



WINTER
FESTIVALS

Read More...



MACVISTA

Macmillan Publishers India Pvt. Ltd.

Life is a Festival	1
Bringing the Community Together	5
Celebrating with the World	7
CROSSWORD PUZZLE	9
Activity Sheet	10
Lighten Up, Jokes	12
Fun Fact	13
Comic Strip	14
Current Events Updates	19

October-December 2019 | gk.macmillaneducation.in

THINK THROUGH IT...

Celebration comes when the common features of life are redeemed.

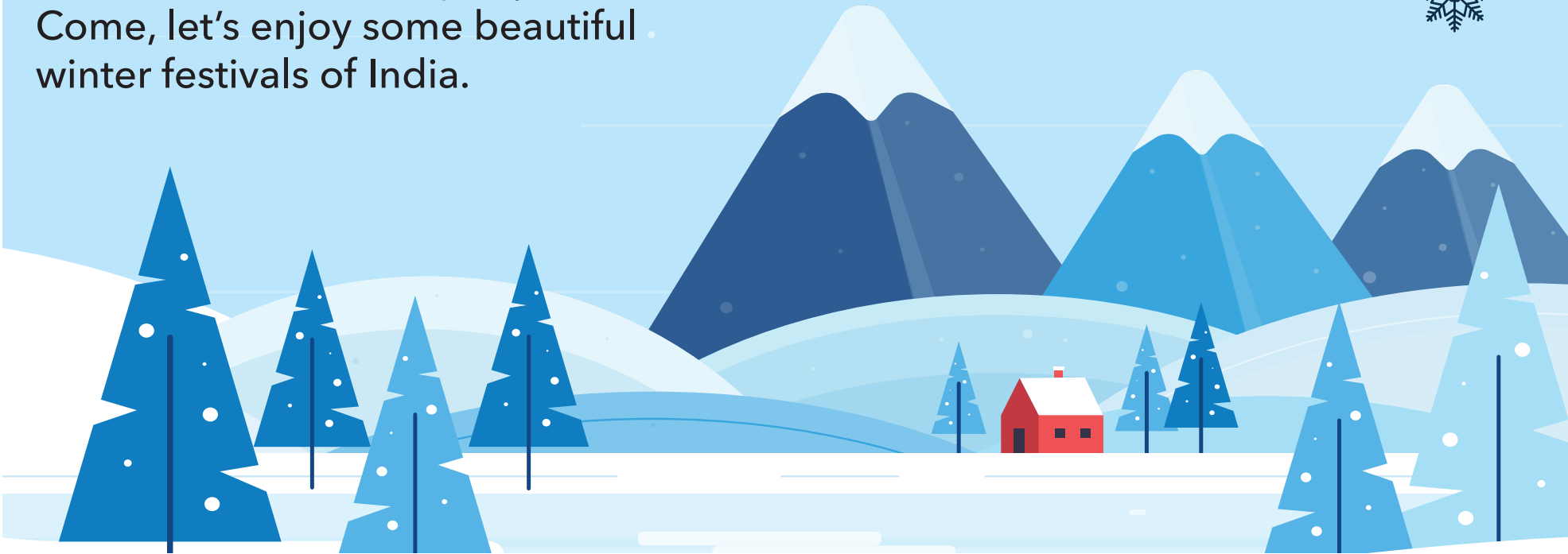
— Richard J. Foster



Life is a Festival

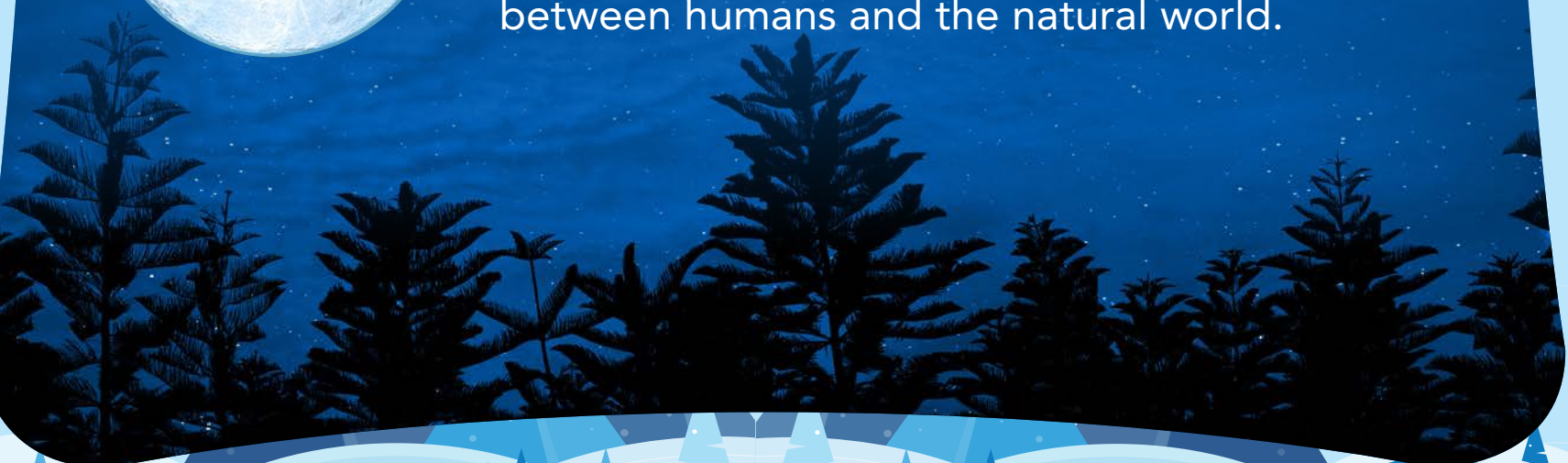
Festivals are a part of human life and make a welcome change from the day-to-day activities. While some festivals revolve around religion, others fete and worship nature and yet others are of community importance.

Come, let's enjoy some beautiful winter festivals of India.



October ushers in *Navaratri*, a nine-day Hindu festival, to honour Goddess Durga, who slayed *Mahisasura*, the demon at the end of a nine-day battle. Gujarat dances the *Garba* and *Dandiya Raas* around the *Garbi*, an earthen pot filled with lighted *diyas*. In the south of India, *Kolu*, a nine-tiered wooden structure is decorated with idols of gods and goddesses. Assam, Bengal and Odisha venerate Durga, the embodiment of feminine power, with *Durga Puja*, filled with music from the *Dhol* (drums), flowers from the *Dhak* (the flaming red *Tesu* flowers), and the *Dhunuchi* dance. Navaratri culminates in *Dussehra* – the day when Ram kills Ravana. Ram's story is told through dance dramas known as *Ram Lila*, performed across the country in various formats. Mysore celebrates *Nadda Habba* with a royal elephant parade. And soon after, it is *Diwali* when Ram returns to Ayodhya and the entire land lights up to rejoice at the victory of good. October also sees another festival, which eulogizes nature.

