

NEWS CAPSULE

Truckers' strike

KOLKATA, March 26: Truckers today threatened to remain off the road across India indefinitely from April 1 in protest against the sharp increase in third party insurance premium and government charges. - IANS

J-K gunfight

SRINAGAR, March 26: A wanted commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen who were today killed in a gunfight in J and K's Pulwama district. - IANS

2 die in mishap

BAHIAH CHARJALA, March 26: The driver and helper of a dumper were killed when the vehicle rammed into a truck on NH 31 near the Charsangi rail station last night. The victims have been identified as Amzad Ali (20) and Md. Md. Sharif (20). This dumper was without registration number. - Correspondent

The Assam Tribune on Internet
<http://www.assamtribune.com> &
<http://paper.assamtribune.com>



How to prepare for
 Assam Public Service
 Commission exam – I
 Jharna Patgiri

The importance of
 Aptitude test in choosing
 the right career
 Meenakshi Medhi

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Govt may table GST Bills in House today

NEW DELHI, March 26: The government is likely to table supplementary goods and services tax legislations in Parliament tomorrow.

Sources said C-GST, UT-GST and the compensation law are likely to be introduced in the Lok Sabha tomorrow and could be taken up for discussion as early as March 28.

Also, amendments to the excise and Customs Act to abolish various cess as well as furnishing Bills for exports and imports under the new GST regime will be placed before the House.

The Business Advisory Committee of the Lok Sabha is likely to meet tomorrow to decide on the duration of discussion on the Bills, the sources added.

According to the sources, the government is looking at

passage of the GST Bills in the Lower House by March 29 or latest by March 30.

Then, these will move to the Rajya Sabha and this gives the government enough time to bring back any amendment adopted by the Lok Sabha.

The current session of Parliament ends on April 12.

Although the legislations

will be introduced as Money Bills, the government wants discussion in both the Houses, the sources said.

The government has set a target of July 1 for rollout of GST, which will subsume excise, service tax, VAT and other local levies.

Once these Bills are cleared by Parliament, the states will then take the state GST (S-GST) Bill to their respective assemblies. S-GST has been prepared as a model of the central GST (C-GST), with each state incorporating state-specific exceptions.

The integrated GST (I-GST) deals in taxation of inter-state movement of goods and services while the Union Territory GST (UT-GST) Bill covers taxation in UTs. - PTI

CM calls on Rajnath, raises key issues

KALYAN BAROOAH

NEW DELHI, March 26: In a move to ensure implementation of the Assam Accord, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today urged the Centre to constitute a special committee to oversee implementation of the Clause 6 of the Accord concerning Constitutional safeguards for the indigenous people of the State.

Sonowal made the suggestion before Home Minister Rajnath Singh when he called

on him here this morning. The meeting saw Sonowal raise several issues that have been dogging the State Government, including granting of ST status to six communities, appointment of a new interlocutor for talks with the pro-talk ULFA and all overground factions of NDFB, funds for NRC update, payments to Home Guards, Village Defence personnel, etc.

He also sought additional Central paramilitary forces, (See page 4)

and a discussion on 'Nagaland' between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M).

The Chief Minister raised the issue of Th Muivah's recent announcement over integration of Nagaland inhabited areas.

Later, briefing newsmen,

Sonowal said the special committee on implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord would comprise experts from legal, constitutional, sociological, historical and cultural

(See page 4)

Tarun Duvarah award presented



Governor Banwarilal Purohit with the award winners Bishnu Khargoria (2nd R) and Dhrendra Nath Paul (3rd R) and other dignitaries at Rabindra Bhawan in Guwahati on Sunday. Photo: Samarendra Sarma

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: The Tarun Duvarah Memorial Oil India Award - 2016 was

today conferred on versatile artist Bishnu Khargoria and eminent terracotta artist Dhrendra Nath Paul in recognition of their remarkable

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TEs cough up Rs 30 cr PF dues

RITURAJ BORTHAKUR

GUWAHATI, March 26: With the Assam Tea Employees Provident Fund Organisation (ATEPFO) wielding the big stick, tea gardens in Assam have begun coughing up the outstanding Provident Fund contributions to the workers.

Over the last one month, since the ATEPFO had begun initiating legal proceedings against them, the defaulting gardens have paid up Rs 30 crore of the total outstanding Rs 50 crore PF dues.

The ATEPFO had already sanctioned lodging of FIRs against 125 defaulting tea gardens. These are chronic defaulters who have accumulated dues for over six months.

"Now we feel cases won't be required against most of the gardens, as except for a few most have started paying the dues. For example, in Golaghat district, we had lodged 13 police cases, of which 12 have already paid up their dues," sources in the ATEPFO told *The Assam Tribune*.

The ATEPFO may, however, initiate legal proceedings against four to five gardens which have been unrelenting, including one against a former MLA and ACMS leader who owns a garden in Tinsukia district.

The organisation has attached five tea gardens so far.

The overall outstanding PF amount is to the tune of around Rs 71 crore. Now, the ATEPFO is looking into those gardens which have outstanding amounts for a period of less than six months.

"We will now begin the process of seizing tea leaves, vehicles and other property of this section of defaulters," the sources said.

"We won't allow the gardens to deprive the workers of their dues. To deter the garden from continuing the practice, (See page 4)

Subodh to be produced in court today

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: Dhemaji police has added two more additional sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to the case registered against Subodh Biswas and others in connection with the Silapather accident.

The two additional sections of the IPC are Sections 353 and 120(B). He is facing charges (Silapather police station case number 67/17) under Sections 147/148/149/148/325/307/427/153A of the IPC.

Meanwhile, Subodh Biswas along with co-accused Subash Biswas, who were arrested from West Bengal on March 22, are likely to be produced before the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), Dhemaji tomorrow. Both the accused (See page 4)

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CM asks ministers to be accessible to public

GORAKHPUR, March 26: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Aditya Nath Yogi today asked all BJP office bearers and public representatives not to undertake any contractual work and instead monitor them for effective execution.

He said his unprecedented win in the recent Assembly elections had only increased the responsibilities of the party and its workers.

"No office bearer of the party or any public representative should undertake any contractual work (thekeadaan). They should rather monitor them. And, if they find any discrepancy, they can inform me, so that action could be taken immediately against the guilty," he said.

Addressing people at the BJP's regional office on the second day of his Gorakhpur visit, he said,

SC judge for exemplary punishment to curb acid attacks

JAIPUR, March 26: Expressing concern over incidents of acid attacks, Supreme Court judge Arun Mishra today said exemplary punishment is required to curb such offences.

Law enforcement agencies should check illegal sale of acid. Intense awareness campaign should be conducted to make the victims and their family aware of legal aid and other schemes for them, he said at the inaugural session of a state-level colloquium on Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

"Most of the victims of acid attacks are women. They suffer physically, mentally and it is difficult for them to adjust in the mainstream of the society. The Supreme Court has ordered that such victims should be included in disability list," Mishra said.

Punishment in acid attack cases should be exemplary to curb such offences, Mishra said.

A woman was allegedly forced to drink acid by two persons on March 23 on board a train in Uttar Pradesh. That was the fourth attack on the woman.

On the issue of child marriage, Mishra said besides punishment, education and awareness efforts are needed to curb the menace which puts the body and mind of children in grave danger.

Acting Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court and Executive Chairman of Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA) KS Jhaveri, acting Education Special of UNICEF Sulagna Roy, Member Secretary of RSLSA SK Jain and were among those present in the programme.

The colloquium was organised jointly by the RSLSA and the UNICEF - PTI

"After victory, a number of important works have to be accomplished. The people of the state have reposed their faith in us, and the onus is on us to meet their expectations, while ensuring accountability of our actions."

Aditya Nath also laid stress on sense of responsibility and accountability among his ministerial colleagues.

"I am the CM. Surya Pratap Shahji is my Cabinet minister. But the post of CM or Cabinet Minister is not meant for flaunting. In fact, it is an indicator of one's responsibility and accountability towards the public, which elected you with an overwhelming majority," he said, pointing towards some ministers present there.

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, who is still the local MP, urged the party to gear up for

the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

"In the next two years, you have to work tirelessly irrespective of the fact that there is sunshine, rain or biting cold. Efforts should be made to ensure that the welfare

schemes of the Centre percolate to the last strata of the society, and needy people are able to avail its benefits," he said, amidst a thunderous applause from the audience.

Underscoring the need for improved work culture, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister also said people who were prepared to work for 18-20 hours a day are "most welcome" to join him, the rest are free to leave.

"Time has come that we should work 18-20 hours a day. There no time for any entertainment (maaj masti)," he said.

He also urged the people to help him break the negative image of UP.

"For the past few years Uttar Pradesh has been defined as a state from whose boundaries begins darkness, from where the pot-holed roads begin and the place from where the women start to feel insecure. I was to break this mindset," he said, and added that he wants to make UP a place, where women feel safe and secure.

Aditya Nath said, "I would like to assure that in the next two months, people would come to know how a state government should work. I have got an opportunity to clean the mess (kachchha saaf karne ka maulka mila hai), and I will do it."

He also advised his ministers that they should be accessible to the public. "The doors of your house and office must remain open to the public. This would ensure that the government is able to reach to the last person of the society. No one would go to bed empty stomach and money would not be a constraint in marriage of any girl," he said.

Referring to the acid attack on a woman from Rae Bareli, Aditya Nath, said, "The officials are working on 'puraana dhaar' (old style). I went to KGMU to inquire about the well-being of the woman and gave

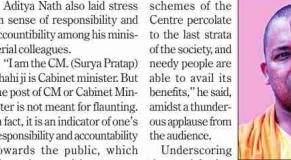
them ultimatum that everything must be done in the next couple of hours."

He also referred to the Agra loot, which was worked out.

"There is no place for those who give patronage to the goonda elements, mafaa, criminal and other rogue elements. They have the option of leaving UP or else they would land in places designated for them (jails)," he said, while hinting at massive revamping of law and order.

He also talked about people committing electricity theft facing the music. "The situation has already improved in Gorakhpur and it would soon improve in the state as well," he said.

"If you find any discrepancy or anomaly, just message me the relevant details. I will ensure action," he said. - PTI



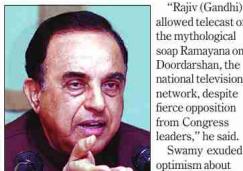
Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh in a group photograph during the Passing Out Parade of the Assistant Commandants at the BSF Academy, Tekanpur, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on Saturday. - UNI

'Rajiv only good human being in family'

PATNA, March 26: Senior BJP leader Subramanian Swamy today praised former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as the only good human being in the (Nehru-Gandhi) family and said he had contributed to awakening of the Hindus.

"Rajiv Gandhi was the only good human being in the (Nehru-Gandhi) family and had contributed to awakening of the Hindus," he told reporters here.

Swamy, a Rajya Sabha MP, recalled that the former Prime Minister had allowed telecast of popular mythological serial Ramayana on Doordarshan, and later got the locks of Ram temple at Ayodhya opened for prayers.



"Rajiv (Gandhi) allowed telecast of the mythological soap Ramayana on Doordarshan, the national television network, despite fierce opposition from Congress leaders," he said.

Swamy exuded optimism about resolution of the vexed Ayodhya dispute in the wake of the Supreme Court's prodding to the contending parties to work out an off-the-court settlement.

The senior BJP leader took a dig at the Congress over its electoral reverses, saying, "The Congress appears to be in a mood to commit suicide... We are there to carry out its funeral." Swamy was here to deliver a lecture on the Ayodhya issue. - PTI

New panel for backward classes to have power of civil court

NEW DELHI, March 26: Aiming to further consolidate its hold among the backward classes, the BJP-led NDA government is set to accord the newly-approved constitutional body for them the powers of civil courts.

Following BJP's resounding victory in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls in which the backward classes played a decisive role, the party-led NDA government approved last week the setting up of National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEB).

Fulfilling the long-pending demand for a constitutional

body for the OBCs, the Union Cabinet under chairpersonship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved last week the setting up of the NCSEB and decided to replace the law under which the existing National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was set up.

The NCBC is a statutory body for the backward classes under the Social Justice Ministry. It will be replaced by the NCSEB. The Bill to provide the constitutional status to the new body will be introduced in Parliament.

Unlike NCBC, the proposed NCSEB can look into the cases of grievances by back-

ward classes. And if needed, the new body can summon the accused and award punishment as it will have powers equivalent of a civil court, said the sources.

The newly-approved commission will have more teeth compared to the present body and the castes which will be included by this new body in the central list of the OBCs cannot be removed as it will have the constitutional mandate, the sources said.

The NCBC's duties included receiving representations from the persons belonging to the backward classes on various issues like discrimination faced by them, non-implementation of reservation rules by authorities etc.

It was, however, not empowered to look into the grievances of the people of Other Backward Classes, whereas the National Commission for Scheduled Castes was the competent authority to look into all the grievances, rights and safeguards relating to scheduled castes.

The new Commission will comprise a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and three other members. Interestingly, the government's move comes at a time when the Jats are demanding OBC status for the community. - PTI

Education institutes need to focus on research: Javadekar

GURGAON, March 26: Union HRD minister Prakash Javadekar has said education institutes need to focus on research in order to be a part of India's growth story.

"India needs expertise in all sectors to manage the economy. We need to realise that in order to be part of growth story of India, education institute need to focus on research," he said yesterday.

Addressing the students of a private management institute here at their convocation through video conference, Javadekar said, "As the economy grows, we need good leaders and better managers from our educational institute. Management institutes will

provide training to them manage the economy of India".

He also spoke to the students about problems faced by the Indian economy at present and various employment generating and skill-building projects undertaken by the Centre.

UGC chairperson Ved Prakash, who was the guest of honour at the convocation, said, "Institutes of learning are the most enduring organisations in the world and take the society to the next stage of development."

Sanjay Dhande, the chairman of the Management Development Institute (MDI), also addressed the students at the programme. - PTI

Archaeologists find world's largest capstone in Telangana

HYDERABAD, March 26: The archaeology department of Telangana has discovered the world's largest capstone after excavating an ancient human burial site in Siddipet district, officials said.

"The ancient human burial site excavated by Telangana Archaeology in Narmatura village in Nangunuru mandal has led to a stunning discovery of the world's largest capstone," said D Ramulu Naik, assistant director, Archaeology Department.

The efforts to lift this massive capstone was coordinated by SS Rangacharyulu, archaeology consultant and K Padmanabha, assistant director (museums), as this mission required great precision and co-ordination. Depar-

tment officials said.

A large crane lifted this huge



capstone at the excavation site in Narmatura village on March 21, they said adding, "the capstone of the menhir burial reportedly weighs about 40 tonnes".

The department is all set to undertake DNA testing of various artefacts that have been discovered at this site which will help in tracing the history of prehistoric humans, their food habits, lifestyle and how their population later became extinct, the officials said. - PTI

Three arrested in UP for illegal slaughter

MUZAFFARNAGAR, March 26: Three persons have been arrested for alleged illegal slaughter of a cow after over 20 kg of meat was seized from their house at Madhavi village in Shamli district, police said today. Acting on a tip-off, police raided the houses last evening and seized around 26 kg of suspected beef, following which the three persons were held, police said, adding, another managed to escape. A case has been registered under the Uttar Pradesh Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, police added. In Muzaffarnagar district, police raided a house and seized seven buffaloes which had been allegedly kept for slaughter. Two persons have been taken into custody. - PTI

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Carrie Lam is congratulated by her husband and son after she won the election for Hong Kong's next Chief Executive in Hong Kong, China on Sunday. - UNI

Indian man 'racially' abused, assaulted in Aus

MELBOURNE/KOTTAYAM, March 26: An Indian man was allegedly assaulted by a group of teenagers, including a girl, who hurled racial abuses at him at a restaurant in Australia's Tasmania state, a week after a Catholic priest of Indian heritage was stabbed in the neck at a church in Melbourne.

I-Max Joy, who is pursuing a nursing course and working as a part time taxi driver in Australia, alleged that five people including a girl hurled racial abuses like "you bloody black Indians" at him and assaulted him up at the McDonald's restaurant at North Hobart.

33-year-old Joy, who hails from Puttupalli in Kerala's Kottayam district, told PTI that the incident took place when he went to the restaurant for a coffee after returning from a trip.

He alleged that the five accused were arguing with a worker inside the store but soon turned their attention to him the moment they noticed him.

When others in the restaurant telephoned the police, the attackers left, but they returned later and assaulted him again. Joy was admitted to Royal Hobart Hospital with bleeding wounds. He was later discharged from hospital and he reported the incident to police.

"They were angry at the McDonald's staff

but turned their anger on me in the car park and then inside the store," he said.

Joy, who has been living in Hobart for the last eight years, was quoted as saying by Australian media that "the racial mood is definitely changing. It is continuous now. Many other drivers have been abused but not everyone reports it to the police."

Joy has sought intervention of External Affairs Ministry to ensure punishment to the culprits.

He alleged that there was no serious effort from the authorities to bring the guilty to justice.

Meanwhile, Kottayam Lok Sabha MP Jose

K Mani condemned the incident and said he will raise the issue with the External Affairs Ministry tomorrow.

On March 20, an Indian-origin Catholic priest was stabbed in the neck at a church in Melbourne by a man who called him unqualified to say mass as he was an Indian, prompting the Indian consulate to take up the matter with the police.

A man armed with a knife approached Tomy Kalathoor Mathew, 48, in the church foyer moments before the Italian-language mass at St Matthew's Parish in Fawkner. - PTI

Hasina asks ultas to return to mainstream

DHAKA, March 26: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today urged militants not to choose the wrong path of terrorism, and return to the mainstream as she greeted the people on Bangladesh's 47th Independence and National Day amid a series of terror attacks in the country.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Hasina paid floral tributes to the martyrs of 1971 Liberation War at the National Memorial in Savar at the outskirts of Dhaka.

Hasina said the ongoing drive against terrorism, militancy and drug addiction would continue and that, these issues would be dealt with an iron hand.

The prime minister urged those wasting their lives in suicide attacks to return to the right path and assured them of doing whatever necessary to ensure their livelihoods.

"But, I will urge them (militants) not to choose the wrong path of suicide attacks as well as the path of terrorism and militancy," she was quoted as saying by The Daily Star.

