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GUWAHATI(KCN): Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a new entrant to Assam politics, on Thursday staged state-wide demonstrations against price rise coinciding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

visit to the northeastern state. Police detained several AAP members who were protesting in Guwahati, while demonstrations were also staged in Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Dhubri and Tinsukia. "Our members organised protests across the state over the price rise issue," AAP Assam unit president Bhaben Choudhury said. "The protestors at Guwahati were detained by the police and are in the process of being released. But they faced harassment during the detention," he said.



Choudhury said some of the party members sustained minor injuries when they were being forcibly taken away from the protest venue. Police said the protestors, who were detained from near the state secretariat complex, were being released on Personal Recognisance bond. "The procedure of law has been

followed. They are being released on PR bond as is done in such cases," an officer said. AAP leader Rumi Ullah claimed that passersby had joined the demonstration at Guwahati and said, "Price rise is an issue that affects everyone. People are fed up with it and they spontaneously joined our protest." She said demonstrations were also staged in Dibrugarh, Dhubri and Tinsukia, while in Golaghat, the party submitted a memorandum to the district administration over the price rise issue. As the party expanded its footprint across the nation after storming to power in Punjab and winning an assembly seat in Goa, the Arvind Kejriwal-led party had also recently tasted its first electoral victory in this northeastern state. Its candidates had emerged victorious in two wards in urban body polls in March, while it bagged one ward in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation election this month. The AAP had been contesting Lok Sabha as well as Assembly elections in Assam for a few years, but hadn't been able to make a mark yet.

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## Russia's invasion of Ukraine: Africa faces new shock due to surge in food and fuel prices, says IMF

Sub-Saharan African countries find themselves facing another severe and exogenous shock. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has prompted a surge in food and fuel prices that threatens the region's economic outlook. This latest setback could not have come at a worse time—as growth was starting to recover and policymakers were beginning to address the social and economic legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic and other development challenges. The effects of the war will be deeply consequential, eroding standards of living and aggravating macroeconomic imbalances, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday.

"We now expect growth to slow to 3.8 percent this year from last year's better-than-expected 4.5 percent, according to our latest Regional Economic Outlook. Though we project annual growth to average 4 percent

over the medium term, it will be too slow to make up for ground lost to the pandemic. Inflation in the region is expected to remain elevated in 2022 and 2023 at 12.2 percent and 9.6 percent re-

tion. Together, these factors will disproportionately hurt the poor, especially in urban areas, and will increase food insecurity. Higher oil prices will boost the import bill for the region's oil im-

while inflation will make reducing these subsidies unpopular. Spending pressures will only increase as growth slows, while rising interest rates in advanced economies may make financing more costly and harder to obtain for some governments.

The IMF said that countries need a careful policy response to address these daunting challenges. Fiscal policy will need to be targeted to avoid adding to debt vulnerabilities. Policymakers should as much as possible use direct transfers to protect the most vulnerable households. Improving access to finance for farmers and small businesses would also help.

The international community must step up to ease the food security crisis. The IMF's recent joint statement with the World Bank, the United Nations World Food Programme and the World Trade Organization called for emergency food supplies, financial support, including grants, increased agricultural production and unin-

dered trade, among other measures.

Following through on the commitment by the Group of Twenty countries to re-channel \$100 billion of their IMF Special Drawing Rights allocation to vulnerable countries would be a major contribution to the region's short-term liquidity needs and longer-term development. There are options for re-channeling SDRs, for example through the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust or the newly created Resilience and Sustainability Trust, which has received almost \$40 billion in pledges. Finally, for some countries, restoring debt sustainability will require debt re-profiling or an outright restructuring of their public debt. To make this a reality, the G20 Common Framework needs to better define its debt restructuring process and timeline, and the enforcement of the comparability of treatment among creditors. Importantly, debt service payments should be suspended until an agreement is reached.



spectively—the first time since 2008 that regional average inflation will reach such high levels," a statement issued by IMF said.

According to IMF, there are three main channels through which the war is impacting countries—with notable differentiation both across and within countries: Prices for food, which accounts for about 40 percent of consumer spending in the region, are rising rapidly. Around 85 percent of the region's wheat supplies are imported. Higher fuel and fertilizer prices also affect domestic food produc-

porters by about \$19 billion, worsening trade imbalances and raising transport and other consumer costs. The shock is set to make an already delicate fiscal balancing act more difficult: increasing development spending, mobilizing more tax revenues, and containing debt pressures. Fiscal authorities generally aren't well-positioned for additional shocks after the pandemic. Half of the region's low-income countries are already in or at high risk of distress. Rising oil prices also represent a direct fiscal cost for countries through fuel subsidies,

## 22,000 Indian students still waiting for visas to return to China for offline classes

NEW DELHI(KCN): It's been two years since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to around 22,000 Indian students (mostly studying medicine) at universities in China heading back home.

However, even though students from countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand and

last month.

"We did make a request to the Chinese foreign minister to expedite the process for the return of Indian students," Jaishankar added. As a retaliatory step, valid visas that Chinese nationals had for visiting India have been scrapped.



Solomon Islands have been permitted to return to their universities in China recently, no such opportunity has been granted to Indian students. The Indian students are attending online classes but it's time for most of them to do practicals for which they have to attend offline classes. The diplomatic standoff between India and China began in 2020 when 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers were killed during the military stand-off in Galwan. Since then, things are yet to settle down between the two nations. "We hope China will take a non-discriminatory approach since it involves the future of many young people," said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar after having met his counterpart from China Wang Yi in New Delhi

ernment officials.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), however, says that visas have been revoked due to the impending threat of Covid in China.

"You are aware of the Covid situation in Chinese cities like Shanghai and elsewhere. I don't think this is an opportune moment to discuss the resumption of issuance of tourist visas from China. You are also aware that China has suspended issue of most types of visas to Indians since November 2020," said Arindam Bagchi, MEA spokesperson.

Amidst the diplomatic standoff between India and China, the concerned students are a worried lot. "The only thing we are doing is waiting for Continued on page-1 further notice," said **CONTINUED ON: P-7**

Malaysian-born English poetess Lilian Woo's poem "The Climate Change" translated into 21 languages, marks a great step in field of literature

Bengaluru (KCN): Eminent Author/Poetess Ms. Lilian Woo is a Malaysian-born Chinese residing in Penang, Malaysia. She is a prolific poetess, having accumulated several accolades for her soulful writing internationally. Her poems have been published in several international anthologies, prestigious journals, SIPAY, and the Bharath Vision website, affiliated with Motivational Strips, the world most active Writer's forum. She is the author of the poetry book "The Pearl Wonder." Currently, she serves world literature as the Chief Administrator of Motivational Strips-Malaysia. She is also an editor for Writers Tribune, a weekly newspaper of Motivational Strips. She serves as the Chief Representative at the World Nations Writers' Union

(WNWU), Kazakhstan.

Recently, she has written a poem, "Climate Change," which has been translated into 21 languages by eminent poets and translators around the globe. The effects of global warming are happening right now. Climate change encompasses not only rising average temperatures but also extreme weather events, shifting wildlife populations and habitats, rising seas, and a range of other impacts. All of these changes are emerging as humans continue to add heat-trapping greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. She wishes to keep awareness of the serious effects of climate change with her poem being translated into many languages by all those obliging, eminent poets and translators globally.

