

A booster dose of love is what people need the most

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



The fourth wave of Covid is anticipated in the month of June as the Covid cases have started increasing, however it is a matter of comfort that patients are not being

admitted in hospitals. Most of the patients are getting treatment while staying at their home and are recovering too. Moreover, deaths are not reported so far. But everyone needs to be careful, that's why wearing a mask and keeping distance in crowded places is still mandatory. The rule of wearing masks has returned in Chandigarh only after three weeks when it got relaxed. Now if anyone is found without a mask in public places and crowded spots, a challan of Rs 500 will be slapped; if the person refuses to pay the penalty a FIR will be registered. The Government of Kerala has also made masks mandatory. Wearing of masks was already declared mandatory in 11 districts of UP and Haryana adjoining the Delhi NCR. In Haryana, people in the age group of 18 to 59 years will be given a booster dose of Covid free of cost. About Rs 300 crore will be spent on the booster doses in the state from the Covid Relief Fund.

Booster dose can be taken free of cost in any government hospital or dispensary in Haryana. The central government has allowed the facility of free booster dose across the country only to people above 60 years of age. People between 18 to 59 years of age across India can get a booster dose at their own expense. Private hospitals get the booster doses at Rs 250 each, on which 150 convenience fee is levied, that is, a booster dose to people costs around Rs 400. Booster dose is recommended for individuals who had taken the second dose of the vaccine nine months ago. The effect of the vaccine starts decreasing after nine months, in such a situation, a booster dose is effective to maintain the body's immunity. In most of the countries of the world, the booster dose is being provided by the governments, whereas in our country the majority of the population has to pay for it. After getting the vaccine, antibodies start forming in the body which neutralize the Coronavirus and the person does not get infection. After receiving the booster dose, antibodies start generating in the body.

It is often said that love is a super power. When you fall in love with a person, things or a hobby, then you start feeling good. This is due to the secretion of feel-good hormones in the brain. These are the same hormones that are released during walking, exercising and eating something sweet. They are responsible for good mood. When we find love, it is like a biological firework. This increases the heartbeat. US neuroscientist Stephanie Artig says that when we feel love for our partner, it causes deep satisfaction in our mind. With the effect of love, pain is reduced, the creativity of the person increases and the ability to memorize also increases. If there is a lack of loving friends and caring relatives in life, the situation can lead to some types of physical problems, such as sleeplessness, increased blood pressure or diabetes.

A Year of Hunger



By: Vijay GarG

Global wheat prices have soared since Russia invaded Ukraine in February. The two nations account for 30% of the world's wheat exports.

That means many low-income nations who are net food importers are bracing for a year of hunger. The disruption of war compounds existing drops in food production linked to climate change. On a global scale, climate change has already cut global average agricultural production by at least one-fifth.

Food insecurity often translates to widespread social unrest, as we saw in the 2011 Arab Spring protests, which came after major food price rises.

Countries in the Middle East and North Africa are likely to be hit hardest in the short term, given they are the major importers of Ukrainian wheat and have major food security issues. Countries dependent on specific commodities and which can't switch to alternative food sources are also at risk.

As many nations face hunger and worsening food security, it is time to redouble our efforts on climate change. Climate change is the great risk multiplier, worsening all existing global crises.

Protesters clash riot police Egypt

Anti-government protesters clash with riot police in Egypt during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. Ben Curtis/AP

What effect is the war having?

The world produces enough food to feed everyone. Hunger persists due to the critical factors of distribution and access.

We can add war and climate change to this list too. The current wheat price spikes are driven by a combination of war pressures and market speculation.

The world's largest wheat importer is Egypt, which buys in over half of its calories. At the same time, it exports rice.

This is a dangerous combination. Much of Egypt's population lives in poverty, with a high reliance on wheat. Civil unrest took root when bread prices rose by almost 40% in 2007-08 due to droughts in food producing nations and oil price rises.

Climate change, conflict and food security will keep compounding

The world's current 1.2% of warming has already slashed the world's average agricultural production by at least 21%.

To date, rich countries have not seen much effect. But the rest of the world has. In Africa, Central and South America, food insecurity and malnutrition have risen sharply due to floods and droughts damaging crops.