While addressing a rally at the Bangabandhu National Stadium to mark the 47th Independence and National Day, she asked students to listen to the advice of their guardians and teachers and never indulge in and go to the wrong path of terrorism, militancy and drug addiction.

After her address, she took salute from the march past by the students of various schools while Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque was present on the occasion.

"It is the day of saving self-identity of the nation, and it is the day of breaking the shackles of subjugation. - PTI

Hollywood celebs ring in Elton John's 70th birthday

LOS ANGELES, March 26: Several Hollywood biggies such as Lady Gaga, Stevie Wonder and Neil Patrick Harris celebrated Elton John's 70th birthday.

For his illustrious career, the legendary singer was honoured at Red Studios by host Rob Lowe, along with musical performances at the weekend birthday bash, reported People magazine.

Talking to Beats 1's Zane Lowe, John



said, "Some people don't like birthdays, they don't like celebrating; they don't want to know about them, and I've always enjoyed my birthday. Seventy sounds so archaic, doesn't it? When I was growing up, 70 sounded like the end of the world. But things have changed – you're only as old as you feel inside." John said.

The headliners for the show also included Ryan Adams and Roseanne Cash, while the guest list boasted of names such as Ryan Phillippe, Jon Hamm, Heidi Klum and Katy Perry, among others. The veteran musician had earlier celebrated his big day with partner David Furnish and sons Elijah and Zachary.

John took to Instagram where he posted a video where he and his kids can be seen gathered around a chocolate cake.

"A huge thank you to all my Facebook friends for the fabulous birthday card signed by all of you! #HappyBirthdayElton." John captioned the clip. - PTI

Indian-Americans raise USD 100,000 for Kansas survivor'

HOUSTON, March 26: A 24-year-old American, who took a bullet for an Indian, has been honoured as 'A True American Hero' by the Indian-American community in Houston which raised USD 100,000 to help him buy a house in his hometown Kansas.

Ian Grillot, who was injured when he tried to intervene in the shooting by a Navy veteran targeting Indians at a bar in Olathe, Kansas last month, was honoured as 'A True American Hero' at the 14th annual gala of India House Houston here.

Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, was killed and his colleague Alok Madasani was critically injured in the shooting.

"On behalf of the Indian-American community in Houston, India House recognised this selfless act beyond the call of duty and has extended the community's gratitude to Ian Grillot by helping him to buy a house," said a statement

posted on the India House Houston Facebook page.

India House raised USD 100,000 as part of an initiative supported by the Consul General

of India in Houston, Dr Anupam Ray to help Ian buy a house in his hometown, it said.

India House is a community centre built by Americans of Indian origin in the Greater Houston area.

Speaking on the occasion, Ian said, "I don't know if I could've lived with myself if I wouldn't have stopped or at-

tempted to stop the shooter because that would've been completely devastating."

"I do now have a very powerful message and if I can help empower people and spread hope and love, then why not? I am honored to be at India House that serves so many families from so many communities in the Houston area," he said. India's Ambassador to the US Neetje Sarna handed over the cheque of USD 100,000 to Ian.

"I was keen to come here today because I was told that Ian Grillot will be honoured. It was a great privilege to meet him and his parents. He is a young man who has shown exceptional courage, strength of very fundamental human values. No amount of honor that India or the Indian-Americans bestow on him will be re-compensed except for that moment of exceptional fortitude and character," Sarna said. - PTI



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Subodh...

(Contd from page 1) have already been shifted to Dhemaji in the wee hours today. With the outer door of the transit remand period for both the accused ending on March 28, police is likely to pray for additional police custody from the CJM, Dhemaji. Special public prosecutor Bijon Kumar Mahajan along with his team of other counsels will leave for Dhemaji tomorrow.

As the outer date expires on March 28, there is also a likelihood that the same accused would be produced before the CJM, Dhemaji, on March 28 as well.

"The Assam Police, showing respect to the judiciary, would comply in totality to the order passed by the Additional CJM of North 24 Parganas and Bongaon in West Bengal," police sources said.

Subodh, a senior leader of the Nukhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samannay Samity (NIBBUS) was the man behind the ransacking of the AASU office at Silapathar in Dhemaji district, besides making provocative comments.

N Korea warns US, South against targeting leadership

SEOUL, March 26: North Korea on Sunday warned South Korea and the US against any attempt to stage a "special operation" to hit the Pyongyang leadership and military installations, including the nuclear arms base.

A North Korean military statement said it was ready to "mercilessly smash the enemy's moves... now that the sinister aim of the US imperialists and the South Korean War maniacs' 'special operation' to hurt the dignity of the DPRK's (North Korea) supreme leadership has become clear, and they disclosed even the dangerous attempt at 'preemptive attack'".

The military accused the US and South Korea of being "busy staging madcap joint military drills for aggression involving more than 300,000 troops, US nuclear carrier Carl Vinson and B-1B and other nuclear strategic assets", Yonhap news agency reported.

"The situation has reached an extreme

phase which should not be overlooked," the statement said.

It urged Washington and Seoul to think twice about the catastrophic

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phase which should not be overlooked," the statement said.

On March 13, combined forces of South Korea and the US kicked off the annual command post exercise,

following the launch on March 1 of the joint field training drill with the code-

name of Foal Eagle.

North Korea has denounced the joint military exercises as a dress rehearsal for northward invasion.

The US-South Korea commands will exercise Operation Plan 5015 during the Key Resolve drill. The operation plan includes preemptive strikes against Pyongyang's nuclear and missile facilities when signs of attack are detected. The military defended Foal Eagle as a defensive training to enhance the alliance's preparedness to defend the South in case of armed conflict. The North has criticised the exercise as preparation for invasion. - IANS

'Top al-Qaeda leader killed in US drone strike in Afghanistan'

WASHINGTON, March 26: A top al-Qaeda commander linked to the bombing of a luxury hotel and attack on Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan has been killed in an US drone strike in Afghanistan, the Pentagon has said.

Qari Yasir, who was responsible for plotting the September 20, 2008 bombing on the luxury Marriott Hotel in Islamabad and the attack on a bus carrying the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2009 in Lahore, was killed on March 19 in a US counter terrorism airstrike in a Paktika Province of Afghanistan.

Pentagon said Yasir was responsible for the deaths of dozens of innocent people, including two American service members. "When Qari Yasir is evidence that terrorists who defame Islam and deliberately target innocent people will not escape justice," US Defence Secretary James Mattis said yesterday.

The prime minister urged those wasting their lives in suicide attacks to return to the right path and assured them of doing whatever necessary to ensure their livelihoods.

"But, I will urge them (militants) not to choose the wrong path of suicide attacks as well as the path of terrorism and militancy," she was quoted as saying by The Daily Star.

While addressing a rally at the Bangabandhu National Stadium to mark the 47th Independence and National Day, she asked students to listen to the advice of their guardians and teachers and never indulge in and go to the wrong path of terrorism, militancy and drug addiction.

After her address, she took salute from the march past by the students of various schools while Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque was present on the occasion.

"It is the day of saving self-identity of the nation, and it is the day of breaking the shackles of subjugation. - PTI

India's new envoy submits credentials to Nepal Prez

KATHMANDU, March 26: India's new envoy to Nepal Manjeet Singh Puri today presented his credentials to President Bidya Devi Bhandari at a ceremony here.

Puri met with President Bhandari at her official residence Sheetal Niwas and submitted his letters of credence, Indian Embassy here said.

Puri, a 1982 batch IFS officer, was on March 10 appointed as India's 24th ambassador to Nepal. His predecessor Rajniti Rae completed his three and a half year tenure on February 28. - PTI



Police officers detain an Opposition supporter during a rally in Vladivostok, Russia on Sunday. - UNI

CM calls on Rajnath...

(Contd from page 1) backgrounds and it will give recommendations on how to effectively implement the Clause 6. Sonowal urged Singh to ensure expeditious completion of the Indo-Bangla border fencing, including the riverine areas, and also recall a new fencing with modern design. He also requested that fencing in the neighbour states be also completed. The Home Minister agreed to re-examine the entire matter in a time-bound manner.

The issue of Foreigners' Tribunals and detention centres for persons detected as foreigners was also discussed. It was decided to give extension to the tribunals to 100 tribunals and the Central government would provide Rs 100 crore for its operational expenses. The Home Minister also suggested establishing separate detention centres to house the de-

tenuees declared by the tribunals as foreigners, pending their deportation.

On the NRC issue, Sonowal said that besides extending all support to RGI, the Assam Government would also seek legal opinion on the issue. The NRC update process has been hit because of the recent judgement of the Gauhati High Court, which has rejected permanent residence certificates as proof of citizenship.

The Chief Minister requested Singh to hold tripartite talks with various organisations and their demands. These would include the leaders of the six ethnic communities demanding ST status, including Koch Rajbongshis, Tai Ahoms, Morans, Mottoks, Chutias and the tea garden communities.

He also suggested discussions at the

Tarun Duvarah...

(Contd from page 1) plays and has written and directed for the stage and television.

Dhrendra Paul has been working relentlessly to revive the dying terracotta art and has succeeded in promoting the State's traditional art nationally and globally. His doll *Latima*, modelled on a bicycle, earned him fame in exhibitions in France and the US.

Both the awardees, in their acceptance speeches, said that the recognition would encourage them to continue their work with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

"Artists like Tarun Duvarah have inspired us in the field of art and culture," Kharhangoria said.

Both the awardees, in their acceptance speeches, said that the recognition would encourage them to continue their work with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

State, OIL CMD Upal Bora said that besides honouring the good work in the fields of art and culture, the company has taken up the work of renovating and maintenance of the Kamakhya temple and an amount of Rs 25 crore has been sanctioned for the purpose.

"For creating more employability in the State, we are also planning to start a driving institute with Maruti Suzuki and a skill development institute worth Rs 15 crore in Assam," he added.

Sufia Duvarah, wife of the late Duvarah, said it was unfortunate that despite being valued highly, art cannot be taken up as a means of livelihood in Assam. GAG president Dibruba Deka delivered the welcome speech. A colourful cultural programme

was also presented on the occasion.

TEs cough...

(Contd from page 1) from now on we will immediately lodge cases against gardens which accumulate the payment for six months," the sources added.

The BJP-led State Government has taken a stern view against the lapses on the part of the garden management, particularly those relating to labour welfare and has been prodding the regulators to initiate quick and prompt action.

Labour and Tea Tribes Welfare Minister Pallab Lochan Das had recently informed the Assembly that managements of altogether 227 tea gardens have not cleared the provident fund dues. The figures, however, include even those gardens which have dues pending for periods like 15 days or one month.

Golden jubilee lecture at GU

GUWAHATI, March 26: Organised in sync with the golden jubilee celebration of the Department of Library & Information Science of Gauhati University, a lecture to commemorate the occasion will be delivered by Julie Bobay on the topic, 'The Dilemma of Library Collection in the Electronic Age: Designing our Future by Taking Small Steps Today' on March 28 at 2.30 pm at the Phanidhar Data Seminar Hall of GU.

Bobay is Executive Associate Dean of Indiana University at Bloomington in the USA. Prof Sanjay Kumar Singh, HoD and organising secretary has urged all the teachers, research scholars, students and professionals of library and information science to attend the programme.

Chutia Yuva Sammilan unit formed

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: The Guwahati District Committee of Chutia Yuva Sammilan has been formed to strengthen the organisation in the city.

A meeting unanimously elected Anirudha Bhakat Chutia as its president, Shiva Pratim Bora as executive president, Manash Pratim Chutia as the general secretary, Lilabari Chutia and Mridupawan Chutia as assistant secretaries.

The committee has 26 members, including the key executives.

The meeting was also attended by the general secretary of the central committee, Rabin Khanikar and spokesperson Samiron Bora.

The meeting also informed that the biennial convention of the All Assam Chutia Yuva Sammilan will be held in Golaghat district on March 27 and 28, a press release stated.

Free health check-up camp for minors held

GUWAHATI, March 26: Edu Flair Academy of the city organised a free health check-up and medicine distribution camp for children at 10 am in the school premises located behind Royal Palace, Magazine, VIP Road here today.

Child specialist Dr Krishnas Das conducted counselling for the children in regard to their health and hygiene, besides development of their physical and mental faculties. This was over and above the general check-up.

The organisers distributed the prescribed medicines free of cost. This camp catered to around 60 children of the locality, including students of the Academy. The initiative was widely appreciated by the local people.

As part of their social responsibility, Edu Flair Academy, it may be mentioned, has been organising different awareness programmes and camps from time to time, a press release stated.

Field gear distributed at Pobitora

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: Conservation NGO Aaranyak in association with the Guwahati Wildlife Division of the State Forest Department organised a field gear distribution ceremony at the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary on Friday to encourage and enhance the exemplary work of the frontline staff of the sanctuary.

Attending the ceremony, Forest Minister Pramila Rani Brahma thanked Aaranyak for the initiative and urged all concerned to work with more vigour to conserve Assam's pride, the one-horned rhino.

The frontline personnel working in Pobitora were offered rucksack bags, windcheaters, raincoats and torchlights to enhance their efforts in protecting rhinos and other wildlife in Pobitora.

The programme was sponsored by Attila Hildmann and NABU International Foundation for Nature, a press release said.

Skirmishes by Naga miscreants decried

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI March 26:

The Retired Public Relations Officers and Employees' Association of Assam at its meeting on Saturday strongly condemned the violent activities by a section of Naga people, who have been habitually disturbing peace in the border areas of Assam since the last seven decades and urged the Government of India and the State Government to take effective measures to contain the depredation and hostility by the Naga miscreants.

The meeting, held on Saturday at the Guwahati Press Club under the presidentship of DN Chakravarty, discussed at length the border problems created by a section of the people of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh and suggested effective measures to ensure peace in the border areas of Assam.

Initiating the discussion,

Chakravarty analysed the weak policy of the Government of Assam and its failure to ensure an honourable and peaceful life for the Assamese people living in the border areas. He called for strong measures in the line of what was followed by powerful Ahom kings like Gadadhar Singh and Rudra Singha.

Retired bureaucrat JP Saikia gave a historical analysis of the information and public relations machinery in Assam. He said that modern welfare States are governed more by ideals of public relations rather than earlier practice of simple law and order.

Pratap Barolia, former Director of Doordarshan News Section and Chief Editor of the organisation's organ *Abosari*, said that it would be an endeavour of the magazine to promote the healthy habit of writing among the retired public relations personnel in the State by highlighting the

myriad experiences of their service life.

Bhaben Bez, Manorama Barua, Anupama Dutta Saikia, Nibedita Barua and Jagadish Barua in their speeches stressed the need for regular exchange of thoughts and ideas among the 500 retired Public Relations personnel in the State.

Earlier, Khandgadmath Methi, general secretary of the association in his report, referred to the great response from the retired Public Relations personnel throughout the State in building up the association.

He also mentioned that the organisation would devote attention towards rendering assistance to the poor and down-trodden in the State. He also said that the next meeting of the association would be held on May 7 at the Rajbari Road-based Icm Academy here.

The association condoned the deaths of Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, Bhadra Bora and Kamakhya Sabhapandit.



Slow pace of road and drainage construction works have caused great inconvenience to local residents in the greater Nabin Nagar area of Guwahati. A stretch of the road at Jamathipali lies dug up for construction works, as seen on Sunday. Photo: Samarendra Sarma

Rural self-employment action plan approved

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: The district-level advisory committee meeting of the Assam Gramin Vikash Bank - Rural Self Employment Training Institute (AGVB-RSETI) Kamrup Metro was held earlier this week at the office chamber of the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup Metro Pranati Majumder here.

The Director of the institute Durjoy Chandra Nath placed the annual action plan for 2017-18, which proposes to train 450 unemployed youth of the district in different activities under agricultural product and process and general entrepreneurship development programmes (EDPs).

The advisory committee after threadbare discussion approved the plan for implementation.

The meeting was chaired by Majumdar and attended by other members of the committee, including Kamal Bhourimik, Regional Manager of AGVB and VD Sarah, AGM of NABARD Guwahati.

The committee also discussed the performance of the institute and appreciated efforts made by the institute for imparting training to 550 candidates for taking up self-employment under various schemes.

Case against GMDA officials

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: A case has been registered against two senior officials of the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) following a complaint by the agency's chief engineer over alleged violation of norms during the Urban Winter Festival Metropolis 2017 which was shut down abruptly.

The festival, held on January last at the Nehru Park in the city, came to an abrupt end on its closing day after Guwahati Development Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had objected to using the children's park for the event. He also had questioned the GMDA for granting permission for the festival.

Police said following the complaint by the GMDA chief engineer, a case has been reg-

istered at Bhangaghat Police Station against two officers - Sazzad Alam and Chinmoy Phukan, both ACS officers, of the agency.

The duo face charges under Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 427 IPC read with Section 3 of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984.

Police said investigations into the case have already begun.

Training on adventure tourism held at IIE

CORRESPONDENT

JALUKBARI, March 26: The Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) with the technical support of Assam Mountaineering Association (AMA) organised a Business Incubation Training on Adventure Tourism at the IIE here on Saturday for the prospective youths on adventure tourism in the North East.

This is the third batch to have completed the training successfully. The programme was sponsored by the Srimerbhubudar Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development.

The objective of the training was to orient and train the youths so that they can set up their own business ventures and highlighted the success of the previous training programmes organised by IIE. The programme was fully

residential and hands-on practical training was covered in and around Guwahati rock fields and water sports points.

This incubation training includes mountaineering, basic rock climbing, jungle safari, jungle camping and water sports, etc. Apart from practical training, management processes and entrepreneurship were also covered. In all, 26 participants from different States of the North East were trained in the programme.

At the valedictory function on Saturday, IIE Director Manoj Kumar Das welcomed the participants and stressed on effective preparation for starting their ventures and highlighted the success of the IIE and AMA for providing them the opportunity. Further, they expressed their keenness to gradually develop their own business ventures.

The participants shared their experience about the programme. Most of them highlighted that the training boosted their confidence and they thanked IIE and AMA for providing them the opportunity. Further, they expressed their keenness to gradually develop their own business ventures.