Climate change

Climate change is affecting our lives psychologically, physically and emotionally  
As a result, plants and animals are not spared, they are hit badly  
Save the world from further deterioration immensely  
Before much harm is done beyond repair and the world is ruined completely

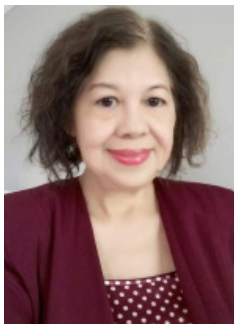
Pollution is destroying the planet tremendously  
Collective action must be taken to save the universe immediately  
Weather patterns change with droughts,  
fires and intense heat waves flowing  
Massive floods occur with the problem of global warming

Human activity has been the primary cause of climate change  
This is due to the clearing of lands and forests burning in a wide range  
Greenhouse gas emissions are produced, which are causative of temperature increases  
The responsible parties should spare a thought for the consequences

Climate change includes rising sea levels and accelerating ice melt in Greenland  
And this ice melts from icebergs causing floods in many lowlands  
Due to droughts, many forests around the world are burning  
It creates carbon, which is hazardous to our health and breathing

Toxic chemicals are dumped by certain industries into the rivers  
This has poisoned our marine life and killed many sea creatures  
It creates a shortage of staple food for mankind in all nations  
The world needs to unite to come up with conditions and speedy solutions

Car pollution in the cities is leading to massive health hazard  
New innovation is required to continue the human glory forward  
All these cause climate change in the universe; who is liable?  
To minimize the environmental impact, mankind must be more responsible.



People are terrified seeing intrusion of the elephant herd

Barbil(KCN): At a time when acute water crisis ails most parts of residential areas and villages near the forests of some areas of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar district of Odisha, are witnessing

natural water reservoirs and tanks in the forest. One environmentalist in an opinion that forest department should built water tanks which they need to fill regularly for wild



an intrusion of elephants. It has come to know from the villagers of Bardhana under Champua forest range a herd of eleven elephants strayed into their village forest in search of water. Locals too say that lack of water in the forest has driven the animals out of their habitat. The straying of elephants into human habitations has been recorded in boarder areas of Odisha adjacent to Jharkhand. Residents attribute the migration to the depletion of water in

animals. Such dams prevents wild animals from straying into human habitations. Due to rapid degradation of vegetation, elephants often envisage lack of water and food and thus compelled to migrate those area having green vegetation and water source. How ever villagers are panic for the intrusion of this elephant herd. They are demanding forest department to make arrangements to make the herd flee away from their village.

Swabhiman Divas observed at DAV, Kalinga Nagar 'Protection on mother land and mother tongue should be the sacred duty of today's youth'

Bhubaneswar(KCN): DAV Public School, Kalinga Nagar observed SWABHIMAN DIVAS in its premises to commemorate the birth anniversary of Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das. Principal of the school Sri Bipin Kumar Sahoo, all



the academic supervisors and teachers offered floral tribute to the great soul. In his address to the gathering, the Principal said that the ideologies of Madhusudan Das shall inspire generations with the spirit of sacrifice, honesty and service to the humanity for all time to come.



He also emphasized that the ethics and principles of Madhusudan shall be relevant for all time to come and shall continue to rule over the hearts of thousands and millions of people of Odisha till eternity. On this occasion, the campus reverberated with a chorus sang by the teachers eulogizing the towering personality of great son of Odisha. The teachers highlighted his contributions to the freedom struggle of India and to the cause of the destitute. The entire programme was arranged successfully by the school's observation department with the wholehearted support of all the staff members.

Accelerated Clean Air Action Plan & Rapid EV Adoption Critical For Kolkata

Kolkata(KCN): SwitchON Foundation as part of the Kolkata Earth Festival organized a multi stakeholder, high level panel discussions at the Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry, following the Earth Day celebrations around the world recently. This was the first year of the annual Kolkata Earth Festival organized together by the environmental groups SwitchON Foundation, Y-East & the EARTHDAY.ORG, in the city - with an attempt to highlight some of the most pressing socio-environmental issues of the

Majumdar from CSIR NEERI said, "The population of Kolkata is highly exposed to benzene. With the increasing number of private cars, there is a dire need to change our current mobility behavior." She further added "As more organizations, public institutions, and government bodies recognize the costs of air pollution, smog, and their huge impact on the environment, more resources need to be funneled into developing strategies to reduce pollution in cities."

Dr. Arup Haldar, a renowned pulmonologist from the Woodland Hospital said, "There is increasing number of cancer patient in Kolkata. Vehicular Congestion contributes to harmful CO2 emissions and release of other toxic elements causing serious neurobehavioral disorders. To improve air quality and public health, we need all hands on deck - in other words a holistic and multisectoral approach."

Prof. Sudakshina Gupta from the Calcutta University and an expert on urban planning, spoke in the urban mobility panel and said, "Sustainable mobility reduces air pollution by incorporating eco-friendly practices into urban planning and management. Transport planning and environmental planning are



region. The key panel discussions saw a strong consensus among stakeholders present, including policymakers, environmental and mobility experts, Electric Vehicle (EV) industry stakeholders, and media representatives on the need for urgent implementation of the 'Clean Air Action Plan' for Kolkata. As well as at the same time, how a key accelerated sustainable mobility and EV transition programme for the city could unlock the grave issues of declining air quality and growing congestion in the city.

Kolkata has to adopt sustainable mobility policies that could bring in powerful ways to clear the skies and make the urban air quality better.

For the past few years Kolkata has been facing catastrophic air pollution with a huge part of the population directly exposed to poor air quality. Vehicular pollution accounts for 50 per cent of the problem. At the same time Electric Mobility currently presents a viable alternative in addressing many challenges and is undoubtedly the need of the hour with an eminent scope of transformation of the transportation ecosystem.

Rising fuel costs along with pertinent environmental concerns are glaring causes why electric vehicles are the need of the day. Based on this realization, the GoWB had earlier introduced an innovative Electric Vehicle Policy 2021 with a mission to place WB as the frontrunner in building a sustainable transportation infrastructure by promoting electric mobility ecosystem in the state.

Mr. Rajanvir Singh Kapur (IAS) delivered the keynote address for the session on Sustainable Mobility he said "As people increasingly choose eco-friendly options in their local areas, municipalities must do their part in providing their citizens with these options. Choosing to be environmentally conscious shouldn't sacrifice convenience and cost, and the way to do this is to enable and promote eco-friendly mobility options."

During the event, he announced that by this Durga Pujo two tram lines of Kolkata will be revived and WBTC will be having all its new fleet of buses running on electric including converting the entire fleet of old buses into CNG by 2025.

Speaking at the occasion during the panel discussion on air pollution, Dr. Dipanjali



both integral parts of urban planning. The road space in Kolkata is only 6% of its total area. It even becomes less due to parking of cars on both sides of the road. To get rid of the congestion problem, big electric buses may be introduced. That may substitute a few smaller cars and reduce the problems of congestion, pollution and parking space." She further adds "Placing charging stations at appropriate places is also an important aspect of urban planning."