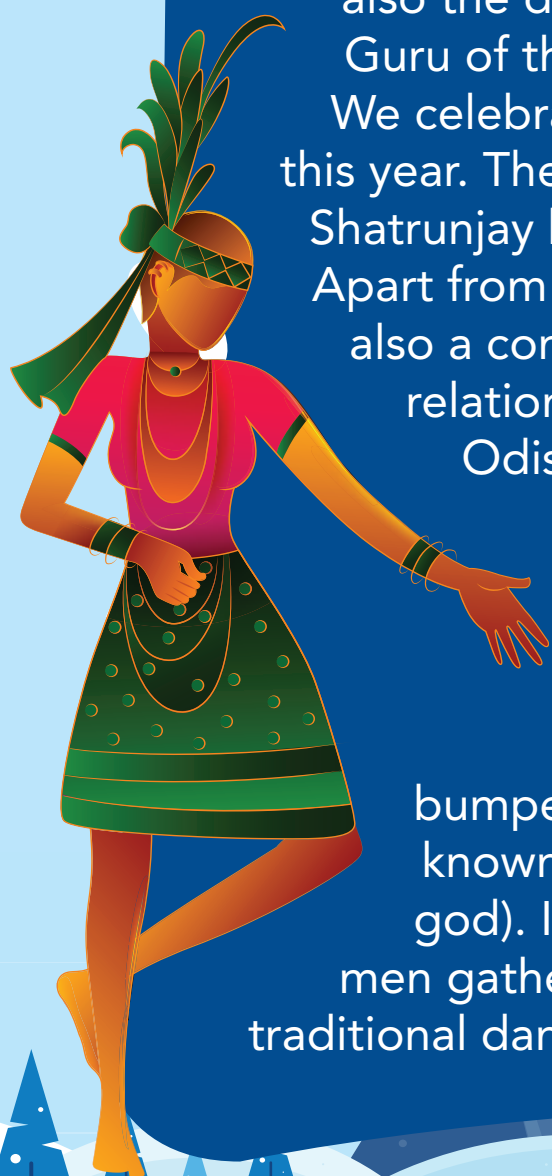
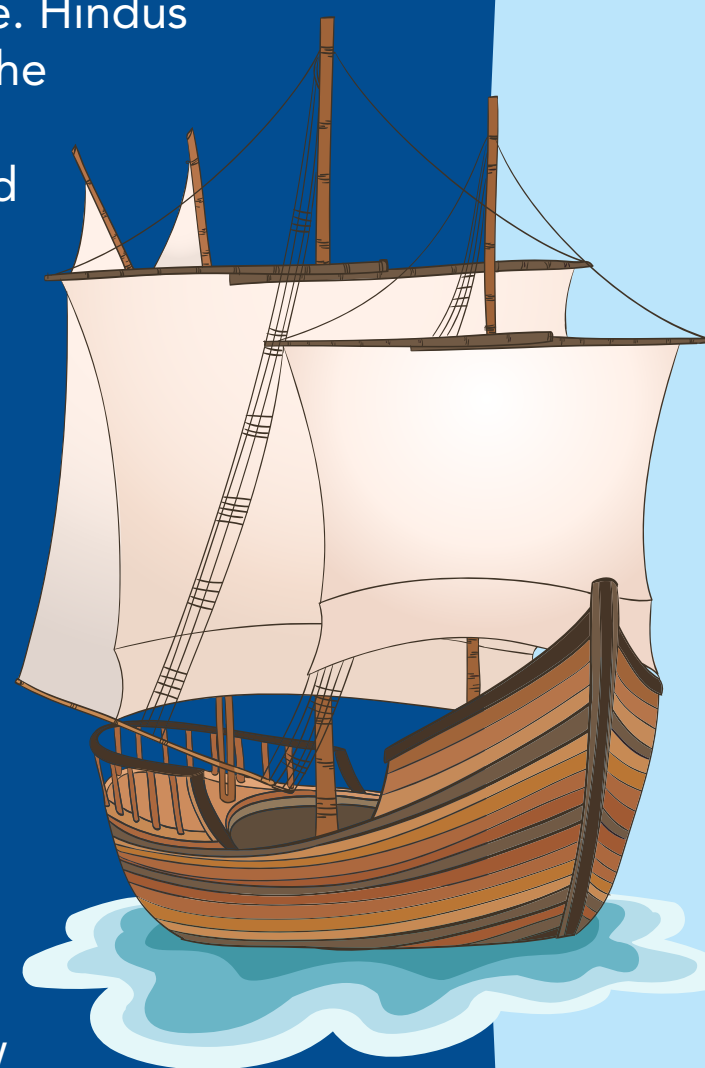
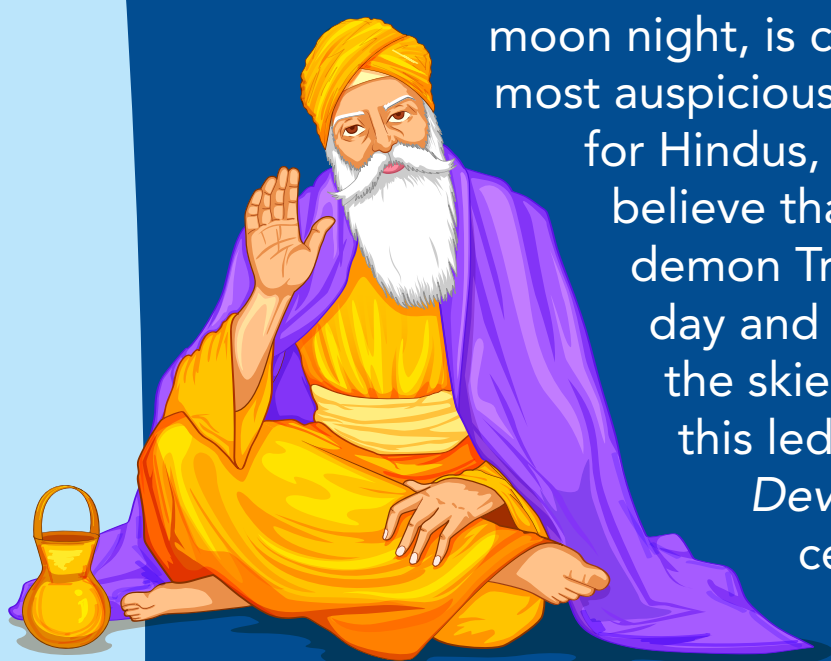
This is a glorification of the full moon and is known as *Kumar Purnima* in Odisha and as *Kojagire Lakhmi Puja* in Bengal. It is believed that Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, comes to visit her devotees on moon beams! Young girls also offer prayers to the full moon in the hope of a life partner as beautiful and noble as the moon. The *Ayilyam* festival of Kerala, is dedicate to the serpent gods and establishes the connection between humans and the natural world.



