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CHRONICLES

MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA
FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

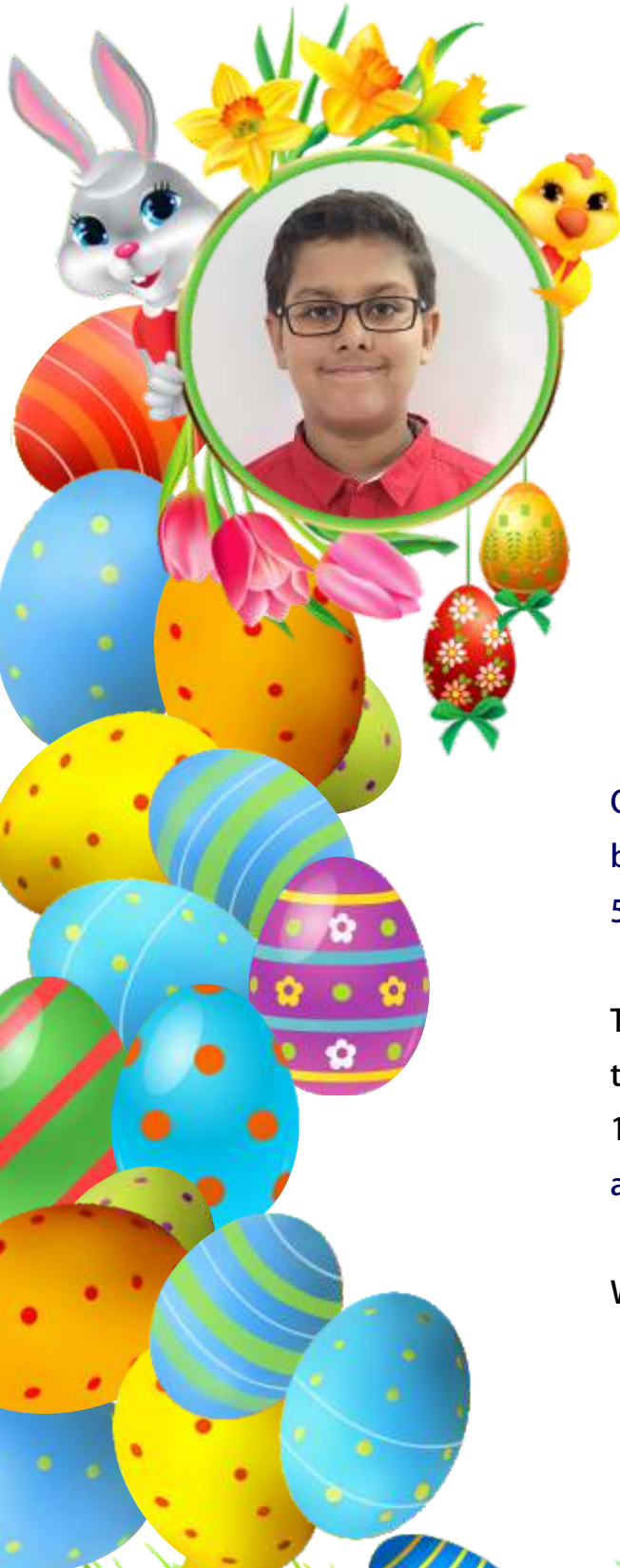
THE COLLAPSE OF SRI LANKA
Article by: Pranet Khetan, G 8, SNS Gurugram

Volatile **U**ncertain **C**omplex **A**mbiguous



The Collapse of Sri Lanka

By Pranet Khetan, Grade 8, SNS Gurugram



On April 18th, 2022, Sri Lanka defaulted (refused to pay) on 50 billion dollars in loan payments. There is little to no food. Over 500,000 Sri Lankan citizens have fallen into poverty.

There is neither any fuel nor any medicine. Specialists say that the economic crisis may kill more Sri Lankans than the COVID-19 Pandemic. A bankrupt Sri Lanka recently asked citizens abroad to send home cash!

What we are witnessing here is the total economic collapse of





a country, similar (yet different) to the economic collapse of Zimbabwe and Venezuela.

To ask the golden question(s): How did we get here? How did the Sri Lankan economy collapse so terribly that it left everyone stupefied? Could the Russia-Ukraine war be connected to this horrific event? Let us find out.

Sri Lanka's collapse can be divided into two parts: mismanagement and fate. Firstly, let us discuss the policies of the Lankan Government.

It is many years of mismanagement and poor leadership that compounded this crisis in the first place. Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on one promise: reduced taxes.

The people happily obliged and voted for him, without realising its direct implications. Reduced taxes would lead to a reduced budget,

which was mostly used up by imports. The rice production of Sri Lanka had also declined by over 50%, leading to further losses.

How would the government pay its employees, create better infrastructure or do anything to improve Sri Lanka with so little money? Goatabaya's answer was that it won't.

He continuously borrowed more and more money until Sri Lanka ended up with a total debt of over 50 billion dollars! Such a large debt, as he already knew, was too much for an economy as small as Sri Lanka's to handle.

Next, let us discuss the influence of China and the Russia-Ukraine war in this matter.

Sri Lanka under Gotabaya had avoided strengthening ties with its closest neighbor, India. Instead, Sri Lanka relied on China for development





more of it. They also devalued the Sri Lankan rupee, so that one US Dollar is equal to 325 Sri Lankan Rupees (as of 18/04/22). Experts estimate that Sri Lanka would need about 20 billion dollars to restart its economy. Where would Sri Lanka get all this money?

loans and funding for the Lankan military. This was yet another recipe for disaster. China did give some money, but it also exported the COVID-19 virus.

Sri Lanka's tourism industry subsequently suffered as an additional burden was placed on hospitals. The Russia-Ukraine war also prevented many imports and exports to and from Sri Lanka, damaging its economy further. This is what I mean by fate.

Now, let us see what the Lankan government did after this crisis started. A simple answer would be relying on its neighbors. Sri Lanka took out a 200 million dollar loan from Bangladesh and 500 million dollars' worth of oil as a loan from India.