"A city with a sustainable mobility strategy supporting equitable non motorized modes of transport, green spaces, and actions or technology that improves air quality and lowers carbon footprints, would truly be the champion cities of the sustainable world we all aspire for. We therefore must look at the different ways our current mobility systems contribute to poor air quality and strategically address that with more sustainable versions"

Ms. Lipika a passionate cyclist who was a part of the panel discussion said, "An improvement of air quality means a reduction of emission of air pollutants, for example through less vehicle kilometres travelled, less and shorter trips, more trips by public transport and non-motorised modes like bicycles - which are more efficient and less polluting than regular vehicles."

From the industries point of view; Mr. Rajesh Ojha from AMWA Moto LLP said, "After Delhi, Bengal was the first state of India where e-rickshaw adoption was fast and today for urban, semi urban and rural areas we use e-rickshaw for last mile connectivity. E-Buses were also commercially operating on city roads far before other states. Today's demand is charging/swapping infrastructure for e2w, e3w, e4w and buses which helps in fast adoption of EV. NMTs like electric 2 wheelers are the best option for senior students of schools and colleges today, this again helps for lowering down the pollution level in cities."

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**Ajay Devgn and Kajol are two of a kind**

Wife and husband and duo Kajol and Ajay Devgn are poles

Tanhaji is Ajay's centennial film in Bollywood. "We

lieve that hard work pays off." At a time when

more than necessary. He keeps me grounded and makes

On the use of 3D technology, the actor says, "The technol-

younger generation is robbed of Indian history. "Not much has been written about unsung warriors such as Tanhaji in school textbooks. My children have not even read about him. During the British era they did not let people read about Indian warriors. Our textbooks have not changed much since then. So, I decided to do this film. The least we can do is respect our heroes. Maybe it will bring about a change in our country. But such films require an audience connect. So, we made it a commercial film with lots of music, action and drama."



apart in their behaviour. While he is quiet and speaks in monosyllables, she is animated and happy-go-lucky. The couple is currently in a celebratory mode as they recently marked their 21st wedding anniversary and are now busy promoting their upcoming film Tanhaji together. The duo is making a comeback on screen after a decade.

Their last film together Toonpur Ka Superhero in 2010 was also made under their own banner—Ajay Devgn Films.

**Aditya Roy Kapoor, Disha Patani sizzle in new 'Malang' poster**

A new poster of Mohit Suri's Malang featuring Aditya Roy Kapur and Disha Patani is out. The poster highlights an intimate moment between the stars, framed against a surreal background.

didn't know that it's his 100th film. It is a happy coincidence. We'd never planned to celebrate but it has all come together. I was supposed to write about his journey on Instagram but I couldn't figure which films to mention and which not to. There are so many outstanding movies and roles that he has done," beams Kajol.

On his journey in Bollywood, Ajay says, "Whatever work I have done has been very satisfying. People tell me to promote myself but I can't do that. I be-

stories of celebrity marriages falling apart are on the rise, Ajay and Kajol boast of a 20-year-long relationship. "It's important to realise that marriage is a daily job and you need to nurture your husband and children. You have to give them extra attention every day. Both Ajay and I have the same priorities and we have not grown apart. Our basic topics for the day are family, children and our work. It's a good thing that I talk too much and he doesn't. I am more spontaneous and do

me realise that I am going overboard at times," says Kajol on how their marriage works.

The couple reveals that their children Nysa and Yug have not watched the film yet. "They don't like my movies because they feel I weep too much. They feel that I cry in happy scenes too," says Kajol. Ajay laughs and adds, "Nysa doesn't discuss much about films but Yug calls me Tanhaji Malsure when I reach home. Even when I call him he says 'Hello Tanhaji'."

ogy that we've used has been done for the first time in India by Indians. I formed my own company for this. The CGI has been done completely by us. I have always tried to experiment with new techniques. Our director Om Raut had done all the research before we embarked on the path. In fact, we met Tanhaji's family and they would be on the sets every day. We recreated the sets as such locales are not available in the current situation."

The 50-year-old further rues how the

Nonetheless, Ajay says controversies could be raked up during the release. "We have tried to make an interesting film and kept the story straight so that we don't get into controversies. But the country is divided now. People can try and create some controversy or the other. I hope the youth realises that it's not easy recreating an unknown part of history in a movie," he concludes.

**Common man has always been the hero: Vikrant Massey**

**MUMBAI:** Actor Vikrant Massey says for him the common man is the hero in real life and he aims to showcase the same on-screen.

The actor believes "aam-aadmi" has been ignored by the film industry for too long and through his movies he wants him to take the centre stage.

"This is the time of common man. The person cleaning the drain is a common man, the common man are out on streets fighting.

"The common man has always been the hero and they have been ignored for too long. I am an actor, I can act and what I can do through my work is, become their voice," Vikrant told PTI in an interview here.

Coming from a lower-middle class family, Vikrant says he has had his fair share of struggles in life, and he has come out stronger.

"I was told I am a TV actor and I won't get to work in films. When I came here (films) I was told I can only be a hero's friend, but I am the

protagonist and the so-called hero. I have lived a journey. Like Amol in 'Chhapaak' is a common man, who left his job and is walking on this path. There are people, these are characters, who for me are the heroes."

The actor says he has always drawn inspiration from the society as he is not a trained performer.

"I travel a lot. I want to bring on-screen all my experiences. I am still learning, I am very young, what I see around me, I try to bring it on screen.

"I hope audiences like me, they laugh and cry with me and take away something from the characters I play.

I am not attempting to change the world, I want people to get aware of their own self, and relate to the characters I play," he adds.

Vikrant is looking forward to "Chhapaak", featuring Deepika Padukone as an acid attack survivor.

The film, directed by Meghna Gulzar, is inspired the life of Laxmi

Agarwal. The actor, who was earlier supposed to collaborate with Meghna on "Raazi", says he is happy to have got the opportunity to be part of her latest venture.

"The response has been positive so far and we are looking forward to January 10, when it releases. It's an opportunity for any aspiring artiste to work with Meghna, Deepika and on a story as such. I am fortunate to be a part of this film."

Vikrant says with "Chhapaak" their aim is to create awareness about acid violence.

"It is a heinous crime and no living being deserves this. No one has the right to have an impact or influence on anyone else's life in such a life-altering way.

"Through 'Chhapaak' our attempt is to talk about acid violence and we hope people take this film in the right way and there will be more awareness and discussion on this topic."

The film is scheduled to release on January 10.

**There was strange inherent comfort with Brad Pitt: Leonardo DiCaprio**

**LOS ANGELES(KCN):** Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio

the film, which was well-received across the globe.

working with Brad was this strange inherent comfort and



says working with Brad Pitt on Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" was an incredible experience.

The actor said they both clicked instantly and were on the same page while portraying their respective characters in

DiCaprio played an ageing, out-of-work actor, Rick Dalton, in the film set in 1960s' Hollywood, while Pitt essayed the part of his stunt double and confident Cliff Booth.

"What was very interesting about

ease that we really both clicked into day one. It didn't need a lot of prep work. We talked about the script, and we instinctively knew that dynamic and relationship, and who these guys were to one another," the actor, 45, told Deadline.