The world's poor live where land is cheapest and most vulnerable to climate extremes. They often have sporadic or no access to health care, education, transport, meaningful employment, food and water. Each of these factors amplifies others, which intensifies the underlying disadvantage and can fuel conflict. Climate change can worsen all of these factors.

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Is Sustainable Development Unsustainable?

By: Sanjenbam Jugeshwar Singh
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The drive for economic growth has resulted in problems such as environmental degradation and social disparities. Sustainable development prescribes for a more balanced approach to growth that progresses development across three underlying pillars: **social inclusion; environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.** Quality of life assessment, such as the OECD's How's Life 2020 report, have told us that economic growth does not equate to happiness or a sense of well-being. As the global population increases, so too does the pressure on our bio-system and social equity. Sustainable development calls for the adoption of more responsible consumption and production patterns. The industrial revolution brought about unprecedented economic growth and many advances such as electricity. Coal has generally been an affordable source of energy for much of the world but it has come at huge cost to the environment and society. Coal is a finite resource which produces harmful greenhouse gases that largely contributed to climate change. A more sustainable approach is to adopt energy efficient technologies and diversify our energy supply. Renewable energy such as wind, solar and biomass is an alternative energy source, which doesn't pose harmful effects to our health and environment. New renewable energy technologies can also represent new economic opportunities. The notion of "sustainable development" is looking

ever more fragile, at least in political terms. Indeed, the rift is growing between advocates of environmental protection and economic development-two key components of sustainable development that the landmark World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 judged were "impossible to separate". So is sustainable development unsustainable?

Until two decades ago, the world looked at economic status alone as a measure of human development. Thus, countries that were economically well developed and where people were relatively richer were called advanced nations, while the rest where poverty were widespread and were economically backward were called developing countries. Most countries of North America and Europe, which had become industrialized at an earlier stage, are economically more advanced. They not only exploited their own natural resources rapidly, but also used the natural resources of developing countries to grow even larger economies. As development progressed, the rich countries got richer while the poor nations got poorer. However, even the developed world has begun to realize that their lives were being seriously affected by the environmental consequences of development based on economic growth alone. This form of development did not add to the quality of life as the environmental conditions had begun to deteriorate.

By the 1970s, most development

specialists began to appreciate the fact that economic growth alone could not bring about a better way of life for people unless environmental conditions were improved. Development strategies in which only economic considerations were used, had begun to suffer from serious environmental problems due to air and water pollution, waste management, deforestation and variety of other ill effects that seriously affected peoples' well-being and health. There were also serious equity issues between the haves and the have-nots in society, at the national and global levels. The disparity in the lifestyles between the rich and the poor was made worse by these unsustainable development strategies.

Many decades ago, Mahatma Gandhi envisioned a reformed village community based on sound environmental management. He stressed the need for sanitation based on recycling human and animal manure and well-ventilated cottage built for recyclable material. He envisioned clean roads that were free of dust. His main objective was to use village-made goods instead of industrial products. All these principles are now considered part of sound long-term development. Gandhi had designed a sustainable lifestyle for himself when these concepts were not a part of general thinking. The idea of sustainable development grew from various environmental movements; however it was only clearly defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environ-

ment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission 1987) as: Development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This expresses the idea of environmental, economic and social equity within the limits of the world's natural resources. Sustainable development is based on improving the quality of life for all, especially the poor and deprived, within the carrying capacity of the supporting eco-systems. It is a process which leads to a better quality of life while reducing the impact on the environment. Its strength is that it acknowledges the interdependence of human needs and environmental requirements.

To ensure sustainable development, any activity that is expected to bring about economic growth must also consider its environmental impact (or environmental costs) so that it is more consistent with long-term growth and development. Many development projects- such as dams, mines, roads, industries and tourism development- have severe environmental consequences in terms of their natural resource use and their impact on bio-diversity. All these impacts must be studied before any development activity is even begun. Thus, for every project, in a strategy that looks at sustainable development, there must be a scientifically and honestly done EIA, without which the project must not be cleared.

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Developing Guwahati as a people-friendly city

By: Nava Thakuria



The virtual capital city of north-east India today supports nearly 1.2 million dwellers along with 6 to 8 lakh floating population and amazingly Guwahati is still expanding to the north bank of mighty Brahmaputra river. Identified as a strategic city while New Delhi is looking forward to south-east Asian nations, Guwahati has now an elected body to look after various needs of the residents. The recent elections of Guwahati Municipal Corporation, held after nine years, pave the way for a new body to take care of the prehistoric city with a sustainable growth.