Even though the Prime Minister knew that debt was what had caused this crisis in the first place, he couldn't stop himself from accumulating

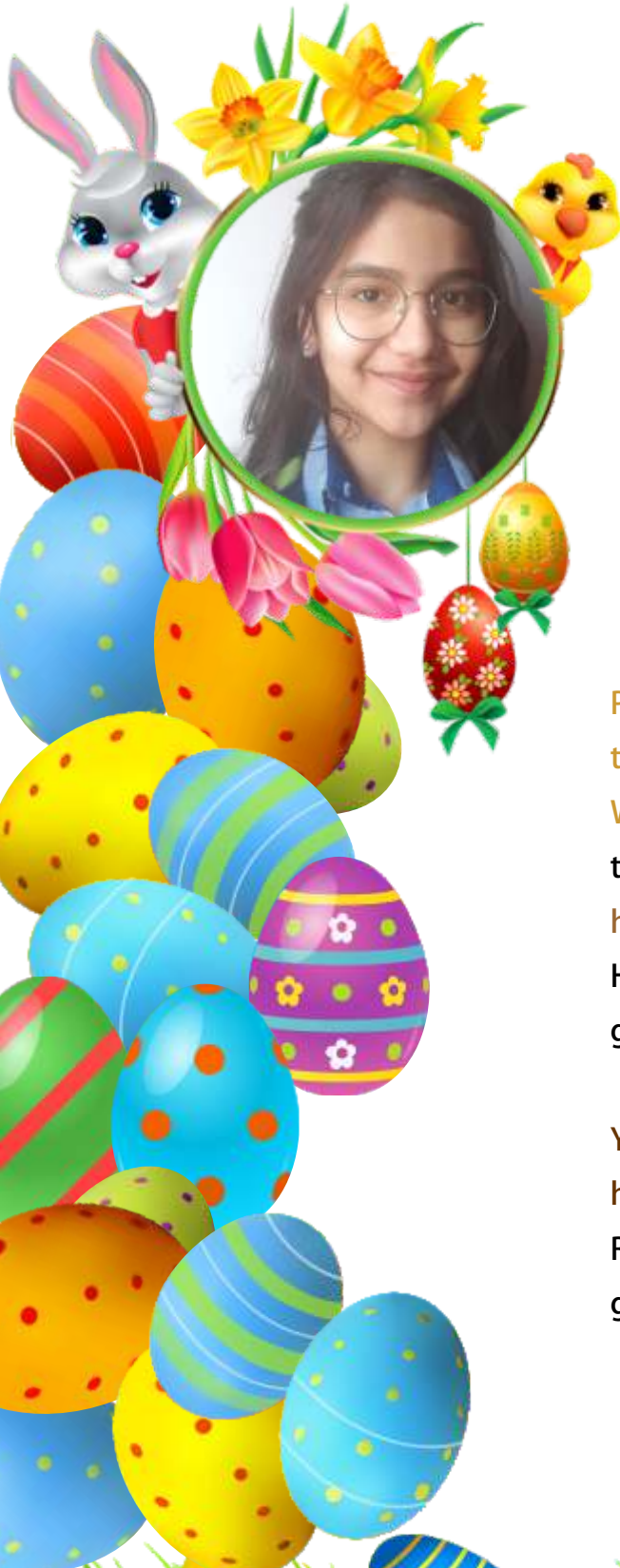
To summarise, the laughable mismanagement of the Lankan government, paired with the unfortunate events happening in the rest of the world led to the total collapse of Sri Lanka. Let us hope that better leadership will come and Sri Lanka will be able to pull itself out of this crisis.





Russia-Ukraine Crisis: Human Rights Abuses

By Drisha Dadheech, Grade 12, SNS Gurugram



Putin's attempt to redraw the map of Europe risks becoming the most devastating conflict on the continent since World War II. Already, it is causing an astounding humanitarian crisis: thousands of civilians have died, and over 1.5 million people have fled the violence so far, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, making it the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.

Yet, the violation of the right to basic human needs and a humanitarian crisis do not constitute the entire picture. The Russian military is also responsible for the commitment of gruesome war crimes against the civilians. While the





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The laws of war prohibit wilful killing, rape and other sexual violence, torture, and inhumane treatment of captured combatants and civilians in custody. **Pillage and looting are also prohibited.** Anyone who orders or deliberately commits such acts, or aids and abets them, is responsible for war crimes.

government continues to deny any such accusations, investigations led by Human Rights Watch have uncovered of a mountain of evidence of human rights violations.

The credibility of such evidence is furthered with the help of investigation teams being sent by the USA and European Union. This has led to a holistic build-up of information which includes instances of abuse of Ukrainian prisoners of war.

All parties to the armed conflict in Ukraine must abide by international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, and customary international law. Belligerent armed forces that have effective control of an area are subject to the international law of occupation and the international human rights law.

Commanders of forces who knew or had reason to know about such crimes but did not attempt to stop them or punish those responsible are criminally liable for war crimes as a matter of command responsibility.

This puts an international legal obligation on Russia to impartially investigate alleged war crimes by its soldiers. Commanders should recognize that a failure to take action against murder and rape may make them personally responsible for war crimes as a matter of command responsibility.





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security council to have its membership revoked from any UN body.

The US ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, had launched the effort to suspend Russia with Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukraine's UN ambassador, introducing the resolution before the 193 members of the general assembly.

Though such a form of accountability isn't proving to be prevalent, Human Rights Watch has documented with significant details and testimonies several cases of Russian military forces violating war laws.

These include a case of repeated rape, two cases of summary execution, one of six men, the other of one man, and other cases of unlawful violence and threats against civilians. Soldiers were also implicated in looting civilian property, including food, clothing, and firewood.

Such form of documentation has the aim of providing justice to the victims by persuading the International Criminal Court.

But another development that is worthy to note is the suspension of the Russian Federation from the United Nations Human Rights Council. It is the first permanent member of the UN

While he said that Russia has committed horrific human rights violations that would be equated to war crimes and crimes against humanity which are shaking the underpinnings of international peace and security, Russia's deputy ambassador, Gennady Kuzmin, urged members to vote against the resolution, calling the resolution an attempt by the United States to maintain its dominant position and total control based on untruthful allegations.





giving a resignation after being fired by Sergiy Kyslytsya.

While this is a notable development, there is obvious concern about its tokenistic nature. It sends a coherent message and an attack on Russia's soft power, but does little for the civilians suffering on ground.

Thus, it would be correct to consider this a small step in the right direction; one that leads to a stringent check on human rights violations in Ukraine and justice for the victims.

Kyslytsya responded to Russia's complaints about the proceeding, saying: "We have heard, many times, the same perverted logic of the aggressor trying to present itself as the victim."