## India will engage with world on own terms'

India will engage with the world on its own terms and the country does not require anyone's approval to do so. External Affairs



Minister S Jaishankar asserted on Wednesday. The idea that others define us and we need approval, is an era that we need to put behind us. India will be deeply more international in terms of its commitments,

responsibilities and roles in the next 25 years. The warning by Minister External Affairs Dr Jaishankar at the Raisina Dialogue that the Russia-Ukraine conflict should be treated as a 'Wake of Call' for Europe, will be heard the world over since it is coming from India. Dr Jaishankar also cautioned the world in general that the happenings in Asia—particularly in Afghanistan have been threatening the rules-based global order. These words of caution

need to be understood in the right perspective, failing which there will only a dim hope that things would get sorted out sensibly in the near future—thereby leading to a greater confusion in international *realpolitik*.

DR. Jaishankar's statement at the vibrant global forum came in response to a few questions from attending dignitaries who were rather critical of the Indian stance in the current conflict. Though India has been giving befitting response to all the criticism for the past some months and that many in the world have begun accepting India's position as legitimate in its own interest, Dr. Jaishankar felt the need to explain the larger picture to the world. This task he did with his characteristic aplomb much to everybody's general appreciation. The assertiveness in his statement cut across all the walls of antagonism and made India's philosophy clear. The import of Dr Jaishankar's statement

**Uma Sankar Prasad**

was that in the name of rules-based global order, many powers that be have often toyed with the international ethos as well as conventions and regulations. The second emergence of Taliban Afghanistan, for example, is a clear gift of the mess superpowers like the United States created in handling the Afghan crises. All those games and shenanigans led finally to the strengthening of Taliban in Afghanistan, Dr Jaishankar meant to suggest. The fine print in his statement is clear that if the US had not mishandled the Afghan situation and if it had not messed up with its troop-withdrawal, then the Afghanistan might not have faced the current condition of terrible uncertainty and fundamentalist confusion, he suggested.

In the most polished manner Dr Jaishankar also deciphered the Raisina metaphor. When he stated that the conflict was a wake up call for Europe, he was clearly hinting at how the political mishandling of the interplay of

conflicting interests in Europe led to the hostilities that are now threatening to push the world in to deeper problems. The reference was to the politics woven around the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ( NATO) by different countries. It has become clear by now that Russia feels unnecessarily threatened by its encirclement by NATO- member nations which was symbolised so fully in the Ukrainian condition. And when Russia's regional hegemony and political domineering. Though Dr Jaishankar did not use those many words, his statement was inclusive of all the related elements. Hence his caution about what he called a wake up call for Europe. But India stood firm and ultimately won the global approval of its stance. That become possible only because India did not violate any norm and rules-based international ethos which ultimately created a protective shield around the India's position.

The Author is Columnist, Khordha

## Learnings from Finland: World Happiness Report & India

Finland is a sovereign European country with a total land area of 303,815 square kilometres. From the 12th through the 19th



century, Finland was a province and later a grand duchy under Swedish rule, and in 1809, it became an autonomous grand duchy of Russia. In 1917, it acquired complete independence. It successfully

defended its independence during World War II by cooperation with Germany and resisted future Soviet Union invasions - albeit with considerable territorial loss. Finland transitioned from a farm/forest economy to a diversified modern industrial economy over the next half-century, and its per capita income is among the highest in Western Europe. Finland, a member of the European Union since 1995, was the first Nordic country to adopt the euro as its single currency.

Finland has once again ranked first in the United Nations' 2020 World Happiness Report, which will come as little surprise to some. When you compare Helsinki to places like California, it's hard to see somebody being pleased while standing outside in the cold. Despite the unfavourable weather circumstances, the country remains at the top of the standings. Finland may not be the world's largest or most powerful country, but it has a lot to offer that other nations don't. But what is the World Happiness Report, exactly? It considers elements such as healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, GDP, generosity, social support from friends, perceived corruption, and the respondents' recent feelings, both positive and negative.

Finland has long been commended by international organisations for its generous social benefits, low levels of corruption, well-functioning democracy, and ingrained sense of freedom and autonomy. Because of its fair taxes and wealth distribution, Finland has a thriving universal healthcare system, and more than 80% of Finns trust their police force, which is significantly higher than many other countries. Finland has long been a global economic powerhouse, producing global companies such as Nokia, Rovio (the developers of Angry Birds), Supercell (the inventors of Clash of Clans), and elevator manufacturer KONE.

The country is known for being one of the first to promote the flat working paradigm, which symbolises the Finnish attitude toward how businesses should be handled and how employees should be treated at work. The flat working paradigm is one in

which there are few if any, hierarchical layers between

management and employees. Employees are typically given less supervision, and the structure tries to encourage greater participation in corporate decision-making by allowing open communication between all departments and teams within a company. As a result, this frequently leads to a significant increase in workplace productivity and team cohesion, and has assisted Finland in pioneering agile working, in which organizations empower their workforces to work where, when, and how they want, with maximum flexibility

**Pratap Kishore Mohanty**

reducing inequality, but Finland has made it a point to stay the course and keep it at the top of the priority list. A Finnish philosophy is known as 'sisu' is said to underlay everything that it means to be Finnish. While it's practically impossible to translate 'sisu' into English, the closest equivalents are 'willpower' or 'stoic perseverance.' Finland exemplifies this notion in a variety of ways, including its successful approach to addressing homelessness. The country's novel 'housing first' philosophy assures that, after receiving the necessary assistance, rough sleepers can own their

assessments), government effectiveness, which includes features of honesty and efficient delivery of public services, is substantially linked to life evaluations.

As a result, the following may be the WHR's preliminary lesson for India's policymakers. Stay focused on the basics, such as material well-being as measured by average income and healthy lives, before attempting to solve problems with deeper social causes; and before doing anything else, figure out how to make the government itself more honest and effective in whatever it needs to do most. The first difficulty is to create a happiness paradigm that is not based on

### WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT



and minimal constraints, something that many European countries have only recently begun to implement. For more than a decade, Finland has championed agile working, and it has played a big part in the welfare of Finnish citizens because overall happiness is intrinsically tied to one's perception of joy from work and whether or not they can strike a healthy work-life balance. Finland excels in this area, as do many other Nordic countries.

With the country's commitment to closing the gender pay gap, as well as high-quality education, Finland is in fact the only country in the developed world in which fathers spend more time with school-aged children than mothers. This is a testament to the nation's progressiveness. For mothers who do choose to stay home, it's very common for them to do so for several months or even years to ensure that they are present for the formative years of their children.

Finland has likewise been an exception in the fight against inequality for a long time. Finland has constantly fought to guarantee that its poorest residents are cared for at a time when the gap between the rich and the poor is expanding in most countries across the world. Many countries struggle with

own home; a creative approach to a traditional problem.

The contentment of the Finnish people originates not just from the country's numerous welfare initiatives, but also from its inherent affinity for mutual trust and equality. The belief that one can only be free and independent if everyone else is free and independent is at the heart of Finland's policymaking and defines what it means to be a Finn.