With so many festivals in October, one would think November would take it easy. But that is far from the truth. November sees the *Chat Puja*, a veneration of the sun; it is primarily celebrated in Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh. People offer fruits and homemade sweets to the rising and setting sun while standing waist deep in water. *Kartik Purnima*, another full

moon night, is considered one of the most auspicious days in India. It is a blessed day for Hindus, Sikhs and Jains alike. Hindus believe that Shiva destroyed the demon Tripurasura on this day and the gods illuminated the skies in admiration; this led to the picturesque *Dev Deepavali* celebrated till date on the *ghats* of Benaras. Kartika Purnima is

also the day when Guru Nanak, the first Guru of the Sikhs, was born at Talwandi. We celebrated his 550th *Parkash Parb* this year. The Jains worship Mahavira on the Shatrunjay hills in Rajasthan on this day. Apart from the religious aspects, this day is also a commemoration of the mercantile relations between erstwhile Kalinga (now Odisha) and Bali and is known as *Boita* (boat) *Bandana* or *Bali Jatra*. People float *diyas* on boats made out of banana stem. Next comes a five-day harvest festival in Meghalaya known as *Ka Pomblang Nongkrem* or *Shad Nongkrem*. Goddess Ka Blei Synshar is worshipped for a bumper harvest. The Garo tribe also has a harvest festival known as *Wangala* where they thank Misi Saljong (the sun god). It is also known as the 100 Drums festival because men gather with their drums and everyone participates in the traditional dance to these drum beats.



December is surely known for Christmas celebrations but India boasts of some uncommon festivals in this month as well. There is *Prathamastami* in Odisha, celebrated to bless the eldest child of the family; prayers for their long and fruitful life are offered as the eldest would ideally become the guardian of the family after the parents' demise. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh play host to the *Losar* and *Galdan Namchot*. Ladakhi

Buddhists make offerings at the Gompas and a medley of ancient rituals and cultural events including traditional dance dramas and music are performed during both. *Galdan Namchot* commemorates the birthday and the Buddhahood of Je Tsongkhapa, a famous scholar and teacher of Tibetan Buddhism, and also marks the New Year in Ladakh.



TechNews

Festivals usually see a throng of people come together for the celebration and this can potentially lead to law and order problems. In such scenarios, drones can be used to collect data about any possible commotion or traffic hazards and share this information in real time with monitoring authorities. Airpix, a leading drone solutions provider in India, helped

Mumbai police to monitor the gathering for Ganesh Chaturthi. Airpix provides aerial photography services along with analytics data.

This comes in handy to check any area where the crowd density is high and could lead to chances of stampedes.

Technology also became the life of the party literally when Siemens used its technology at the famous Oktoberfest in Germany. Control technology and software is used to supply beer from the tanks to the taps directly through an underground pipeline loop. It uses a Liter-Meter to indicate the exact rate of the flow of beer! This system also sends data on the quantity of beer sold and any issues to the brewery and beer taproom operator via a web browser and smartphone.



Bringing the Community Together

Festivals are not just religious in nature but also an excuse for the community to get together and showcase their culture, traditions and history. Some of the colourful and vibrant community festivals, which have now become a mainstay of the tourism sector as well include the Rann Utsav, the India Art Festival and the Konark Dance Festival.



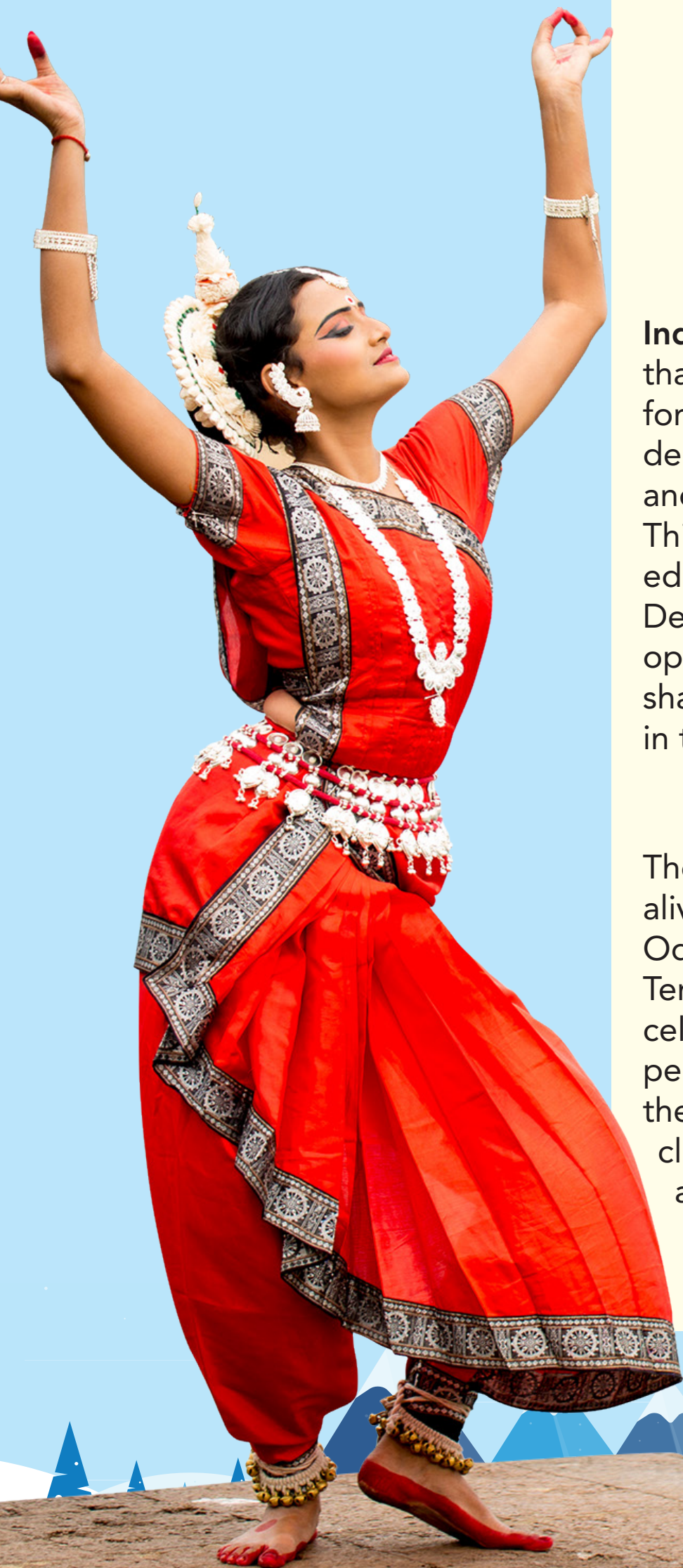
The **Rann Utsav** is held on the white sands of the bleak but beautiful Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. The Rann is transformed into a city of tents to host the guests. Traditional dances, music, food and handicrafts all vie for attention here. It has become a showcase of all that is best in the culture of the community.

