

The THINK Club[©]

A forum to encourage
independent thinking

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The Business of America Is Business

*Afghanistan: A Tourist
Guide*



What Does Math Mean?



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TheThinkClub is a forum to encourage independent thinking among fellow human beings. Think Club Publications has been publishing a quarterly for the last 26 years titled, 'The Think Club Quarterly' to encourage independent thinking. Everyone thinks! It is our nature to do so. But much of our thinking, unfortunately, is biased, distorted, partial, uninformed or down-right prejudiced. Yet the quality of our life and that of the world around us depends precisely on the quality of our thought. Shoddy thinking is costly, both in money and in quality of life. Independent thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. Independent thinking comes from within because knowledge lies within us. If interested, join the club!

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EDITORIAL

The Business of America Is Business by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’



“The chief business of the American people is business,” said Calvin Coolidge, the thirtieth U.S. President in 1925. He further added, “After all, the chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing, and prospering in the world. I am of the opinion that the great

majority of people will always find these the moving impulses of our life.”

In the year 2021, the United States exported 138 billion dollars worth of arms, a sharp decline compared to 2020 when the U.S. exported arms worth 178 billion dollars. Thanks to the war in Ukraine, the

U.S. export in 2022 will top that of 2020. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, the stocks of Halliburton (hal), General Dynamics (gd), Lockheed Martin (lmt) and Northrop Grumman (noc) have been gaining 3 to 5% every day.

U.S. arms sales to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have long been justified by the belief that they provide substantial numbers of jobs to American citizens—a line that was famously repeated, and exaggerated, by former President Donald Trump’s administration.

Do we really care about the suffering of the Ukrainian citizens? We didn’t care about the Iraqis and the Afghanis either. We invaded Iraq and killed its president due to the wrong information provided by our intelligence. All we said was “Oops.”

184,382 Iraqis were killed for our small mistake. 80,000 Afghani lives were lost in a war deemed meaningless. In the process, we sold hundreds of billions of arms to Israel, the Middle East countries, and Asia.

Talking of Ukraine, the U.S. riled up Putin, the mad man. All the U.S. had to do was assure that Ukraine won’t be a part of NATO. Admitting more countries into NATO equates to more arms sales. Now, the Balkan states are asking for more and more arms from the U.S. Another business opportunity!

Historically, the United States has sold weapons to almost any nation that wanted to buy them and it still does so indiscriminately. According to a Sludge review of financial disclosures, 51 members of Congress and their spouses own between \$2.3 and \$5.8 million worth of stocks in companies that are among the

top 30 defense contractors in the world. In the Senate, nearly one-third of the members of the Defense Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee own stocks in top defense contractors. After all, more than 70% of Lockheed Martin’s \$51 billion in 2018 revenue came from sales to the U.S. government. Companies like Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon sell their products almost exclusively to the government through appropriations approved by Congress.

The defense sector is one of the most powerful political influencers. Individuals and political action committees associated with the defense sector contribute lavishly to political candidates and committees during the campaign cycle. When I worked for General Dynamics, our VP asked us to contribute to GD’s political action committee (of course, it wasn’t mandatory). He said, “We give to both the parties (Democrats and Republicans).”

