



The Assam Tribune

79 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE NATION
PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIBRUGARH

RN-1127/57 TECH/GH – 104/2015-2017, VOL. 79, NO. 113, GUWAHATI, SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2017, Pages 20

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NEWS CAPSULE

New airports

NEW DELHI, April 28: Union Minister Jayant Sinha today said that the Central Government's regional air connectivity scheme, UDAN, which was launched yesterday, is slated to create additional 100 airports over the next 2-3 years. He was speaking at a CII session here. — IANS

ISI agent'

NEW DELHI, April 28: Security forces detained a man from Dubai and a Pakistan transport holder, MI Ahmed Sheikh MA Rafin today after he approached a help desk at the airport here and wanted to share information about his country's snooping agency ISI. — PTI

Plastic food

NEW DELHI, April 28: The Delhi High Court today sought a response from the Central government on a plea alleging that vegetables and eggs made of plastic were being imported from China and sold in Indian markets. — IANS

Drug dealer

DHAKA, April 29: A suspected drug dealer of Nagaland was arrested with over 4 kg opium during a joint operation by a team of the Army and police at Khatkhati Karbi Anglong district last night, police said today. — PTI

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GU convocation

Prof Rao highlights role of science & technology

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 28: Universities of the country, together with the other institutions, have the responsibilities to work towards taking India to greater heights, said renowned scientist Professor Chintamani Nagesa Ramachandra Rao, who is popularly known as Prof CNR Rao. He was delivering the Convocation Address at the 26th Convocation of Gauhati University (GU) here today.

He asserted that the future of India depends on how well

we do in science and technology. It is the foundation of science and technology that enables a country to become a leader in the world, he maintained.

He reasoned that while increased funds and better infrastructure are necessary for the universities, there is also an urgent need of the Indian universities to improve the content of what they teach in their classrooms.

In science and technology, many efforts are there to be made. These include the areas of science and technology where we compete with the

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rest of the world, in the area of development of our industry and evolving solutions to the problems facing the humanity, taking science to the doorstep of everyone and inculcate scientific temper among the common people.

He laid emphasis on taking science and good education to the doorstep of the village people where millions of children are deprived of the opportunities.

Prof Rao, who has authored more than 1,500 research papers and 50 books, and was

(See page 16)

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NITI Aayog pitches for NE connectivity

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, April 28: Making a strong pitch for connecting all state capitals of the Northeast by 2020, the NITI Aayog vision and strategy paper has advocated high level of funding at around Rs 6,000 crore per annum for the project.

The draft 'Three Year Action Agenda 2017-2018 to 2019-2020', which was released on Thursday evening, said that a top priority for the next three years is ironing out the transit treaties and development of physical infrastructure between northeastern region and neighbouring states.

NITI Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya presented the draft of the three-

year action agenda for the nation's development at the planning body's governing council meeting here on Sunday. He said apart from the action agenda, there would be a seven-year strategy and a 15-year long-term vision that will replace the erstwhile five-year plans for the nation's

strategy paper, which has a separate section on the Northeast, dwells at length on improving connectivity between the region and neighbouring countries. It recommended that upgrade of Guwahati airport to a regional aviation hub will be an important milestone for the region and that should be expedited.

Additionally, Agartala, Imphal and Dibrugarh should be developed as intra-regional hubs by 2020 by approving projects proposals for developing hangars at the airports there. Furthermore, the state governments should collectively aim to increase the frequency of intra-regional services with this hub and spoke model by using small aircraft and helicopters.

The vision document said a key project (See page 16)

Educationist Dilip Kr Barua passes away

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 28: Renowned economist and educationist Professor Dilip Kumar Barua passed away at 10:50 last night in a private hospital here following old-age ailments.

He was 74. He has left behind his wife Dr Indira Barua, two sons and a host of relatives and admirers. A number of eminent personalities of the State, including his former students and colleagues paid their last tributes to Professor Barua at his Bharalumukh residence and at the Cotton College.