Bringing the Community Together



India Art Festival is a contemporary art festival that was started in 2011. It serves as a platform for artists, art connoisseurs, art galleries, art dealers and buyers to come together every year and celebrate modern Indian art and artists. This festival is conducted in various cities as editions. This year it is being held across New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. The festival is an opportunity for upcoming and amateur artists to share the limelight along with established names in the art circle.

The mesmerizing stone statues of Konark come alive at the **Konark Dance Festival** held in Odisha every year. The Natyashala of the Sun Temple provides the stage where a host of celebrated classical dancers from the country perform. With the splendid ancient temple as the backdrop, this festival celebrates all Indian classical dance forms and also showcases folk and tribal dances. Handicrafts and cuisine from various states add to the festive mood of this week long celebration.



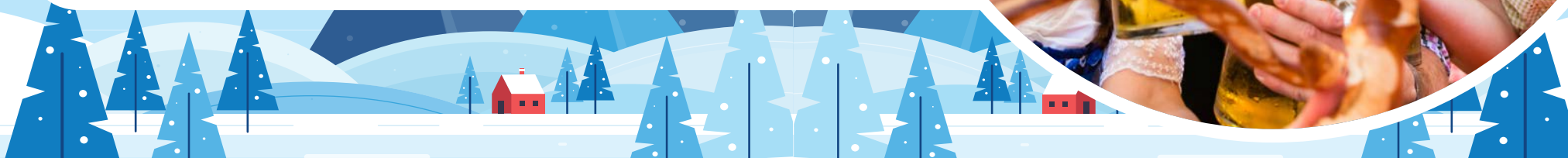
Celebrating with the World

China and Vietnam celebrate a harvest festival in early October, which has the magical name of **Moon Cake Festival**. Unlike other harvest festivals, this one is dedicated to the moon and not the sun; the moon goddess is offered special round cakes as a token of thanksgiving.



Loi Krathong is one of the most picturesque festivals of Thailand, where water is worshipped. People gather around lakes, rivers and canals to pay respect to the goddess of water by floating a lotus-shaped boat-like container made of banana leaves. This boat holds candles, incense sticks, flowers and coins as offerings.

Oktoberfest is when Germany celebrates its bounty of nature, which produces one of the world's best beer. An annual beer festival held in Munich sees visitors from across the globe. Locally-produced beer is presented with other produce from the region as people pile into three huge tents to drink, sing songs, get a flavour of the Bavarian culture and have a great time.



Celebrating with the World



Another unlikely form of nature that has a celebration attached to it is Death. Mexico comes together to celebrate the unique festival of **Día De Los Muertos** (Day of the dead). Families make *ofrendas* (offerings) to honour their deceased. These are altars, which are decorated with bright yellow marigold flowers, photos of the departed, and their favourite food and drink. The offerings are believed to encourage visits from the land of the dead. Unlike Halloween, which is more sombre, this is a joyous festival where family stories are passed on to the next generation. And there is music and dance as well.



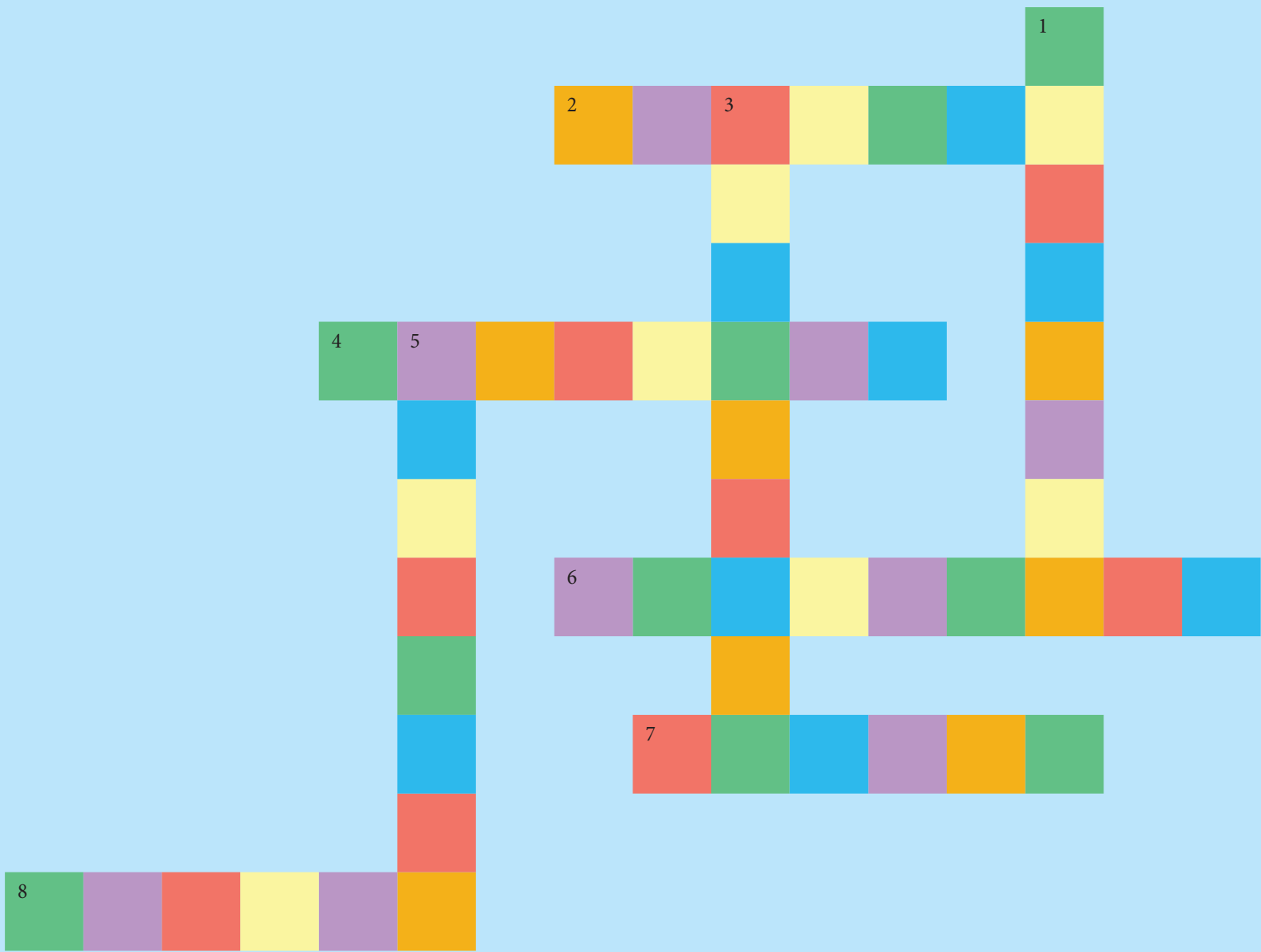
While the human world gets busy with winter celebrations, it is generally assumed that the animal world becomes quieter during winter. Many animals and birds hibernate or migrate during the harsh, winter months; this is essential for their survival. And this very act of migration, specially in birds, creates a festive spirit for us humans, who are witness to this natural spectacle. One such