As predicted the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party and its ally Asom Gana Parishad succeeded in winning 58 seats in the 60-member municipal corporation. Two seats were won by Asom Jatiya Parishad and Aam Admi Party nominees, but shockingly the main opposition party (Congress) failed to win a single seat. As the electronic voting machines were used in GMC polls for the first time to facilitate 7,97,807 voters (including 4,00,658 females and 26 third-genders), the results came within hours of the counting of votes. The issues surfaced during poll-campaigns include a safe & secured, clean & green, flash flood-free city with the regular supply of piped drinking water to households and other civic facilities meant for city-dwellers.

The new governing body needs to take some pragmatic steps to resolve various issues raised by the electorate. Guwahatians deserve a safe city with a smart police force working in synchronization with the residents. They should feel the confidence to go any police station any time with their grievances as well as important inputs necessitated for the larger interest. Street lights across the city must work and the installed CCTV cameras in various

points should function flawlessly. These all arrangements should work as a deterrent to the criminals. Children to senior citizens should be secured while moving around the city.

Public transport needs to be developed and managed in a dignified way so that everyone can travel safely. The commuters in the city should get benefits from the public transport till midnight, now which turns dead after 9 pm. The government-run city buses, if not the private ones, should ply on selected routes in the evening hours to cater the need of night shift employees in workplaces. Needless to say that more people use the public transport means the concerned authority's relief while managing the traffic on the road and it will finally help in reducing the degree of air (automobile) pollution significantly.

The garbage management system needs more efficient workforces. Open drains in some parts of the city may cause a major health hazard to the citizens. As the city experiences heavy rains in monsoon, the drains must have the capacity to take the sudden water load. Often the drains in city areas start overflowing after a downpour and the filth reaches the streets and even the

residential campuses. The water logging problem in many areas of Guwahati should be addressed scientifically.

As the city has over 15 small and medium hills with a large number of residents taking shelter there, necessary policies should be adopted to deal with the issue. The virgin hills, whichever left today, must be protected methodically. Many streams inside the city have almost died because of human aggression and a number of wetlands are on the verge of extinction. The authority must preserve the water bodies to protect the fragile environment of Guwahati.

The key problem faced by most Guwahatians for decades remains the scarcity of drinking water. Thousands of families have to buy water on a regular basis and the situation turns worse in pre-monsoon days. The groundwater depletion because of its excessive exploitation in the last few years has worsened the situation. In some areas the groundwater is found contaminated with fluoride and arsenic making the situation more complicated. If proper initiatives are not taken on time, it would emerge as a major health hazard to the residents.

Whoever visits the sprawling

city from outside expresses surprise why Guwahatians are deprived of water even though the mighty Brahmaputra river flows adjacent to it. The State governments in Dispur have taken various mega projects to supply drinking water to every household in the city, but the ground reality remains the same. The consumers are still waiting for the water, supplied regularly to their kitchens by the concerned authority. Judicial use of drinking water should also be promoted among the city people.

Many Guwahatians use the drinking water for all purposes from cleaning cars to gardening to washing clothes. The practice only reflects how much precious water the consumers misuse in their day-to-day life. The concept of rain water harvesting should be promoted so that the residents use the supplied water only for drinking purposes. The rest should be managed by the stored rain water to the optimum level. Nevertheless the residents deserved to be made collaborators in the growth and development of Guwahati.

In recent years, the government has initiated to develop North Guwahati to reduce the population pressure in the southern bank of Brahmaputra. After the IITG, various other important institutions including AIIMS Guwahati have been established in the northern bank. A new all weather bridge over Brahmaputra connecting the busiest city points with North Guwahati should ease the movement of commuters as well as the essential items. Finally the government should keep an eye on the expansion of the northern part of Guwahati so that it would not emerge as another unplanned city area in near future.

(The author is a northeast India-based journalist)

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India records 3,303 COVID-19 cases, 39 deaths

Agency
New Delhi, April 28:

India on Thursday reported 3,303 fresh COVID-19 cases that took its tally to 4,30,68,799, while the active cases increased to 16,980, according to Union health ministry data.