Preparations for Namami Brahmaputra Festival reviewed

STAFF REPORTER



Workers busy preparing a showpiece for the five-day Namami Brahmaputra Festival, in Guwahati on Sunday. - UB Photos

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: The Kamrup Metro district administration held a meeting with various stakeholders of the city on Saturday to discuss issues related to the ensuing Namami Brahmaputra Festival.

Representatives from the Assam Sahitya Sabha, various transport associations, trad-

ers' bodies, hotel and restaurants' associations, petroleum traders, Kamrup Chamber of Commerce, wholesale and retail traders' associations and other socio-cultural organisations attended the meeting.

Kamrup Metro Deputy Commissioner Dr M Angamuthu said that the participants assured their help and cooperation before the administration for smooth completion of the festival, including maintenance of cleanliness and hygiene in their respective premises, better presentation and turnout of the employees in the event, illumination, painting and decoration of their premises or business establishments, besides provision of drinking water and other basic facilities.

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MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Solitude matters, and for some people, it's the air they breathe.

— SUSAN CAIN

The Assam Tribune

Inauspicious start

Into just his third month in office, the new US President Donald Trump is learning the hard way that pledges made in the heat of the election campaign are not that easy to translate into reality. His has been, at best, a stuttering start, the passage not being made smooth by his pugnacious attitude and the fact that he ruffles feathers at the drop of a hat. In turn Trump has made derogatory comments on the American media, the Judiciary, the intelligence agencies, *et al* — in fact, he has roused the heckles of a broad swathe of the population of his nation, including a segment of die-hard supporters who are now having second thoughts about him being the right choice. This more than anything else explains why his approval ratings have dropped to a record low and he has not been able to strike empathy with even representatives from his own Republican Party. To give him due credit, he has attempted since becoming the President to implement some of the 'core' pledges he had made, but his major essays have come a cropper because of faulty as well as hasty planning. His very first failure was his inability to twice implement a selective travel ban, with the highly-respected American Judiciary stepping in on each occasion to block that order on the ground that it violated the US Constitution.

However, his biggest failure has been the attempt to have the Affordable Care Act, popularly known as Obamacare, replaced by a Bill drafted by his own people. One must note that it took Barack Obama two years to have his signature health insurance scheme passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The problem with Donald Trump was that he had tried to get it replaced in two months! Rather than have it discussed and debated among fellow Republicans, Trump had characteristically tried to bulldoze it through in the House, leading to a 'revolt' by both conservative and liberal factions of his party. While such inauspicious starts to his Presidency serves to shatter up the inefficiency of Trump and his team, it simultaneously shreds the myth that the American President is invested with sufficient power to have things move in the way he desires. On the contrary, the democratic system in the US appears to have sufficient checks and balances to forestall even a Donald Trump from autocratic actions. It is indeed a piece of political irony that while Obama, despite being handicapped by a House and Senate having Republican majority, could implement his scheme, while Trump has not been able to convince members of his own party. Republicans did not hesitate to assert that loyalty to their constituents take precedence over their own loyalty to the President, a lesson in democracy which our own representatives can well imbibe.

Road accidents

Assam continues to grapple with an abnormally high incidence of fatalities caused by road mishaps. The phenomenon has been conspicuous for the past one decade, with some 3,000 traffic accident-induced deaths recorded annually. The toll by road accidents, in fact, constitutes a big percentage of the total accident-related deaths — including railway crossing and railway accidents — in the State. As per data released by the National Crime Records Bureau, the State recorded 4,331 accidental deaths in 2015, with over 3,000 attributable to traffic accidents. Natural causes accounted for 236 fatalities, which has registered a down by 19% compared to the 2014 figure. Disturbingly, around one-third of those getting killed in accidents happen to be a young population below 45 years. Then, Assam also outscores its neighbouring north-eastern States by a huge margin when it comes to fatalities attributable to accidents, including natural calamities. Even a cursory look at the accident data makes it clear that it is road mishaps that have acquired sinister dimensions in recent years. Precious human lives are being lost in a matter of routine with fatal road accidents witnessing an unprecedented spurt in the State.

The enormity of the situation warrants road accidents to be treated as a serious issue but regrettably, the government authorities choose to stay blind to this reality. Mishaps have their reasons — ranging from negligent driving to violation and ignorance of road safety norms to poor enforcement of laws. But the situation could reach such an appalling stage precisely due to the absence of intervention from the authorities. Rash driving, for instance, is related to poor enforcement, as the violators invariably get away for negligent driving, often under the influence of liquor. In most countries, such offence invites severe penalties including cancellation of licence but the absence of any deterrent encourages our drivers to repeat violations with impunity. Then, the corruption-riddled process of issuing licences has ensured that unqualified people get to sit behind the wheels. We have departments like Transport, Police and PWD entrusted with the responsibility of looking into the different aspects of road safety but their casual approach is aggravating the situation. It is time the Chief Minister, being in charge of the Home Department, made a personal intervention on the matter; as it involves precious lives. Apart from negligent driving, poor road conditions and design, lack of amenities for pedestrians, and low level of road safety awareness are also factors triggering a spurt in killer mishaps. Further contributing to the high death toll is the absence of emergency roadside service. The situation calls for a multi-pronged strategy with thrust on strict enforcement of all road safety rules. Sustained crackdowns on unqualified and negligent drivers apart, issuance of driving licences should be made more stringent. There should be roadside checking of vehicles for crossing prescribed speed limits. Then we need to have awareness campaigns that should also involve children.

People, land and life in dire straits

■ Vijayanta Sharma Pathak

The ULFA cannot turn against the Bengalis, as the Lachit Sena did, because the experience of the AASU's movement showed that the people from West Bengal, too, had become victims of the agitation against the Bangladeshis. The ULFA armed wing chief, Pares Barua, has had to warn the indigenous Bengalis after the Silapathar homeland failing which the ULFA would be compelled to take action. The Nukhi Bharat Bengal (NBB) members and supporters had the gumption to vandalise the local AASU offices. They did 'even worse' the parts of Assam's icons, Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla, which they ground to dust. The NBBUSS has been at the forefront to grant citizenship to the Bangladeshi Hindus by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955. That in itself will amount to legalizing an additional 1.5 crore people who are already residents in the State. The rest of the refugees, including Hindus, Christians, Parsis and Sikhs migrating from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan, among others, would be conferred citizenship under the amended Citizenship Act, when enacted into law.

It is a foregone conclusion that the solution to the migrant tangle in the State will be to have on the basis of the Assam Accord. The AASU has called upon the Chief Minister and the BJP Government in the State to resist the Centre's policy to invoke the settlement of Bangladeshis and other foreign nationals in the State.

Though a number of reasons have been ascribed for the violence in Silapathar that sent shockwaves through the State, the existing reality of the politico-socio-economic arrangement in India constitutes the deciding factor towards the extra-constitutional movements in the North-east.

Bengal Babus from Bengal.

The conferment of citizenship to tens of thousands of Hindu Bangladeshi residing in the State would be a contradiction in terms of the Assam Accord that deems any person — whether a Hindu or a Muslim — as 'illegal' if found entering the State from Bangladesh after March 24, 1971. Clause 6A in the context was inserted into the Assam Accord by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1985 in the aftermath of the signing of the

to religious persecution or fear of religious persecution'. It also reduces their period of stay in India required to become eligible for citizenship from 11 years to six years.

Soon after the Central Government issued a notification to this effect to the Tarun Gogoi Government in September, 2015, the powerful student bodies of the State — AASU and the Ason Jyotiabadi Yuva Satra Parishad (AJYCP) — hit the streets announcing their strong opposition to it.

While the Bengalis are a majority in three districts, namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, together forming the Barak Valley; they have a significant population in the Brahmaputra Valley as well. Although there are Bengalis who have been living in this land since centuries, there are also people who migrated to Assam following two cataclysmic events in the history of the Indian subcontinent — the Partition of India and the genocide in East Pakistan which

propelled the Bangladesh Liberation War. After the Yandaboo Treaty was signed in 1826, the British brought literate Bengal Hindus to Assam for doing administrative work. Assam was part of the Bengal Presidency from 1826 to 1873. The clubbing together of Assam and Bengal into one administrative unit officially facilitated the movement of Bengalis to the region. More importantly, Bangla was adopted as the official language and medium of instruction in the schools of Assam. Due to the efforts of the American Baptist missionaries and members of the Assamese middle-class, the Assamese language, mistakenly as

sumed to be a dialect of Bangla, was restored to its independent status and adopted as a medium of instruction in Assam in 1873.

The Barak Valley was originally not a part of Assam. When the British carved out the State, the Cachar and Syhet districts, both inhabited mostly by Bengalis, were also included to make the new state revenue sufficient. During the independence struggle, when a major part of Sylhet went to East Pakistan, the Karimganj subdivision of the district was retained by India. Now the then Karimganj subdivision and the Cachar district have been reorganized into the three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi, which is jointly called the Barak Valley.

It would be wrong to say that Bengalis have no contribution in the cultural milieu of Assam. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, better known as 'Bengali Bagh', had introduced the Assamese language in Calcutta University. Hemanta Biswas, who was one of the most important members of the Indian People's Theatre Association, played a pivotal role in propagating Assamese culture. Rai Bahadur Mahendra Mohan Lahiri was the third Indian chairman of the Guwahati Municipal Board. Late Karamoy Lahiri rose to the post of Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court. Other examples are galore.

It is true that the influx from Bangladesh after 1971 has put tremendous pressure on Assam and its demographics. However, it is also true that not all Bengalis can be deemed foreigners. While the common masses, both Assamese and Bengali, had lived together harmoniously, bad blood created mostly by political leaders in the past still comes back to haunt this relationship.

For the Bengalis in Assam, isn't the State their own homeland?

Necessity of forest conservation

■ Panchanan Borthakur

Since the development of society, man has always been using other species in his own interest as he has to be dependent increasingly on cultivated plants or farming and animals for his livelihood. Actually the forests have played an important role in the development and progress of the entire humanity. Our basic needs of food, cloth and shelter are fulfilled by the forests. The resources are something which are capable of satisfying the specific human needs. They are very useful to the humanity and a product of the interaction of man with the environment. The resources may be classified into two major heads — renewable and non-renewable. Forests are included in renewable resources. The renewable resources can be increased by good management.

Forests play an important role in the ecosystem of a country and are a great source of satisfying the growing demand of the society. An ecosystem may be defined as the study of nature, including both biotic and abiotic components. An ecosystem holds an automatic and natural system of maintaining an ecological balance. Since the demand of the people is growing, a balance between the

and under whose guidance the state forests departments were created in various British-ruled provinces.

Among the universal valuable resources, plants and trees are most significant gifts of the nature. It consumes large amount of CO₂ because of which the survival of human and other animals has become possible. As the reckless deforestation in the entire universe is gradually going on for an ever long period, the conservation of forest on the earth has acquired a lot of significance and it has been considered as an urgent requirement of today. Apart from providing a number of products, forest performs a lot of irreplaceable ecological services. The trees provide shade and moist to the soil and make the surface of the earth more fertile with normal moisture. Forest shapes environmental environment by influencing such factors as temperature, humidity and precipitation. It may be said that tropical forests are the 'great chemical factory of the world'. According to the Washington-based World Watch Institute's report, "40% of prescription drugs have active ingredients derived from wild plants, animals or micro organisms, many of them from forests".

The practice of scientific forestry in India began with Sir Dietrich Bruns who took over charge as the Inspector-General of Forest in 1864 and under whose guidance the state forests departments were created in various British-ruled provinces. In was in 1894 the Government of India formulated a forest policy, the first of its kind which has been a trendsetter for forest management throughout the British Empire. It was the policy which formed the basis of forest management in India till Independence. Following Independence, a Central Forestry Board was set up in 1950 and in 1952, a national policy was developed on the lines of which the Indian forests were managed till about 1988.

Enormous destruction of our natural forests continued for about two or three decades and we have lost about 3.9 million hectares of precious forest wealth since 1950. About 2.50 million hectares have been destroyed for expansion of agriculture, 0.41 million hectares have been lost for river valley projects, about 1.5 million hectares for industries, 0.56 million hectares for road construction and about 0.40 million hectares for miscellaneous purposes.

In India, forests are neither abundant nor very rich in its content.

The actual area under forest was 6.8 million hectares which constitutes nearly 23% of total geographical area of the country; of this 60% is actually exploited. Another about 22% is

potentially exploitable. Thus more

than 80% of the area under forest is capable of being used. The remaining about 20% or so is either inaccessible or unproductive or required to be maintained for protection purpose. Considering the tropical climate of the country and the predominance of agriculture, the total area under forests is much less than its requirement. The National Forest Policy of India prescribed a national minimum of 33.3% under productive forest. The total forest area of the country is thus less than that minimum required limit. In India, the per capita forest area is estimated at only 1.15 hectares, whereas the same 1.8 hectares in the USA and 3.2 hectares in Russia. The 23% total forest area is grossly inadequate, considering the needs pertaining to the amelioration of physical and climatic conditions, for the well-being of the people living around these forests and of the country.

A major portion of forests in India

is owned by different States (95%)

whereas the remaining small portion (5%) is owned by corporate bodies and private individuals. The present scenario of forest in India is not much satisfactory. The country has a area of 64.73 million hectares notified as forest. So far as the State-wise position of forest coverage in India is concerned, Madhya Pradesh

accounts for the largest forest coverage of the country (20.68%) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (10.8%), Orissa (7.38%) and Maharashtra (7.32%). The North-eastern States together represent 25.7% of the total forest coverage in India.

While forests do good to the entire economy, there are certain areas of activities which, being in their immediate vicinity, need to be promoted as part of the forest development programmes. There are in the first place the agro-forestry projects. Through a suitable land management, it means integration of silviculture with horticulture, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. Secondly, there are the forest-based small scale and cottage industries. These have to be provided raw materials grown in forests on a regular basis, so as to make them dependable source of income and employment for the people living in and around forests.

The government of India should formulate suitable policies for proper conservation of forest. Forests have become an important part of an economy, as they are not only the source of national income and employment to the millions of people, but also a guarantee for the quality life to the society. They are our cultural inheritance and valuable resource in our life.

Waste segregation at household level

Letters
to the
EDITOR

Sir, — One of our prime concerns is that the effort of the municipal boards and corporations towards management of solid wastes is not complemented by the citizens, the citizens, particularly in space-constrained urban areas, need to be informed about the negative outcomes arising out of non-segregation of wastes at the household level and commercial establishments. Waste segregation at source not only reduces the burden (the time consumed and thus costs) to handle the filthy wastes of the urban local bodies and the waste collectors, the practice raises the service coverage level as well as the scope for recycling. The prime outcome is minimization of wastes to be released for the dumpsites and landfills. We have territorial example how the wetland called Silsako Beel in Guwahati was used as a

dumpsite and finally vanished as a significant extent.

Many cities of the world now

concentrate on segregation of wastes, material recovery,

biological treatment, recycling and waste-based energy generation.

Considering the nature of the wastes released, in

Guwahati for example, we can

make a case that behavioural norms could outweigh the constraints put by financial resources.

Garbage dumped in the nooks and corners reflect our insensitivity. We just want to get rid of the wastes at the cost of

public good, and leave the waste to municipal bodies and scavengers to do away with.

Our behaviour however is rational towards disposal of old newspapers and used batteries as these have ready markets to recycle.

Instead of conventional

segregation to biodegradable

and non-biodegradable categories,

we need to segregate wastes into five categories

for convenience of the waste

collectors — food wastes (here

involves an ethical issue), non-

biodegradable polythene and

wrappers, glass items, electronic wastes and sanitary items. It

will not be expensive for us to

segregate and go for community

initiative to make compost from the biodegradable wastes.

Segregation and a market of

compost could act as an incentive

for the private service providers to join hands with urban local bodies. Now we

observe an initiative of the State

on this front. The final outcome

is significant reduction in wastes, increase in coverage

level of municipal services,

reduction of financial burden of

local bodies and burden to look

for additional dumpsites and

landfill. On ethical front, segrega-

tion will make waste collection hazards free for the

poor waste collectors. The role

of the urban local bodies is to

facilitate the private service

providers (waste collectors) as

well as the people to read the

market of the wastes of different categories. In case the awareness drive fails to make people responsive towards waste

segregation, there is no alternative than to imposition of high household fine. Yours etc.,

Kalyan Das, RG Baruah Road, Guwahati.

Protecting sparrows

Sir, — Thank you for the World Sparrow Day picture of a group of satisfied-looking humans holding up an impressive placard saying 'I love sparrows' (AT, March 21). No sparrows, however, can be spotted gracing the grand event, not hopping in and out of the colourful little huts clustered behind the group on a completely exposed tree trunk. Perhaps the greater Guwahati sparrow community is waiting for humbler steps to enable it to regain its habitat, such as tackling near-toxic pollution levels and wanton destruction of the city's natural surroundings. Yours etc., RONOJOY SEN, Guwahati.

Articles (within 1000–1100 words) and letters to the Editor for publication in the editorial page may be sent to the email ID: editor@assamtribune.com.

Surgical robot installed at BBCI

SIVASISH THAKUR

GUWAHATI, March 26: With the adoption of the da Vinci surgical robot at the Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI) here on Friday, the new-age technology is expected to revolutionise surgical procedures for not just cancer patients, but for almost any kind of operation, particularly those requiring better precision.

While this marks the first time that a surgical robot has been installed at a hospital in the North East, robot-assisted surgery is the buzzword across the globe, with more and more countries adopting the technology.

"Robot-assisted minimally invasive surgery enables a high degree of precision and control, besides magnified 3-D vision for removal of cancerous tissues and tumours. Robotic surgery minimises blood loss, dramatically reducing post-opera-

tive recovery time and costs," Dr Sanjay Gogoi, India's leading robotic surgeon and Director and Head of Urology & Renal Transplant, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurgaon, told *The Assam Tribune*.

Dr Gogoi, who shared his experience of performing robotic surgeries on hundreds of urology cancer patients with doctors from the North East during a meet in the city on Friday evening, also gave a visual presentation on how the surgical robot (which is totally controlled by the user) with its four arms, can reach organs and areas where human fingers cannot.

"The three-dimensional high-definition view that can be magnified manifold helps the surgeons achieve unmatched precision that prevents collateral damage to healthy tissue. Surgical robots combine the best of science, engineering and medicine," he added.