event is the coming together of endangered flamingos in December at the Eduardo Avaroa Andean Fauna National Reserve in Sur Lípez, Bolivia.

This park is situated close to the Chilean border and plays host to the largest population of endangered flamingos. The flock includes the James's, Chilean and Andean species. The birds come here to feed on the algae-rich waters of the shallow, salt lake of Laguna Colorado. The beauty of the flock of flamingos makes for great memories and reverence for nature and her ways.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across

- 2. 100 Drums Festival
- 4. Traditional Chinese sweet
- 6. Birth place of Jesus Christ
- 7. Festival of lights
- 8. Songs sung at Christmas

Down

- 1. Famous Jewish festival celebrated in December
- 3. Nine holy nights
- 5. Mexican altar

- 5. OFRENDAS
- 3. NAVARATRI
- 1. HANUKKAH

Down

- 8. CAROLS
- 7. DIWALI
- 6. BETHLEHEM
- 4. MOONCAKE
- 2. WANGALA

Across

Answer

Crossword Puzzle



ACTIVITY SHEET

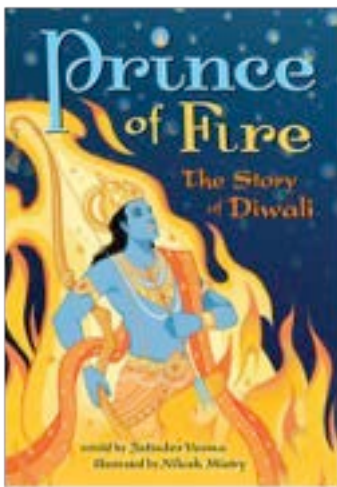
Activity 1

Help the little elf place the gift under the Christmas tree.



Activity 2

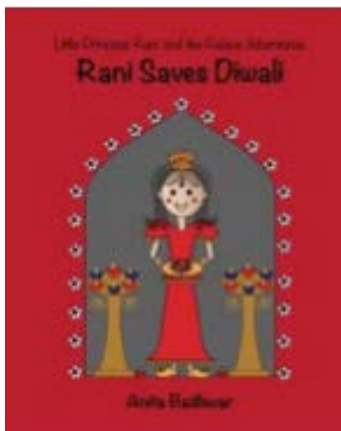
You have read about so many festivals in this edition. Are you curious to know more? Here is one of the best ways to spend your festival holiday or even winter break; spend them reading! And we have just the booklist for you.



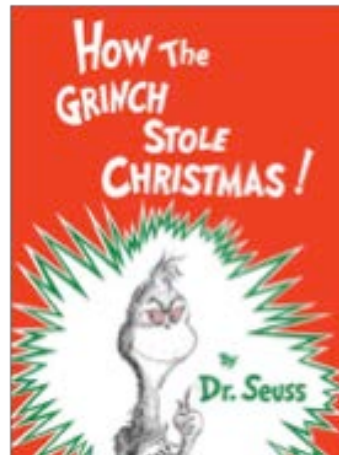
This dramatic new version of India's great epic, The Ramayana, vividly brings the story of Diwali to life. Retold by Jatinder Verma.



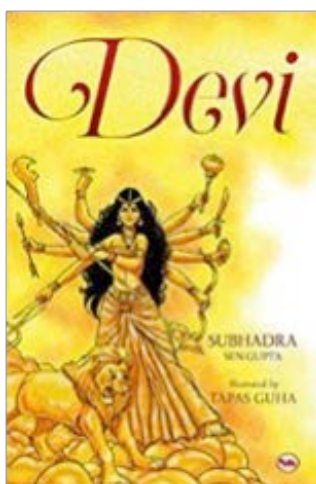
The retelling of Charles Dickens' immortal classic gives us the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, the Ghosts of Christmas, the courage of Tiny Tim and the glory of Christmas morning.



Read this book by Anita Babbar to find out how Rani saves Diwali after an accident at the palace.



First published in 1957, the small-hearted Grinch's transformation reminds readers – young and old – that Christmas is about much more than gifts.



Read three exciting tales about the Devi as Parvati, Durga and Saraswati. Retold by Subhadra Sen Gupta and illustrated by Tapas Guha, this is one interesting read for sure!



Lighten Up

Clue – The answers lie in this edition of the newsletter!

Q. Tamil Nadu celebrates Navaratri with dolls arranged in a unique array. What is the name of this doll house?
A. Kolu – A nine-tiered step-like wooden object decorated with dolls.

Q. Nine days do the people dance; around a pot of light do they prance. What are my names?
A. Garba dance around the pot known as Garbi

Q. A guru was born this day, leading the people to pray. His birth was blessed; he earned the world's respect. Who was he?
A. Guru Nanak

Q. Deep in the mountains of the east, drums beat out and call for feast. What festival am I?
A. The 100 Drums Festival or Wangala

Q. White sands, moonlight, camels and dances galore. This is how this festival scores. What festival am I?
A. Rann Utsav in Gujarat

JOKES



Why won't the elephant use the computer?
 Because he is afraid of the mouse!