His last rites were performed at the Nabagraha crematorium.

Born on March 1, 1943 at Sipajhar in Darrang district,

Professor Barua is considered a pioneer of quizzing and debate in the State. He graduated from Cotton College, Guwahati and obtained his master's degree in economics from Delhi University.

A man who dedicated himself for betterment of education in Assam, Barua served in different capacities in several premier educational institutions of the State. He joined Cotton College in 1966

and became the principal in charge of the college for a short stint in the year 2000. He retired as the principal of Haflong College in 2001.

Professor Barua's death has cast a pall of gloom in the State. Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal condoled the death of

(See page 16)

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Govt promoting growth in bamboo sector: Sonowal

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 28: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said that the State Government is promoting holistic growth of bamboo sector by adopting area-based, regionally differentiated strategy to increase bamboo cultivation.

Inaugurating a two-day bamboo summit here today Chief Minister Sonowal said, "People of Assam have grown up with bamboo. Bamboo culture has already been rooted in our minds for a long time". Since bamboos constitute an important segment of the wealth of Assam, State Government is committed to promoting a holistic growth of bamboo sector by adopting an exhaustive strategy to influence the growth of bamboo and its marketing.

(See page 16)

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Bengal jetty collapse toll rises to 13

HOOGHLY (WB), April 28: Seven more bodies were fished out from the Hooghly river today, taking the toll in Wednesday's jetty collapse in Bhadravati in Hooghly district to 13, police said. Superintendent of Police Suresh Jain said that personnel of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) found the seven bloated bodies, including that of a woman, floating on the river this morning. — PTI

In Loving Memory of



PRADIP KUMAR GOSWAMI
26.4.1942 - 29.4.2006

Each time we see your picture,
You seem to smile and say,
"Don't cry, I'm in God's keeping,
We'll meet again someday."

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but you walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard,
but always near, still loved, still missed and very dear.

IN REVERENCE & REMEMBRANCE
Chandana Goswami (Wife)
Kaushik & Partha (Sons)
Mousumi (Daughter in Law)
Riyam (Grandson)

FREE
ENTRY

NATIONAL

Malegaon blast: Purohit moves SC against Bombay HC order rejecting bail

NEW DELHI, April 28: Malegaon blast accused Shrikant Purohit today moved the Supreme Court against the Bombay High Court order rejecting his bail plea in the case.

A bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar said that the petition will come up in regular course while rejecting the former Lieutenant Colonel's plea for an urgent hearing.

The Bombay High Court had on April 25 granted bail to Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, accused of plotting the September 2008 Malegaon blast, but rejected the bail plea of co-accused Purohit saying the charges against him were of grave nature.

Six persons were killed and nearly 100 others injured when a bomb strapped to a motorcycle had exploded in Malegaon town of Nashik district on September 29, 2008. Sadhvi Pragya and 44-year-old Purohit were arrested in 2008.

While Sadhvi Pragya, 44, who is suffering from cancer, is undergoing treatment at Madhya Pradesh hospital, Purohit is lodged in Taloja jail in Maharashtra. The High Court had said that prima facie no case was made out against Pragya and asked her to furnish a cash security of Re 50 lakh and surrender her passport to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The NIA, which was handed over the probe from ATS, had given a clean chit to Sadhvi Pragya but had opposed Purohit's bail plea noting that the charges levelled against Purohit are of serious and grave nature.

Referring to the report filed by the NIA, the HC had said,

"Purohit was the one who pre-

pared a separate 'Constitution' for 'Hindi Rashtra' with a separate saffron colour flag. He also discussed about taking revenge for the atrocities committed by the Muslims on Hindus."

The HC had refused to ac-

cept Purohit's contention that he had attended the meetings as part of a "covert military intelligence operation."