What India can do Before policy implications can be taken from the data, more research and understanding is required. However, the happiness index and its explanatory variables offer a starting point for policy changes. Will government transfer programs address India's lack of social support whether it is a result of social fragmentation, poor trust, or the disintegration of extended family support networks, or will more fundamental changes be required? Is it true that government action is the best location to look for improvements in societal structures that will improve people's sense of well-being? The WHR discovers that while faith in national government is unrelated to happiness (subjective life

wealth. Happy countries have surged to the top of the current list based on intangibles such as social capital, trust, and generosity rather than traditional metrics of GDP. As the traditional reservoir of these ideals, this discovery must add to India's pleasure. Generations of people have come from all over the world to find true happiness. Spirituality, as it is practiced in this country, is a science

that postulates the wisdom, skills, and processes for promoting happiness. Spirituality does offer a tool for calming the mind and dealing with life's pressures. It does enable one to confront life's truths and cope with them happily, compassionately, and courageously. In some ways, we gave the world the happiness recipe but failed to apply it at home.

Many people want to live in a country where they can get all of their basic needs addressed, whether it's healthcare, education, or a job that makes them happy. The overriding theme is that Finland continues to be ahead of the curve in numerous areas. Finland is currently in first place, but the goal is that the example Finland is establishing will inspire other countries to provide better care for their citizens. The fact that the country continues to lead the way in terms of social and economic wellbeing, education, and workplace best practices is something that other countries should take note of if they want to improve their people's happiness.

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## 100 Cr for Nilamadhab Temple

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday approved the master plan for the development of the Kantilo Neelmadhab Peetha. The project will cost Rs 100 crore and be completed within 18 months.



The approval came at a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister where detailed deliberation was done on the master plan. The Chief Minister sought the cooperation of the local people and services for the successful implementation of the project. Notably, the Neelmadhab Peetha has a close relationship with the Jagannath culture. It is believed that the Neelmadhab Peetha was worshiped by Lord Vishwabasu as a sapphire in the Brahmadi Mountains. Thousands of devotees come to the Neelmadhab Peetha every day to witness this manifestation of the Lord. The majestic view of the river north of the Brahmadi Mountains is breathtaking and one of the major attractions for tourists. The systematic development of this holy shrine will also help in the economic development of the local area as well as the devotees and tourists. On the instructions of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister's Secretary 5T VK Pandian visited the Neelmadhab Peetha last week and discussed the development plan with the ministry and the local people and ordered the preparation of a master plan. The master plan focuses mainly on the restoration of the temple, the sightseeing, the beautification of the sand dunes, the improvement

## Spurt in violence in India part of larger BJP conspiracy, alleges Yechury

NEW DELHI: The general secretary of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) Sitaram Yechury on Thursday alleged that communal tactics are being employed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to divert people's attention from the failure of the Central government in multiple spheres including combating rising prices and unemployment. Referring to the spate of communal incidents across states, he said that these incidents are part of a larger conspiracy hatched by the Gov-



ernment to destroy the social fabric and constitutional arrangement in India. "The ruling party is inciting this violence and hatred. There is a great conspiracy behind this; conspiracy against humanity and the constitution. Attempts are being made to destroy the constitution. We haven't seen such barbarism in the last 75 years since independence and beyond. Eid and Ramnavmi were celebrated together but this kind of violence, hatred and bloodshed never existed before. It is being executed in a planned manner, which has the backing of the ruling party and the Government," said Yechury. EDITORIAL | Selective demolitions bring no glory to the nation He was speaking at a protest jointly organised by the Left parties -- CPI (M), CPI (Marxist-Leninist), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) -- at Jantar Mantar against the 'targeted' demolition

of the surrounding roads, the shade of the trees, the parking with the gardens, the protection of the banks of the river and the beautification of the riverside. The east, west, north, south four gates will be

upgraded with the restoration of the steps leading to the temple. Steps will also be taken to make it easier for the elderly and the disabled to visit. Khandalite stones will be laid around the temple grounds and surrounding areas, and temples and gardens will be developed. Rasbihari Mandap, Raghunath Math and Batamangala temples will also be developed besides cloak rooms and laundry facilities. Lift Lobby, Sky Bridge, etc. will be arranged through the west gate of the temple while the roads on the east and west sides will be paved to allow easy access to the temple. The east side road will be widened by 4 meters and the west side road by 12 meters. A 400-meter protective wall will be constructed to protect the temple from the floodwaters of the river. The project will require a total of two acres of land and the district administration has been directed to acquire land in accordance with the Rehabilitation and Thirsthan Policy. The project will be implemented through the Department of Public Works. The Department of Water Resources will build a protective wall to prevent flooding. Principal Secretary, Department of Public Works, Bir Bikram Yada presented the project at the meeting.

drive in Jahangirpuri by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (North DMC) after communal clashes during the Hanuman Jyanti procession. The Left parties alleged that the demolition drive was part and parcel of the nefarious design to create communal tension in the area. Hundreds of people participated in the protest. Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Brinda Karat and CPI-ML's politburo member Kavita Krishnan were also present during the protest. Yechury said that this (protest) is the beginning. Left parties would hold demonstrations across the country against divisive fascist politics. The CPI (M) leader further stated that the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi despite the violation of laws is surprising. "PM doesn't say a word. The character of the country is being altered. Condemning the violence is one thing but it has to be stopped; prevention is necessary," said Yechury. He also criticized the Government for the continuous rise in petrol and diesel prices. Yechury said that instead of asking the governments of non-BJP governed states, the Central government should scrap central excise duties on petroleum products to control their prices. ALSO READ | 'Centre devoured Rs 26 lakh crore from fuel prices but they blame states': Stalin. PTR hit back

"The BJP and RSS are creating an environment of hate in the name of removing encroachments in Delhi. We have seen this happening in Jahangirpuri and now they are planning to conduct such activities at other locations in Delhi. We are demanding the government to end such practices," said the secretary of CPI (ML) Delhi Ravi Rai.

## BBSA Extended till 2026

Bhubaneswar: The State Government has extended the Bhima Bhoi Bhinnakshyama Samarthyaa Abhiyan (BBSA) scheme till the financial year 2025-26 for the welfare of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) Department has extended the scheme for another five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26. SSEPD Additional Secretary Madhumita Nayak has informed about the decision of the Government to all District Social Security Officers (DSSOs) on Wednesday. However, this time, the Government has made Aadhaar mandatory to get benefit of the scheme. "The identification of PwD to be Aadhaar linked. Any financial assistance to be credited into the Aadhaar

linked Bank account of the beneficiary provided for purchase of aids and appliances, Children below 14 years including those



through DBT under this scheme," Nayak said. The State Government had launched the scheme in the year 2016-17 for providing certificates, assistive devices and scholarship for the children of persons with disabilities (PwDs). As per the scheme, the Government will organise Samarthyaa Sibirs (camps) to distribute certificates and assistive devices to the PwDs. An amount up to maximum of Rs 5 lakhs per Sibir will be pro-

subject to actual requirements. Physically disabled persons are facing many constraints in access to public services in the absence of certification. They also lack access to assistive devices and appliances that help them integrate with mainstream society. The scheme is expected to effectively address these serious concerns of PwDs. The Government is also providing scholarships to children of PwDs pursuing higher education. in special schools will be provided aids and appliances from out of OPEPA funds meant for the purpose. The BDO will verify the list of beneficiaries and co-ordinate with OPEPA authorities for supply of aids and appliances. The 2011 Census estimated the PwD population in State at 12, 44,402 accounting to 2.96pc of the total population of the State which is 0.75pc higher than the national average (2.21pc).