How do you know the sea is friendly?
 It waves!

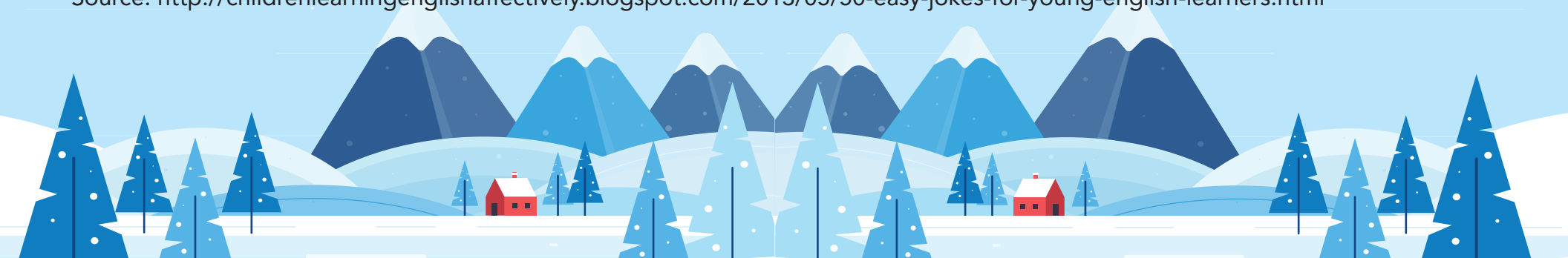
Why do birds fly south in the winter?
 Because it is too far to walk.

What kind of key does not open a lock?
 A mon-key!

Why was the strawberry sad?
 Its parents were put in a jam!

What is a robot's favourite snack?
 Computer chips

Source: <http://childrenlearningenglishaffectively.blogspot.com/2013/05/50-easy-jokes-for-young-english-learners.html>



FUN FACTS

"Jingle Bells" was written for Thanksgiving, not Christmas! The song was written in 1857 by James Lord Pierpont. It was supposed to be played in the composer's Sunday school class to commemorate the famous Medford sleigh races.

In Holland, *Sinterklaas* (Dutch for Santa Claus) arrives from Spain, not from the North Pole. *Sinterklaas* has little helpers just like Santa Claus, but they are not adorable, hard-working elves; instead they are black-faced boys and girls who can kidnap children if they misbehave, and take them back to Spain. According to the Dutch, this is very severe punishment!

In Germany, Poland and Ukraine, finding a spider or a spider's web on a Christmas tree is believed to be a harbinger of good luck. According to one legend, a spider wove a blanket for Baby Jesus. According to another story, a spider web on the Christmas tree turned silver and gold once touched by sunlight.

Xmas is a common abbreviation of Christmas. However, some people believe that this is incorrect since it replaces "Christ" with "X". Actually, the Greek alphabet, the letter X ("chi") is the first letter of the Greek word for Christ or Christos.

Iceland has 13 Santa Clauses; they are known as Yule Lads. The holiday period begins 13 days before Christmas. On each day, one Yule Lad visits and rewards or punishes children for their behaviour. They fill the children's shoes that are kept under the Christmas tree either with sweets and small gifts or with rotting potatoes.



Comic Strip

BAIRA AND BELA



Bela and Baira are visiting their friends, Sara and Matthew Verghese, in Kochi (Kerala) at Grandma Verghese's house. They are decorating a banana tree with stars and lights.