According to Dr Gogoi, surgical robots are being used in almost all specialities involving soft body tissues. "It is also extremely conducive for operations on infants and chil-



dren. Precision, vision and control are three clear advantages over conventional and laparoscopic surgery. It is, in a way, an extension of laparoscopic surgery. It's time to take robotic surgery to the masses," he added.

As of now, around 50 hospitals of the country are into robotic surgery, the break-up being South India - 15, North India - 20, West India - 12, and East India - 1, while the

North East has just entered the robotic surgery map.

AC Borkati, Director of the Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI), which organised the doctors' interactive meet on robotic surgery, stressed the need for popularising robotic surgery "as it scores over conventional surgery and has proven superior outcomes, especially for urology, oncology, gynaecology and general surgery, besides head

and neck surgery."

"Cancer patients from neighbouring States will also benefit from robotic surgeries once more hospitals equip themselves with da Vinci surgical robots. For promoting robotic surgery, we need to train doctors on robotic surgery, which is quite simple actually," he added.

Gopal Chakravarthy, CEO of Vattikuti Technologies, which has provided the da

indication (GI) rights for the medicinal plants and traditional healing systems of Assam and North East region.

There should be a scientific endeavour to identify the medicinal plants, healing systems and record the end products, besides preserving the medicinal plants so that this brilliant heritage could be preserved for posterity and benefitment of mankind," said Prof Dutta.

At the conference, which concluded at the PD Dutta Seminar Hall of Gauhati University here on Saturday evening, a host of traditional healers and scholars from various parts of the North East region took part. The conference was organised in association with the IASTT, ITG, USTM and NEBA.

Call to sustain indigenous treatment

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: Indigenous healing systems should be supported and sustained. For, these systems can be translated into good economic activities. Indigenous knowledge systems contribute to drug discovery programmes which have huge economic benefits, said Dr D Syiem, Professor of the Department of Biochemistry, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong.

Speaking to this Correspondent the sidelines of the two-day North Eastern Regional Conference and Exhibition on Promotion and Protection of Traditional Healthcare Remedy (PAPOTHYCARY), 2017, organised by the

Institutional Biotech Hub, Department of Biotechnology of Gauhati University (GU), Dr Syiem said that the North East region is very rich in biodiversity and culture, and is home to many ethnic groups which have rich indigenous knowledge for using plants or natural resources for healthcare.

This knowledge is important and relevant today especially in the North East region. Because, indigenous knowledge systems have many positive impacts on livelihood, local economy, public health, conservation, tradition and culture. Dr Syiem, who has been working in this area for the past about 20 years, said.

The 75-year-old Jibeswar Barpatra Gohain, president of Assam Folk Medicine Healers'

Creative workshop for minors organised

STAFF REPORTER

Vinci surgical robot in around 50 Indian hospitals, feels the time has come to showcase the advanced technology beyond large metros.

"Robotic surgery in India has established value with documented superior patient outcomes and efficacy, with nearly 50 Government, corporate and trust hospitals adopting the da Vinci surgical robot. We can already see a huge movement among patients, healthcare providers as well as surgeons. Many specialist cancer hospitals like the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute, Kidwai Memorial Hospital and Delhi State Cancer Institute too have been using the da Vinci robotic system," he said.

He added that the demonstration of the surgical robot to a large audience of Indian surgeons in Guwahati would not just create awareness about robotic surgery and its contribution in superior patient outcomes, but also about its ease of use.

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Jorhat - 785001

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

For and on behalf of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, General Manager Telecom District Jorhat, Assam invites sealed Tenders for trenching, laying of OFC & allied works in Lichubani Gram Panchayat, Jorhat, Assam for the year 2017-2018 satisfying the eligibility criteria of the Tender document. The bid document can be obtained from the SDE(Planning) O/o G.M.T.D. BSNL, Jorhat on payment of Rs 575/- in Cash or DD in favour of Accounts Officer (Cash), O/o the G.M.T.D. BSNL, Jorhat payable at Jorhat on or before 27-03-2017 between 11.00 hrs and 16.00 hrs in a working day, last date of submission of bid is up to 14.00 hours of 18-04-2017 and will be opened on the same day at 15.00 hours.

The tender document can also be downloaded from our Website www.assam-bsnl.co.in in such case the document fee of Rs 575/- should be paid in Cash, DD/Banker Cheque in favour of Accounts Officer(Cash), O/o the G.M.T.D. BSNL, Jorhat, payable at Jorhat.

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Ministry of Science & Technology
Department of Science and Technology
National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB)

Technology Bhawan, New Mohrauli Road, New Delhi -110016

Invites Applications for

National Awards 2016 for Technology Business Incubator (TBI) and Emerging Technology Business Incubator (ETBI)

National Awards for Technology Business Incubator & Emerging Technology Business Incubator are instituted by National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB), Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

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Who can apply: Applications are invited from Indian Organizations/institutions such as Science and Technology Entrepreneurs' Park, Technology Parks, Technological Business Incubators, Innovation Centers, Software Technology Parks actively involved in startup promotion through business incubation processes which include specialized infrastructure and technical support, mentoring, business facilitation, financial, legal and investment services.

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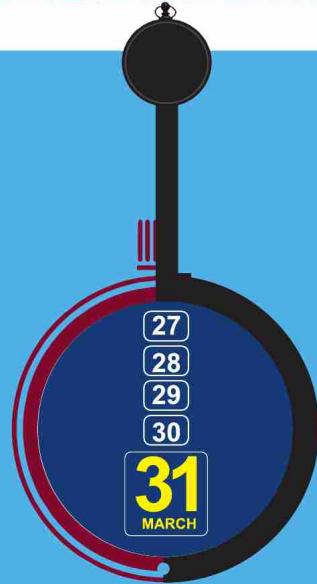
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Parimal Suklabaidya, Fisheries and Excise Minister, Dilip Kumar Paul, Deputy Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly, Silchar MP Sushmita Dev along with others inaugurating the Passport Seva Kendra in Silchar, on Saturday. — UB Photos

OBITUARY

Dr Shankha Dhar Baruah

GUWAHATI, March 26: Dr Shankha Dhar Baruah, seniormost paediatrician of the State and former Principal of Silchar Medical College passed away at his own residence at RG Baruah Road on March 24, He was 90.

A member of the first batch of students of Assam Medical College (1947), he pursued his higher studies in the UK. Coming back to Assam Medical College, he was instrumental in establishing the Department of Paediatrics there. Under his guidance, the first post graduate courses were started in AMC as early as in 1968, much before several bigger centres in India. He also served the Head of the Dept of Paediatrics, Silchar Medical College and Gauhati Medical College. He also held the post of additional Director of Health Services (Medical Education). He leaves behind one son, one grandson, two daughters and a host of relatives.

MP Agarwal
GUWAHATI, March 26: Social worker and RSS activist Mahabir Prasad Agarwal passed away at the Marwari Hospital and Research Centre, Guwahati on Saturday. He was 82.

He was the president of Sri Ram Sewa Samiti, Guwahati unit besides being the working president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's public wing for the North-east.

During the Emergency of 1975-76, Agarwal was imprisoned for 19 months.

He leaves behind his wife, three sons and two daughters besides a host of relatives and well-wishers. His cremation at Bhamoan was largely attended.

Col KK Handique
CORRESPONDENT

JORHAT, March 26: Retired Army officer and former Ward Commissioner of Jorhat Municipal Board, Colonel Krishn Kumar Handique passed away on Saturday following respiratory problems at a private hospital here. He was 85.

Closely associated with social activities post retirement, he also contested in the Lok Sabha election on a BJP ticket for the Jorhat seat. His demise was widely condole.

Shakti Pujari
CORRESPONDENT

DOOMDOOMA, March 26: Veteran CPI(M) activist Shakti Pujari breathed his last at his own residence at Lachit Nagar, Rupai Siding near here on March 21 evening. He was 60 and was suffering from cancer. He leaves behind his mother, three brothers, a sister and a host of relatives. His death was widely mourned in Doomdooma circle.

Protests galore over Muivah's claim on Nagaland

CORRESPONDENT

DERGAON, March 26: Massive public protests followed the sensational declaration of NSCN(M) general secretary Th Muivah that the Greater Nagaland issue was registered in Golaghat district. As the district has been suffering a lot of harassment following the boundary dispute over the last few decades, the people of the district have come out to protest the proposed inclusion of the land of the district in Nagaland. The people here have demanded the Centre to make public the Framework Agreement signed between the NSCN(M) and the Centre on August 3, 2015.

Different leaders of several organisations, including individuals of the district are of the opinion that not a single inch of land of the district can be included in the proposed Nagaland of NSCN. The people of the district living along the interstate border have been facing serious threat from the Naga miscreants since decades.

Very recently, Naga miscreants killed several people in'B'

Apiary training imparted to girl students at Nikasi

ANN Service

MUSHPUR, March 26: A daylong training programme on beekeeping was held among 25 girl students of Indral Pathak Girls' High School at Nikasi in Baksa district on March 24.

The apary training programme was supported by the Khadi Village Industries Commission and implemented by Green Environment Task Force, a non-profit organisation working in the field of sustainable agriculture with its focus area on scientific beekeeping and conservation of honeybee species.

The programme started with a thought-provoking speech from Debjati Borah of GETE, who threw light on different aspects of beekeeping like history, species of honeybees, types of honeybees in a hive and demonstra-

tion on movable frame hive.

Honeybees pollinate most of the fruits and vegetables that human beings consume. Most flowering plants are pollinated by honey bees. Honeybees pollinate by visiting flowers and plants and sucking the nectar out of them. While feeding on the flower, the pollen therein sticks to the honeybee and is carried to the next flower. Pollination helps flowers and plants continue to spread their seeds and grow to produce the oxygen that humans breathe", he explained.

He added that honeybees pollinate around 80% of the world's crops, which contribute 98% of vitamin C, 55% of folic acid, 70% of vitamin A and 29% of iron to human nutrition globally. Honey is a complete food, which if taken by the girls every day will help in decreasing nutrient deficiency.

Honeybees are the most efficient monitors of the environment. Extinction of honeybees will jeopardise biodiversity, global food webs and human health.

Chandan Haloi, Beekeeping Supervisor of Forest Based Industries, KVIC briefed on royal jelly extraction and the health benefits of royal jelly on human health, the healing properties of bee sting and its beneficial effect on arthritis pain. He presented a demonstration on hive site selection, hive establishment and introduction of live colonies.

Local beekeepers Santanu Bhattacharjee, Deepa Gautam and Rimpaa Gautam shared their experiences on bee handling and methodology of beekeeping to the students. Four beehives with five colonies were also established in the school premises.

Awareness programme for handicraft artisans

ANN Service

GORESWAR, March 26: An awareness meeting for Cluster artisans was organised recently at Barendola village under Singlpara Gram Panchayat with Arbindha Deka in the chair.

The programme was formally inaugurated by the chief guest of the function, Bhabesh Kalita, MLA, Rangia LAC. On the occasion, a daylong programme was held which

was conducted by resource persons from various government departments. The MLA in his inaugural speech stated the main aim of the programme which was to make efforts to uplift the cause of the handicraft artisans of the Barendola Bamboo Basketry Cluster (BBBC) initiated under the Ambedkar Hasta Silpa Vikash Yojana (AHVY) scheme under the Ministry of Textiles, which was sanctioned recently.

Under this project, 600 artisans will receive necessary support for development of their craft and uplift of their socio-economic conditions through a cluster approach. It would eventually see the interventions taken up for the benefit of the BBBC artisans of Barendola, Singlpara, Kendua, Outol, Jayantipur and Sahani villages under Bibhia Majikona Development Block of Rangia subdivision.

Post Office Passport Seva Kendra opened at Silchar

CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, March 26: After a prolonged wait, people of Silchar witnessed the opening of the first-ever Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) on Saturday on the premises of the Senior Superintendent of Post Office Cache.

In the words of John Mai, the Regional Passport Officer, this is the first and only POPS in the North East so far.

The Seva Kendra was ceremoniously inaugurated by PWD Minister Parimal Suklabaidya in the presence of Deputy Speaker of the Assam Assembly and Silchar MLA Dilip Kumar Paul, Silchar MP Sushmita Dev, former Union Minister, Kabinra Purakayastha and DCs of Cachar and Hailakandi.

As many as five applicants

had their biometric tests done on the opening day of the office. According to sources, the affairs of the Seva Kendra will be carried out on a camp mode and after three months the office will gain its full-fledged status. In all, 80 applicants can undergo the verification process on working days, a source said.

It may be mentioned that south Assam region ranks third in terms of applications made for processing passports.

Speaking on the occasion, the PWD Minister said, "The Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has yet again proved how to translate promises into performances. Apparently, the opening of a passport Seva Kendra might not be a major thing. But this is a major addition to achieve development. People of Barak

valley willing to apply for a passport can breathe easy now." He thanked the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj for taking proactive steps in setting up this office here.

Recollecting the bygone days when agents made hay in the name of facilitating the passport applicants, Deputy Speaker Dilip Paul said that the Government is determined to put an end to such practices.

Expressing happiness on achieving this historical milestone, Silchar MP Sushmita Dev urged the POPS officials to extend facilities to citizens who are differently-abled during their biometric tests and paper verification. "I thank the External Affairs Minister to give us a Passport Seva Kendra which is of great significance to the people of the State which is

battling with the issue of doubtful voters," Sushmita said.

Terming this a red-letter day for the people of the district and Barak Valley at large, Cachar Deputy Commissioner S. Vishwanathan said in the two previous camps held earlier, as many as 710 applications were verified from here.

On the other hand, the Deputy Commissioner informed that the Government will soon start an anti-litter drive, 'Debo Na Nebo Na' to put a check on corrupt practices.

Former Union Minister Kabinra Purakayastha, Deputy Commissioner of Hailakandi and SSPD Cachar H. Yinchunger also spoke on the occasion. Assistant Passport Officer Jaydeep Chakraborty subsequently delivered the votes of thanks.

Traffic snarls at Baihata Chariali getting on people's nerves

CORRESPONDENT

DIPHU, March 26: The Assam University, Diphu Campus, which had remained closed since March 10 owing to confrontation between the students and the university authorities, reopened here on March 24 in the presence of Dilip Kumar Nath, Vice-Chancellor of Assam University.

The students had locked the gate of the campus and had gone for a stir demanding change of the campus status to full-fledged central university and all associated facilities needed for a central institution of higher education. The students had also demanded removal of the present Pro Vice Chancellor for his 'incompetency' and other shortcomings.

The Vice-Chancellor has affirmed that maximum demands of the students will be met within one month and the serving Pro Vice Chancellor will be substituted with a fresh one within seven days. He has also assured that the bigger demands of the students will be met up in a phased manner.

Former ABSU GS dies in road mishap

CORRESPONDENT

TEZPUR, March 26: Kanta Narzary who was the former general secretary of the main body of All Bodoland Students' Union (ABSU) and a resident of Naingra-Segelimara under Charduar PS in Sonitpur district died in a road mishap near Sonabari on NH-15 near Salboni police outpost on Saturday at around 3.30 pm. He was 55.

He was on his way to Tezpur by a two-wheeler when a truck knocked him down from behind. He died on the spot. Narzary also served as the president of Sonitpur district ABSU for a long time and was also associated with several social organisations. His demise was widely condoled.

As per the scenario, an earthquake caused the flagpole leakage and the leaked hydrocarbon vapours formed a cloud and moved outwards in the eastern direction due to wind, resulting in fire in some hurtments ignited by domestic energy source at the railway colony.

It may be pertinent to add here that the Golaghat district administration and NRL jointly conduct such offsite mock drills every year to meet the requirements of MSHIC Rule, 1989 and PNGRB Act 2006. For the purpose of safety of the public and as part of the exercise, people in the neighbourhood of NRL are also involved in the awareness exercise.

The mock drill was followed by a review meeting which was held to identify the various shortcomings in the mock exercises and preparedness of emergency teams and also to develop the skills of the key personnel of various departments of the district administration as well as refinery personnel to tackle real emergency situations.

NRL Director (Technical), BK Phukan, Senior Manager (HR) AK Bhattacharya, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Golaghat district, Amarjyoti Barman, DSP (Ho) Shyam Kumar Chauhan, Circle Officer of Morong, SK Gogoi, District Project Officer of DDMR, Romney Rajkumar, heads of various Government departments, along with senior officials of NRL were present at the exercise, the release concluded.

Rongali Bihu committee

A CORRESPONDENT

TIHU, March 26: To celebrate the forthcoming Rongali Bihu in a befitting manner, the people of greater Haribhanga area formed a new bihu committee in the name of Haribhanga Central Rongali Bihu Sammelan in a public meeting held recently in Gaon Ummay premises and appointed a 35-member committee with Nagen Medhi as president, Hananta Kalita and Guneswar Haioi as vice president, Nabajyoti Kalita as secretary, Jogesh Barman and Gobinda Kalita as assistant secretaries.

Cancer camp

DOOMDOOMA, March 26: The local unit of Marwari Yuva Manch organised a free cancer screening-cum-awareness camp at the Marwari Pancharayan Blawmien here recently. Local MLA Durga Bhumiang inaugurated the camp.

The SR Rungru Group of Jharkhand donated a mobile cancer screening van to the All India Marwari Yuva Manch. The van has all the facilities to detect oral, lungs, breast, cervical, prostate and throat cancer.



With Bohag Bihu approaching, a woman busy weaving gamosas at Majuli recently. — UB Photos



Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh speaking to media before leaving New Delhi on Sunday. — Photo: Correspondent

30 mn trafficking victims worldwide: Manipur CJ

NEWMAI NEWS

IMPHAL, March 26: The number of victims of human trafficking worldwide has reached an appalling 30 million and 11.9 million of them are from the Asia Pacific region alone, Manipur High Court Chief Justice Rakesh Ranjan Prasad said on Saturday.

Delivering his speech during a judicial seminar on human trafficking at Manipur High Court

auditorium here, Justice Prasad also said the service providers such as touts victimise other countries and seize their passengers and later make them victims of forced labour.

"These victims are trapped in jobs after they are channeled to their place of employment where they are not paid," Prasad said.