The court pointed out the statements of the witnesses that it was Purohit who said their right-wing group Abhimanyu Bharat should not just be a political party but should work as an organization to eliminate persons opposing the same. — PTI

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MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Don't persuade, defend or interrupt. Be curious, be conversational, be real. And listen.

— ELIZABETH LESSER

The Assam Tribune

Aam Aadmi decides

The BJP juggernaut rolls on! It achieved huge victories in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, literally squashing under its wheels the Samajwadi Party, the Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party. At the same time, its post-poll strategy had been crystal clear in States where it did not win too many seats, such as Goa and Manipur — use the services of the Governors placed by it to steer the course to power. Now such a strategy has proved fruitful in Delhi too, with the Aam Aadmi deciding it had had enough of the party formed in its name and returning the BJP by large margins in the civic polls. The saffron party has won 181 of the 270 wards in which elections were held, increasing its tally from the 138 wards it had won during the last election. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) came a poor second with just 38 wards, while the Congress, which scraped through in 30 wards, saw its dream of making a comeback in the nation's capital being dashed. Though the BJP has actually retained its hold on the Delhi municipality, its win is significant in the broader context of the AAP's overwhelming victory in the last Assembly election, where it won all but 3 seats! Thus the BJP's success in the civic polls is telling revelation of the disenchantment of Delhites with the policies of Kejriwal and company.

In every sense the AAP had severed its foot with its own axe, for it fell into the tried and tested trap laid for it by the BJP — foist its own selection, in this case the Lieutenant General, and wait for the opponents to self-destruct. Kejriwal's running battle with the former LG on the issue of administrative jurisdiction, especially of law and order maintenance, had hindered effective governance so much so that the national capital earned the dubious reputation of being as safe as the rape capital of India. The LG went as far as to arrest a number of AAP legislators and the AAP's apparent impotence to tackle such interference told against it in the eyes of voters. Also, that civic bodies were controlled by the BJP hampered AAP from effectively tackling issues closer to the electorate's concern, with occurrences such as the prolonged strike by municipal employees further tarnishing its image. However, far from confronting reality, and focusing on improving its image within its home-turf, the AAP began dreaming about becoming an all-India party and put its resources in Punjab and Goa, only to come a cropper in both the States. Thus we have once again seen a 'surgical strike' by the BJP, which surely subscribes to the philosophy that all is fair in love and war, a development that must be worrying the ruling dispensation in States like West Bengal, Odisha, Meghalaya and Tripura.

Tackling corruption

The past few months have seen the State's anti-corruption machinery getting tough on corrupt government officials and employees. This is corroborated by the spurt in arrests in connection with corruption cases. The State Government, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in particular, deserves credit for the visible action on the corrupt. Also praiseworthy is the Cabinet's decision to add more teeth to the anti-corruption machinery by giving a free hand to the officials engaged in probing corruption, and more importantly, freeing it from political influence. This, however, is easier said than done, and the coming days will test the sincerity of the Government *vis-a-vis* eradicating political influence. Indeed, it is precisely because of political influence that we rarely get to see a politician caught in a corruption case. As corruption at government official level has been all-pervasive, it will require a sustained crackdown in order to be really effective and act as a deterrent. Pursuance of court cases against the corrupt also needs to be efficient so that the corrupt are adequately punished. If a person, who amassed crores of rupees through corrupt practices, gets to serve three-four years in jail, that's hardly a punishment commensurate with the crime committed nor does it amount any meaningful deterrent. If necessary, the relevant laws should be changed. The revelations emanating from the ongoing exposé of corruption are extremely disturbing, and go to show how the pervasive culture of corruption is engulfing every sphere of public life. Investigations into corruption apart, a mechanism needs to be worked out that can effectively check and detect corruption besides fixing accountability. Different investigating agencies while unearthing corruption cases including big scams have revealed the loopholes in the system that allows large-scale irregularities.