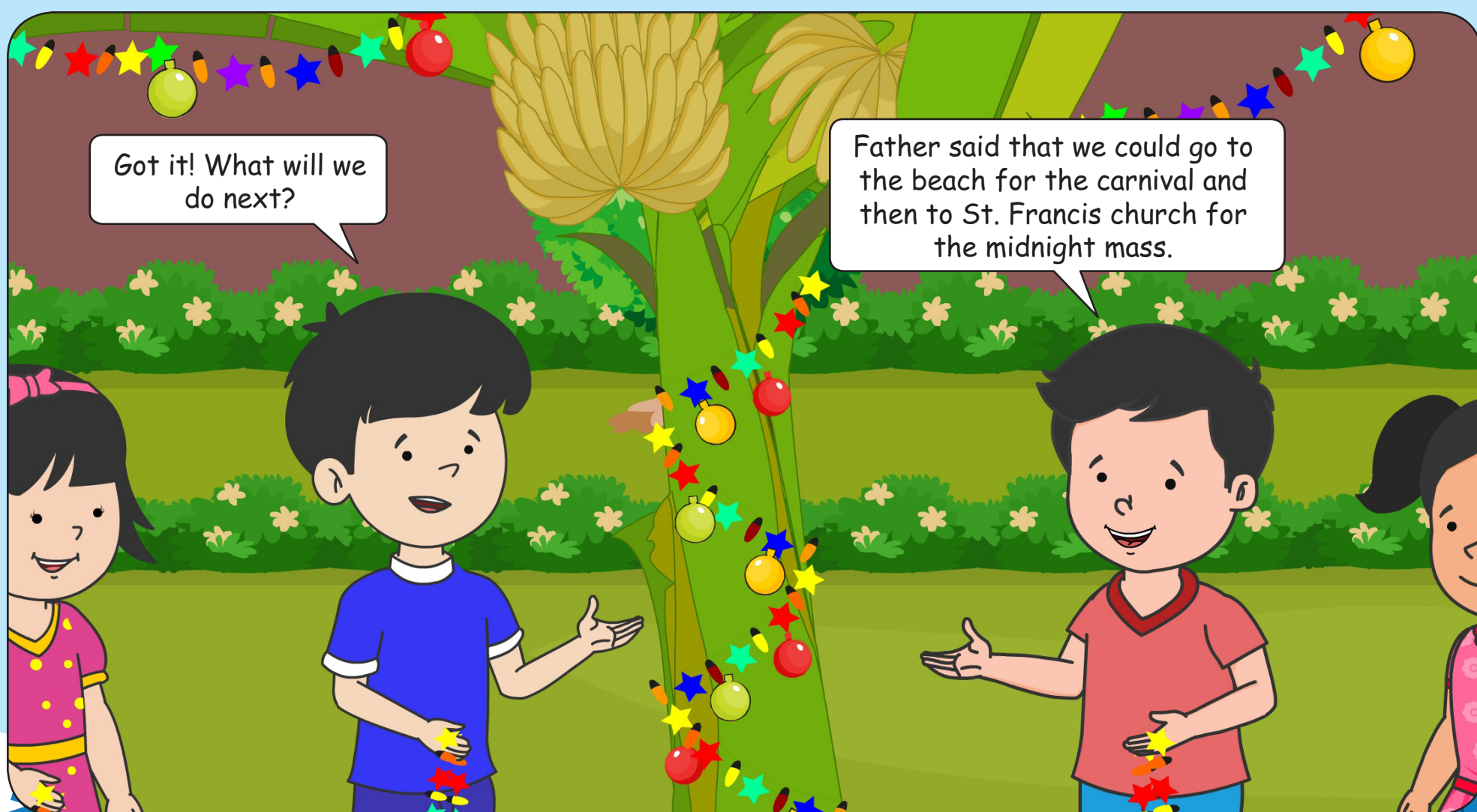
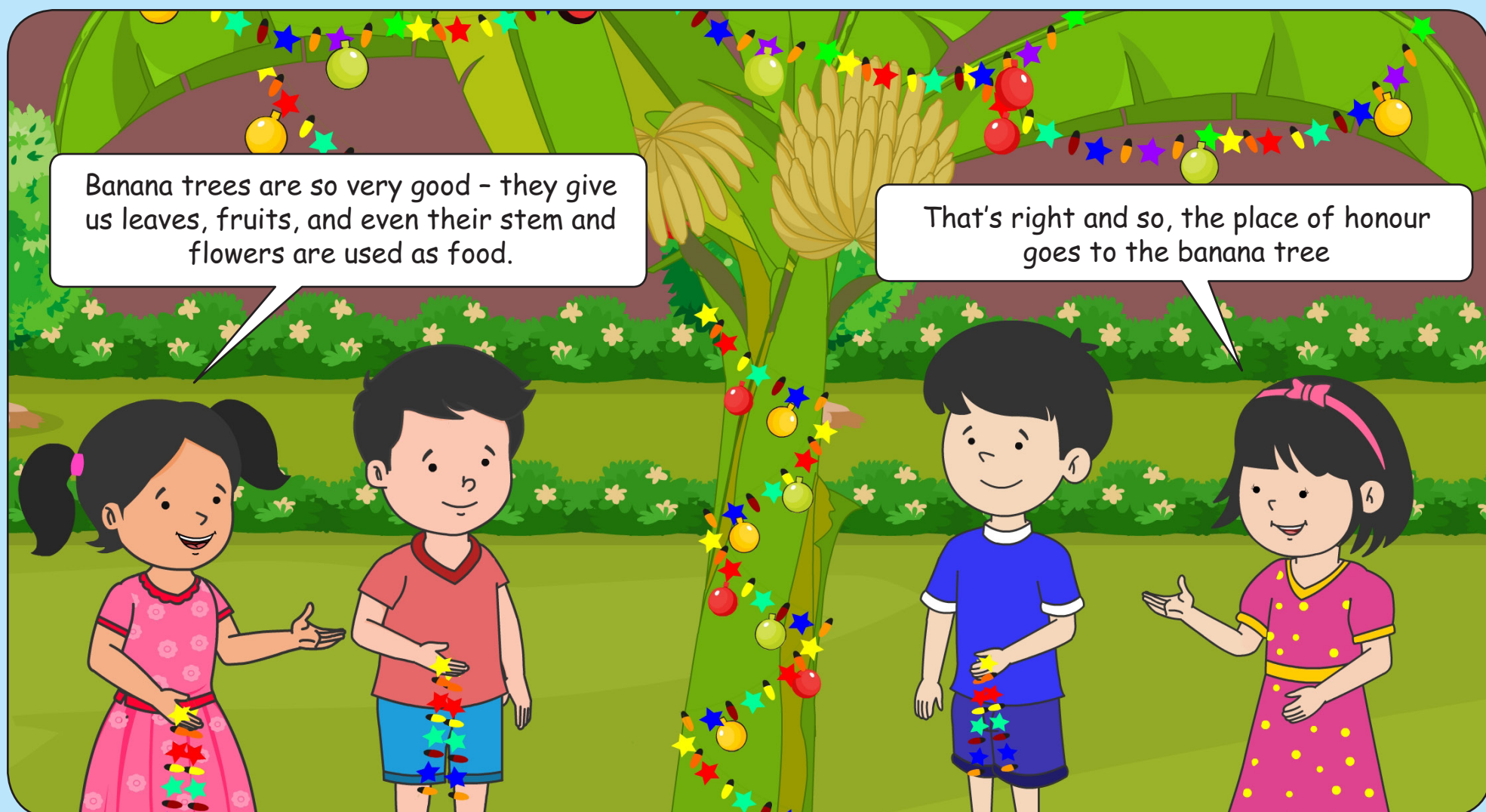