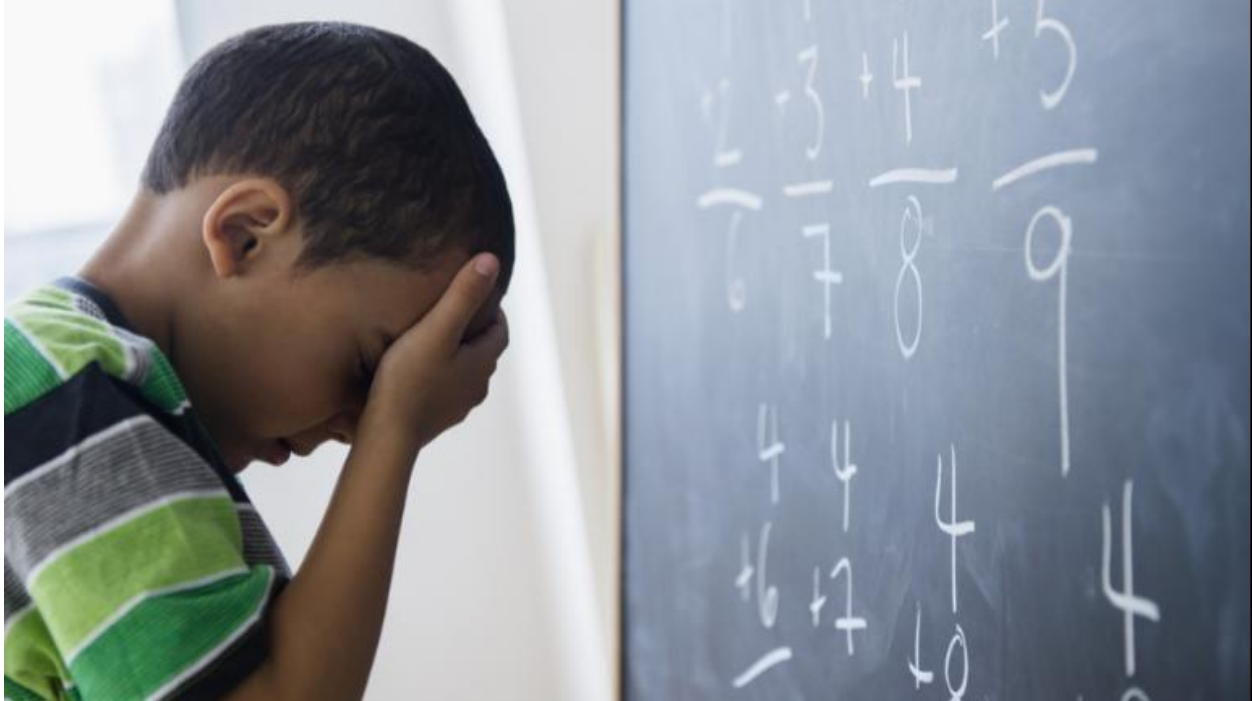
So, who cares about the Ukrainian people? Not us.



Commentary

What Does Math Mean?

by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’



I very often hear educated people say, “Math was always my worst subject,” or “I can’t even balance my checkbook.” We proudly flaunt our innumeracy which, in my opinion, is illiteracy. Is it not an irony that, at the same time, we feel embarrassed when we are confused between words such as “imply” and “infer” or “continually” and “continuously?”

We are so innumerate that if someone said that there was a 50 percent chance of rain on Saturday and a 50 percent chance for Sunday, therefore, there was a 100 percent chance of rain on the weekend, we may not question that person’s prediction. If you don’t believe me, try this in your next

gathering and see how many blank looks you get.

Part of the reason for this perverse pride in mathematical ignorance is that its consequences are not usually as obvious as are those of other weaknesses. Most of us ignore that because of general ignorance when it comes to basic math.

In our educational system math is presented as a chore. The teachers simply go through the rigor of mathematical formulae making it fearsome. Only those who excel in tests are considered

intelligent. Conversely, math classes should teach why math is important other than being a requirement for completing one's degree. Students are often made to perceive mathematics as boring, overly abstract, uncreative, and extremely difficult to understand. This is why many of them develop math phobias as adults. However, the idea of having or not having a math brain is completely untrue. Everyone is capable of understanding mathematics at a high level. Even I did later in my life

In my opinion, the math curriculum should emphasize and demonstrate how it can enhance the critical ability to learn and think logically in any field of endeavor. Math helps us distinguish fact from opinion and cause from correlation. Quantitative thinking helps us in processing the information that is thrown at us. In other words, math makes us think critically and independently.

Let me present a simple mathematical problem here. If you are given an option to take a pension of \$4,500 a month at your retirement age of 62 or take a one-time lump sum payment of \$600,000 considering the average life span of 78.9 years for a U.S. male, which one will you choose? This is a real-life problem. Basic math (not higher math) can help one find the correct solution.

We always hear the phrase, "The survey says." We need to understand the bias factor which can be a response bias, observer bias, or expectation bias. We also hear about the mean income and median

income of the U.S. population. What's the difference between the two? Statistics 101 can make us understand and question the information given to us.

We scream at one another at town hall meetings and call those who disagree with us traitorous and un-American. And yet there's nothing inherently divisive about health insurance. It's just expected value: the probability of you getting sick multiplied by the cost to treat you. Knowledge of basic math can come to our rescue right there.