In the end, the resolution passed with 93 votes in favor of it and 23 against. Among the 58 who abstained included Brazil, India, Mexico, Senegal and South Africa, with many urging the conclusion of the investigation and diplomacy.

TS Tirumurti, India's ambassador, said: "When innocent human lives are at stake, diplomacy must prevail as the only viable option.", words that may or may not just be meant to protect the country's own relations with the federation.

After the adoption of the resolution, Kuzmin of Russia gave up its membership in the council with immediate effect; a move quickly questioned in the assembly by James Roscoe, UK ambassador to the UN and later compared to





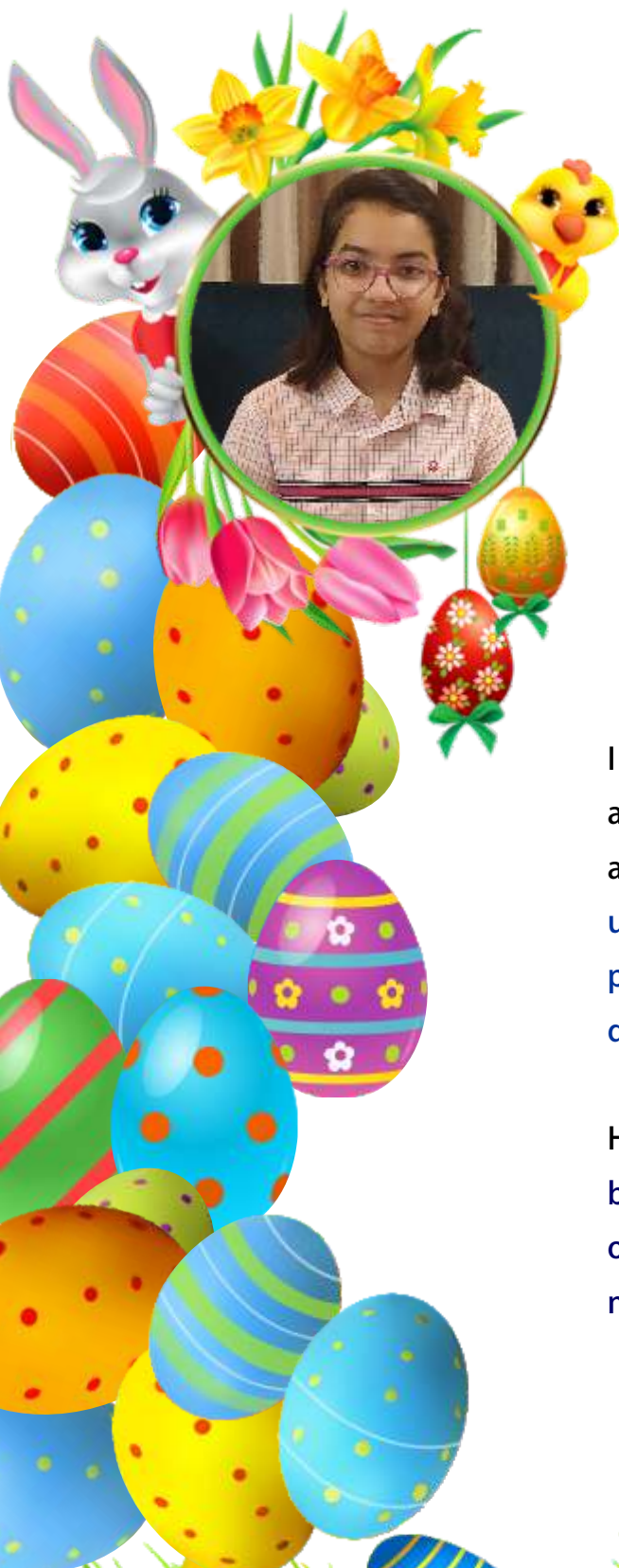
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Human Rights

By Vedika Sharma , Grade 7, SNS Gurugram



I am a 12-year-old. Since the day I was born, I had the internet all around me and I have learnt so much from it. I have learned about different cultures, religions, countries, peoples etc. I used to think that with this easy availability of internet, people would learn about each other and respect each other's differences and celebrate each other's diversity.

However, this is not the case. Even in today's world, people are being kidnapped, shot, murdered and discriminated against on the basis of their gender, skin color, religion, age, nationality, sexual orientation etc.





In the words of the [Saint Mother Teresa](#), “Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of his or her humanity.”

Allow me to draw a picture for you so you can understand this better:

Imagine that you are not allowed to speak and if you spoke, you would be imprisoned and tortured and maybe even murdered.

But why? We do have the right to speak for what's wrong or right!

Exactly!

That is what some people are doing around the world, taking away people's rights - to speak, to live, to express themselves.

Here are some examples from around the world:

1. [Child slavery in LRA \(Lord's Resistance Army\)](#) - This child slavery continued for 20,000 years. Children were kidnapped and boys were forced to serve as soldiers, and girls served as their slaves.

2. [The Holocaust](#) – This is the most well-known human rights violation. [Adolf Hitler](#) killed 60 lakh Jews. His plan was to cleanse the world of Jews.

3. [Taliban crimes in Afghanistan](#) – Taliban, a large terrorist group, has been in power in Afghanistan since 1996. Whenever they feel like it, they kill people randomly. Taliban has told the Afghan army not to take action or they would kill their President.

4. [Suppression of the press in Russia](#) – Journalists are thrown in jail in Russia and tortured and even killed simply for writing and reporting facts about the performance of the Russian government.





Human rights can be traced back to 1215 when King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta. Signing the Magna Carta was not only the first document establishing some sort of human rights, but it also spread the message of democracy to the whole world. This was the first time an English king was made answerable to the law.

5. Genocide of the Rohingya by Myanmar – The Rohingya, a minority in Myanmar, are denied basic human rights like freedom to move, access to education and right to citizenship. Lakhs of Rohingya have been killed in the past 6 years by the army.

This saddens me.

As the Dalai Lama said, “Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.”

What are human rights? Human rights are ground rules that dictate how we should treat one another, i.e. with dignity, fairness, respect and equality.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, as rightly said by Eleanor Roosevelt

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity”, as Nelson Mandela once said.

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly formed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in Paris. This declaration was formed as a result of the experience of World War II.