Comic Strip



BAIRA AND BELA





Comic Strip

BAIRA AND BELA

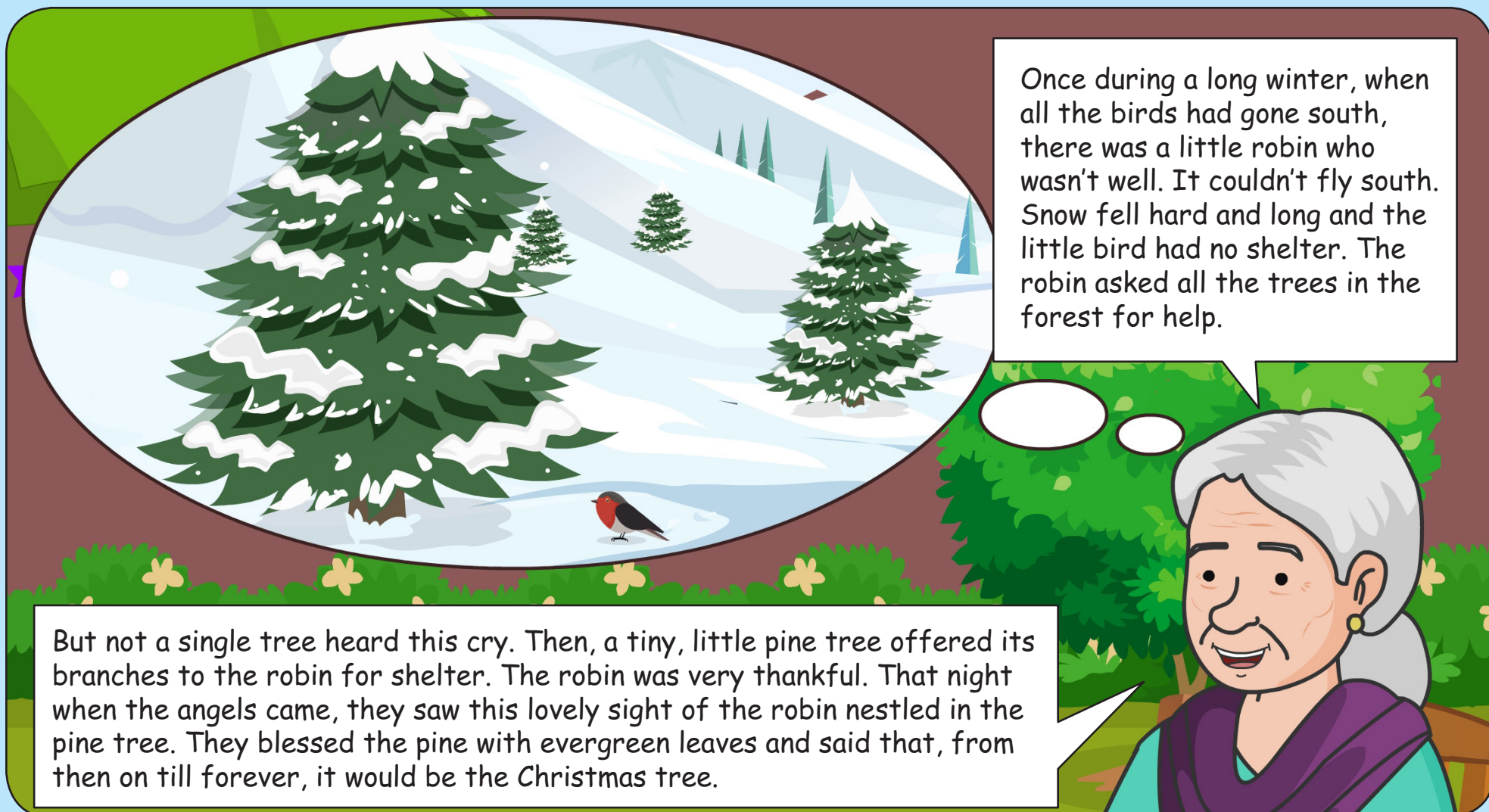




Comic Strip



BAIRA AND BELA







Comic Strip



BAIRA AND BELA



That's right, children. Help others and be kind. That is the way to celebrate Christmas. Now, go and get ready for the midnight mass at church.



Yes Ammama. Let's go and get ready. Remember, there is cake after the mass!!

CURRENT EVENTS UPDATES

Oct 9

Two people were killed and many injured in an attack on an East German synagogue on one of the holiest Jewish festivals.

Oct 12

The Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2019 for his efforts to resolve 20-year long border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.



Oct 14

Abhijit Banerjee, an Indian-origin economist, has been awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for the year 2019 along with Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer. They received the prize for their research and experimental approach to alleviating global poverty.



Oct 15

The Booker Prize for 2019 was awarded jointly to Margaret Atwood for *The Testaments* and Bernardine Evaristo for her novel, *Girl, Women, Other*.



Oct 18

NASA astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir made history with the world's first all-female spacewalk as they fixed a broken part of the ISS (International Space Station).



Oct 23

Sourav Ganguly has been made the chairman of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).



Oct 26

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the terrorist organization Islamic State (IS) was declared killed in raid by US troops.

Oct 31

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been officially divided into two union territories.

G.C. Murmu and Radha Krishna Mathur have been appointed as the first Lt. Governors of the union territories of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh respectively.

CURRENT EVENTS UPDATES

Nov 7

Over 11000 scientists from 153 countries have recently declared a Global Climate Emergency. They have issued a warning to people globally that if timely measures are not taken, it might be too late for the planet.

Nov 9

Supreme Court of India gave its final verdict on the Ayodhya dispute. The verdict awarded the right to the disputed site to the Ayodhya Ram Temple.

Nov 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kartarpur Corridor at Dera Baba Nanak.



Nov 22

Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in as Sri Lanka's new Prime Minister after Ranil Wickremesinghe's resignation.



The Indian Women's Cricket team won the series against the West Indies team with 5-0.

Nov 25

Greta Thunberg has been awarded the International Children's Peace Prize 2019 for her fight towards environmental protection.



Nov 26

The Arcadia Education Project was honored with the prestigious Aga Khan Architecture Award 2019 for its Floating School Project in South Kanarchor, Bangladesh. This school was established for marginalized children on land that stays dry in the dry seasons but floats on water during the monsoons. The architect Saif-ul-Haq used local materials like bamboo to build the structure.

Nov 27

ISRO has successfully launched Cartosat-3 along with 13 nanosatellites of US from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota. It is India's Earth observation satellite that will help in surveillance of India's borders and also in monitoring natural disasters.

Nov 30

Uddhav Thackeray, Shiv Sena's leader became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra after winning the floor test.



Akkitham Achuthan Namboodri, the famous Malayalam poet, has been given the Jnanpith Award for 2019.

CURRENT EVENTS UPDATES

Dec 8

Zozibini Tunzi from South Africa was crowned Miss Universe 2019 in the event held at Atlanta, USA. She became the first black woman to win the title after 2011.



Dec 9

Sanna Marin became the youngest-ever Prime Minister in the world after being elected to head Finland's coalition government.



Dec 12

Climate change activist, Greta Thunberg, has been selected as Person of the Year for the year 2019 by the TIME magazine. She is the youngest person ever to achieve this honour.



Dec 14

Toni Ann-Singh of Jamaica was crowned Miss World 2019 at the event held in London. India's Suman Rao finished as second runner-up in the pageant.



Dec 16

The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 was passed in India's Parliament. This act is aimed at helping persecuted people of specific religious backgrounds from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan gain Indian citizenship. Massive protests have been seen throughout India mostly against and some for the Act.

Dec 19

Donald Trump, the 45th President of America, has become the third President in the history of USA to be impeached. The charges were brought forth for "abuse of power".

Dec 21

The United Kingdom has shared its final decision to completely leave the European Union (EU) by January 31, 2020.

Dec 23

Amitabh Bachchan was bestowed the 66th Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema.



Dec 24

India is set to get its first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) who will serve as the unified military advisor to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence.

Eight West African countries have announced a new common currency – Eco – to end French dominance and this new currency will come into circulation in 2020. These eight countries include Mali, Niger, Senegal, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau and Ivory Coast.