I'll again emphasize reform in how math is taught in schools and universities. Students need to be taught giving them real-life examples such as different types of mortgages and how to decide which one will best suit one's circumstances. Students must also develop an understanding of concepts; they must understand in simple terms how an algebraic equation will help them in real life. Students in middle schools often participate in derby car races. They can be taught the relationship between various factors such as the weight of the car, incline (slope), and speed using basic algebra and trigonometry. This will attract students' attention and create interest in math.

Let's not forget that Math has provided humanity with a scheme of structured reasoning causing us to evolve and learn how to reason more deeply than using natural language alone. In my opinion, both are equally important.

Afghanistan – A Tourist Guide

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



So, what is on your bucket list? Airboat across an alligator-infested

swamp? Hold a shark? Bungee jump off a cliff? Run with the bulls in Spain? Fly Aeroflot?

That's fine by

me – nothing wrong with having some goals to tick off before kicking the bucket but remember that they are too dangerous. Howbout vacationing in Afghanistan instead? It's better than lying around on a beach. That's for crocodiles unless you are one.

After years of lockdowns and quarantine due to Covid, many people are itching to travel. Afghanistan welcomes you with open arms. They need your dollars desperately. It's time to be visiting Afghanistan as a tourist. You'll find Afghanistan a truly rewarding country. It's an addictive country to visit especially after tasting their abundant and inexpensive opium and heroin.

Visa Requirement

You must get an Afghani visa first before even thinking of traveling there. If you arrive there without a visa, you may never

come back unless you decide to settle there. You should contact the Afghani embassy in the U.S. You'll find them if you are lucky. Their contact information is as follows: Abdullah's Pawn Shop near 2341 Wyoming Ave NW, Washington DC 20008. Phone: Disconnected. Email: poppy@afghanembassy.us

How to get there?

You can fly to the Afghani capital by Pakistan International Airlines or Turkish Airlines, the two most trusted countries in the world according to the JihadiRUs Encyclopedia. If you take any of those airlines, I'll recommend that you buy a one-way ticket to Kabul since you never know when those airlines will stop flying or in case you decide to settle there. Who knows you may decide to get into the lucrative business of poppy processing? The on-way ticket can be had for less than \$500 U.S.

Where to stay in Afghanistan?

Afghanis are very hospitable people. You can stay with them for as little as 5 dollars a day. One U.S. dollar is equal to 106



Afghanis. Afghanistan becomes more pristine and livable after dark as the power is turned off in the nighttime. The new Taliban government is trying to save power.

“If it’s night, why do you need the power?” Afghan security consultant Nasser Waziri said.

A word of caution, never even think of flirting with beautiful burqa-clad women. Remember, Afghan men usually have four sex-starved wives ranging from 13 years to 40 years of age. Don’t even think of taking pics of their burqa-covered face.

Things to do in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is full of activities and spectator’s games. There is never a dull moment there. If you enjoy the bloody caged wrestling at home, you’d love the brutal caning and stoning of infidels and blasphemers in open stadia full of cheering crowds.

Once in Afghanistan, you must visit and witness the extraction of opium and heroin from poppy plants. There’s a saying among Still not convinced? That’s the Tall Poppy Syndrome that you suffering from - a cultural phenomenon in which people hold back, criticize, or sabotage those who are

opium and heroin processors that “poppies love beautiful places.” The Afghani countryside bears an eloquent view of thriving poppy plants. The poppy fields are surrounded by nature’s beautiful displays and perched on hillsides with sweeping views of hills and valleys.

There are numerous historic sites that a tourist must visit. Tour of the destruction of the Buddha monuments is spectacular. It depicts the deep-rooted self-pride of the Afghani. No wonder, empires came and empires went but none could conquer Afghanistan.

Riding a donkey backward is the greatest pastime of Afghani men (women are not allowed to leave home). You’ll never be alone as the owner of the donkey will always come along with you. Afghani don’t trust tourists with their women and donkeys. The added benefit is that you’ll always have the pleasure of the company of an Afghani escort. Many tourists prefer to tour the entire Afghanistan by riding a donkey. Many of them have never returned from the eternal state of ecstasy.

Omar Mine Museum: Wanna learn how to make and lay mines in your neighborhood? Well, Omar Mine Museum in Kabul is the holy grail of mines. The Omar Mine Museum displays 51 of the 53 types of landmines used in Afghanistan. Besides landmines, the museum also holds cluster bombs, rockets, unexploded ordnance, and airdrop bombs.

having a good time. Smile! This time you’re going to Afghanistan for spreading love not war.