The daily cases crossed the 3,000-mark after 46 days. The death toll due to COVID-19 climbed to 5,23,693 with 39 more fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated.

The active cases comprise 0.04 per cent of the total infections. The national COVID-19 recovery rate stood at 98.74 per

cent, the ministry said.

An increase of 701 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 0.66 per cent and the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 0.61 per cent, the ministry said.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 4,25,28,126, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.22 per cent, it said.

The total number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide vaccination drive has exceeded 188.40

crore.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore mark on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4, 2021 and three crore on June 23.

The 39 new fatalities include 36 from Kerala, and one each from Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Of the total 5,23,693 deaths reported so far in the country, 1,47,838 were from Maharashtra, 68,952 from Kerala, 40,057 from Karnataka, 38,025 from Tamil Nadu, 26,170 from Delhi, 23,506 from Uttar Pradesh and 21,201 from West Bengal.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Security Forces apprehends UGs

IT News
Imphal, April 28:

Keithelmanbi and Loktak Battalion of Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) in joint operations with Manipur Police apprehended insurgents of proscribed groups PLA and UNLF from Imphal East and Bishnupur respectively on April 26.

Based on specific inputs, troops of Assam Rifles and Manipur Police launched joint operations which led to the apprehensions.

The apprehended insurgents were handed over to Sagolmang and Moirang Police Stations for further investigation.



Assam Rifles provides Medical Aid to Snake Bite victim

IT News
Imphal, April 28:

Churachandpur Battalion under the aegis of IGAR (S) extended life saving medical assistance to a snake bite vic-

tim of Gangpimawlliv, Churachandpur district, Manipur on April 26.

A 28 year old person was bitten by a venomous snake and developed symptoms of mild fever, vomiting and head-

ache since the time of bite. The villagers rushed the individual to medical aid post of Assam Rifles located at Veng, CCPur where life saving medical assistance was rendered to stabilised his condition.

Prashant Kishor's Congress gambit still uncertain

Conflict of interest with I-PAC Servicing Rival Parties

By: Harihar Swarup
New Delhi, April 28:

From playing a key role in Narendra Modi's prime ministerial campaign in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, to taking a political plunge four years later by joining the JD(U) and leaving it in a huff, to negotiate the Congress for any entry now, Prashant Kishor has covered a long distance in Indian politics in the last eight years. But unpredictability, or otherwise inconsistency, driven by ambition has been his hall mark. And, many political leaders who have engaged with the sharp tactician in the last eight years can vouch for that. Some say he is full of contradictions.

Prashant Kishor's Congress saga is a case in point. His latest tweet dated April 26, 2022 says: "I declined the generous offer of Congress to join the party as part of the EAG & take responsibility for the elections. In my humble opinion, more than me the party needs leadership and collective will to fix the deep rooted structural problems through transformational reforms." Quite obviously, the much-hyped courtship between the grand old party and the whiz-kid of grand strategy has once again run into choppy waters. Yet, keen observers of both Kishor's public overtures and his equally public rebuffs are hardly surprised.

In a twist, a presentation he had reportedly made for the party last year, wherein he suggested a non-Congress leader be made the chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, was leaked. Kishor then had had a one-on-one meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi. Sources in the party said it was ready to induct him into the party fold and that he was also open to the idea. He could join in shortly, sources said.

In May 2021, Kishor had his first serious set of task with the Congress. In fact, his meeting with Sonia Gandhi took place in the backdrop of him and his political consultancy firm I-PAC working with the Congress's rival, Trinamool Congress, for the West Bengal Assembly elections. Kishor gave Sonia a presentation a month later on how to revive the Congress. The Gandhi engaged him and both Rahul and Priyanka met him in July.

But, around the same time, Kishor also met NCP President Sharad Pawar, and if sources in the NCP are to be believed,

suggested a grand plan — the merger of NCP and Trinamool Congress as the alternative to the Indian National Congress. He is also said to have promised the NCP and Trinamool Congress the stewardship of the UPA. He is said to have assured the two regional bigwigs that he could get several "disgruntled" leaders from the Congress and some even from the BJP, including two Lok Sabha MPs, to the new entity, which could replace the Congress as the key opposition party and pose a significant challenge to the BJP and Narendra Modi.

"I don't know how he is now discussing with the Congress a plan for its revival. He had shared with us some other plans", an NCP leader said.