The Chief Justice stressed on the importance of registration by service providers with the

General strike affects life in Manipur

IMPHAL, March 26: The 17-hour general strike called by Democratic Students Alliance of Manipur (DESAM) in protest against the induction of Md Ashab Uddin, an independent MLA as a Parliamentary Secretary in BJP-led coalition government in the State, has affected normal life in the border State particularly Imphal on Sunday. DESAM has alleged that the government has inflicted a "non-local" as a Parliamentary Secretary in the government while the indigenous population of the State is struggling for their rights.

Meanwhile Chief Minister N Biren told the media that the Jiribam MLA won the Assembly elections. He contested two times in Panchayat elections also. Stating that he is confused as to who he added, after all people have elected him.

The general strike which concluded peacefully on Sunday evening, affected normal movement of inter-district and inter-State transport services from dawn to dusk. Shops and commercial establishments remained closed despite the State Government's appeal to call off the strike in public interest. — Correspondent

4 NSCN (K) operatives nabbed in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, March 26:

Three suspected operatives of banned insurgent group NSCN (K) have been apprehended and arms and ammunition seized by the police from Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Officials said the three were apprehended during a special operation conducted by police few days back. They said they have apprehended the three cadres in an operation in Kalapani area of Dambuk in the district.

An automatic rifle, a loaded magazine, 25 bullets of AK series assault rifles were seized from the NSCN (K) members.

Meanwhile Assam Rifles apprehended another cadre of the banned NSCN (K) during an operation in Changlang district, a Defence communiqué informed here on Saturday. He was apprehended yesterday morning by Assam Rifles and a pistol and live ammunition were seized from his possession. — PTI

Nagaland Agri dept plans 81 rural road projects

CORRESPONDENT

development with availability of better inputs for agricultural products.

During the last decade, there has been gradual increase in cash crop production in the state, mainly ginger, kholer, chilly, cardamom and vegetable crops with considerable marketing surplus and this is attributed partly due to the road communication with the agricultural hinterlands provided by agriculture department under Rural Infrastructure Development Programme, the report stated.

A amount of Rs 38.31 crore has been sanctioned against the 81 projects for RDP-XIX and so far over 75 per cent of the said work is completed.

The report added that an amount of Rs 21.50 crore has been reimbursed by NABARD. It said the rural roads serve the primary need in sustaining agrarian economy of the state to encourage an overall mineral resources.

The Minister informed the House that the pending share of the royalty of the three District Councils on major minerals is Rs 57 crore. Tyngsog said, the total share pending for Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council is Rs 20.57 crore and for Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council Rs 36.42 crore.

Replying to a question raised by Siem, Tyngsog said: "you are welcome to do that (approach the judiciary). Nobody is going to stop you from doing that."

Syiem was dissatisfied with the answer provided by the Minister on the delay in release of Council's share of royalty earned from major and minor minerals.

Garo Hills NGO seeks better education

TURA, March 26: Achile Youth Council (AYC) while expressing concern at the poor state of higher education in Garo Hills, mainly in the rural region, has sought the intervention of Meghalaya Government to reverse the situation.

AYC in a statement recently said that Garo Hills rural region has only two deficit colleges and three adhoc/government-aided ones, which are run mainly on fees collected from students. These colleges are located at Dulu, Ampati and New Blairburi, said AYC president Dimsingh Marak. — Correspondent

KHADC chief threatens to drag Meghalaya Govt to court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, March 26: Chief Executive Member of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council Pynshingnang Syiem has threatened that the Council would be forced to approach the judiciary in order to get its share of royalty from the Meghalaya Government.

Syiem, a Congress legislator from Mawlynnong Constituency, had earlier successfully dragged the State Government to court and won on the issue of MLAs holding the dual post of an MDC

Financial literacy course to be launched in Nagaland

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, March 26: NSE Academy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of India's leading stock exchange National Stock Exchange of India Limited (NSE) and Nagaland Board of School Education (NBSE) have joined hands to impart financial literacy to Class IX students in the State.

From the 2017 session, NBSE has made NSE Academy's financial literacy course compulsory for the students of Class IX, in all Higher Secondary Schools under the Board.

The financial literacy course called Concepts of Financial Literacy has been designed by NSE Academy and will help in familiarising students about the basics of Finance and Financial Planning.

As part of the initiative, NSE Academy has conducted training of the teachers, who then teaches the

Biren commits to protect territorial integrity of State

SOBHAPATI SAMOM

IMPHAL, March 26: Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh on Sunday said the territorial integrity of the State will be protected at any cost as it is dearer than his life. "This is the commitment of the government," he said.

Biren was responding to a question by reporters in connection with the Framework Agreement, this afternoon, minutes before his departure for the national capital to pay a courtesy call on President of India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and other Central leaders after he assumed the charge of the Chief Minister of the State on March 15.

NSCN (IM) General Secretary Th

Muiyah's remark during the outfit's Republic Day function in Nagaland on Tuesday that the "Framework Agreement" which was signed with Centre two years back recognises the demand for integration of Naga areas, has evoked reactions from various fronts.

Stating that Prime Minister had already made a clarification (during his last visit) and the Central Government also issued a clear-cut clarification on Saturday that there is nothing that can harm the territorial integrity of Manipur in the framework of agreement, he said what the NSCN-IM leader Muivah is reported to have said could be his claim.

On Saturday, Central Government had clarified that there is no such agreement or decision "to carve out a larger Naga

land State by taking away the territories of the States contiguous to Nagaland."

Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee leaders had also demanded clarification from both from the BJP led coalition government in the State as well as at the Centre over Muivah's remark.

On demands of implementation of Inner Line Permit system in the State, the CM said that he will look into what can be done in consultation with all stakeholders. Informing that he will apprise the State's situation to the Central leaders during his visit, he said, "I think the Prime Minister is also keen to solve the issues in the State." Minister for Works, Information and Public Relations Th Biswajit Singh is accompanying the CM in the visit. They are expected to return here on March 29.

North East important part of WW II reconciliation process: Japanese envoy

NEW DELHI

March 26: The 17-hour general strike called by Democratic Students Alliance of Manipur (DESAM) in protest against the induction of Md Ashab Uddin, an independent MLA as a Parliamentary Secretary in BJP-led coalition government in the State, has affected normal life in the border State particularly Imphal on Sunday. DESAM has alleged that the government has inflicted a "non-local" as a Parliamentary Secretary in the government while the indigenous population of the State is struggling for their rights.

Meanwhile Chief Minister N Biren told the media that the Jiribam MLA won the Assembly elections. He contested two times in Panchayat elections also. Stating that he is confused as to who he added, after all people have elected him.

The general strike which concluded peacefully on Sunday evening, affected normal movement of inter-district and inter-State transport services from dawn to dusk. Shops and commercial establishments remained closed despite the State Government's appeal to call off the strike in public interest. — Correspondent

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, March 26: Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, Government of India, has sanctioned development of 403 km of National Highways in Meghalaya and Mizoram. Out of this, approximately 52 km will be in Meghalaya and 351 km in Mizoram. The project will be executed in EPC Mode.

The estimated cost of the

Network Connectivity Project Phase I" with loan assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The existing carriageway of all the stretches is varying between single lanes to intermediate lane. The condition of the pavement is very poor and at some locations not in traffic-worthy condition. In addition, the stretches are also in poor condition in the landslide areas/sinking zone. Update and development of these stretches to two lane standards is under

the scheme "North East Road

various parts of the region and said it would be a ongoing process aimed at enabling the families and the people of Japan to pay their last respects to those who laid down their lives for their nation.

Hiramatsu has visited Manipur, Nagaland and Assam in the recent past and is planning to visit Manipur again to participate in the annual World War II commemoration programme in the State in May.

Hiramatsu stressed on the need to collect the bones of the dead Japanese soldiers from

as part of the Indian Panorama at the 47th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa last year.

Hiramatsu said the film was an effort to bring out a positive aspect of the North East and tell an important historical narrative of the region that is often projected in a negative way in the rest of the country.

According to Borpuri, the film is part of his continuing efforts to bring out untold stories from the NE through the medium of cinema. — PTI

Garobadha dacoity case victim loses fight with life

TURA, March 26: The 55-year-old victim of the brutal dacoity case, Tapan Ghosh, of Garobadha lost his battle with life recently.

Ghosh had been critically injured after being hit on his head with a "khukuri". Five members of the family injured in the attack were rushed to Guwahati for medical care where Tapan Ghosh was put under intensive care.

The family was attacked by a gang of about 20 dacoits in January. Ghosh died at Dhiekajuli in Assam where he was brought by his family to recuperate. — Correspondent



Activists of Justice Seeking Forum of All Mishmi taking out a rally "Come One And All" from residence of late Kalikho Pu in Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday. — UB Photos

country. The Nagaland Board has played a very positive role by making the Financial Literacy course compulsory for students of Class IX. We hope this course will sensitise students about money management and financial planning, to build a sound financial future. In addition they can also pursue career options in the financial sector, after studying these courses run by NSE Academy."

The curriculum comprises 25 periods of 45 minutes each. The topics that students will be taught include Financial Planning, setting of financial goals, concepts of savings and investments, banking transactions and making a family budget. This will help in empowering the children on the need for financial planning, to ensure their financial well-being in the future.

NSE Academy will conduct an offline examination at the end of the academic year.

NSE Academy and NBSE will issue joint certificates to students and teachers under various categories. Certificates will be issued to successful candidates and participation certificates will be issued, even if they don't qualify in the exam. A certificate of merit to the topper of every school will be given by the Board and NSE Academy. Certificates of appreciation will also be awarded to teachers who teach the State toppers.

The Board had introduced the financial literacy course in selected schools in the three districts of Kohima, Mokokchung and Dimapur in 2016. During the pilot project, around 5,150 students had enrolled for the course in Class IX, across 60 schools under the Board.

NSE Academy also runs a Financial Literacy course in partnership with the State Boards of Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Goa.

CAG to audit impact of demonetisation

NEW DELHI, March 26: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) plans to audit the impact of note ban and the effect it has had on government tax revenues, said CAG Shashi Kant Sharma.

In an interview to PTI, he said the auditor is gearing up to audit tax revenues under the new Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime and has started capacity building and reorienting its audit methodology and procedures.

Among the special audits, CAG has already completed audit of agricultural

tural crop insurance scheme and flood control and flood forecasting, and is now engaged in several important audits like Right to Education, National Rural Health Mission, defence pensions and Ganga Rejuvenation, he said. "These reports should be ready by the end of the current year."

Sharma asserted that CAG has audit jurisdiction over any body or authority which has any relation to government revenues and expenditure and resistance by some like city development bodies, DISCOMs and metro corporations will wither away.

"We plan to audit certain issues related to fiscal impact of demonetisation, largely its impact on tax revenues," he said.

The government had withdrawn old 500 and 1,000 rupee notes from circulation on November 8 last year and announced a new tax amnesty scheme for those holding unaccounted junked currency.

CAG audit may look into expenditure on printing of notes, RBI dividend payout and banking transaction data.

The auditor has also conveyed to

the government its stand on the recent move of the GST Council to delete section 65 of the preliminary draft that authorised CAG to audit GST.

"Our mandate covers GST just like the earlier taxation regimes were covered. We have already started work on restructuring of our revenue audit arrangements to meet this likely challenge when GST is introduced."

"This exercise would include issues of capacity building, data access and analysis, reorientation of audit methodology and procedures, and developing end-to-end IT solutions," he said.

Sharma said executive, legislature, judiciary and audit have clearly demarcated roles and responsibilities.

"The framers of our Constitution were fully aware of the concept of checks and balances, hence you find the mention of Judiciary and CAG in the fifth part of the Constitution along with legislature and executive," he said. "The CAG's DPC Act of 1971 provides the details of the mandate and scope of audit available to us." - PTI

Automation

By 2021, 4 out of 10 jobs would be lost: Experts

NEW DELHI, March 26: Automation is the new norm across sectors and will affect the bottom of pyramid so much so that four out of every 10 jobs globally would be lost due to this by 2021, experts say.

Automation is the new normal in sectors like engineering, manufacturing, automobiles, IT and banking. As automation adoption increases, all high transaction and labour-intensive jobs will take a hit.

According to PeopleStrong CEO and Founder Pankaj Bansal, there will be a visible change in the next 3-4 years, first major effects will be seen in the sectors like manufacturing, IT and ITeS and security services and agriculture.

"We predict that by 2021, 4 out of every 10 jobs globally would be lost because of automation. And of these, one in every 4 will be from India. That sums up to 23 per cent of job loss in India," Bansal said.

India produces 5.5 million jobs (across levels) every year, but this number falls short of jobs needed to employ available talent and automation is further increasing the gap.

"Five years ago, there were 1,500 jobs in the assembly line, it has been reduced to 500 jobs now. The focus has moved away from skilled to unskilled workers," said Bansal.

With the government aiming at adding around 15 to 16 GW of clean energy projects, the cost of solar and wind, there would be total credit market size of around Rs 65,000 crore.

Experts said low skill and high transaction jobs will be affected as automation takes away their jobs. - PTI

Govt likely to announce NPA resolution policy soon

NEW DELHI, March 26: To deal with mounting bad loans afflicting banks, the government is likely to come out with a set of measures for faster resolution of non-performing assets within a fortnight.

"Policy is being given final touches. It should be announced by the month-end or early next month," a senior Finance Ministry official said.

Broadly, the policy should

contain the processes relating to haircut and one-time settlement to be carried out by banks for faster resolution of high-value cases, the official said, adding that the big loan defaults constitute about 70 per cent of the total NPAs.

"...I think you wait for a few days... There is some policy decision between the RBI and the government which we will implement, which will put adequate pressure on people to settle..." he had said.

Jaitly had gone on to say that "if you look at the whole structure, there are enough instruments available for settlements as far as the banking system is concerned. There are different legislations where action can be taken".

According to sources, the joint lenders' forum (JLF) is expected to be overhauled to facilitate quick decision-making.

Instead of being a resolution mechanism, the JLF has become a delaying tool for big debtors because as per the guidelines, restructuring needs approval of 60 per cent of consortium lenders which more often than not eludes, sources added.

As per the existing JLF

guidelines, if a restructuring package is approved by 75 per cent of creditors by value and 60 per cent of creditors by number, other banks have to go along with it. - PTI

IREDA to sanction Rs 13,000-cr loans for clean energy in FY18

NEW DELHI, March 26: State-run Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) will sanction Rs 13,000 crore for clean energy projects next fiscal in the country, vying for around 20 per cent of the loan market share.

With the government aiming at adding around 15 to 16 GW of clean energy projects, including solar and wind, there would be total credit market size of around Rs 65,000 crore.

"We have planned to sanction around Rs 13,000 crore credit to clean energy project developers in the country in next financial year, which would be around 20 per cent of the market share," IREDA Chairman KS Popli told PTI.

Popli also said that IREDA would be able to release around Rs 8,000 crore for these clean energy projects in country.

IREDA has sanctioned around Rs 37,000 crore of credit for clean energy projects in the country so far and has released around Rs 28,000 crore to developers, which aid generation capacity of around 7,000 MW.

Elaborating further, Popli said, "The same amount of credit would be able to add larger green capacities as the cost of clean energy equipment was quite high in earlier days".

The lower cost of equipment and lower borrowing charges

have already pulled down solar energy tariff to all time low of Rs 2.97 per unit last month.

The wind power tariff has too dropped to a record low of Rs 3.46 per unit in an auction of 1,000 MW capacity conducted by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).

The loan disbursements by IREDA have grown from Rs 826 crore in 2007-08 to Rs 7,806 crore in 2015-16, with a CAGR of 32 per cent and expected to cross Rs 10,000 crore during this fiscal.

Similarly, the loan disbursements have grown from Rs 553 crore in 2007-08 to Rs 4,257 crore in 2015-16, with a CAGR of 29 per cent and is likely to cross Rs 6,000 crore in the financial year 2016-17.

The net profit of the company has increased from Rs 47,96 crore in 2007-08 to Rs 298.04 crore in 2015-16.

In order to give more wings to IREDA's ambitious plans to finance clean energy projects, its board has approved initial public offer proposal of Rs 13.90 crore fresh equity share with face value of Rs 10 each during February 2017.

The initiative would help IREDA to increase its net worth facilitating lending to larger projects. The fresh issue of share shall be at price to be determined through a book building process. - PTI



Bandaru Dattatreya, Minister of Labour & Employment, flagging off ESIC mobile dispensaries at ESIC Regional Office Adarshnagar, in Hyderabad on Sunday. - UNI

Arbitration on compensation demand starts

NEW DELHI, March 26: A three-member arbitration panel has started hearing validity of the government's demand of \$1.55 billion as compensation from Reliance Industries for "unfairly" producing ONGC's gas.

The panel, headed by Singapore-based arbitrator Prof Lawrence Boo, had its first hearing on March 3 where the timetable was drawn, sources privy to the development said.

RIL-BP-Nuko had slapped an arbitration notice on November 11 last year.

This was against the Oil Minis-

nominated on the three-meeting panel for arbitration while RIL and its partners BP Plc of the UK and Canada's Niko Resources have named former UK High Court Judge Bernard Eder to the panel.

RIL is the operator of the KG-D6 block with 60 per cent interest while BP holds 30 per cent. The remaining 10 per cent is with Niko Resources.

The government's compensation claim followed from the report of the Justice (retd) AP Shah Committee.

The Shah panel, in its Augus-

28, 2016, report, concluded that there has been "unjust enrichment" to the contractor of the block KG-DW-98/2 (KG-D6) due to production of migrated gas from the ONGC's blocks KG-DW-98/

and Godavari PML.

The government, sources said, accepted the recommendations of the committee and consequently, decided to claim restitution from RIL-BP-Niko for the "unjust benefit received and unfairly retained".

So, a notice was sent, they said, adding that the government is also pressing RIL to pay \$174.9 million of additional profit petroleum after certain costs were disallowed because of KG-D6 output being lower than the target.

The cost recovery issue is being arbitrated separately.

Originally, ONGC had sued RIL for producing gas that had migrated from its blocks KG-DW-98/2 (KG-D5) and Godavari PML in the KG basin to adjoining KG-D6 block of RIL. - PTI

Four T-Hub start-ups bag global awards

HYDERABAD, March 26: Four start-ups from T-Hub, one of the largest start-up ecosystems builders in India, have bagged global awards, a statement said on Saturday.