The Other Side

by Anil Shrivastava “Musafir”



What is happening in Ukraine is inhumane and brutal. Russia must be condemned for an incursion into a free country. But we shouldn't forget that the Western countries and the USA are equally to be blamed for the Ukrainian tragedy.

Remember the Cuban blockade by the USA against Russian arms shipment in 1962? The US risked nuclear war to prevent missiles installed 90 miles off its shores. Back to the present day, Russia is similarly upset about NATO schemes along their border. Russia is upset as it is not allowed to have a buffer zone around its borders. Would the US stand idly by while Russians covertly backed a coup in Canada or Mexico, as the US did in Ukraine in 2014, and then acquiesce to a Russian military buildup along its frontier?

The United States has been expanding NATO against Russian terrain since 1991 and has been getting the better of the great game lately. If Russia calls a halt to NATO recruitment in and around Ukraine, the West cries foul. In this grim geopolitical game, Ukraine itself is almost beside the point and is suffering severely from the economic and psychological effects of an unnecessarily hair-trigger environment.

Before invading Ukraine, Russia asked for assurance that Ukraine will not be made a part of NATO. The United States denied the Russian request.

In March 1991, for example, British Prime Minister John Major told Moscow that he did not foresee “circumstances now or in the future where East/Central European countries would become members of NATO”. The discourse emanating out of the Kremlin is that Russia trusted these and other verbal assurances, but NATO's eastward expansion violated the spirit of the treaty on German reunification signed in 1990.

“It is easy to imagine how the West would have reacted if the positions had been reversed. The Russians were entitled to take seriously the repeated high-level assurances they were given.” President Putin is playing the betrayal theme to perfection, and, unfortunately, may survive the economic sanctions with the help of economically powerful China.



2030: How Today's Biggest Trends Will Collide and Reshape the Future of Everything

Author: Mauro F. Guillen

Publisher: First published by St. Martin's Press in 2020 (288 pages)



The world around us is changing at an accelerated speed. Not long ago, we lived in a different world order where there were developed countries and countries known as the third world. The United States and Europe were the centers of business where the big

companies found their customers. Printed money was the only legal tender.

The old-world order is completely changing right in front of our own eyes and by 2030, we will be playing by entirely different rules. The scenario will look like the following as spelled in this book authored by Mauro F. Guillen:

- There will be more grandparents than grandchildren
- The middle-class in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa will outnumber the US and Europe combined
- The global economy will be driven by the non-Western consumer for the first time in modern history
- There will be more global wealth owned by women than men

- There will be more robots than workers
- There will be more computers than human brains
- There will be more currencies than countries

Those of us who follow the trend, can already notice the changes taking place about culture, the economy, and the world on a daily basis. Agricultural advances might curtail hunger in Africa, where a rising middle class will impact worldwide consumer trends. Asia and Africa will dictate the global companies to adhere to their standards. The U.S.A. and Europe will no longer hold the reign.

Guillen states that women are making incredible strides. Perhaps most surprising is this projection: "55% of wealth will be owned by women by 2030. A shockingly quick reversal of fortunes, considering that women were mostly excluded from the workforce until WWII and were even denied access to credit cards until 1974 in America."

At first, I was skeptical about reading this book thinking that this may be one of the futuristic science books fantasizing about

humans turning into waves and traveling at a speed of light. To the contrary, this book traces social, technological, economic, and environmental developments that would shape the world up to 2030.

Guillen stimulates the readers to think more deeply about future challenges. The book is logical, informative and stimulating to the thoughts. The ideas of the book would offer readers the chance to look for alternative possibilities.

A Guide to Navigating Childhood Development and Wellbeing

AUTHOR: DR. NIRU PRASAD

PUBLISHER: FIRST PUBLISHED BY GO TO PUBLISH LLC IN 2021 (61 PAGES)



In her latest book, “A Guide to Navigating Childhood Development and Wellbeing,” Dr. Niru Prasad, has delineated

The book has easy to read layout and excellent pictorials to explain different facets and phases of children’s development in a layman’s language. Dr. Prasad has covered a broad array of topics such as nutrition, immunization, safety, bullying, effects of social media, academics, drug abuse, mental health issues, and COVID-19.