Meanwhile, at that time, his talks with the Congress did not fructify. Neither did his NCP-TMC merger idea. Soon after, Kishor publicly turned against Gandhi. He was also said to be behind the increasingly vocal idea that a non-Congress leader take over as UPA chairperson, a post currently held by Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

After signing up with the TMC for the 2022 Goa assembly elections, a state where the Congress has deep stakes, Prashant Kishor tweeted in December last year that leadership of opposition was not "the divine right of any individual, especially when the party has lost more than 90% of elections in the last ten years". Let opposition leadership be decided "democratically", he wrote.

The disastrous Goa foray of the TMC was another turning point in the career of Kishor. His role in designing the party's campaign and hyping up its chances there soon came under question, even in the party where Mamata Banerjee's writ reigns supreme.

It was against this background that Kishor reopened his talks with the Congress, the bad blood of last year apparently forgotten. Kishor was also said to be keen on joining the Congress — a point that remained unresolved last time too. Apart from working out a role for him in the grand old party with its traditional set ways, there are other issues with it. Kishor's firm I-PAC has lucrative contacts as of now with the YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh and the TRS in Telangana — both states where the Congress has presence.

Kishor is also said to be nursing hopes of launching a

political outfit of his own in Bihar. His joining the JD(U) was a way of testing the electoral waters.

Were Prashant Kishor to join the Congress, I-PAC working for its rivals would give rise to conflict of interest. It is interesting in this context that the Congress has cleverly made it public that it is engaging with him, unlike when it held talks with other election consultants. In an interview with the media last week, AICC general secretary in-charge of organisation K C Venugopal said: "Prashant Kishor has made a detailed presentation for the 2024 election strategy. It needs some detailed discussions and the Congress President set up a small group to talk about this entire presentation. That group will submit a report within a week's time for a final decision."

Some voices considered close to the high command have also talked favourably of Kishor joining the Congress. Other party leaders also say there is no hurry in his joining the party, despite huge reservations from a section who fear they will be left redundant in this new direction the Congress taking.

However, Kishor's latest tweet does pour cold water on such hot speculations, both from within and outside the Congress party. In fact, political observers have already opined that Kishor's "polite declining" has less to do with him, and more with the Congress's strong reservations about the strategist's overt preference for a supreme

commander to report to and advise, such as in the case of Narendra Modi and Mamata Banerjee. Congress, for all its inertia towards the Gandhis, has an array of multi-faceted, politically well-heeled leaders, and therefore, Kishor's one-person pit-stop will go against the grain of the culture of debate and discussion with which the party still operates. Moreover, Kishor's strategy of building/hyphing the cult of the supreme leader is exactly what the coalition of opposition leaders are rallying against. In addition, Kishor's demand that he be made to decide who to serve election tickets to would also do a disservice to the grassroots organisational structure, especially, the party cadres who work tirelessly, and the state Congress committees which have deep roots in every part of the country.

At the end of the day, the Indian National Congress, with its inception in the anti-colonial struggle against the British Empire and its illustrious history of 137 years, cannot simply be reduced to yet another "client" of Prashant Kishor, a strategist with scant respect for the hard deliberative work that is democracy, both internal as well as external. Hence, unless Kishor comes to see Congress's very grounded objections to his "600-slide" master-plan, and unless the grand old party becomes more nimble with its own place in the current scheme of things, the middle ground of real negotiations will keep eluding both.

(IPAService)

Health Ministry will wait for NTAGI recommendation to begin vaccination of 5 to 12-year-olds, says Mansukh Mandaviya

Agency
New Delhi, April 28:

The Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said that Ministry of Health will be waiting for National Technical Advisory Group of India (NTAGI) recommendation to begin the vaccination of 5 to 12-year-olds. The health minister's statement comes days after vaccine maker Biological E. Ltd on Tuesday announced that its Covid-19 vaccine Corbevax has received a nod from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use authorisation for the 5-12-year age group.

The approval comes after the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) recommendation based on the review of interim safety and immunogenicity data of Corbevax for this age bracket. This approval comes a month after Corbevax was given the nod for children between 12



and 15 years, Hyderabad-based BE said.