Laudable as the ongoing drive against corruption is, it is not without its share of a disturbing irony. It has come to light that a few investigating officers themselves took bribe from the very persons whose cases they had been probing. This is shocking to say the least and has the potential to take the sheen off the Government's proclamation of a fight against corruption. These cases need to be investigated in the urgency they deserve and taken to a logical conclusion. Then, while some government officials have been arrested for corrupt practices, the same is yet to be seen when it comes to corruption at political level, which has been rampant over the years. Indeed, the kind of corruption we have been witnessing in recent years, it is difficult to believe that anomalies of such scale are possible without tacit approval of the political bosses. This is something the Government needs to look into if it is really serious about checking the scourge of corruption. Massive corruption in the implementation of development projects has over the years attained such magnitudes that it had all but attained legitimacy. This also explains why the masses have stayed out of the ambit of development despite spending of huge amounts of public fund for development.

More equal than others

PLAIN-SPEAK

Arup Kumar Dutta

In Orwell's *Animal Farm* all animals are equal, but some (for example, the pigs) are 'more equal' than others! This mirrors perfectly the Indian scenario. In the Indian democratic system, all citizens are equal but some, (for example, the politicians and bureaucrats), are more equal than others.

However, there is a hierarchy among the more equals, the bureaucrats being placed upon a lower rung than the politicians. This entails that the former kowtow to the latter, an aberration that the current Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh apparently wants to eradicate. Speaking to civil service personnel while inaugurating the Civil Services Day, Singh had asserted that the Executive was a strong constituent of our democracy in its own right. It was invested with powers and responsibilities which the civil servants were expected to carry out fearlessly and impartially.

Singh also reminded the civil servants that the Executive lent continuity to the system of governance, which had induced India's first Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to be the 'steel frame' of the nation. While politicians periodically rise and fall from power, thereby curtailing their ability to lead a semblance of continuity to governance, the Executive is comparatively stable, thereby ensuring that some degree of coherence and continuity is retained in the system.

Moreover, civil servants were selected and not elected, so they do not have to fight elections and make unrealistic pledges which they cannot keep. This invests them with power to implement viable policies while remaining within the rules stipulated in the rule book. This was the rationale behind Singh's exhortation to civil servants not to become yes-men to politicians and to resist wrong orders if these violated rules and not fight shy of pointing these out.

Singh, of course, was speaking in utopian terms, visualizing an ideal bureaucrat who would be unafraid to stand up to politicians if wrong orders are given, responsible, accountable to the public and impartial! Unfortunately, in the Indian scheme of things, reality is very different. Although there are honest and upright officers throughout the nation, they are a woeful minority. Politicians, in general, try to ensure that their underlings toe the line. There have been all too many instances of politicians assaulting civil service members because of the latter's refusal to carry out wrong orders. On the other hand, many bureaucrats, although ostensibly 'servants' of the people, actually behave as 'masters' while dealing with the public, which explains why our Government offices are so inhospitable.

Not that politicians ap-

paly the 'more equal among equals' syndrome only with the bureaucrats — occasionally individuals in other spheres wake up to the realization that hell hath no fury than a Member of Parliament scored!

Time and again we hear of these so-called representatives of the people resort to bullying and worse when they do not get their way, displaying high-handed and aggressive behaviour with people who, because of fear of losing their jobs or other reasons cannot fight back.

The disgraceful incident involving a Shiv Sena Member of Parliament named Ravindra Gaikwad, who reportedly assaulted an employee of Air India, is just one of many examples illustrating the egoism our politicians are infected with. Allegedly, the MP was affronted at not having been allotted a business class seat, though the flight was an all-economy seat one. He took out his umbrage by first refusing to disembark, and then beating up the employee who had politely requested him to do so.