Hug Innovations, Loop Reality, AuthBase and Kheyti have received prestigious awards and recognitions in competitions held exclusively to identify emerging stars in the country, the T-Hub said in a statement.

The T-Hub, which has over 2,000 start-ups on its database, claims to be emerging as the first choice of top Indian start-ups.

Hug Innovations, the maker of the gesture-control Hug Smartwatch capable of flying drones, navigating smart television, and controlling virtual reality-based applications through

China between April 11-18.

Loop Reality is a disruptive technology firm, whose first product LoopIt is an immersive multi-player VR fitness solution, which allows its users to experience outdoor environments, indoors.

AuthBase, a deep tech cyber security company working out of the India Round of the 1st China (Shenzhen) International Entrepreneurship Competition held at Bengaluru. While they received a cash-prize of RMB 100,000, another emerging start-up player, Loop Reality, was declared 2nd runner-up and received a cash-prize of RMB 30,000. Both these companies qualified for the global finals of the competition, which will be held at Shenzhen.

The fourth start-up nurtured by T-Hub is garnering international attention after being conferred with the "Acumen Global Award 2017" in Kenya 10-Kheyti, an AgriTech company that creates dependable incomes to small farmers using technology. - IANS

Govt working on options for duty sops sought by Apple

NEW DELHI, March 26: The government is working on certain options to accommodate demands related to tax and duty concessions sought by iPhone maker Apple for setting up a manufacturing unit in India.

Although the Finance Ministry has prima facie rejected the demands of the US-based technology major, senior executives of the company met an inter-ministerial group recently to deliberate upon the issue.

The group discussed at length the demands of the company, sources said, adding that the government is trying to find ways through which certain import measures could be extended to the American firm.

Sources also said the company is asking for concessions as it wants to bring in its sup-

port chain or component-makers to the country as Apple cannot source inputs locally.

The company also wants duty exemptions on the products to be brought from special economic zones (SEZs).

At present, goods exported from SEZs do not attract any duty but import duties are levied if items produced in special economic zones are sold in the domestic market.

There is a possibility that this demand could be met by the government as several domestic companies are also demanding the same.

On the other hand, certain duty concessions sought by Apple are very difficult to meet as India is gradually becoming a manufacturing hub of smartphones. - PTI

New NEXA showroom

GUWAHATI, March 26:

NEXA, the premium automotive channel from Maruti Suzuki, opened a new showroom at Chandmari here on Saturday, a press release said.

Speaking on the occasion, Avadeesh Lahoty, Director Pallavi Motors Pvt Ltd, said the new NEXA showroom spread over 5000 sq feet area, is designed for an emerging segment of customers who value innovation, personal touch and pampering in their car buying experience.

The inaugural function was attended by industrial stalwarts, bankers, government officers and other distinguished guests, the release added.

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On the other hand, certain duty concessions sought by Apple are very difficult to meet as India is gradually becoming a manufacturing hub of smartphones. - PTI

The Broadcast Audience Research Council has moved into the space.

Covering digital video is not just covering pure-play digital video but it is covering TV on digital devices," the council's business head for digital, Jamie Kenney, said.

"We need to see the holistic picture whether it is a YouTube pure-play catch-up (TV) on digital," he said.

Notably, the digital medium is fast growing, globally, and India is among the fastest growing one.

The advertisers see that it has better addressability and better connect with the audience, Kenney said. - PTI

Digital Ventures Chief Operating Officer Gaurav Gandhi said over the weekend.

The YouTube, which is an ad-funded and user-generated OTT platform, offers video on demand, while Viacom18's Voot, Jio Play (from Reliance Jio), TVF Play, Ozee TV etc., operate in the ad-led video-on-demand space.

Others like Hotstar, Sony Liv, Datto TV, Viu, ErosNow operate on a 'free-to-air' model where some content is ad-led (free) while some is subscription-led offerings.

Zulfiqar Khan, business head at ErosNow, the OTT platform of film producer and distributor Eros International, said, "As a medium, as con-

tent creators and as a platforms if we want to accelerate growth, we need to inspire the audience and wean them away from TV."

He said ErosNow is toying with the idea of creating a mainstream film for the digital audience before a theatrical release.

Meanwhile, the Broadcast Audience Research Council is planning to launch a digital measurement tool this year, measuring the ads and content viewed on the new medium.

According to the latest FICCI-KPMG report, leading OTT video platforms like Hotstar, Voot, Jio Play (from Reliance Jio), TVF Play, Ozee TV etc., are dependent on ad revenues, while the likes of Hotstar have a small portion of subscription income.

Out of a total revenue of Rs 186

crore in fiscal 2016, Hotstar's ad revenue contributed Rs 139 crore, while the subscription contributed only Rs 24 crore.

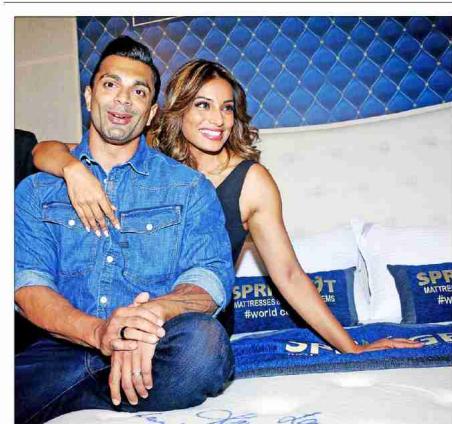
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Bollywood actors Bipasha Basu and Karan Singh Grover during the launch of Spring Mattress autograph collection, in Mumbai on Saturday night. - UNI



Vice President Hamid Ansari giving away the Kala Rattan Award to Anupam Kher, at the 66th Convocation of the Panjab University, in Chandigarh on Saturday. — UNI

Assam woman among 232 missing people reunited with families

DEHRADUN, March 26: Fourteen years after she went missing from a mental asylum in Assam, Subhadra Patir was found wandering in Uttarakhand's Tehri and lodged in a women's shelter here in 2015.

Life came full circle when the 50-year-old was finally reunited with her son this month.

Over 200 people, most of them women and children, who were missing or languishing in asylums and other institutions, have been reunited with their families over the last by the Uttarakhand government.

Additional Secretary of the Social Welfare department, Manoj Chandran, said 232 such people living in women's shelter homes, asylums and orphanges have got back to their families. — PTI

Seer seeks apology from Kamal Haasan

BENGALURU, March 26: Paravanananda Swami of Basaveshwara Mutt in Karnataka today flagged actor Kamal Haasan for his alleged insulting remarks on *Mahabharat* and demanded an apology from him.

"It is unbecoming of actor Kamal Haasan to hurt the sentiments of any religious community, including Christians and Muslims. He has been in the thick of controversies even in the past, and we demand he should apologise," Paravanananda Swami said here.

In an interview to Tamil TV channel, the actor while

spoke about a question about violence against women, particularly in the film industry, had said in this country, people read even books like the epic *Mahabharat*, wherein 'even a woman was pledged in gamble, as a bet', an apparent reference to Paanchali.

Paravanananda Swami said the actor had always been in news for "hurting" the sentiments of religious communities and threatened to take legal action if he did not apologise for the controversial remarks.

"He should apologise in next three days, or else he must face legal action," he said. — PTI



A farmer awaiting for showers as lakes at Siddanabavi village recedes after being hit by dry spell. — UNI

Kerala minister quits

KOZHIKODE, March 26: Kerala Transport minister AK Saseendran today announced his resignation from the CPI(M)-led LDF government in Kerala after a purported audio clip of him speaking in sexual undertones to a woman emerged.

The audio clipping was released by a Malayalam television channel this afternoon. Hours later, the minister, who was in Kochikode, hurriedly convened a press meet and announced his resignation. Saseendran, of Nationalist Congress Party, a coalition party of LDF, said he had already informed Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who he said had not sought his resignation.

The minister said his resignation should not be seen as an acceptance of guilt. "My resignation is to uphold political morality," he told reporters. Pointing out that he had not behaved in an improper manner with anyone, Saseendran said he was prepared to face any probe. "A proper investigation is needed. All facts should come," he said, adding, he welcomed any probe.

It is the second blow to the 10-month old CPI(M)-led LDF government in Kerala after the resignation of Jayaram over charges of nepotism for appointing two of his close relatives to top position in state PSUs. — PTI

Caterpillars to transport ITBP troops along China border soon

NEW DELHI, March 26: After SUVs and snow scooters, ITBP troops deployed along the Sino-India frontier will soon have all-terrain amphibious 'caterpillar' vehicles to undertake patrols and operational movements in the icy heights of the region.

The force has decided to procure at least two such giant rubberband belt rolling vehicles to transport troops on high-altitude deployment, along with their arms and ammunition, along the China border in the Ladakh region.

"We are in the final stages of procuring these vehicles. The trials have been successful and they will be used for transport of troops. These vehicles suit our requirements in the high-altitude areas," ITBP Director General Krishna Chaudhary said.

He said the all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are adept at maneuvering at low temperatures and can carry

about a dozen troops at a time. The final clearance, a senior officer said, is awaited from the Union Home Ministry after which the ITBP will place orders for two

machines — five forward and reverse. The rubberband track also allows the ATVs to move over snow, the official said. Its two aluminum alloy-made cab



Caterpillar ATVs

such giants from a US-based firm at around Rs 9 crore.

The vehicles, called 'caterpillars' due to their design, can negotiate treacherous slopes and stay afloat in shallow waters. They operate on four-cylinder engines and have auto-

matic gears — five forward and reverse. The rubberband track also allows the ATVs to move over snow, the official said. Its two aluminum alloy-made cab

area along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

As the original caterpillar vehicle comes with an air conditioning system, which would not be of use in high-altitude areas, the ITBP has sought modification of the vehicle through installation of a heater that can keep the troops warm and insulated from freezing winds while traveling in sub-zero temperatures.

Powered by a 250 litre diesel fuel tank and while floating on water it can achieve a maximum speed of 3.5 km per hour. Its speed is about 30 km per hour on a dirt or uneven track.

A slightly similar version of the caterpillar is used by the BSF to patrol the marshy Rann of Kutch along the Gujarat coast. The ITBP has recently procured five snow scooters which will be deployed at high-altitude border locations in Ladakh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim that overlook the Chinese PLA deployment. — PTI



Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh chairing a meeting with Chief Minister of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal and his team on security related issues, in New Delhi on Sunday. — UNI

India to change definition of blindness

NEW DELHI, March 26:

The government is set to change a four-decade-old definition of blindness to bring it in line with the WHO criteria and ensure the Indian data on blindness meets the global estimates.

As defined under the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB), a person unable to count fingers from a distance of six metres is categorised as 'blind' in India, against the WHO's stipulation of three metres.

"We will bring the definition of blindness at par with the WHO's criteria. Because of this change, the project will have a higher figure of blind people from India at any international forum. Thus India gets presented in a poor light compared to other countries," said Promila Gupta, NPCB Deputy Director General.

Also, she said, the data "we generate under the programme will be compared with the global estimates as other countries are following the WHO's criteria".

Uniformity in the definition across various regions of the world is a pre-requisite for facilitating collection of population-based data on prevalence of blindness and estimating its global burden. Gupta said.

For the Indians to achieve the goal set by WHO which recommends reducing the blindness prevalence of the country to 0.3 per cent of the total population by 2020, "The Vision 2020 recommends reducing the prevalence of blindness to 0.3 per cent by the year 2020 to achieve the elimination of blindness", Gupta said.

"It will be extremely difficult to achieve the WHO goal using the NPCB definition since we will be addressing an extra 4 million individuals, blind due to refractive errors. By adopting the blindness criteria of WHO, India can achieve the goal," said Praveen Vashist, in-charge, Community Ophthalmology at Dr RP Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences at AIIMS. — PTI

Surrogacy bill allows human trafficking, warns author Virani

NEW DELHI, March 26:

The surrogacy bill introduced in Parliament making altruistic a third-party woman carrying the foetus of a married infertile couple is "riddled with loopholes", says author Pinki Virani.

She, however, welcomes the government's complete ban on commercial surrogacy.

She has sent stakeholder suggestions towards strengthening the surrogacy bill to the Rajya Sabha's Standing Committee currently examining it, in which she points to "the trafficking of poor women for surrogacy continuing, they are be-

ing bussed across the border".

Virani's latest book *Politics Of The Womb: The Perils Of IVF, Surrogacy & Modified Babies* released by Penguin Viking, exposes the physical and mental harm that aggressive IVF (in vitro fertilisation) can inflict upon a baby and its mother, whether she is the "direct patient" or the surrogate.

"Some artificial reproductive procedures can carry dangers of deadly diseases, deformities and disorders," says the book while providing proof from international experts.

"India must be mindful that other

countries, near or far, may be encouraging their medical economies through the bodies of women. They may not allow their fertility clinics to practise commercial surrogacy on their own women citizens but would turn a blind eye to women being trafficked inwards."

"Unfortunately, in its current exclusionary form, the surrogacy bill allows for human-trafficking," author claims.

Suggesting solutions, she says, "The intending parents will identify their own surrogate birth mother and the final approval will be by the Surrogacy Board."

Under offences and penalties law equally ensure that no womb, with the woman attached, is trafficked into our country for the exploitative purpose of commercial surrogacy. Every country, India included, needs to clamp down to prevent reproductive trafficking.

"India must be mindful that other

countries, near or far, may be encouraging their medical economies through the bodies of women. They may not allow their fertility clinics to practise commercial surrogacy on their own women citizens but would turn a blind eye to women being trafficked inwards."

She also suggests the adding of "inclusive of using Indian passport-holders as surrogate birth mothers internationally".

She further asks for the bill to clarify that the surrogate "will be an Indian citizen residing in India".

"Not only to prevent inwards trafficking," she says. "The altruistic surrogate is the intending child's birth-mother even as its genetic-mother is the egg or oocyte-giver. It is a combination of genetic and giving birth which, in the general context of human reproduction, makes for biological mothers. — PTI



অসম চৰকাৰ

প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা বিভাগে আয়োজন কৰা “নৱ-নিযুক্ত প্রাথমিক শিক্ষকৰ এদিনীয়া প্ৰশিক্ষণ” আৰু “স্বচ্ছ বিদ্যালয় বটা” প্ৰদান অনুষ্ঠান

২৭ মাৰ্চ, ২০১৭ তাৰিখে অনুষ্ঠিতৰ নৱ-নিযুক্ত শিক্ষকসকলৰ এদিনীয়া প্ৰশিক্ষণ” আৰু “স্বচ্ছ বিদ্যালয় বটা” প্ৰদান অনুষ্ঠানলৈ সমূহ নৱ-নিযুক্ত শিক্ষকৰ আৰু স্বচ্ছ বিদ্যালয়ৰ পুৰুষাবলৰ বাবে নিৰ্বাচিত বিদ্যালয়সমূহৰ প্ৰতিনিধিসকলক পুৰা ৯.৩০ বজাৰত পঞ্চ চিকিৎসা মহাবিদ্যালয় খেলগথাৰ, খানাপাৰা, গুৱাহাটী-২২ ত উপস্থিত হ'বলৈ অনুৰোধ জনোৱা হ'ল।

উক্ত অনুষ্ঠানত অসমৰ মাননীয় মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী শ্ৰীযুত সৰ্বানন্দ সোণোৱালদেৱ মুখ্য অতিথি

হিচাপে আৰু মাননীয় শিক্ষামন্ত্ৰী ড° হিমন্ত শৰ্মাদেৱ সমানীয় অতিথি

হিচাপে উপস্থিত থাকিব।

হিচাপে : পশ্চ চিকিৎসা মহাবিদ্যালয় খেলগথাৰ, খানাপাৰা, গুৱাহাটী-২২ [অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগৰ কাৰ্যালয়ৰ সমীক্ষা]

সময় : পুৰা ৯.৩০ বজা।

বিবৃত : নৱ-নিযুক্ত শিক্ষকসকলক পুৰা ৯.৩০ বজাৰত নিজৰ টেট/চি টেট উত্তীৰ্ণৰ প্রামাণ্যপত্ৰ সতেজ অনুষ্ঠানত উপস্থিত থাকিবলৈ অনুৰোধ জনোৱা হ'ল।

স্বচ্ছালক
প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা স্বচ্ছালকালয়
অসম চৰকাৰ

Jainanag/17/03/16

Hamas shuts Gaza crossing, blames Israel for assassination

GAZA CITY, March 26: Hamas shut the crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel today after blaming the Jewish state for the assassination of one of its officials in the Palestinian enclave. The interior ministry in Gaza, run by Islamist movement Hamas, said it was shutting the Erez crossing for an indefinite period as it investigates Friday's murder.

It did not give details on the reason behind the closure, though there was speculation authorities may be seeking to prevent those responsible for the killing from leaving. Hamas security forces were deployed along the Gaza borders and exits by the weekend, officials said.

Hamas officials have blamed the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad and its "collaborators" for the killing of Mazen Faqha, 38, who was shot dead by unknown gunmen. He was killed by four bullets from a pistol equipped with a silencer.

Israel has not commented on the shooting.

According to Israeli media, Faqha was responsible for cells of Hamas's military wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Today, Faqha's wife, Nahed Assida, called on "Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to respond to this assassination."

"The price of my husband's blood is in your hands," she said during a women's conference in Gaza. Faqha's funeral on Saturday drew thousands of Hamas supporters into the streets with chants of "revenge" and "death to Israel."

Ismail Haniya, until recently head of Hamas in Gaza, and Yahya Sinwar, who replaced him as leader, headed the procession. According to Hamas, Faqha formed cells for the Islamist group's military wing in the West Bank cities of Tubas, also where he was born, and Jenin.

It said he played an important role in preparing two major attacks. They included a suicide attack in the Israeli settlement neighbourhood of Gilo in east Jerusalem in 2002 that killed 19 people.

The second was a suicide bus attack later that year that killed nine people in the northern Israeli city of Safed. — AFP

Around the WORLD

Renovation of old houses in Beijing

BEIJING, March 26: China has allocated a whopping USD 4.5 billion to renovate substandard urban houses in Beijing this year, as part of a plan to make the capital a world-class city.

A budget of 30.8 billion yuan (USD 4.5 billion), which is 60 per cent more than last year, has been allocated for housing renovation. Around 36,000 homes in pockets of dilapidated areas, including four traditional hutongs around the tourist site Nanluoguxiang, will be targeted this year, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

According to Beijing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the renovation is part of Beijing's efforts to build a world-class city to live.