The UDHR is a historic document that was drafted by representatives from different cultural and legal backgrounds from all regions of the world. The declaration inspires us to keep working to ensure that all people can gain freedom, dignity, equity,



UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



and equality. The UDHR was the first international agreement in the history of the world. It has been translated into more than 360 languages. Nearly every state in the world has accepted the UDHR.

“Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world” - Malala Yusufzai

“The rights of every person are diminished, when the rights of one person are threatened” – John F Kennedy

In conclusion, I would like the world to be more friendly, peaceful, and loving where people take care of each other and do not punish each other for their differences.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The greatness of humanity is not in being human, but in being humane.”

“Be the change you want to see in the world”
– Mahatma Gandhi

I do want to be the change I want to see in the world. Therefore, as I grow, I will strive to uphold my fellow world citizens' human rights while I live.

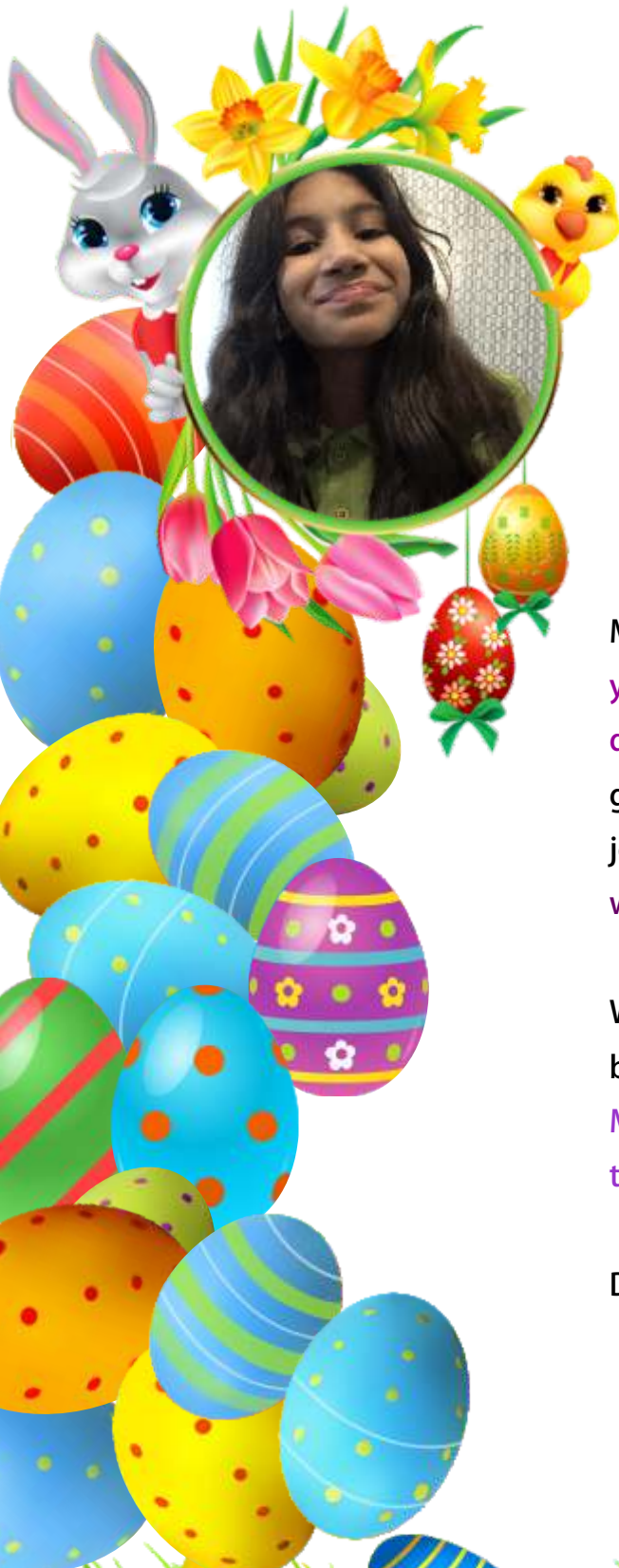
I will also request the adults of this world to do the same so that the world they leave behind for me and my generation is a happier, more equal and, hence more prosperous world.





The Weight of Double Burden

By Gia Ganesh, Grade 8, SNS Gurugram



My mom is a hero. Trust me, she is. **Women are so important yet the world doesn't give them as much credit as they deserve.** I remember that she told me it was so hard for her growing up in a world that contained thoughts like 'quit your job, stay home and clean,' 'women are only good at being wives and producing children.' But she was a fighter.

Women suffer immeasurably giving birth to small innocent beings who they don't even know are going to succeed or not. **My mom didn't care about that. She told me that when you take one look at your child, you know you already love them.**

During pregnancy you get acne, you can't eat the food you





right to rest. They are headstrong and not to be underestimated and taken advantage of. **They will believe in the impossible and risk it all in the darkest. They put you on the top even if that means they have to go down.** So why can't we do the same for them?

like, you can't work, you have to take medicines and the pain while giving birth is unimaginable, but at the end, it is all worth it.

Most moms cook, clean, work and look after the entire family. They don't even get any recognition let alone any payment for doing what they do.

Women deserve respect and gratitude. They don't get a holiday or a break from working at home yet they don't complain.

So, it is only proper that we help them out and look out for them. **Lack of support can also transpire into mental health issues which would make it more difficult for them to fulfil responsibilities expected of them as wives/ mothers.**

Women have the right to speak up and express themselves. They have the right to work and the

My mom deserves the world for the struggles she has been through to come to the position she is in today, and I am so proud of her.

Women are capable of anything and everything. So, stop holding them back from what they want to do and give them the power of choice so that they can build a meaningful life for themselves.





Born Under the Same Sun

By Aiyana Bhagowati, Grade 6, SNS Gurugram



No two persons are ever made the same,
Some aren't as lucky, and some have wealth and fame.

They say that we shouldn't care,
But what about the clothes we wear?

We rest our heads at night on pillows, under a roof,
Some don't even have proof.

We take so many things for granted,
People are like seeds, scattered and planted.





They can grow up to be whoever they want to
be,
But many don't see the same world as you and
me.
But since we are all born under the same sun,
we must help them all to have a strong stem.

This doesn't happen overnight,
For this, we have to fight,
Fight with all our might,
For what we believe is right.





The Right to Life

By Amber Kaur Rohatgi, Grade 8, SNS Gurugram



EVERYONE HAS
A RIGHT TO
LIVE



The Right to Life is a fundamental right that means every being has a right to live and should not be killed by another entity, including the government.