## Verbal Duel over Srimandir

Puri: Firebrand Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi and Puri Parliamentarian Pinaki Mishra entered into a verbal duel over digging of huge pits close to Shree Jagannath Temple here allegedly without proper permission of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI). While Ms. Sarangi claimed that the State Government carried out big construction by digging 30 feet deep pits in the restricted zone without permission of ASI, Mr. Mishra countered her saying that no rules are violated in the Heritage Corridor Project. Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra had earlier claimed that the corridor project is being carried out with "coordination" with the ASI. Gajapati Maharaja of Puri Dibyasingha Deb also clarified that there is no threat to the 12th century shrine due to the corridor project. Though the opposition BJP maintained a distance from the corridor row, Ms. Sarangi on Wednesday marched to the holy city with BJP supporters despite the local administration putting restrictions on the padayatra by a local outfit. Ms. Sarangi was scheduled to participate in the pada Jatra, which was not allowed by the administration on the ground of law and order situation. Ms. Sarangi, who on Tuesday had announced that she would visit Puri to have 'darshan' of the Trinity - Lord

Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath, as a devotee. However, when Ms. Sarangi reached near Chandanpur, she was intercepted by police which requested her to either go alone or with a few supporters for darshan of Lord Jagannath. Ms. Sarangi refused the mission to her visit, Ms. Sarangi said: "Permission is not required for darshan of Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannath. If the Odisha government is on the right path, why is it so afraid?" Stating that she has raised the issue in Lok Sabha, Ms. Sarangi said this is not a party programme and work-



and all officers concerned would do anything without necessary approval? Everything has been done in consonance with rules, regulations and the law," Mr. Mishra said. Mr. Mishra also alleged that Sarangi has been trying to create her own space in the party by making poli-

cers of all parties have assembled on their own. She said even Puri MP Pinaki Mishra is not aware about the corridor project and therefore, he told the Lok Sabha that only three toilets are being constructed in the prohibited zone of the temple. "When the Puri MP has no clue about the construction work, how will the common people of Odisha know about it. All the Odia have the right and responsibility for the safety and security of Srimandir and the government is answerable to them," pointed out Ms. Sarangi. The senior BJP leader also put a question mark on transparency of the state government. Puri's BJD MP Pinaki Mishra took no time to counter BJP MP and accused her of doing politics in the name of Lord Jagannath. "Being a former bureaucrat, how can she think that the government

# Access to Quality Education in Nuapada

New Delhi: Nuapada District in Odisha has been steadfast in its efforts to ensure access to quality education for its children.

In order to bridge the learning gaps caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the district has been organizing Community Classes, an innovative initiative, feel senior officials. Nuapada District Collector Swadha Dev Singh participated in the NITI Aayog's a day-long conference on the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP).

She said "Technology will be a transformative weapon in ensuring equal access to education and improving learning outcomes in the Aspirational Districts"

Efforts of the government and development partners for addressing learning loss among children during the pandemic were discussed in the session on 'Education'. Special initiatives led by districts such as Nuapada, and Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu for addressing learning gaps and bringing back out-of-school children were presented.

Recently Central Prabhari Officer Santosh Sarangi extensively visited Nuapada to review the progress in the backward district.

Mr. Sarangi, Director General Foreign Trade (DGFT) has been appreciative of the efforts of the Nuapada District Administration.

The conference, 'Sehbhagita se Samridhhi', saw wide participation from District Collectors and Central Prabhari Officers of Aspirational Districts, officials from Union Ministries and NITI Aayog, and representatives from development partners.

A report, titled 'Stories of Change', on 30 innovative interventions by the Aspirational Districts was also released. These interventions—selected on the basis of the usage of behavioural principles, innovation, replicability and potential for impact—demonstrate how behavioural insights can drive outcomes on the ground. Drawing attention to the high expectations of the people for health service delivery, NITI Aayog Member Dr VK Paul said we needed to strive towards the saturation of key maternal and child health schemes and focus on last-mile service delivery.

Addressing the participants, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said, 'ADP has emerged as a unique platform for development partners to work with the govern-

ment at the grassroots level. Their active engagement has led to significant

market and technology. Several initiatives such as water rejuvenation projects under-



progress.' He highlighted how the partnership between the district teams and the development partners has been instrumental in improving the impact of schemes while improving the understanding of critical requirements of the districts. Five sessions on 'State Capacity', 'Education', 'Agriculture', 'Skill Development and Livelihood', and 'Health' were held. The 'State Capacity' session focused on challenges and emerging best practices for improving last-mile service delivery through behaviour change communication and efficient data management. Local initiatives led by districts, such as that in Dumka in Jharkhand for strengthening block- and panchayat-level functionaries, were discussed.

The session on 'Agriculture' focused on challenges that directly affect farmers such as dwindling water tables, small per capita land holdings, and climate change. It also focused on developing targeted action plans, infrastructure development for the value chain and ensuring access to

taken in Aspirational Districts were shared.

The 'Skill Development and Livelihood' session focused on developing demand-based and context-specific livelihoods in the Aspirational Districts, particularly in the context of SHGs and other micro-enterprises. Special initiatives led by districts such as Dantewada in Chhattisgarh in addressing challenges through Farmer Producer Organizations and effective methods of tracking livelihood opportunities and benefits accorded to the households were discussed.

The session on 'Health' focused on the role of development partners in supporting existing government staff to build capacity, particularly in initiatives to reduce malnutrition, and anaemia among women through rice fortification, millet-based recipes under the Integrated Child Development Scheme, and NITI's pilot project to streamline the Government of India's Anaemia Mukh Bharat interventions in five districts in Jharkhand.

## Science Girl Shines

Cuttack: At a time when there is a rush for engineering, medical and management studies to shape career of youngsters, here is a glaring instance of a girl from a small town in

programme where the student gets the opportunity to visit various eminent research institutions/ universities in Europe during the course of his/her Master studies and is able to

work on various research topics as a part of the program.

One can also work as a Research Associate in R&D laboratories or Research Institutions after doing Masters. Besides this in Germany, various R&D labs are actively seeking for R&D consultant positions, she said adding that working in different corporate research

firms/ industries is another such option after having a Masters degree.

In some cases, even a candidate with an extraordinary Bachelors degree with good research experiences during the Bachelors is also a good substitute for a Master candidate for such job roles. One highlight of her talk is that after Masters one can pursue his/her research career by doing a PhD and with additional Post Doctoral experiences make one's research career even more promising when it comes to working as a scientist in the world-class scientific laboratories such as CERN, ESO, NASA, etc.

After a PhD, one also has the possibility of entering into academia. Besides, PhD acts as a promising qualification for various industries seeking research experts with well paid salaries. She further said that though scopes for a scientific research career after Bachelor studies is promising unfortunately not many are aware of the possibilities and majority are even scared to take the risk of exploring/ availing these sophisticated yet beautiful fields of research.

Finally she encouraged everyone to take up the risk, sharing how she learned from her several failures and rejections because of which she is presently exploring the magical world of science and research instead of following the mainstream herd blindly, she concluded her talk by saying that she would one day make a difference in the society.