Though all the aspects mentioned above are equally important, I particularly liked her deliberation on social media and COVID-19 as they relate to childhood development. Dr. Prasad writes, “By the time they reach middle school, computers, smartphones, and social media are a fully immersive experience.... Other apps like YouTube or Tik Tok are more focused on entertainment

than communication, but still, see their fair share of bullying.”

the development and wellbeing of children during preschool, middle, and high school years based on her 50 years of experience in the field of pediatrics.

The section on COVID-19 is very practical, informative, and educational. This is a topic that is on everyone’s mind today. This explains different variants of COVID along with providing a comprehensive guide to how to keep healthy, creating normalcy, social distancing, address fear and stress, and being a good role model.

“A Guide to Navigating Childhood Development and Wellbeing,” is available on AMAZON in both print and electronic versions.

(https://www.amazon.com/s?k=niru+prasad&crid=2B2KPUCHCG99S&sprefix=niru+prasad%2Caps%2C270&ref=nb_sb_noss). The proceeds from the sale of this book will go to UNICEF.

As stated in this book, and truly so,” this book is a guide to navigating childhood development for parents and caretakers who are raising children during preschool, middle and high school.”

-Reviewed by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’

ESSAY

Malthus Was Not Entirely Wrong

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Thomas Malthus, a British philosopher, and economist predicted in the eighteenth century that the population of the world would continue expanding until growth is stopped or reversed by disease, famine, war, or calamity. His prediction is overwhelmingly rejected as Utopianism due to the fact that India, which has 1.3 billion people, is able to feed itself and is also a net exporter of food due to the Green Revolution in agriculture.

Since the 2000s, India has made remarkable progress in reducing absolute poverty. Between 2011 and 2015, more than 90 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty. Very soon India will replace the USA as the greatest consumer market along with China. The largest markets write the rules of the game, so India and China will soon dictate the global companies to comply by their rules replacing the supremacy of FCC (Federal Communications Commission) of the United States.

Was Malthus entirely wrong? No, I don't think so. Overpopulation is ruining the environment and endangering the future of the earth. As an example, India's Green Revolution is causing major desertification (turning green land into the desert). India is not the victim of desertification alone. Out of the world's arid land, an area of about 12 million square kilometers is affected by desertification. About 10-20 percent of drylands are already degraded. The rapidly expanding desertification threatens more than a billion people living in dryland around the world (Source: Down to Earth, March 9, 2021).

As the megacities are growing in India and China, they are sure to bring apocalypse sooner than later. Cities occupy only 1 percent of the world's land yet they're home to 55% of the world's population. "In 2020, approximately a third of the total population in India lived in cities. The trend shows an increase of urbanization by 4 percent in the last decade, meaning people have moved away from rural areas to find work and make a living in the cities." (Niel, Aron O, July 1, 2021, "Urbanization in India 2020," Statista).

Cities account for 75% of total energy consumption and 80% of total carbon emissions. Additionally, closely packed buildings, asphalt, and concrete trap heat and cause global warming in countries where the heat is already intolerable. India

already has 23 cities with a population of 1 million and more. Sixty more Indian cities are expected to cross the 1 million mark in the next ten years. The majority of the people living in those cities are below poverty levels (earning below Rs. 1,060 per month or \$15 per month).

The quality of life, one of the measures of happiness, in those cities is miserable. People are so busy commuting and earning a living that they are becoming unsocial, soulless, and dehumanized. Plato said, "A great city is not to be confounded with a populous one."

Economic growth in China, India, and Africa is causing consumption of more processed food, preservatives, and fast food causing the rise in cancer, diabetes, and other organ problems.

Water is the lifeline for all living creatures and plants. All the great civilizations in history grew around sources of water including Indus Valley, Rome (Tiber), Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates), Egypt (Nile River Valley), and China (Yellow River Valley). Fresh water in overpopulated cities will get scarcer causing great miseries.

In my opinion, quality of life is more important than becoming the largest economy as a result of an uncontrolled population. Countries having the highest quality of life index and personal income are some of the least populated. Here is the ranking of quality of life for some countries that are sparsely populated:

Switzerland (population 8.6 million; per capita income: \$80,296)

The Netherlands (population 17.4 million; per capita income \$54,422)

Finland (population 5.5 million; per capita income \$46,344)

Iceland (population 369,000 per capita income 73,200)

Denmark (population 5.8 million; per capita income 57,545)

Sweden (population 10.4 million; per capita income 54,075)

New Zealand (population 5.2 million per capita income \$43,415)