The company has developed India's first indigenous sub-unit Covid-19 against the novel coronavirus. It performed a multi-centric, Phase 2/3 clinical trial in 624 children aged between 5 and 18 in two age subsets, i.e., 12 to less than 18 years and 5 to less than 12 years. As a part of the trial, children were administered two doses of 0.5 ml each of the vaccine or placebo in a gap of 28 days.

The company revealed that it has so far manufactured 30 crore doses of Corbevax and has already supplied nearly 10 crore doses to the government.

Currently, over 3 crore doses of Corbevax have been administered in children between 12-15 years of age. With an approval for the 5-12 age group, this move will not only reduce the risks children face from the infectious disease, but it will also enable them to concentrate on their education and social development, which were severely impacted by the pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccination for minors in India started from January 3 onwards for those in the 15-18 age group with Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. The drive later expanded on March 16 to include children aged above 12 for Corbevax. India is currently administering two COVID-19 vaccines for children above 12.

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A Year of Hunger

In 2022, a war between two nations is directly influencing global food, fuel and fertiliser supplies and prices. As the world warms and our agricultural systems begin to fail in some areas, it is a certainty that climate, food insecurity and war will combine to produce more suffering.

Rich countries are not immune

Rich countries like Australia are learning food insecurity can affect everyone. The pandemic years have led to heightened financial vulnerability and food insecurity among more Australians than ever.

The pandemic comes on top of climate change-linked weather events disrupting food supply due to unprec-

edented bushfires and floods. The record-breaking rains have made it harder to sell record bumper grain crops at a good price due to water damage to crops as well as export infrastructure damaged by the previous prolonged drought cycle.

Australia exports enough food for 70 million people. That can give a false sense of security. In reality, our position as the most arid inhabited continent in a steadily warming world has led to drops of up to 35% in farm profitability since 2000.

What can be done?

For many in Ukraine, other conflict zones and refugee camps, life becomes a question of knowing how and when the next meal will come.

People who have experienced true hunger know the memory will linger even after living in a food-rich country for decades, as one author knows from living through the war in former Yugoslavia.

Knowledge about food is critical to resilience: food production and preserving skills, diversity of edible weeds and foraging opportunities, how supply chains work and the consequences of trading food in the face of hunger.

To build resilience in the face of these intensifying and overlapping threats, we must move away from our current dependence on wheat, corn and rice for fully 40% of our calories. Of the world's thousands of plant species, we farm around 170 on a commercial

basis. And of these, about a dozen supply most of our needs.

As the threats to food security intensify, we will also need to question why basic foodstuffs are commodities of profit. A radical but widely advocated approach is the model in which foods are traded equitably to address need. Access to food is, after all, a human right.

If we can embed more equitable and resilient food systems, we will be better placed to adapt to climate change already locked in by previous emissions, as well as dampen the sparks of conflict. Improving the way we produce food can also help us tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

We are heartened by grow-

ing interest in urban food production, efforts to reimagine distribution as well as regenerative agriculture and technological innovations on farms. Taken together, these changes can shorten supply chains and increase food diversity and resilience.

Why does that matter? Because producing food closer to home reduces the risk of food insecurity linked to climate change, war and other disruptions.

As more and more of us move to cities, we will have to embrace greater urban production of food and support for the family farms and smallholders who still, to this day, produce more than half of every calorie consumed by humanity.

Gehlot asks Centre to cut excise duty for states to reduce VAT on petrol, diesel

Agency
New Delhi, April 28:

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi perhaps by mistake referred to Jaipur among the places with higher fuel prices and pointed out petrol and diesel are costlier in Bhopal in Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ruled Madhya Pradesh.

The comments came hours after Modi asked states, including Rajasthan, to reduce Value Added Tax (VAT) on fuels at a meeting with chief ministers.

Gehlot said the BJP-led government at the Centre has earned about 26 lakh crore from excise duty on fuels in eight years. He said this is the highest any government has earned in the country's history by taxing petrol and diesel.

Modi said the Centre cut the excise duty but many states did not reduce VAT to provide relief to people.

Gehlot maintained Rajasthan reduced VAT by 2% on petrol and diesel in January 2021 even as the Centre did not reduce the excise duty. He added the Centre imposed a new cess of Rs. 4 on diesel and



Rs. 2.5 per litre on petrol in the name of agriculture infrastructure and development two days after the state budget (2021-22). Gehlot said due to this, people in Rajasthan could not benefit from the VAT reduction.