Dr Biswadas Mohanty, Head of the Department of Physics gave the guest introduction while Dr. Pritipragnan Roy, member IQAC delivered the welcome address. Seminar Secretary Tripada Pratik moderated the webinar. Dr. Anita Mekap. Kiranmayee Sahoo, Assistant seminar secretary Miss Harapriya Sahoo and other Staff members assisted in smooth conduct of the webinar. At the end, Megha Kamilya proposed vote of thanks.

Western Odisha making her own destiny through general science abroad.

Take the instance of Architarani Dash, while participating in the second international Alumni Webinar of the Alumni webinar series held by the department of Physics of Shailabala Women's Autonomous College, climbed the career graph in general science.

The girl from Jharsuguda town in Odisha, while attending the Webinar deliberated on research opportunities in Germany sharing her journey so far starting as an undergraduate student in Physics honours at SB Women's Autonomous College to doing Masters at VIT and finally joining as a PhD student in Experimental High Energy Nuclear Physics at Institute of Nuclear Physics, Munster University, Germany.

Archita narrated how she forayed into experimental research and gave helpful tips to students who want to pursue research in Europe especially in Germany. She advised on the importance of building a strong CV, recommendations from mentors, proficiency in language and how it helps in selection process in availing scholarship.

She further elaborated that the opportunities for higher studies and research in science are immensely high and promising for the present and the future generations in Europe and especially in Germany as it being one of the best choices to pursue a scientific research career with high end scientific and technology based research facilities, infrastructure and promising funding sources.

In a the Webinar, presided over by SB Women's College Principal and Professor Dr. Surekha Sundari Swain, Archita said various opportunities in research after completing Bachelors in Science include pursuing 'MS by Research' degree, one example of this is the "The Erasmus Programme by European Union", which is a mobile Masters

## India's small towns hotbeds of entrepreneurship: OYO CEO Ritesh Agarwal

NEW DELHI: India's small towns have now become the hotbed of entrepreneurship fuelled by the aspirations of the young population and these, along with the scaling up of small businesses will play a key role in creating many unicorns in the

and become high quality sizable companies, he added. "The new young India that is building their businesses, is aspiring to build sizable world champions in the consumer segments that they operate," Agarwal said.

here, our country has a very large rural mass and the use of technology to integrate them can be quite significant." Citing the example of OYO's partnership with villagers in Gujarat and Kashmir for homestays, he said, "We have en-

have been changed by the rapid evolution of internet infrastructure. It has allowed cheap and quick distribution at scale. This, combined with that of the ability of making sure that capital becomes accessible and with all transactions



country through the startup ecosystem, OYO Founder and Group CEO Ritesh Agarwal said on Thursday.

Speaking at the Global Unicorn Summit, Nurturing 1,000 Unicorns by 2030 -- jointly organised by CII with DPIIT, he also stressed on the need to integrate the "very large rural mass" of India with the usage of technology and help generate income for the people living there.

The rapid evolution of internet infrastructure, allowing cheap and quick distribution at scale, combined with access to capital provides the opportunity for a large number of small businesses in the country to scale up

Laying out the value of small towns "in this big opportunity", he said, "I think small town India is now more exposed to the world than ever before...I think they are no more markets. They're actually hotbeds of new entrepreneurs getting created and they are not happy with just (being) in the tier two and tier three markets." He further said, "They are coming for at least the entire national market and ideally for the world. So, there's a very structural shift that's happening in small town India."

Stressing on the need for onboarding villages in the shift that's happening, Agarwal said, "I think, in the entire conversation

abled villages to be able to bring their houses online and then generate a substantial amount of income on the back of it." Overall, he said a combination of the ecosystem and infrastructure, as well as a sense of motivation and promotion of entrepreneurship has created significant enablement for what he called "the Indian dream", as the country has always been entrepreneurial by design.

While in the past, various issues such as lack of capital, infrastructure, access to distribution have impeded scaling up of businesses despite Indians being entrepreneurial by design, Agarwal said in the "new world" those

moving towards digital, has fundamentally allowed a large number of these small businesses to scale and become into high quality sizable companies, he added.

"And my perspective is here, the new young India that is building their businesses is aspiring to build sizable world champions in the consumer segments that they operate," Agarwal said.

Stating that small businesses have been there a long time, he said, "This is an opportunity for us to scale them and that's in my view, a big opportunity ahead of ourselves and it will be a big funnel into our 1,000 unicorns outcome over a period of time."

## Assam Congress MP demands immediate release of Jignesh Mevani

GUWAHATI: Assam Congress MP Abdul Khaleque Wednesday demanded the immediate release of Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mevani and a judicial inquiry into the case filed against him for alleged assault of a woman police officer in Barpeta for which he was rearrested after being granted bail in a case related to a tweet against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said Mevani's arrest was a "full fledged conspiracy" and expressed scepticism over the incident which had reportedly taken place when he was in police custody after being brought to Kokrajhar in Assam from Gujarat for his tweet. "An independent judicial inquiry must be instituted into the fabricated case immediately as the police is not independent in Assam and is acting under political pressure. He should be released immediately," said Khaleque, who is an MP from Barpeta, where the alleged assault of the

woman police officer took place.

He said Mevani had tweeted in Gujarat.

"Then why was a case filed in Assam? It is obvious that the

stage protests against the arrest of Mevani, who is supported by the party, in all districts of the state on Thursday when Prime Minister

Tuesday in connection with the alleged assaulted of a woman officer when she was accompanying him from Guwahati airport to Kokrajhar



Assam chief minister wants to please the prime minister. It is shameful for a chief minister to behave in such a manner". Khaleque claimed that he had filed a case against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma but the police did not register it despite a local court's direction to do so. BJP, he said, has no respect for democracy and "Is all out to stifle the freedom of speech which we cannot allow at any cost". Assam Pradesh Congress Committee will

Narendra Modi is slated to visit the state, party spokesman Manjit Mahanta said.

APCC will hold its protest from 11 a.m to 1 p.m in the districts headquarters across the state.

Party MPs, MLAs, former MPs and MLAs, members of the Youth Congress, NSUI, Seva Dal and officials from all cells and organs of the party will participate in the protest, he added.

Mevani was remanded to police custody for five days on

along with senior police officers.

He was been booked under IPC sections 294 (uttering obscene words in public), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 353 (assaulting a public servant in the execution of duty) and 354 (using criminal force to a woman intending to outrage her modesty).

He was first arrested on April 19 from Palanpur town in Gujarat and was brought to Kokrajhar in Assam for tweeting against the prime minister.

## We require a change in way we are operating our cricket structure: Misbah

K A R A C H I : Pakistan's former captain and head coach Misbah-ul-Haq has said that changing the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will not make any difference to the sport in the country.

"We require a change in the way we are operating our cricket structure and change our priorities," Misbah said on the Geo News channel. He said former Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision to stop departmental cricket and their role in sports didn't appear to have done any

good for Pakistan cricket or any other

on cricket were now spending that money



discipline.

"It has been three years now with no role of departments or institutions in cricket and other sports and what have we achieved so far?" he questioned.

Misbah noted that those departments and institutions which spent money

somewhere else.

"They formed provincial association teams in domestic cricket but that has only resulted in administrative problems."