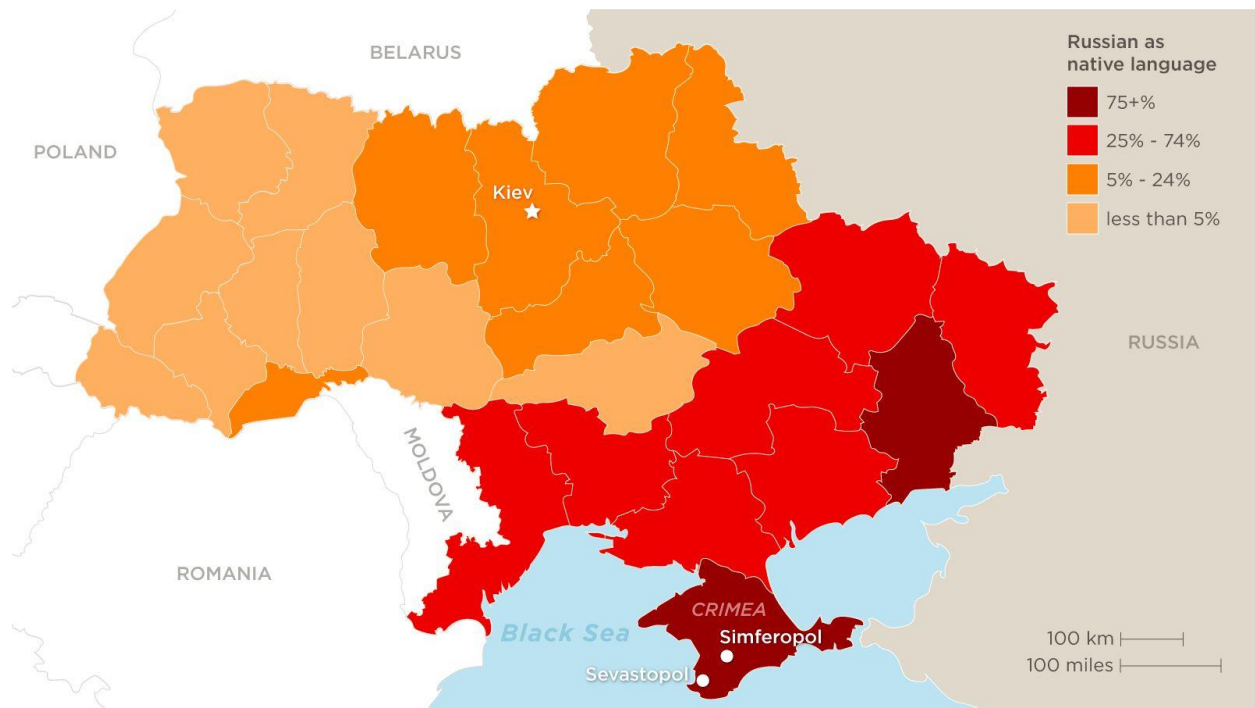
Luxembourg (population 632,000; per capita income \$107,641)

India and China rank very low in the Quality-of-Life Index and especially poorly in the Quality of the Environment subcategory. Pollution is a big problem there. Sometimes people go for weeks without being able to walk or run outdoors. With urbanization, it's going to get even worse.

World's population in 2022 is close to 7 billion. It is expected to rise to more than 9 billion by 2050. Needless to say, the consumption created by population growth has placed potentially irreversible strains on the interconnected systems and cycles that comprise the Earth's climate. Water scarcity and biodiversity loss are only a few of the consequences of these forces. These challenges have contributed to a rebirth of the profoundly deprecated philosophy espoused by Thomas Malthus. Malthus, was not entirely wrong, after all.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

What's the Fuss about Russia Attacking Ukraine? by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



A geopolitical crisis is looming large over the eastern border of Russia. Anticipation is that

Russia may invade and occupy the Eastern part of Ukraine. There has been a massive military build-up by Russia close to Ukraine. Russia is also amassing troops and armament in Belarus which borders the northern part of Ukraine.

Ukraine is a polarized country inasmuch as 17% of the Ukrainians are Russians. Ninety-six percent of Russians in Ukraine consider the Russian language to be native to them. Some of them state their opposition to Ukrainian independence and openly

advocate for the restoration of the Russian Empire. As a reminder to our readers, the Crimean Peninsula, a geostrategic region in southern Ukraine, with the port of Sevastopol, was annexed by Russia on 18 March 2014. By the way, 66% of the Crimean population is Russian and only 15% are Ukrainians.