It also means that the government will take adequate measures to protect life by making certain laws, and will take





steps for the same especially when a life is at risk. Public authorities, such as the municipality, meaning the office of the local government of a town or district, have to consider the right to life when making decisions that might affect our life expectancy or put us in danger.

These decisions include the way they manage the distribution of water and electricity, construction guidelines, the general cleanliness of the area under their control, and, most importantly, the laws and regulations of the land they own.

If suppose a family member dies in matters that involve the state, you have the right to call for an investigation. The government is also required to investigate suspicious deaths like deaths in custody.

In some countries, the Right to Life does not include the Right to Die. Right to Die means a

person can willingly end their life or undergo voluntary euthanasia. 'Euthanasia' is a legally approved practice of intentionally taking away a person's life through painless procedures to relieve them from pain/suffering.

In some cases, the person may be conscious enough to give consent, but in other cases, another person, like immediate family, may approve of this procedure.

This, however, is legal only in some countries, including India, which legalized euthanasia on the 7th of March, 2011.

In my opinion, Euthanasia should only be legal if the person in question is responsive enough to give their consent. It should be illegal if another person conducts the procedure without the clear consent of the person in question.





This is because the Right to Life states that a person should have a right to live, and their life may not be ended by another entity, including the government.

Well, if euthanasia is conducted without the permission of the person themselves, then technically it violates the Right to Life. There may be some exceptions to this like if the provider of the person in question can no longer financially support their medical needs or if the person has a will.

Suppose the provider cannot afford the medical bills but the responsive person in question wishes to live further, the government can provide them with loans and support them in other ways.

Now, you may be wondering, does the Right to Life apply to criminals? Well, technically it does, according to the law, because a prisoner does

not cease to be a human being once they are imprisoned, they may enjoy all the fundamental rights, including the Right to Life. However, this can be viewed differently.

Some people may believe that the criminals should be killed as a severe punishment for their crimes, and because imprisonment for life may be considered far crueler.

So, in conclusion, the Right to Life has potential for a few alterations or gaps that can be filled, such as the debate over the fate of criminals and the legalisation of euthanasia all over the world.

These adjustments will complete the most basic right a person has and change the lives/fates of millions of people all over the world.





Overcoming Inertia

A Reflection of our Mental Strength

By Aarshi Vaidya, Grade 8, SNS Gurugram

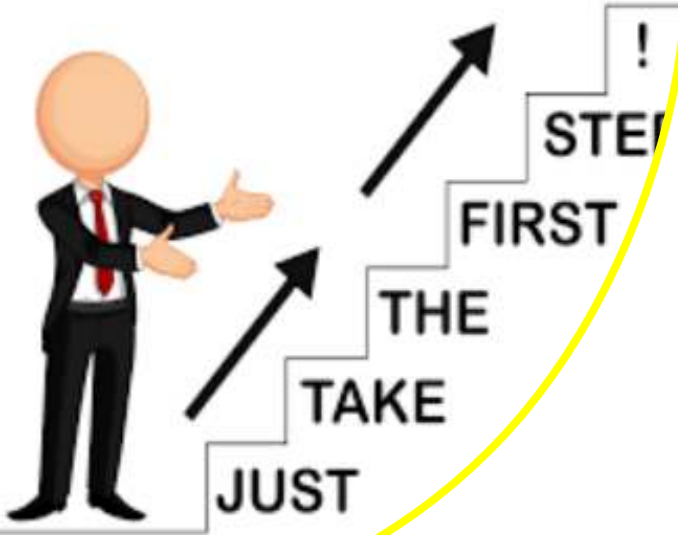


A journey of a thousand miles begins with a simple step, so let us take our first step towards a better life.

Inertia is a tendency to remain unchanged and we all tend to stick to our mundane habits which if changed for better can lead to a much more beautiful life!

In this article, I will share the aspects which lead to Inertia in our life and stop us from being progressive They are as follows:





travel plans.

I would like to quote the famous parable of a shark in a fish tank that grows 8 inches, but in an ocean, it grows 8 feet or more.

A shark, therefore, never outgrows its environment. The same is true for us as when we are around unambitious people we do not grow. **Once we change our environment, our growth knows no bounds.**

In the end, I would like to reinforce the thought that 'It is never too late to be what you might have been.' So let us overcome inertia with our mental strength and be the best version of ourselves by taking small steps toward a better life!

1. Being hesitant in starting something new

Most people are hesitant to start something new as they are afraid of failure. It can also stop us from achieving our full potential. We do not begin something new due to unfamiliarity and hence hesitate.

2. Procrastination

Procrastination is an act of delaying your tasks. We always bank upon tomorrow and do not work in the present. Our laziness is a reason for the same and hampers our performance.

3. Resisting a sudden change

Sudden changes are never welcome to most of us. We might lose an opportunity and regret it later due to our resistance to sudden changes.