The campaign will create more green space and improve public facilities in the urban districts.

China aims to complete renovation of rundown urban areas and dilapidated housing by 2020, to provide low-income urban residents with affordable housing.

The government had rebuilt six million homes last year and aims to renovate the same number this year. — PTI

World War-I liquor bottles

JERUSALEM, March 26: Archaeologists have discovered a stash of hundreds of bottles, along with other items dating back to World War I, buried British backlog in Israel. The unexpected discovery was made in an archaeological excavation of the Israel Antiquities Authority being conducted in Israel.

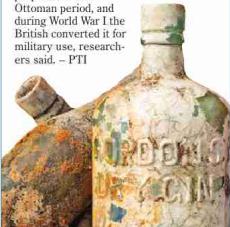
The researchers also found flint tools that are 250,000 years old from the Middle Paleolithic period.

The excavation is being carried out as part of the construction of a highway.

"The written historical evidence regarding the British activities in the British backlog in Israel consists of 'dry' details, such as the number of soldiers, direction of attack, and the results of battle," said Ron Toueg, excavation director of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

"The discovery of this site and the finds in it provide us with an opportunity for a glimpse of the unwritten part of history and reconstruct for the first time the everyday life and leisure of the soldiers," said Toueg. "We found a building whose upper part was not preserved, which was apparently the foundations of a barracks," he said.

The structure was used for agricultural purposes in the Ottoman period, and during World War I it was converted for military use, researchers said. — PTI



French President Francois Hollande inspects an honour guard with Singaporean counterpart Tony Tan during a welcome ceremony at the Istana in Singapore on Sunday. — UNI

Iraqi snipers target Mosul jihadists using human shields

BAGHDAD, March 26: Iraq has deployed snipers to target jihadists using civilians as human shields in Mosul, as it investigates air strikes that reportedly killed large numbers of residents in the city, the military said today.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians



Fresh blasts rock building occupied by militants in B'desh

DHAKA, March 26: Elite commandos today battled to neutralise Islamist militants holed up in a building rocked by fresh explosions, hours after six people were killed and over 50 others injured in blasts claimed by

the Islamic State outside the complex in Bangladesh's northeastern Sylhet city.

"A ban has been enforced barring entry of ordinary people within the vicinity of the building as final preparations were underway to flush the militants out from their den," a police officer told reporters on the scene.

At least three blasts were heard from inside the five-storey "Atia Mahal" since 9:57 AM (local time). A huge blast near the terrace tilted it towards one side, the Daily Star reported, citing its photojournalist who was on the spot. Several gunshots were also heard. But it is unclear who were firing the shots as army prepared for a final assault.

Sylhet-based 17 Infantry Division's Major General Anwarul Momen is leading the operation to clear the building. The force includes two police inspectors and four onlookers, two of them being college students. — PTI

ians are still trapped in Mosul, caught between advancing Iraqi forces and the Islamic State group jihadists that they are fighting to defeat.

Iraqi officials and witnesses said that air strikes killed civilians in the Mosul al-Jadida area in recent days, but the number of victims – said to range from dozens to hundreds – could not be independently confirmed.

IS "began to use

citizens as human shields, and we are trying to target them with... Snipers to eliminate them," Joint Operations Command spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Rasool told AFP.

Iraqi forces are relying on "light and medium weapons, among them sniper rifles," to hunt for Daesh members" located among civilians, he said.

However, Iraqi forces have also frequently fired mortars rounds and unguided rockets during the battle for west Mosul – weapons that pose a much greater risk to residents of areas where fighting is taking place.

Rasool accused IS of gathering civilians together and then blowing up explosives-rigged vehicles nearby to make it look like "Iraqi forces... Are targeting innocent civilians."

He also said that Iraq has begun a probe into reports of civilians killed by air strikes in Mosul.

"The defence ministry opened an investigation into this issue," Rasool said.

The US-led coalition against IS has indicated that it may have been responsible for at least some of the civilian deaths.

An initial review of strike data... indicates that, at the request of the Iraqi security forces, the coalition struck (IS) fighters and equipment,

March 17, in west Mosul at the location corresponding to allegations of civilian casualties," it said in a statement yesterday.

At the beginning of this month the international alliance had said that "it is more likely than not, at least 220 civilians have been unintentionally killed by coalition strikes," while other incidents were still under investigation.

Two witnesses who have since fled Mosul said that a building with around 170 people inside was destroyed. — AFP



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and his wife Cheng Hong wave as they arrive in Wellington, New Zealand on Sunday. — UNI

Prehistoric evidence of human cannibalism discovered

LONDON, March 26: Scientists have discovered the oldest evidence of human cannibalism in the western European Mediterranean region, by analysing 10,000-year-old bones with scratch and bite marks on them.

The bones, discovered in the Santa Maria Caves in Spain, belong to the Mesolithic period, researchers said. The Mesolithic period lasts from about 10,200 to 8,000 years ago. The human bones were an accidental find, said study lead researcher Juan Morales-Perez, a researcher at the University of Valencia in Spain.

"I was studying the remains of Mesolithic animals from the Santa Maria site, and suddenly I identified a human distal humerus - an elbow -



and it was full of cuts," Morales-Perez said. Researchers eventually discovered 30 bones belonging to

three individuals: a robust adult, a gracile adult and an infant. 'Live Science' reported.

However, the infant had only one complete bone (a shoulder blade) that did not show signs of cannibalism, the researchers said. The bones date to between 10,200 and 9,000 years ago, Morales-Perez said.

The last of the hunter-gatherer communities lived through this time, and evidence suggests that their culture was more organized and complex than it was during the Paleolithic period.

"A good example of this complexity is the appearance of the first cemeteries. There are also these strange examples of cannibalism," Morales-Perez said. The study was published in the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*. — PTI

Rebel court sentences Yemen President to death

SANA, March 26: A rebel court in Yemen's insurgent-held capital has sentenced President Abdrabbo Mansour Hadi to death for high treason in absentia, the rebel news agency has said.

Yemen today marked the second anniversary of a Saudi-led coalition starting air strikes against the Houthi rebels in support of Hadi's government, after the insurgents overran the capital Sanaa.

The court found Hadi guilty of "usurping the title of president after the end of his term in office" in February 2014, "instigating attacks by Saudi Arabia" and "undermining the independence and integrity of the Republic of Yemen", the rebel-controlled Saba agency said late Saturday.

Six members of Hadi's government were also sentenced to death for treason, it said.

Today hundreds of thousands of Houthi supporters flooded the streets of Sanaa for a mass rally against Saudi Arabia's role in the war, an AFP reporter at the site said.

That came a day after former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is allied to the Houthi, slammed Riyadh in a speech marking two years since the coalition's military intervention.

"Free Yemenis will continue to choose resistance, as long as the coalition led by Saudi Arabia continues to choose war," Saleh quoted Saleh as saying. Rebel leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi said the Saudi-led coalition had been "living under the illusion that they can talk Yemen in a week or a month... But have sunk into the mud," it said.

Hadi's forces have gained ground in southern Yemen since the coalition's intervention in March 2015, but the Houthis still control the capital and strategic ports on the Red Sea coastline. — AFP

1 killed, 15 hurt at Cincinnati nightclub shooting

CINCINNATI (US), March 26: At least two people opened fire inside a crowded nightclub early this morning, killing one person and wounding more than a dozen others in what authorities described as a chaotic scene.

It was not clear what prompted the shooting at the Cameo club in Cincinnati, Ohio at about 1:30 am, and authorities didn't immediately have any suspects.

"Saturday night, it is a very young crowd. We have had incidents here in the past, but this is by far the worst," Capt. Kim Williams said. Several officers were working security detail at the club and performed first aid and tried to revive the person that died, Williams said.

Fifteen people were shot. Some of them drove themselves to area hospitals and others were taken by ambulance. Authorities are interviewing several witnesses, but Williams said a lot of the clubgoers had left.

"The biggest problem when you have a large crowd like this and the shots ring out, a lot of the witnesses disappear," she said.

Authorities were asking anyone with information to come forward. Williams said investigators are checking to see if surveillance cameras were working.

WLWT reported that at least one person was in critical condition at University of Cincinnati Medical Center. — AP

Syrian Opp calls on US to spare civilians in Raqqa

BEIRUT, March 26: A leading Syrian Opposition group is calling on the US-led coalition to stop targeting residential areas in and around Raqa, the ISIS group's de facto capital.

The Syrian National Coalition says it is "increasingly concerned" about civilian casualties in the campaign against the extremist group. The exiled opposition coalition is taking part in UN-mediated talks in Geneva.

The SNC says it believes coalition forces were behind an airstrike that killed at least 30 civilians sheltering in a school in the countryside outside Raqa on March 21. The coalition has said it is investigating. The US has provided substantial air and ground support to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, who are closing in on Raqa. — AP

4 dead, 23 hurt in Philippines grenade attack

JOLO, March 26: Officials say a man lobbed a grenade at a store in the southern Philippines, killing four people and wounding 23 in an attack that appears to be unrelated to terrorism.

Army Col Cirilito Sobejana says the attacker was arrested following the late yesterday grenade blast in Bucas village near the airport in Sulu province's Jolo town.

The motive for the attack wasn't immediately clear, but a military officer said today that the attacker, who was identified by police as Sedmar Rabah, returned to the area to retaliate after being beaten by a group of men who accused him of stealing a cellphone. — AP

Dutch suffer shock, Ronaldo in 70-goal landmark

PARIS, March 26: The Netherlands' hopes of reaching the World Cup finals suffered a major setback when the three-time runners-up slumped to a shock 2-0 defeat to Bulgaria.

The loss left the Dutch six points behind Group A leaders France, who beat Luxembourg 3-1, and down in fourth spot, three back from Sweden and two of Bulgaria with just the group winners guaranteed a place in the 2018 finals in Russia.

Elsewhere, Cristiano Ronaldo took his international tally to 70 goals as European champions Portugal beat Hungary 3-0 to stay in second spot behind Switzerland in Group B.

Belgium needed a goal two minutes from time by Romelu Lukaku to salvage a 1-1 draw against nine-man Greece as they stayed two points clear in Group H, although Roberto Martinez's team lost their 100 percent record in the process.

In Sofia, Bulgaria stunned the Dutch with two goals in the first 20 minutes, both coming from Spas Delev.

Delev pounced on a mistake by 17-year-old Matthijs De Ligt, Holland's youngest debutant since 1931, who misjudged a pass and allowed the striker to slot the ball past Jeroen Zoet.

Delev then made it 2-0 when he unleashed a stinging right-foot drive past Zoet.

The Dutch dominated large parts of the rest of the game but were thwarted by a solid Bulgarian defence while goalkeeper Nikolay Milayov pulled off a super save in the second period to deny Davy Klaassen.

Bos Dost had a weak header saved by Milayov as the Netherlands' evening petered out in a haze of possession and poor end product.

Group A table-toppers France, the 1998 champions and last year's Euro 2016 runners-up, saw Olivier Giroud open the scoring in Luxembourg just before the half-hour mark.

Luxembourg levelled after 34 minutes thanks to Aurelien Joachim's penalty, his country's first goal against France in 39 years.



Cristiano Ronaldo (right) of Portugal celebrates with his teammate Joao Mario after scoring against Hungary during the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifiers at the Luz stadium in Lisbon, on Saturday.

But the minors' joy was short-lived as Atletico Madrid striker Antoine Griezmann restored France's lead, also from the spot, just four minutes later.

Griou scored his second of the evening after 77 minutes after being set up by Benjamin Mendy.

In Lisbon, Portugal saw off Hungary, a team they shared six goals with at Euro 2016.

Greece were reduced to 10 men after 65 minutes when Panagiotis Tachtsidis was red carded for a crude lunge on defender Toby Alderweireld.

Everton striker Lukaku drove home from close range in the 89th minute to grab a share of the spoils sent off in injury time.

Earlier on Saturday, Sweden crushed Belarus 4-0 to move to 10 points in Group A, three behind France, with Emil Forsberg goal in six games for Portugal.

Six minutes later, skipper Ronaldo doubled the lead with a superb left-footed finish and the Real Madrid superstar made it 3-0 on 65 minutes with a clever free-kick for his 70th international goal. Belgium stayed top of Group H but only after strug-

Myanmar are favourites, says Constantine

HANOI, March 26: Indian football team head coach Stephen Constantine today said that Myanmar would start as favourites against his side in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers match on Tuesday.

Constantine said the Myanmar side have been together for some time and the support from crowd will give them the advantage. Moreover, Myanmar had beaten India 1-0 when the two teams last met.

"Myanmar are definitely the favourites. Playing at home is always an advantage for any team. They have been together for some time and the familiarity with each other is so much beneficial when you take the field. They certainly have the advantage," Constantine said two days ahead of the crucial match.

Asked what was Myanmar's biggest strength, he said, "They work very hard and love to press. When you combine with the two with the ability they have and add a crowd and atmosphere to it, the combination is just deadly."

Asked about the perception of Myanmar

being the longer team for India, he said, "History will show that the same players are not always playing. The situations are always different and both teams would be playing after a long gap. I feel the circumstances are always different."

"But at the same time, I cannot deny history; in fact, nobody can. But we can't bring it back. Yesterday will always stay yesterday and at the same time, today is another day."

"On the day we can be best anybody. We have to have a very good day and hope they have a very bad day. To beat them, we have to play very well and hope that they don't play very, very well," said the Englishman.

Prior to the international friendly against Cambodia on March 22 which India won 3-2, Constantine had said that some of his players had niggles. Asked about that, he said, "Considering the last 18 months, we are in a good place at the moment. Nothing is too serious and the players are ready." - PTI

Force India open season with double points finish

MELBOURNE, March 26: Sahara Force India made a promising start to the 2017 Formula One season with a double points finish through Sergio Perez and Esteban Ocon at the Australian Grand Prix here today.

Perez, who was on 11th spot on the grid, made two bold moves to finish the 57-lap race in seventh place.

It was a memorable race for Eon as he scored his first point in Formula 1 on his Force India debut, passing two-time World Champion Fernando Alonso to secure 10th place.

Force India collected seven points from the weekend, one less than Williams with Felipe Massa finishing sixth.

The Silverstone-squad had finished a record fourth in team standings last year, beating the likes of Williams and McLaren. Perez said it was a satisfy-

ing result.

"I am very pleased with the result and don't believe there is anything we could have done better today. Seventh place was the most we could achieve and the team had to make all the right calls to get this result," said Perez.

"We had the correct strategy and we managed the tyres well to bring the points home. We still had to pull a few big moves to Kyat and Sainz, even though it was not easy to overtake, once I was in clean air I felt I was in a very strong position."

"Driving these cars is so much fun; you can push a lot harder than in the past and I was doing my fastest laps towards the end of the race. We know we need to improve this car and there is more performance to come," added the Mexican. - PTI

Vettel masters Hamilton to win Australian Grand Prix

MELBOURNE, March 26: Sebastian Vettel out-maneuvered Lewis Hamilton and the world champion Mercedes team with a stunning victory in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on Sunday.

Vettel won by almost 10 seconds from Hamilton and Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas in a commanding victory of tactics and superior speed around the Albert Park street circuit.

Ferrari hadn't won in Melbourne since Kimi Raikkonen's 2007 victory and it was Vettel's second triumph in Australia after winning the 2011 race with Red Bull.

It was also a major fillip for the fledgling season and the new generation of quicker cars after Ferrari's superior pre-season test times as they chase their first world constructors' title since 2008.

The victory was the German four-time world champion's fourth for Ferrari and his first since Singapore in 2015 and his 43rd career win.

"A little challenge is a long way ahead. For now we are just over the moon at the start we have made here today," Vettel said. "I was not entirely happy with my start, there was a bit of wheel spin, but I was trying to keep the pressure on to give the message that we are here to fight."

"There was a bit of luck that Lewis came out in traffic."

Ferrari got the better of Mercedes in the sole round of tyre changes which ultimately decided the race.

Hamilton's early stop meant he rejoined behind the Red Bull of Max Verstappen which allowed Vettel to open up a decisive gap at the head of the field. - AFP

Pliskova advances, Radwanska ousted

MIAMI, March 26: Fifth-seed Agnieszka Radwanska had her bid to repeat her 2012 success at the Miami Open ended by Croatian veteran Mirjana Lucic-Baroni at Crandon Park.

But second-seed Karolina Pliskova fought past Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan 7-5, 6-3 to move into the last 16 and Slovak Dominika Cibulkova also progressed with a comfortable two-set win over Belgium's Kirsten Flipkens yesterday.

Lucic-Baroni is enjoying an unexpected upturn in her fortunes at the age of 35 and in January reached the semifinal of the Australian Open - 18 years after her first appearance in the last four of a slam, in 1999 at Wimbledon.

The Croat was a teenage prodigy who appeared to have disappeared from the top tier of the sport but has fought her way back impressively in recent years and is now ranked 29th in the world.

"I'm playing better tennis. I feel that

I'm playing good here. I took the confidence from Indian Wells. So let's see... When I'm playing well, when I am confident with my game, I know I can beat anybody," said Wawrinka, who turns 32 on Tuesday. - AFP

from the beginning, very aggressive, hitting everything with unpredictable speed. I couldn't do much," she said. - AFP



Mirjana Lucic-Baroni of Croatia in action against Agnieszka Radwanska during the third round match of the Miami Open, on Saturday.

India draw with Chile 2-2

WEST VANCOUVER, March 26: The Indian women's team drew with Chile 2-2 in a closely-fought first match here on a cold evening ahead of the all-important Women's Hockey World League Round 2.

It was Chile who got off to a positive start with an 18th minute field goal by Agustina Venegas to take a 1-0 lead.

But India held their nerves to score an equalizer in the 35th minute. Anupa Barla was responsible for the team's first goal through a successful penalty corner.

Almost immediately, Vanida Kataria scored a stunning field goal in the 36th minute to take a 2-1 lead.

Agustina Venegas made complete use of the opportunity to successfully convert the PC in the 53rd minute to draw the match 2-2. - PTI

Federer, Wawrinka advance in Miami

MIAMI, March 26: Roger Federer survived a brave challenge from American qualifier Frances Tiafoe before emerging with a 6-7 (7-2) 6-3 victory as he got his Miami Open title bid underway.