The histories of the two nations are linked until 1991 as both were parts of the USSR. Since independence in 1991, Ukraine had a pro-Russian leader, Viktor Yanukovich,

whose ambitions were aligned with Russian interests. The situation changed with the 'Maidan revolution', where a series of protests erupted across the nation during 2013-14, following Yanukovych's refusal to join the political association and a free trade agreement with the European Union. The elected government was ousted, and power shifted towards the current pro-West Volodymyr Zelensky. Russia blames the U.S. for plotting this regime change.

The situation got worse with Ukraine's growing proximity to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). If Ukraine slips out of Russian influence, NATO will get a foothold in the Volga region and can threaten Russia's control over its hydrocarbon-rich areas. Also, Putin doesn't want Ukraine joining NATO as he doesn't want to be surrounded by the NATO forces, and rightly so. Putin wants a guarantee of that sort from the United States. The U.S. has denied complying with the Russian request.

Internally, a war between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces has been waging in Eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, collectively called the Donbas region, since 2014. It is already proved to the world that the separatists are supported by Russia. Between 13,100 and 13,300 lives have already been lost in this futile civil war since 2014.

The USA is fearing a Russian annexation of the region in a similar fashion as the

Crimean Peninsula. These geopolitical instabilities point towards a common issue – the dependency of the world on hydrocarbons. More than 40 percent of these exports from Ukraine go to EU countries. Russia doesn't like that. This adds another dimension to the Ukraine crisis.

As you can see from the above facts, the USA is equally to be blamed for the present Ukrainian crisis. United States' options are very limited in case of the Russian incursion into Ukraine. Russia has an abundant energy source and America's allies in Europe depend on Russian energy. Germany is already non-committal about opposing the Russian move. Though the EU and US uphold and defend democratic governments across the globe, the energy dependency and trade surpluses against Russia make them incapable of taking any meaningful steps to resolve the issue. Mr. Biden's energy policies have already made the USA dependent on foreign oil once more thus the U.S. cannot help the Europeans as far as energy is concerned.

If the USA fumbles there (as Mr. Biden has done it over and over again), China will be encouraged to invade Taiwan and the U.S. influence in the world will suffer. Thus the U.S. has more to lose than Russia. Putin has said that he could live with the U.S. economic sanctions. He knows that the Europeans will ultimately lean towards Russia for their energy dependence and economic survival.

Hypothermia Tips

Written by Dr. Niru Prasad

By Niru Prasad, MD



Niru Prasad, M.D. on staff at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital's department of ambulatory pediatrics, explains that hypothermia occurs when a person's core body temperature falls well below normal as a result of prolonged exposure to cold. "Symptoms of moderate hypothermia are mental confusion, clumsiness and loss of interest in activity," says Dr. Prasad, noting that treatment should be immediate. "Get the victim out of the cold and into a warm environment, replace wet clothes, serve warm liquids and apply hot water bottles of heat pads."

Dr. Prasad states that in cases of severe hypothermia, loss of the shivering response (the body's way of speeding metabolism and generating heat) and loss of consciousness may result. She cautions against trying to warm the victim with active measures and advises that the victim be covered gently with blankets, removed

from the cold environment and taken to the hospital for immediate medical attention.

To avoid hypothermia, take the following precautions:

Eat a well balanced diet and take a high calorie snack if you expect to be out in the cold for a long period.

Avoid alcohol, it causes your body to lose heat faster.

Dress in light, loose and layered clothing that will trap layers of air and provide extra insulation.

Know the effects of any medication you are taking. Some affect the body's response to outside temperature changes.



1. How many teeth does an adult human have?
2. In which sport would you use a shuttlecock?
3. What is a group of lions called?
4. Name the slowest animal in the world
5. What's the best selling book of all time?
6. Sofia is the capital of which country?
7. Who famously said "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."
8. Catalonia is a region of what country?
9. Who wrote Oliver Twist?
10. Who was the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated?

Answers below:

1.(32) 2. Badminton 3. A pride 4. Three-toed sloth 5. The Bible 6. Bulgaria 7. Mahatma Gandhi 8. Spain 9. Charles Dickens 10. Spencer Perceval - May 1812

Out of My Mind

Books in A Nutshell

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



(INSPIRED BY DAVE BARRY'S BOOK, "BAD HABITS")

I was sitting next to a boring person at a wedding reception last week. I decided to read a book to avoid any conversation with the boring person. Yes, I always carry a book with me to marriage receptions to ward off such situations. The boring person interrupted me by asking what was I reading.