Misbah said there was nothing wrong in the PCB experimenting with a new domestic cricket struc-

ture but at the same time, the old system of departmental cricket could have been done away with only after the new system had started producing dividends. On the expected changes in the cricket board, Misbah maintained that a change of face wouldn't make any difference. "I think that whoever is the chairman we should have a vision about how to run our cricket. No matter who is the chairman or whether there are changes in the board, the system should not change and cricket should carry on."

## Davis Cup: Serbia to face Spain in finals group stage

MADRID: Serbia and Spain will square off in the group stage of the Davis Cup Finals, organizers said after holding a draw.

That could mean a matchup of Novak Djokovic against Rafael Nadal when their nations play as part of Group B along with Canada and South Korea in Valencia from Sept 14-18.

Nadal did not play for Spain last year; Djokovic helped Serbia reach the semifinals.

Group A, hosted by Bologna, will include Croatia "last year's runner-up" along with Italy, Argentina, and Sweden. Group C, in Hamburg, will pit Germany against France, Belgium, and

Kazakhstan, and the Netherlands will play in Group D in Glasgow.

Serbia was in the draw to replace Russia, last year's champion after it was expelled by the

International Tennis Federation for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The top two teams of each group will advance to the knockout rounds, including quarterfinals, semifinals, and final to be played in Spain's southern city of Málaga from Nov 21-27. Also on Tuesday, the ITF and organizing group Kosmos Tennis announced that Valencia would host group games.

Bologna, Glasgow, and Hamburg had already been named as host cities. The entire competition between men's national teams will be



Australia, Britain, the United States, played on indoor hard courts.

## 22,000 Indian students still waiting for visas to return to China for offline classes

Mominur Rahaman, a student of South West Medical University. Students are running a campaign on social media called 'Take us back to China'.

"Let us request again to the authorities. We can't be just simply waiting anymore. We must have an update on our return, while other countries are given, why are we deprived of it," says a representative group called Indian Students in China on Twitter.

On the request of the students, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya wrote a letter to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, urging him to help facilitate the return of Indian students to China.

China has not given a firm response till now, nor has issued visas to Indian students.

Interestingly, China is preferred by Indian students, especially to study medicine, as there is ease of getting admission and the fee is cheaper. China ranks third globally in international student intake after the US and UK. Following Galwan, India banned over 200 popular Chinese apps like Tik Tok and even boycotted the opening and closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics.

# Madrid can clinch Spanish title ahead of Manchester City showdown

BARCELONA: Carlo Ancelotti has a decision to make when Espanyol comes to town on Saturday.

key player. The apparently easy-going Ancelotti should know better than anyone which choice is best. After

pean Cup title. Villarreal, Spain's other Champions League semifinalist, plays at Alavés on Saturday. With

season. The France striker has 41 goals in 41 games overall. He leads the Spanish league with 25 goals, and has

Barcelona-based club hasn't won at Madrid since April 1996. Even if Espanyol manages to pull off an upset,

six league games it has played on the road this year and endured a disappointing 1-0 loss at home against Rayo Vallecano last week. Espanyol midfielder Yangel Herrera, however, said his team can pull off the surprise and postpone Madrid's celebrations. "We are going to compete to the fullest against Real Madrid. We already beat them in the first game against them this season, and we have to go out there and enjoy this game," Herrera said. "We want to give the fans something to be happy about, and change the feeling that we left in the last game. We have a beautiful opportunity, a beautiful venue to play in, and we want to compete and enjoy ourselves."

Madrid has been playing like a champion-in-waiting for several weeks after its closest rivals self-destructed. Barcelona had a glimmer of hope after its rout at the Santiago Bernabéu last month, only for it to be embarrassed in home losses against Cádiz and Rayo Vallecano. Add a loss to Eintracht Frankfurt in the Europa League and Barcelona has lost three in a row in all competitions in the same season for the first time ever at Camp Nou. Now the team coached by Xavi Hernández must ensure it locks up a top-four finish and a Champions League berth to avoid another blow to the club's reputation and its poor finances. Atlético

Madrid is two points behind in fourth place, but Real Betis and Real Sociedad are within striking distance. Barcelona's first goal on Sunday when it hosts Mallorca will be to win back its disgruntled fans, who booed the team after last weekend's loss to Rayo. Sevilla, which hosts Cádiz on Friday, had the most realistic shot to give Madrid a run for the title entering the second half of the season but hit a slump that wrecked its chances. Atlético visits Athletic Bilbao on Saturday needing to maintain the four-point gap over Betis, the newly crowned Copa del Rey champion.



The Real Madrid coach can play his top players to have the best chance of wrapping up the Spanish league title, or he can focus on the Champions League semifinal decider against Manchester City on Wednesday. Madrid needs only one point from its remaining five matches to win a record-extending 35th league title, so Ancelotti will be tempted to give his reserves a chance to shine while reducing the risk for an untimely injury to a

all, the 62-year-old Italian is on the brink of becoming the only coach to win titles in Europe's five major leagues. He guided AC Milan to the 2004 Serie A title, Chelsea to the 2010 Premier League title, Paris Saint-Germain to the 2013 French title and Bayern Munich to the 2017 Bundesliga title. And if Madrid can turn around its 4-3 loss at City when Pep Guardiola and his players visit Madrid, Ancelotti will be one victory from a fourth Euro-

Villarreal in seventh place, coach Unai Emery will likely rest his top players ahead of hosting Liverpool on Tuesday trailing 2-0 after the first leg. Ancelotti's recipe for success this season has been sticking with his best players and maintaining a very short rotation. But with the title so close and City looming, this weekend looks like a perfect time to let 36-year-old Luka Modric and 34-year-old Karim Benzema take a break. Benzema is having a Ballon d'Or-caliber

scored eight goals in the Champions League knockout rounds, including two at City on Tuesday. When he has not been on the field, Madrid has struggled. The team's only league setback in 2022 was a 4-0 loss to Barcelona when Benzema was out with an injury. But Ancelotti could leave him on the bench and start one of his reserves — a group that includes the much-maligned Gareth Bale. Espanyol beat Madrid 2-1 at home in October. But the

Madrid would still have four more games to clinch the title ahead of Barcelona and Sevilla. Espanyol has lost all

## Sindhu, Satwik-Chirag enter Badminton Asia Championships quarterfinals



MANILA: Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu advanced to the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Championships after beating lowly-ranked Yue Yann Jaslyn Hooi of Singapore in straight games in the women's singles competition here on Thursday.

The fourth-seeded Indian, who had claimed a bronze in the 2014 Gimcheon edition, defeated Jaslyn Hooi, ranked 100th, 21-16 21-16 in 42 minutes to set up a clash with third seed Chinese He Bing Jiao, whom she had beaten for a bronze at the Tokyo Olympics.

Sindhu has a 7-9 head-to-head record against Bing Jiao, whom she has beaten twice in the last two meetings. The third-seeded Indian men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also made it to the quarterfinals with a

21-17 21-15 win over Japan's Akira Koga and Taichi Saito. The world number 7 Indian pairing will face next either fifth-seeded Malaysian Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik or the Singaporean duo of Danny Bawa Chrisnanta and Jun Liang Andy Kwek.




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