4. Sweating over small things

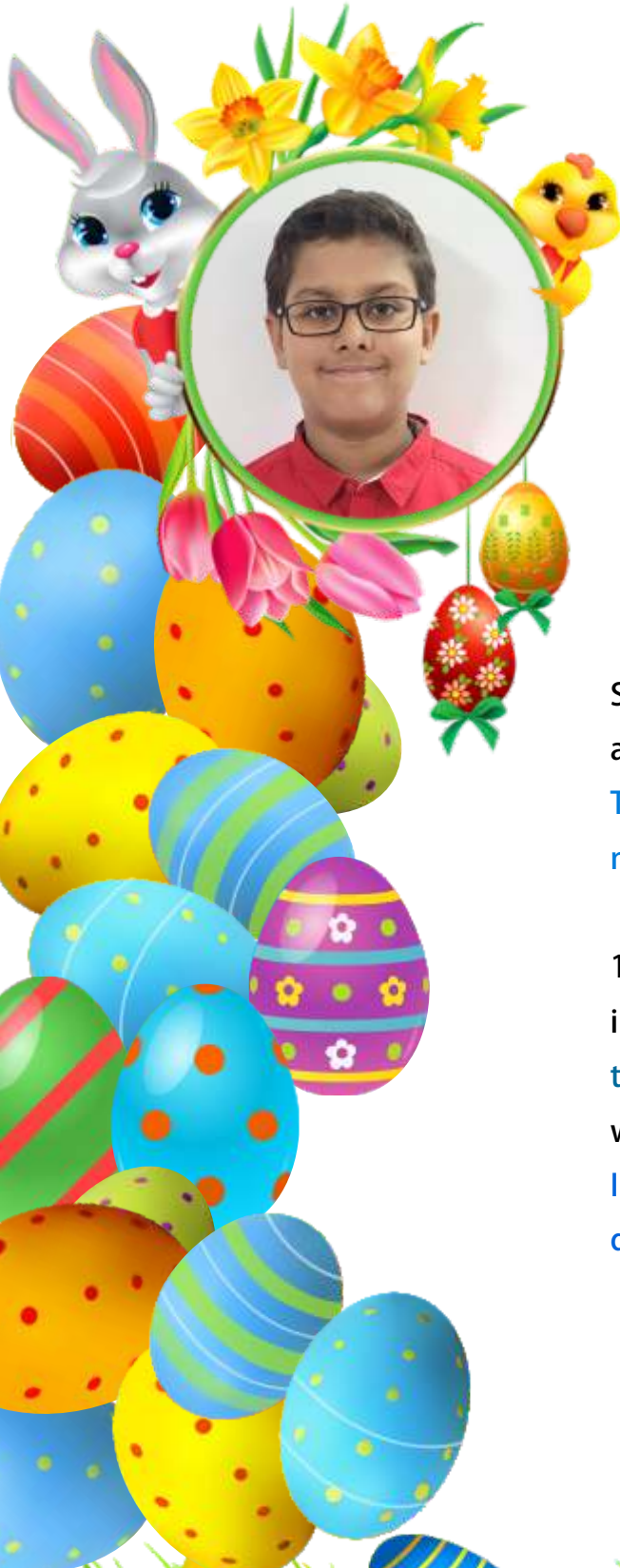
Sometimes what pulls us back in life is our habit of sweating over small things, like worrying about changes in class sections, teachers, or





The Latest in Science

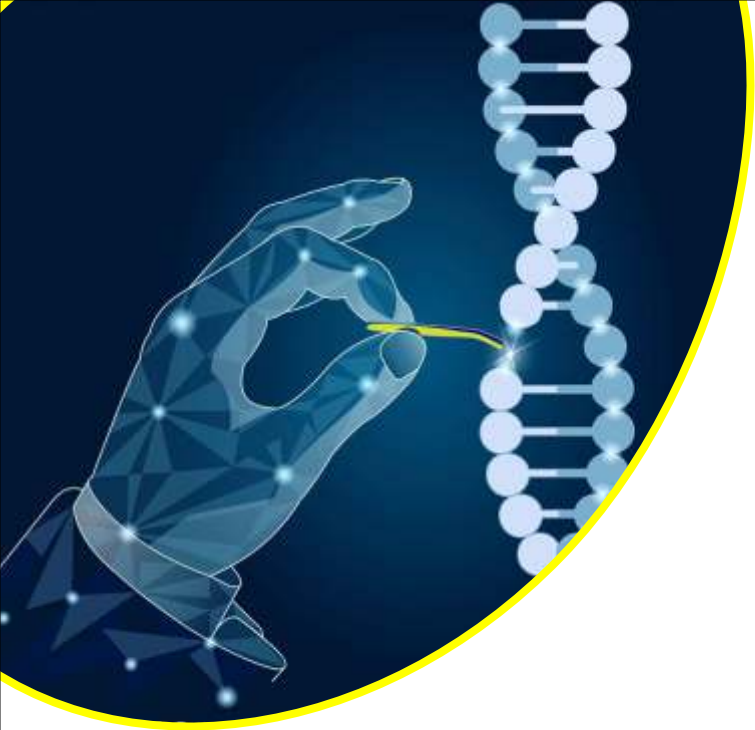
By Pranet Khetan, Grade 8, SNS Gurugram



Science is the treasure trove of all of humanity's knowledge about us, our environment, our planet, and so much more. Today, we are going to look at 4 of the latest breakthroughs made in the field.

1) Firstly, let us talk about robots. They aren't a recent invention: they have lasted for decades. What is (sort of) new, though, is the discovery of the human genome. Scientists were finally able to view and study the DNA inside our cells! Imagine where humanity would be now if we had made this discovery, say, a hundred years ago.





The latest breakthrough: the invention (or rather, discovery) of a new gene-editing component of bacterial immune systems: CRISPR.

CRISPR is important because it can delete, edit and insert parts into the DNA of any living organism. This means that with CRISPR, we can literally 'edit' ourselves (although the technology is still in its early phases.) The huge implication of this discovery is that we can finally program life.

Yes, I am talking about living robots. Robots that do not use digital microchips, but instead follow the instructions in their specially programmed DNA.

These bots can work together to do mind-blowing things, which may be later repurposed to take care of the human body and prevent/cure disease. Who knows how

advanced this technology could become a few decades from now?

2) Next, let us talk about silk. For centuries, the art of making silk was hidden in China until it was leaked out to the rest of the world. Silk, made from silkworms, has long been a luxury fabric used by people rich enough to afford them.

It has long had many natural and materialistic advantages over other clothes. But, if I ask you if this silk could be stronger than steel, what would you say?

Most would call me crazy and laugh at the idea. But, a special type of silk exists that actually has these properties! It is called Spider Silk, as it is used by certain types of spiders to make their webs and protect them from falls. Its tensile strength is more than steel!





For a long time, a major hurdle has been that spiders produce very small amounts of this silk, and harvesting it in a large-scale operation would never be profitable. Thus, we turned to science.

Scientists have been searching for a method to artificially reproduce this silk, and have (mostly) accomplished it, with a breakthrough recently. They have genetically modified a bacterial host (Using the CRISPR technology mentioned in the first topic) to create the required proteins and bind them together in a way that is slightly stronger than the natural spider silk! In a few years (maybe a decade), we may find Spider Silk in regular use.