For a while all airlines in India had tried to stand against such behaviour by blacklisting the MP and refusing him further passage in their airplanes. But, in a telling il-

lustration of the undue importance given by society to those worthies,

If an economist comments on important facets of the inflation phenomenon, he or she might merit a few columns in one of the inner pages. However, if a Chief Minister pledges to start a 'vegetable revolution' in the State in order to combat the astronomical prices prevailing in the market, it would be reported in the front page complete with photographs. We all know that like previously uttered phrases such as 'industrial revolution' or 'power revolution', the 'vegetable revolution' too would be a non-starter in the State. Nevertheless, our newspaper editors do not have the least hesitation in giving front-page space to a politician when a trader from the market would have given a far truer picture of the problem.

The importance given by the media also has led to another amusing phenomenon — having a politician to inaugurate something or the other in order to garner publicity. Have a daylong workshop, for instance, on say the conservation of rivers and you will not see a journalist or camera-person within one mile radius of the venue. However, successfully invite a prominent politician, retired or otherwise, to inaugurate the seminar and you will have swarms of media personnel descending upon the scene!

I have often cogitated on this phenomenon of some being more equal than others, though the Constitution of our nation is absolutely egalitarian in its core pronouncements. The conclusion I have arrived at may sound simplistic, but I believe does explain it. The prime cause of the all-embracing attitude of servitude to those who have power, for instance, on say the conservation of rivers and you will not see a journalist or camera-person within one mile radius of the venue. However, successfully invite a prominent politician, retired or otherwise, to inaugurate the seminar and you will have swarms of media personnel descending upon the scene!

whether political, bureaucratic or monetary; is that we as a people have not been able to shed what I deem the 'feudal mentality'.

Mind you, since ancient times till the coming of the imperialists, the various sections that today constitute India had been governed through the monarchial system. The king (or, occasionally the queen) was the almighty male in the system and wielded absolute power. Except during periods of anarchy, the subjects owed complete fealty to the monarch and venerated him. That's why we these days consider today's bureaucrats and some of the monarch's powers rubbed off onto them, and they too were given reverence.

Thus there were only two social strata — the aristocracy and the serfs. The coming of the imperialists merely replaced one monarch by another and the feel of servitude remained in the Indian psyche. Queen Victoria was the new Lord High Everything and the officers of the East India Company, the new aristocrats. The British era, however, saw the addition of one new class — the bourgeoisie or the professional middle-class, today's equivalent of the bureaucrats.

With the attainment of independence, though the kings and their couriers sank into oblivion, and the imperialists were sent packing, the middle-class took over. One set of masters was replaced by another, the politicians became the monarchs (and behaved as though they actually were) and the bureaucrats the neo-aristocracy which licked their masters' feet while cocking a snook at the serfs, meaning the people of a 'democratic' nation.

That, friends, is precisely why like in Orwell's *Animal Farm* in India too, as long as the feudal mentality persists, though all might be equal, some will always be more equal than others!

Veterinary studies and world health

■ Prof Chandana Choudhury Barua

On the last Saturday of the month of April, every year, World Veterinary Day is celebrated, which was started in 2000 by the World Veterinary Association to highlight and promote the life-saving work performed by veterinarians around the globe. A different theme is chosen every year to create awareness on an emerging topic. This year the theme is 'Antimicrobial resistance — from awareness to action'.

Since the discovery of sulphonamides and penicillin, the availability and use of antimicrobial drugs have transformed the practice of human and animal medicine. Infections that were once lethal are now treatable, and the use of antimicrobial agents has advanced global health as well as animal health, which is a key component of animal welfare, food security and safety.

However, there is the other side of the coin. The emerging menace of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) threatens the effective prevention and treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi. AMR

is an increasingly serious threat to global public health that requires action across all government sectors and society. Without effective antibiotics, the success of major surgery and cancer chemotherapy would be compromised. Obviously, the theme for this year is appropriate and a timely reminder.