In November, the Centre reduced the excise duty on petrol by Rs. 5 and diesel by 10 per litre. The duty on petrol was increased by 10 and diesel by Rs. 13 per litre in May 2020. Gehlot said this means excise duty increase was not even reduced completely.

Gehlot said states levy VAT on the Centre's excise duty. He added by reducing the excise duty, the VAT is automatically reduced. For this reason, due to the reduction in excise duty in November,

Rajasthan automatically reduced VAT by Rs. 1.80 per litre on petrol and Rs. 2.60 per litre on diesel.

"To give relief to the common person, the state government on November 17, 2021, reduced VAT on petrol by 4.96% and on diesel by 6.70%. Due to the reduction made by the state, there was a revenue loss of about Rs. 6300 crore per year," said Gehlot. He added Modi only mentioned the revenue loss of Rs. 6000 crores of BJP-ruled Karnataka and Rs. 3500-4000 crores of Gujarat. "These two states would probably have been mentioned in view of the upcoming assembly elections there."

Gehlot said Modi talked about VAT but not about the

Centre's excise duty. "In May 2014, when Modi became the Prime Minister, excise duty was Rs. 9.20 per litre on petrol and Rs. 3.46 per litre on diesel, but today excise duty is Rs. 27.90 per litre on petrol and Rs. 21.80 per litre on diesel."

Gehlot said during the previous Congress-led government, the states used to get their share of excise duty. "But now the share of the states has been continuously reduced to just a few paise per litre, so the states are forced to increase their VAT."

State BJP chief Satish Poonia said the Centre has reduced excise duty on petrol and diesel but the Gehlot government was not reducing VAT and that is why people are not getting relief. He added the BJP-ruled states such as Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana have reduced VAT for relief to the common person.

"Due to the high VAT, smuggling of petroleum products is at its peak in the state... [This has] led to the closure of 1,500 petrol pumps in about 17 border districts of the state."

Awareness programme on "IP and Youth: Innovating for a Better Future" held at Madeligaon LP School



IT Correspondent
Guwahati, April 28

On the occasion of World IPR Day, April 26, 2022, the DPIIT-IPR Chair of National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam along with the student volunteers from BALLB Vth semester of the University organised an awareness programme on the theme of World IPR Day 2022 "IP and Youth: Innovating for a Better Future" among the young

women weavers associated with ENHANSE Foundation at Madeligaon LP School, Udalguri District.

The Research Assistants of the DPIIT-IPR Chair of National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam, Ms. Sharmistha Baruah and Ms. Dolly Kumar deliberated on the concept of Intellectual Property Rights and the significant role played by the people at the grassroot level such as artisans, weavers etc., in creation

of intellectual properties. The Programme was an endeavour towards orienting young women weavers of Madeligaon village on protection of their IPs by means of various IP components such as, Geographical Indications, Industrial Designs, etc.

This initiative has been towards supporting the young women weavers of the region in enhancing the market potential and credibility of their produce.

Covid cases rising in Delhi but people not getting severe disease: Health Min Satyendar Jain

Agency
New Delhi, April 28:

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said that though COVID-19 cases have increased in the capital, people are not developing severe disease and the hospitalisation rate is low. He

attributed the low hospitalisation rate to vaccination and naturally acquired immunity.

"Though Covid cases have increased in Delhi, people are not developing severe disease and the hospitalisation rate is low. This is because our population is fully vaccinated

and a large number of people have had the disease in the past," Jain told reporters here. He also said there is no need to panic about Covid cases among children. Several serosurveys have shown that though the infection rate among children and adults is almost the same, the severity

of disease is "very low" in children.

With the national capital witnessing an uptick in coronavirus infections over the past few days, the number of active cases on Wednesday stood at 4,832, up from 601 on April 11, according to health department data.

During PM Modi's visit, AAP volunteers detained by police for staging protest in Guwahati

Agency
Guwahati, April 28:

Several leaders and workers of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Assam were detained by the police on Thursday in Guwahati for staging protest over high

prices of commodities.

The Assam AAP volunteers staged their protest during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state.

The Assam AAP leaders and workers were detained from Ganeshguri area near Dispur in Guwahati.

The detained Assam AAP leaders and workers were taken to the Kahilipara-based camp of 4th Assam police battalion in Guwahati.