3) Next, let us talk about space. A dark, (mostly) empty void that exists outside the Earth's atmosphere. The latest prediction, and the one that is globally followed, is that the universe is approximately 13.8 billion years old. The Earth

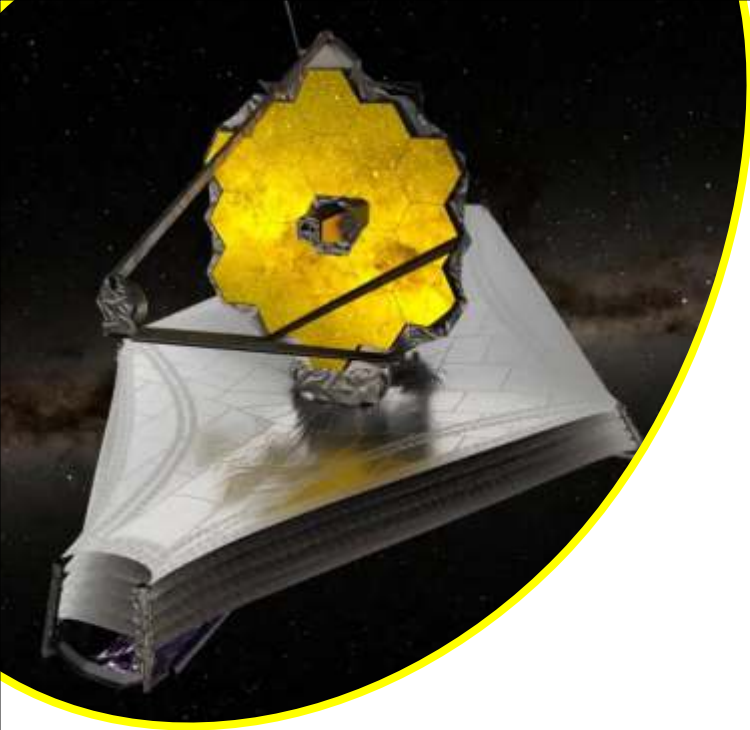
itself is (approximately) more than 4 billion years old. For a long, long time, scientists have been struggling to find out our origins: the origin of the universe, to be exact.

The most commonly believed theory is the big bang, where a super-dense mass exploded, releasing all kinds of matter and forming our universe. The only problem is that we don't know for sure. On April 24th, 1990, the Hubble space telescope was launched, which gave us a detailed look into the universe.

But it wasn't enough. The Hubble could only see so far and had a limited range. Also, it used an optical camera instead of an infrared one, which is better while observing space.

This time, scientists are launching an even better, more advanced telescope: The James Webb Space Telescope (which we will call the JWST). It was a





collaboration between many nations which took decades and a total of about 10 billion dollars to build, excluding operational costs after launch. It was launched on December 24th, 2021 as the successor to the Hubble. We will receive the first images a few months from now.

The JWST is an engineering marvel. Designed to operate in the extreme cold of space, it will orbit just behind the Earth, using the Earth's and the Sun's gravity to hold it in a sweet spot where it can stay.

It has an extremely wide reflective surface and a complex heat shield. The only caveat: if anything goes wrong, we can't repair it because it will be too far away from Earth to send Astronauts.

NASA hopes that the JWST will enable us to look into our pasts and the big bang.

4) Next, let us talk about computers. They use binary digits, 0s and 1s to store, manage and process data. They have truly revolutionised our lives, even more so since the advent of the internet. They kick-started the information age, where everyone is connected and you can make a call on the other side of the world in seconds.

The problem is that computers can be a little inefficient, at least compared to the latest technology: Quantum Computing.

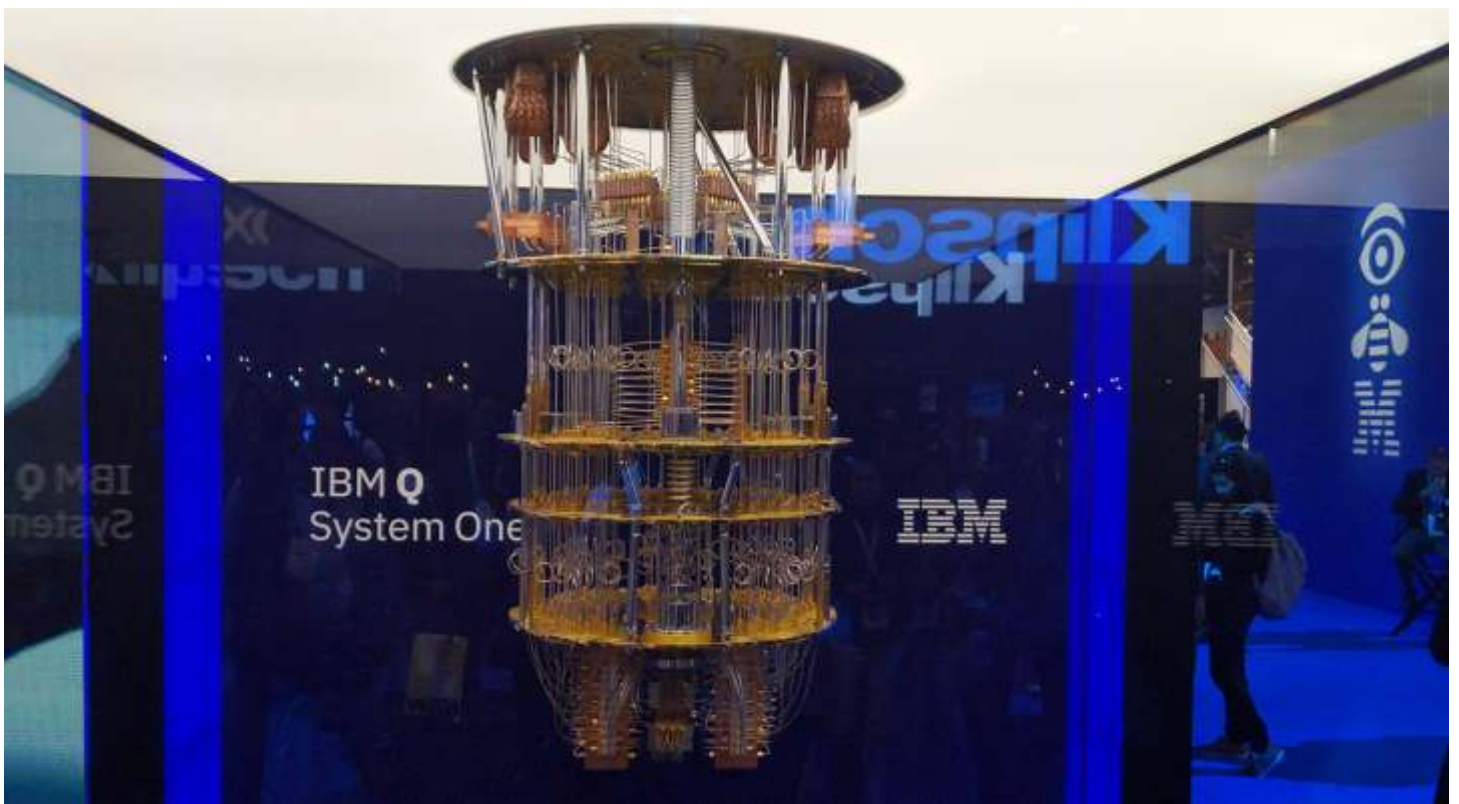
Quantum Computing makes use of Qubits instead of bits. They can also be 0 or 1, but the trick is that they can also be any value in between and can be both 0 and 1 at the same time, too.