Me: This is the latest James Bond novel, "With A Mind To Kill."

Boring person: "But I thought Ian Fleming died in 1964. How can he write James Bond novels now?"

Me: "Ian Fleming may be dead but James Bond never died."

I started thinking why do I read James Bond novels? It's the same story in all James Bond books. A villain tries to create trouble. James Bond kills him. In the process, he makes love to many beautiful women.

I read two books every three months out of necessity. I write book reviews for The Think Club Quarterly because no one else wants to write a book review for me. Most of the books I read are more boring than the boring person sitting next to me. The problem is that books have too many pages. The

writers unnecessarily make their books too long.

This has been the story of my life. When I was young, my father made me read boring classics. The whole classic could be summarized in a few words. Here are some examples.

War And Peace: Everyone is sad. It snows.

Moby Dick: Man vs. whale. Whale wins.

Crime And Punishment: Murderer feels bad. Confesses. Goes to jail. Feels better.

The Sun Also Rises: The lost generation gets drunk. They're still lost.

Wuthering Heights: Heathcliff rises in his adopted family and then is reduced to the status of a servant. The young woman he loves decides to marry another.

If the writers got right to the point, the world would be a much happier place. People could pursue other hobbies such as reading real-life stories and gossiping on social media. Finally, I decided to put down my book and talk to the boring person instead.

American Scene

Reading e-Books

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Thanks to the Internet. Ever since I started using online dictionaries, my vocabulary has enriched manifolds. Not only that, I can hear their correct pronunciations and learn to use correct enunciation. I don't have to write down new words I come across and check them later in voluminous dictionaries.

I consider the convenience of an online dictionary as one of life's sweet pleasures. I am not scoffing off old paper dictionaries. They should be savored as antique cars.

Possibilities are endless. I don't have to have a separate thesaurus to find antonyms and synonyms either. It is all there in one place. Forgive me for my flight of fancy, but I feel quite elevated finding my new romance. I have stopped buying paper books. I read them either on iBook or Kindle. That way I am not only saving the environment, but am also saving my own time and effort. Those books come with a built-in online dictionary. That way I don't

have to log in to an electronic dictionary taking my attention away from the book. The dictionary is already built-in right there. I'm eternally grateful for all things internet. I was tired of typing in unfamiliar words on my phone while reading a physical book.

However, I'll be ever obliged to Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer who created "A Dictionary of the English Language" in 1755, the prototype for the dictionaries we use to this day. His famous words were: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." This was true then and is true now. Politics and language have forever been intertwined.

There are different kinds of online dictionaries to suit one's need. When I want to find colloquial terms while writing a humor piece, I often go to the Urban Dictionary. I just now searched meaning for 'politician.' The Urban Dictionary suggested corruptocrat, baby-kisser, stuffed shirt, uncle Ron, snollygoster, honkocraft, crackstituent, bozo, and many more.

Being foreign-born and much unfamiliar with regional accents, I feel at a loss while writing in regional variations of English spoken in the United States. In that case, I often go to something called slangpedia. In my past articles, I have used terms like squeeze meaning 'friends with benefits,' or wifey meaning 'girlfriend whom you hope to marry.' There is also a separate dictionary for the Bostonian accent. In my previous articles I have used 'cah' for car, 'hahwayha' for how are you. Thanks to sites like wikihow.com. My stories are better accepted by my readers now than before.

Plus, I save myself the sudden panic of encountering words like 'isohyet' (a line on

a map connecting points having the same amount of rainfall in a given period) or 'nudiustertian' (of or related to the day before yesterday), strangers that accost you when you're drifting up and down familiar pages. I doan queech (sweat) anymoh.

A War of Lies

By: Ashok Kumar Lal

***The war in Ukraine is insane.
Torture, mayhem are in vain,
Imperialists want to retain,
Their influence in Ukraine.***

***It's a war for domain,
For power and reign,
Recall UK and Spain?
Now, it's here again.***

***The war has to come to end,
Brutality can't be sustained,
Blind ambition has to end,
Extinction none can defend.***

***Mania must be contained,
Peace must be obtained,
Good days must return
Let's all pray for Ukraine***