The BVSc is a four-year degree course with one-year internship. Two years of postgraduate degree if one wants to specialize in a subject. A lot of people have this impression that a vet plays with puppies and kittens all day and that it is inferior to human medicine. As a veterinarian, we need to know how to do surgery, internal medicine, deliver and X-rays, while in human medicine, one specializes in one of those things. One of the great benefits of a career in veterinary medicine is the chance to promote the health and welfare of the patients. We can relieve the suffering of animals that have experienced traumatic injuries or chronic illnesses. Every day is a new experience, different types of animals are to be examined, varieties of injuries and conditions,

and above all, one has to deal with different owners from different backgrounds and moods.

Veterinary medicine is certainly one of the careers that can offer an excellent salary. Most veterinarians earn a very good salary if they are practising clinicians, be it large animals or pets. Besides waiting for government jobs, one may start out working for an established clinic, but he/she will always have the option of starting own practice. Many of the students have roasting practices in places like Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad. Veterinarians never stop learning new things. Continuing education hours are required to practise medicine, and most vets would want to learn about new techniques and innovations even if there was no official requirement. The industry is constantly evolving and it is important to keep up with the latest developments so that we can provide the best possible care to our clients. One can use one's veterinary background to transition into a variety of roles with other organizations such as veterinary pharmaceutical sales companies, poultry farms, feed companies, wildlife agencies, laboratories, academic institu-

tions, administration, military, banking sector, etc. The opportunities that we have as students were incredible. And there are no limits. Elephants and camels are also patients in the OPD. Treatment-cum-extension camps are held regularly in the fringe areas of Kaziranga, Manas and Nameri national parks and sanctuaries like Pobitora for wild and domestic animals to give an exposure to the students of the College of Veterinary Science, Kharagpur, para, Guwahati.

It's very surprising that working with animals need more training than working with people. So it is better to present the pet owners with every option available, whether that's additional diagnostics and treatment or hospital care, and help them to take the best decision for themselves. One can use one's veterinary background to transition into a variety of roles with other organizations such as veterinary pharmaceutical sales companies, poultry farms, feed companies, wildlife agencies, laboratories, academic institutions,

etc.

Pradesh, people from other religions from the entire North-east regularly visit Bodhgaya every year as pilgrims. There is no direct railway connectivity from Assam and the neighbouring States to Bodhgaya and people are facing great difficulties since long. It has been observed that the NF Railway, in addition to the existing regular trains, has extended the services of many trains in recent times to cater to the needs of the commuters. Therefore, the extension of the said train up to Tinsukia (or Dibrugarh) should not be any problem. Yours etc., RANJIT SHYAM, Chandon Nagar, Jorhat.

Doctor's dilemma

Sir. — This refers to your editorial 'Doctor's dilemma' (AT, April 24). It is a welcome decision by the Modi Government to bring in a legal framework under which the doctors will have to prescribe generic medicines, which are cheaper than their equivalent branded drugs, to patients. Modi has rightly said that "doctors write prescriptions in such a way that poor people do not understand the

Letters to the EDITOR

Editor

Sir. — The recent instruction issued by the University Grants Commission to the Vice-Chancellors of all the universities regarding the inclusion of NCC as an elective subject at the undergraduate level is an appropriate initiative. The NCC aims at developing character, comradeship, discipline, the spirit of adventure and ideals of selfless service amongst the young citizens. Further, it aims at creating a pool of organized, trained and motivated youth with the leadership qualities in all walks of life, who will serve the nation regardless of which career they choose. Since a large number of the colleges in Assam are having their own NCC units, introduction of NCC as an elective subject at the undergraduate level should not have much difficulty. It will be useful for some of the college students of our State for getting an employment opportunity as the NCC provides an environment conducive to motivating young Indians to join the armed

forces. Apart from that, addition of NCC as a new subject in the colleges may reduce the burden of over-enrolment in some subject like Assamese, Political Science, Education, etc., to some extent.

Yours etc., DR DEBAHAR TALUKDAR, Jalahari, Guwahati.