Yes, it may be confusing, but the technology can calculate in seconds things that take the most powerful supercomputers weeks to calculate. The most recent breakthrough is the launch of the IBM





right now, is exponentially more powerful than the computers used by NASA to run the Apollo 11 Moon Mission! Imagine just how powerful Quantum Computers could get, and how they could also revolutionise the space industry. These are the latest topics and breakthroughs in Science.



Eagle, a quantum processor with a whopping 127 Qubits! The number may seem low, but Qubits can carry a lot more data than a normal bit. Let us wait and see where this technology takes us in the future.

Here's an interesting fact about computers: [The mobile phone \(or laptop/tablet\) we are using](#)

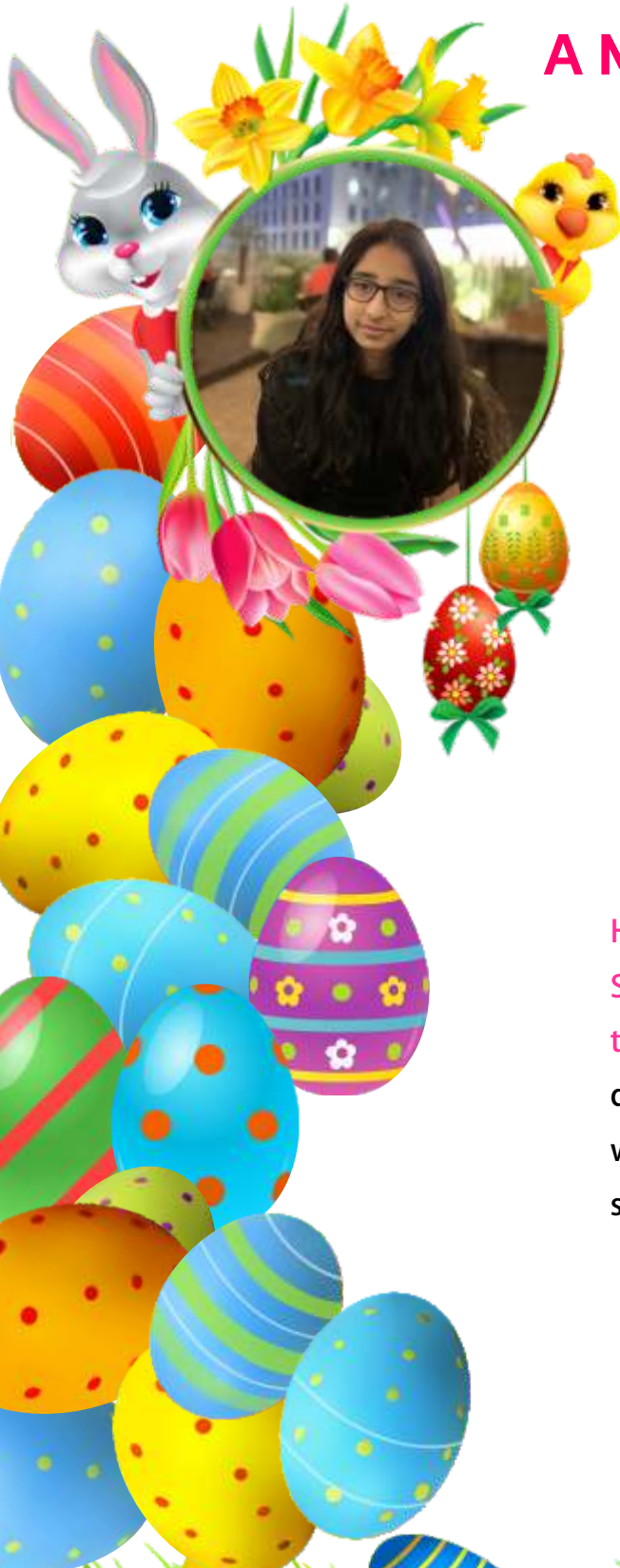




Why You Need

A Musical Instrument In Your Life

By Gaurika Mehta, Grade 7, SNS Gurugram



How do you destress? Maybe by reading a good book? Sleeping? Drawing or painting? Watching about 4 hours of television? In my case, its playing my guitar. Yes, it leaves dents in my fingertips, but look at it this way – I could be on my way to becoming the next Slash while blowing off some steam.





instruments are very unforgiving in their sound of failure. Don't let them win. Beat them at their own game, by practicing on them endlessly.

Have a "show pony" – Have a few key pieces to always showcase. When you play, people can hear it even through closed doors. If you are called on to play a piece, have something prepared, always. This also gives you confidence in your playing abilities. With this newfound confidence, you will be motivated to go further. Also, adulation helps!

Don't give up – Many people buy Casios, guitars, pianos, harmonicas – and they are left to collect dust after a while. If you follow the above three points, you would have upskilled yourself, as well as having a new companion for life. Keep on learning to improve yourself through your instrument, and it will lead to relaxing and enjoyable times, full of melody.

While dreams of money and glory do tempt me, I play guitar for a number of other reasons. Having started playing the guitar more frequently while my exams were just kicking off, I needed something to do in my breaks. Strumming my guitar was actually a perfect way to unwind. Any time I felt happy, angry, sad, excited or stressed, venting out my feelings in the form of chords was therapeutic.

Now that I've made my pitch, maybe it got you wondering how to pick up an instrument too, and for that I have a few pointers-

Get help – No one becomes Mozart, Beethoven or Bach without help. Find a teacher or enrol in classes. You can self-learn with the help of YouTube videos or online resources. Without a second force, your efforts will be wasted.

Practice, practice, practice! – As the word suggests, keep playing again and again. Musical





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