Tiafoe, ranked 101st in the world, struggled against Federer's serve but



Roger Federer of Switzerland returns a shot against Frances Tiafoe of the United States during day six of the Miami Open, on Saturday.

was strong on his own and forced a first set tie-break in which the Swiss came out on top yesterday.

The 19-year-old son of immigrants from Sierra Leone then broke Federer's serve in the first game of the second set only for the 18-times Grand Slam winner to break back

twice and run out a comfortable winner in the end.

Federer is in fine form having clinched the Australian Open and Indian Wells so far this year and extended his record to 14-1.

The 35-year-old is looking for his third Miami title following wins in 2005 and 2006.

Reigning US Open champion Stan Wawrinka got off to a solid start, beating Argentina's Horacio Zeballos 6-3, 6-4 at Crandon Park on Saturday.

In the absence of Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic, the top two ranked players in the world, Wawrinka is the number one seed and is fired up after reaching the final at Indian Wells last week, where he was beaten by Federer.

"I'm playing better tennis. I feel that I'm playing good here. I took the confidence from Indian Wells. So let's see... When I'm playing well, when I am confident with my game, I know I can beat anybody," said Wawrinka, who turns 32 on Tuesday. - AFP

on Saturday, as Radwanska acknowledged.

"She was playing unbelievable

tennis today. She was very solid

from the beginning, very aggressive, hitting everything with unpredictable speed. I couldn't do much," she said. - AFP



Mirjana Lucic-Baroni of Croatia in action against Agnieszka Radwanska during the third round match of the Miami Open, on Saturday.

No. 1 Johnson to face Tanihara in WGC Match Play semis

MIAMI, March 26: Top-ranked Dustin Johnson won twice in impressive fashion to advance into the World Golf Championships Match Play Championship semifinals, where he will face 60th-ranked Japanese Tour star Hideki Matsuyama.

Reigning US Open champion Johnson defeated fellow American Zach Johnson 5 and 4, then birdied to win three of the last four holes and held off Swedish eighth seed Alex Noren 3 and 2 in the quarterfinals at Austin (Texas) Country Club yesterday.

Johnson seeks his third title in a row after wins last month at Riviera and three weeks ago at the WGC Mexico Championship. He could become the first player to win every WGC event and match Tiger Woods as the only players to win consecutive WGC events.

"It's a long way to go, I've got to make it to the finals first," Johnson said of his chance at history. "Any-

thing can happen. I like the way I'm playing, I like my chances."

He will face a determined long-shot in 38-year-old Tanihara, who dispatched England's Ross Fisher 4 and 2 in the quarterfinals after defeating England's Paul Casey 2 and 1 in the round of 16.

"There's a lot more strategy and thinking in playing this kind of format," said Tanihara, a 14-time Japan Tour winner in his WGC Match Play debut who hopes to crack the world top 50 and qualify for the Masters in two weeks.

"My goal is to get to the Masters. Maybe top eight would get me in. Wasn't sure. Top four should get me in so I'm really happy."

US 42nd seed Bill Haas held off a

late charge by countryman Phil Mickelson to defeat the five-time major winner 2 and 1 and reach a Sunday

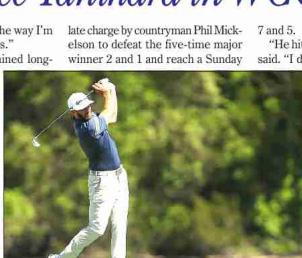
7 and 5.

"He hits the ball a long way," Haas said. "I definitely need to be in the fairways and put the pressure on him, make him attack. He's certain going to be very difficult."

Haas and Johnson each led 3-up after nine holes but saw their matches tighten quickly before they advanced.

Johnson won the first three holes against Noren, and was 3-up at the turn, but the world number one missed a short par putt to lose 10 and found the water to drop 11, then watched as Noren rolled in a stunning 40-foot birdie putt at the par-5 12th

to square the match - the first time all week any hole had been level with Johnson after any hole.



Dustin Johnson tees off on the 14th hole of his match during round four of the World Golf Championships Match Play at the Austin Country Club, on Saturday.

"He hits the ball a long way," Haas said. "I definitely need to be in the fairways and put the pressure on him, make him attack. He's certain going to be very difficult."

Johnson, who lost to Noren in the first round of the 2013 WGC Match Play, answered with birdies at 13, 15 and 16 to seal the win.

Tanihara closed the front nine with four hole-winning birdies in a row, the longest putt from five feet, to jump up 4 on Fisher at the turn. A six-foot birdie at 13 put Tanihara 5-up and he halved Fisher three holes later to end matters.

Three-time Masters winner Mickelson had won not this week until Haas opened his match with a birdie. Haas birdied to win the third, fifth and sixth to seize command.

"Just felt like I needed to capitalize when I had the chances and I was able to do that," Haas said.

Mickelson birdied to win the 10th and claimed 12 with a par, then barely missed a 12-foot birdie putt at 13 to square the match. Haas birdied to 15, Mickelson missed a 10-foot eagle putt at 16 and could only halve 17. - AFP

SU DO KU

3	4		8	6
7	1			5
2	4	8	7	9
1	5	8		7
2	3	9	6	6
7	5	3	4	
8	7	6	9	2
9	4	6	2	
5	3	8	1	

Solution of last problem

Originating from Japan, 'su do ku' is a mind game and a puzzle that can be solved with proper reasoning and logic. It accommodates digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9 without repeating any.

1	5	3	10	4	6	9
7	12	6	11	2	8	5
9	8	7	6	3	1	10
2	10	7	1	6	5	4
3	11	9	8	7	12	6
5	7	13	12	10	9	3
9	3	14	1	5	2	11
7	15	10	9	11	3	4
1	2	16	13	14	15	8
3	17	18	19	20	1	10
5	19	21	2	17	16	11
7	18	16	15	14	13	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2	12	13	14	15	16	17
4	11	12	1	2	3	18
6	13	14	15	16	17	19
8	15	16	17	18	19	10
10	17	18	19	1	2	11
12	19	1	2	3	4	13
14	1	2	3	4	5	12
16	2	3	4	5	6	14
18	3	4	5	6	7	15
20	4	5	6	7	8	16

Lyon's 4-for restricts India to 248/6 on Day 2

DHARAMSALA, March 26: Indian batsmen frittered away the initial advantage before reaching 248 for six against a disciplined Australia to leave the fourth and final Test even poised, here today.

India are still 52 runs short of Australia's first innings total of 300 as atleast three batsmen failed to convert their starts into big knocks.

With the pitch offering significant turn along with good bounce, batting will only get difficult in the third and fourth innings in what promises to be a battle of attrition in the next three days.

Playing a batsmen short, opener Lokesh Rahul's indiscipline cost India dearly. India never got the required momentum after Rahul's ill-timed pull-shot off a Patrick Cummins bouncer. He scored 60 off 124 balls.

Cheteshwar Pujara (57) and Ajinkya Rahane (46) also got starts before Nathan Lyon snuffed them out, extracting sharp bounce from the pitch.

India were comfortably placed at 108 for one before Rahul's dismissals and could have pushed for lead but are struggling to level the scores at least.

After probing spells by the new ball bowlers Josh Hazlewood (1/40 in 18 overs) and Pat Cummins (1/59 off 20 overs), it was off-spinner Lyon (4/67 from 28 overs), who tor-

mented the middle-order was once again in the final session of the day which belonged to Australia.

The final session in which India scored 95 runs saw them lose as many as four wickets – all trying to be defensive against Lyon.

If India fought hard, credit to Ravichandran Ashwin (30 off 49 balls) and Ravindra Jadeja (16), who played their natural game knowing fully well that mere survival won't get them any where as the cracks on the pitch widened and the bounce remained true as ever.

It could have been worse had Wridhiman Saha (10 batting) catch would have been taken by Matt Renshaw at first slip. But if the Indian innings had a turning point, it was Rahul, who again raised visions of a big score before throwing his wicket.

Rahul looked comfortable during his knock of 60 – his fifth half-century of the series – before a sudden rush of blood saw him play a pull shot off a Cummins short ball only to offer a simple skier to David Warner at cover.

Rahul hit nine fours and a slog-sweep six off Steve O'Keefe. The Rahul-Pujara duo added 87 runs for the second wicket to lend solidity to the Indian innings after Murali Vijay's (11) early departure.

The dependable Pujara kept his focus intact en route his 15th half-



Australia's Nathan Lyon in action during day two of the fourth Test against India at the HPCA Stadium in Dharamsala, on Sunday.

century but was out after tea with Lyon producing a classical off-break, flight and turn which he gloved to Peter Handscomb forward short leg.

Pujara played some glorious on

drives using his feet against both O'Keefe and Nathan Lyon. The half-century came up with a whip through the mid-wicket region as he reaffirmed his status of being India's best batsman in the current

series. His innings had six boundaries off 151 balls.

Skipper Rahane was shaky to begin with a mis-timed pull off Cummins that got him a six but grew in confidence during his 104-

ball stay at the wicket which also fetched him seven boundaries.

He added 49 runs each with Pujara and Ashwin. He was looking good for a second half century of the series when Lyon got a straighter to bounce a shade more as Steven Smith took a sharp catch at first slip.

Earlier, Rahul was elegant as ever during his innings but his duel with Cummins during the first and second session was worth watching.

With Australia playing on the bounciest of pitches, Cummins was used in short bursts as Rahul showed good technique while swaying away from the bouncers.

The spell that Cummins bowled in the post lunch session was a hostile one but Rahul punched the fast bowler through point region to get a boundary.

However, having left a barrage of short stuff, his patience finally gave away and the mistimed pull shot was a result of lapse in concentration.

With India playing a batsman short, the dressing room must not have been a very happy place for Rahul for the indiscretion that he showed.

India began slowly during the first hour but courtesy Rahul picked up the tempo during the second hour as they ran well be-

tween the wickets and also punished the loose deliveries. The first boundary was an inside out cover drive off Lyon. He did survive a nasty Cummins delivery that flew past the slip cordon.

After initial period of caution, he did take some risks – uppishly sweeping Lyon for a boundary as run flow was stopped by the Australian bowlers.

When Cummins bowled one into his ribs, he nicely tucked one off his hips to fine leg boundary. The shot off the day was an on-drive off Cummins that raced to the fence.

In the morning, Vijay hit a flowing cover drive off Hazlewood and got another off the bowler even though it wasn't a controlled shot. But Hazlewood had found his channel by then and was able to hit a few visible cracks from which the electronics were deviating away. A faint nick was gobblled up by Matthew Wade with Hazlewood getting his first wicket.

SCORECARD

India 1st innings (oversight 90 in 1 over): Lokesh Rahul c Warner b Cummins 60, Murali Vijay c Wade b Hazlewood 11, Cheteshwar Pujara c Handscomb b Cummins 57, Ajinkya Rahane c Warner b Lyon 46, Karun Nair c Wade b Lyon 5, R Ashwin lbw Lyon 30, Wridhiman Saha batting 10, Ravindra Jadeja batting 16. Extras: 10. Total: 300. **Wickets in 91 overs:** 248. **Fall of wickets:** 1-21, 2-108, 3-157, 4-167, 5-216, 6-221. **Bowling:** J. Hazlewood 18-6-40, P. Cummins 21-5-59, 1, N. Lyon 28-5-67, S. Steve O'Keefe 24-6-93 - PTI

FIFA team lauds Guwahati U-17 WC venue



Jaime Yarza (2nd left), head of events, FIFA with Assam Football Association president Hemendra Nath Brahma (left), Assam sports commissioner Ajay Tewari (2nd right) and tournament director of the LOC Javier Ceppi in Guwahati, on Sunday. – UB

SPORTS REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 26: The FIFA inspection team which visited the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium here today appeared quite satisfied after assessing the preparedness of the FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017 venue.

A 21 member delegation of the FIFA and the Local Organising Committee (LOC) visited the venue and was pleased with the preparations at the venue and the enthusiasm shown by the State government.

Addressing the media after the inspection, FIFA Head of Events, Jaime Yarza was sounded quite happy with the overall progress at the venue with the over-all progress at the venue.

"The State government is wonderful and their eagerness to be a great venue for the

first FIFA tournament in the country is worth lauding. We know how passionate the supporters are in this part of the country and hence, we're very happy to see the developments and preparations here in Guwahati. We want to give the fans all over Northeast India just like at other venues, a great World Cup," Yarza said.

"There are minor issues to sort out – like development of a new hotel for teams but we are well on schedule for the tournament," he added.

Tournament Director of the Local Organising Committee, Javier Ceppi, was also pleased with the progress shown.

"The State government of Assam has really taken the leadership when it comes to making the World Cup a huge effort in their State. We are already work-

ing on all operational and promotional matters to make sure that all the people of Assam and of the neighbouring Northeastern states can enjoy World Cup matches in the Northeast."

Speaking about the venue which includes the stadium as well as training sites, he added: "The development in the stadium is very satisfactory and we are sure that the FIFA U-17 World Cup will do justice to the vision of CM Sarbananda Sonowal in making Guwahati the sports capital of India."

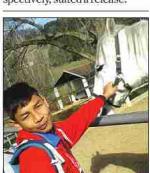
Also present during the occasion were Ajay Tewari, sports commissioner, Government of Assam and Hemendra Nath Brahma, president, Assam Football Association.

The delegation will finish their week long inspection at Kolkata tomorrow.

Well Track SC annex title

TIHU, March 26: Well Track Sports Club annexed the Swami Smriti Cricket title defeating Naharbari Club (B), Nalbari by 4 wickets in the final at the Nahar College playground today.

Put in to bat, Nahar boys scored 139 in 20 overs with Nilopak Das top scoring with 46 runs. In reply, Well Track batsmen put up 142 in 19 overs losing only 6 wickets. Gaurav Das of Well Track was adjudged the man of the match while Kankai Choudhury walked away with the man of the series honour. The champion and runners-up team got Rs 15,000 and Rs 10,000 respectively, stated a release.



Assam's Rohan Ho won a gold medal in floorball (team event) at the World Winter Games of Special Olympics held at Graz, Austria from March 13 to 25. He is a student of Asha Deep Day Rehabilitation Centre, Jorhat, Guwahati.

De Kock bats through pain to have Test even



South Africa's Quinton de Kock plays a shot on the leg side during day two of the 3rd Test against New Zealand at Hamilton, on Sunday.

HAMILTON, March 26: Quinton de Kock batted through the pain of a damaged finger to bolster South Africa with a defiant 90 as the deciding Test against New Zealand was evenly poised at the end of day three in Hamilton on Sunday.

In the rain disrupted Test, New Zealand were 67 without loss at stumps, with a rejuvenated Tom Latham on 42, in reply to South Africa's 314.

The injured De Kock and previously out-of-form Latham were the individual stars in the deciding Test with South Africa 1-0 up and New Zealand needing a win to draw the series.

De Kock, playing with damaged ligaments in his right index finger, went to the middle with South Africa 148 for five and he held the innings together while the bottom of the batting order added a further 166.

South African batting coach Neil McKenzie described De Kock as "a unique player" who needed painkillers to get through the day.

"We're threatening to get bowled out for around 200 and he comes and gets a really quality 90," McKenzie said.

"There's a few tablets, anti-

inflammatories and that sort of stuff but Quinton doesn't mind he gets on with it."

"But I definitely see he was very uncomfortable."

Latham, who managed 24 in total in three previous innings in the series, put his string of

low scores behind him to ensure a positive start to Zealand's reply with Jeetan Patel who was 25 not out at stumps.

New Zealand bowling coach Shane Jurgens said Latham was buoyed by a standout per-

formance in the field highlighted by an instinctive catch at short leg to remove Faf du Plessis.

"I think the game's evenly poised. The two openers have set us up with a good start," Ju-

rgens said.

Latham "got a lot of confi-

dence from his fielding. He took that into his batting today. He's got some confidence".

Just as De Kock's 91 in the first innings in Wellington set

Latham up for an eight-

wicket victory, he again tormented

De Kock with his trou-

ble-free approach.

His 90 came off only 118 balls,

highlighting why captain Faf du Plessis was determined to have him play despite the wicket-

keeper-batsman's injury.

SCORECARD

South Africa first innings (oversight 90 in 1 over): D. de Bruyn c Latham b Henry 0, D. Elgar c Warner b Cummins 5, H. Amla c Warner b Cummins 1, D. Pienaar lbw b Cummins 1, D. Miller lbw b Cummins 1, B. Sanzor 53, T. Bavaruma c Raval b Henry 29, Q. De Kock lbw Wagner 90, P. Philander c Latham b Henry 11, K. Malan c Warner b Cummins 1, D. Miller c Wagner b Cummins 34, M. Morkel not out 9. Extras: [0]. Total: (all out 95.2 overs) 314. Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-93, 3-102, 4-112, 5-121, 6-131, 7-219, 8-249, 9-295, 10-314. **Bowling:** H. De Villiers 24-2-93-4, de Grandhomme 24-4-62-2, Wagner 24-3-2-104-3, Patel 7-0-13-0, Pienaar 7-0-13-0.

New Zealand 1st innings: T. Latham not out 42, J. Raval not out 25. **Extras:** 0. Total: (all out 95.2 overs, 25.3 overs) 67. **Bowling:** Pienaar 18-2-15-3, Morkel 12-2-13-0, Rabada 5-1-2-5, Maharoof 5-1-14-0. – AFT

International chess tourney

GUWAHATI, March 26: Neelabh Jyoti Borthakur shocked top seed Y Dhanabir Singh of Manipur in the 6th round of the 3rd Assam Downtown University International Open Rating Chess Tournament at the Judges Field here.

Neelabh displayed some amazing defensive skill to snatch a win against top seed Dhanabir who is more than 300 rating points ahead of him. He continued his giant killing spree and defeated 4th seeded Minal Kakati in the 7th round and faces Traikalya Nanda in round 8 on the top board who had defeated 2nd seed Appolosan Maangang Rajkumar in the 7th round.

After the completion of 7 rounds, Traikalya Nanda and Neelabh Jyoti Borthakur lead the tournament on 6.5 points each. They are followed by a group of 6 players on 5.5 points each, stated a release.

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