A thriving culture

Sir. — Thank you for reporting on the Rongali Bihu celebrations in Chicago this year. Such occasions are not only an opportunity for us to celebrate with old and new friends and well-wishers, but also to highlight the best of the Assamese culture to our non-Assamese friends and acquaintances, particularly to the younger ones born here who may not have had the opportunity to spend much time in Assam or other places in India. As parents and elders who have seen many of these children grow and grow up here, it was heartening and rewarding to see them confidently and enthusiastically take to the stage to present outstanding and excellent performances of traditional and modern Assamese and Indian songs and dances. Watching their performances.

and, that of the adults performing Bihu and other traditional dances and songs of Assam, most of us could not feel a great warmth in our hearts that the spirit and magnificence of the Assamese culture is thriving in a land so far away from Assam. Yours etc., ANUJ SARMA, Chicago, USA.

Kamakhya-Gaya Express

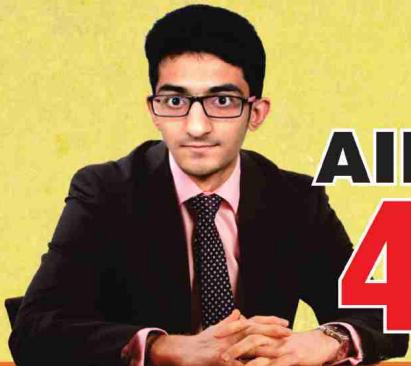
Sir. — Through your esteemed daily, I would like to request the authority concerned of the NF Railway to extend the presently running weekly Kamakhya-Gaya Express (Train No. 15620/15619) up to Tinsukia/Dibrugarh. The train is facilitating the people to visit the holy places like Bodhgaya in Bihar as well as the Kamakhya temple, Guwahati. But as the train runs up to the Kamakhya Junction, Guwahati city, the people from Upper Assam and adjoining Arunachal Pradesh cannot avail the services of this train. I would like to draw the attention of the NF Railway authority to the fact that apart from the Buddhist community of Assam and Arunachal

handwriting, and he has to buy medicines from private stores at high prices'. Promoting the generic industry is good but we should not just produce generic drugs but also produce quality generic drugs as it is a matter of people's good health. It is reported that 90% of the domestic Indian pharmaceutical market consists of sale of branded products. If the government implements a rule that doctors must prescribe only generic names, a patient will, in most cases, still end up buying branded drugs as the generic medicines have low margins. The new regulation must be amended so that every physician should prescribe drugs with generic names legally and preferably in capital letters and he/she shall ensure there is a rational prescription and use of drugs. The generic medicines if available across the medical shops will be welcomed by one and all. Yours etc., VINOD C DIXIT, Sundervan.

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

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Stream	Course Name (Eligibility)	Batches Start Date	Stream	Course Name (Eligibility)	Batches Start Date
JEE (Advanced)	Nurture (X to XI Moving)	1 May, 18 May	PRE-MEDICAL (NEET-UG, AIIMS)	Nurture (X to XI Moving)	30 April, 14 May
	Enthusiast (XI to XII Moving)	1 May		Enthusiast (XI to XII Moving)	15 May
	Leader (XII Pass/Appeared)	08 May, 29 May		Leader (XII Pass/Appeared)	17 May, 09 June
JEE (Main)	Nurture (X to XI Moving)	15 May, 05 June	Pre-Nurture & Career Foundation	Achiever (XII Pass/Repeaters)	10 May (New Phase), 12 June
	Enthusiast (XI to XII Moving)	08 May, 29 May		For Class VI to X	15 May
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People carrying firewood from the riverside for day-to-day uses, at Majuli on Thursday. – UB Photos

Seminar at Lumding College

ANN Service

LUMDING, April 28: The Faculty of Commerce and the Department of Economics, Lumding College, Lumding are organising a UGC-sponsored national seminar on Sustainable Development in India: Issues and Challenges with special reference to NER-India in collaboration with the North East India Commerce & Management Association (NEIC-MA), North Eastern Economic Association (NEEA), Society for Extension Education Agra (SEEA) and Association for North East India Studies on June 23-24, 2017, at Lumding College Conference Hall.