The Assam AAP leaders and workers were dragged by the police in Guwahati while detaining them.

Sports

Santosh Trophy: Kerala face Karnataka and West Bengal take on Manipur in Semifinal



Kerala and West Bengal team

Agency
Malappuram, April 28:

Kerala would look to move a step closer to winning their seventh Santosh Trophy title when they square off against four-time champions Karnataka in the first semi-final here on Thursday.

In the second semi-final on Friday, the most successful team in the history of the Santosh Trophy, West Bengal will face Manipur at the same venue.

Kerala progressed to the semi-final round of the tournament after finishing as Group A toppers. They collected 10 points from four games and are the only unbeaten side in the tournament.

The 2017-18 champions kicked off the tournament with a thumping 5-0 win over Rajasthan. In their next game, they passed the West Bengal test with flying colours before playing out a 2-2 draw with Meghalaya. They edged past Punjab 2-1 in their most recent game to finish the group round as table toppers.

Kerala captain Jijo Joseph is the tournament's highest scorer so far, and when asked about it, he said, "Scoring isn't essential to me, I just want to win every game, and that is what I am concentrating on right now." "The most important thing for me is to win this game and get to the final."

"Karnataka is a good side," Kerala coach Bino George

Chiramel Padinjatharathala remarked when asked about their opponent.

"They were outstanding against Gujarat in their most recent match and are in excellent form."

"All of the teams that have advanced to the semifinals are good, and now it's a do-or-die situation for us," he said.

Karnataka, meanwhile, finished second in Group B with seven points in their kitty. They won against Gujarat and Services with their only defeat coming at the hands of Manipur. They were held to a 3-3 draw by Odisha in their first game.

"Kerala have home advantage but we will give our best in the game. Our team is motivated

after our last win and we will not leave any stone unturned to win this one," Karnataka boss Biby Thomas Muttath said.

Manipur qualified for the last four after winning Group B with nine points. They won three of their four group stage games, with their lone defeat coming against Odisha. In their most recent game, they thrashed Karnataka 3-0.

Manipur coach. Gift Raikhan said, "We've prepared for West Bengal and will give it our all in the semi-finals."

"We respect the West Bengal team, but we're prepared. We're hoping to put up a good fight on Friday and make it to the final after so many years," Raikhan added.

West Bengal reached the semi-finals after finishing second in Group A. West Bengal won their group stage games against Punjab, Meghalaya and Rajasthan, with their solitary loss coming against Kerala.

"We'll try to reach the summit clash once more," West Bengal coach Ranjan Bhattacherjee stated.

"I believe our match against Manipur will be a tense affair since they are a strong team with some outstanding players," he said.

Umrans' fifer goes in vain as Gujarat beat Hyderabad by 5 wickets



Agency
Mumbai, April 28:

Gujarat Titans defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets in an IPL 2022 match at the Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday. Pacer Umrans Malik's maiden fifer (5/25) was in vain.

Inviting Sunrisers Hyderabad to bat first, brilliant fifties by Abhishek Sharma (65 off 42), Aiden Markram (56 off 40), and a late blitz by Shashank Singh (25 not out off 6) propelled them to 195/6 in 20 overs.

Gujarat's wicket-takers were Mohammed Shami (3/39), Yash Dayal (1/24), and Alzarri Joseph (1/35).

Wriddhiman Saha, the wicket-keeper batter, smashed a solid half-century (68 off 38) to keep Gujarat in the chase. Apart from him, most of Gujarat's batters — Shubman Gill (22), David Miller (17), and Hardik Pandya (10) — failed to score big despite getting starts.

Lower down the order,



however, it was Rahul Tewatia (40 not out off 21 balls) and Rashid Khan (31 not out off 11 balls) who kept Gujarat in the game until the final over.

Gujarat needed 22 runs in the final over of the innings, which was bowled by Marco Jansen, and Tewatia hit one six while Rashid smashed three sixes to get their team over the

line.

Brief Scores:

Sunrisers Hyderabad: 195/6 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 65, Aiden Markram 56; Mohammed Shami 3/39).

Gujarat Titans: 199 for 5 in 20 overs (Wriddhiman Saha 68, Rahul Tewatia 40 not out, Rashid Khan 31 not out; Umrans Malik 5/25).