Academics from Calcutta University, Burdwan University, Utakal University, Assam University, Dibrugarh University, North Eastern Hill University, University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya, IIT-Guwahati, Gauhati University and Tezpur University are expected to attend the seminar. For details intending participants may contact the Joint Convenor, NSOC or the Principal, Lumding College, Lumding or before May 20 next.

Concluding session of Rongali Bihu at Tangla

CORRESPONDENT

KALAGAON, April 28: Hectic preparations are on at Tangla to mark the end of Rongali Bihu with a three-day programme to be held on May 13, 14 and 15 at the Tangla HS School playground.

The programme will witness a host of events to be organised by Tangla Yuva Manch. A celebration committee to this effect has already been formed with social worker Syed Idil Hussain as president, Dipu Hazarika as working president, Hemanta Rai Barua and Maitri Nath as secretaries. The celebration will be opened on May 13 with hoisting of the Bihu flag and other programmes will follow. On May 14 evening, the All Assam Mukoli Bihuni test will be held while on May 15, a cultural night will be held where various artists including Zubeen Garg would entertain people.

Lila Chakraborty: a tribute

Lila Chakraborty, a pious lady of Nizirpar, Jalguri passed away after prolonged illness on April 19 last.

Born at Muguria village of Pathsala, she was married to HN Chakraborty of Bongaon in Nalbari district in 1966. She regularly attended the local naamghar. She was also closely associated with all the religious organisations of the locality. Her humble and amiable nature endeared her to all who came into contact with her. She leaves behind her husband, four daughters and a son.

Today, on the day of her adyashraddha, I pray to the Almighty to grant eternal peace to her departed soul.

– Bibha Devi

Irregularities alleged in MGNREGA works in Lakhimpur

CORRESPONDENT

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, April 28: Funds meant for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) have been allegedly embezzled and other irregularities come to the fore in Lakhimpur DRDA. This has been observed in various MGNREGA works in Azad Gaon Panchayat under North Lakhimpur Rural Development Block.

Irregularities were found at the construction of guide-dam of Somdiri river at the cost of Rs 3,37,900 in 2016-17. The dam work is marked by the use of poor materials without any iron nets and other strong goods. In the same GP Rs 5 lakh was allegedly siphoned off in the year 2016-17 on the works of a canal in Timukuria-Khatol village on the same work completed by Lakhimpur District Soil Conservation Department worth Rs 4.5 lakh two

years ago. Similarly, Rs 15 lakh have been allegedly embezzled for the excavation of ponds in the same GP area under MGNREGA. The ponds excavated were less in sizes than the MGNREGA specifications.

Meanwhile, resentment is brewing among the MGNREGA workers following the meagre amount of funds released for their previous works in nine rural development blocks in Lakhimpur. Outstanding of Rs 302,37 lakh in Dhakukhama Development Block, Rs 233,82 lakh in Narayapur Development Block, Rs 231,58 lakh in North Lakhimpur Development Block, Rs 202,63 lakh in Nowbocha Development Block, Rs 155,78 lakh in Barakbari Development Block, Rs 138,04 lakh for Bogeonadi, Rs 75,63 lakh in Ghilamara Development Block and Rs 13,98 lakh in Tehai Development Block are due for MGNREGA workers for the year 2016-17.

However, the State has released Rs 69,93 lakh for Dhakukhama, Rs 81,59 lakh for Narayapur, Rs 46,62 lakh to North Lakhimpur, Rs 58,28 lakh to Nowbocha, Rs 23,31 lakh to Bihuri and Rs 34,97 lakh to Tehai Development Block. The huge differences in the released amounts from the original outstanding amounts have caused widespread resentment among MGNREGA workers and vendors in Lakhimpur district. It may be recalled that all the nine rural development blocks under Lakhimpur DRDA have unpaid dues of MGNREGA schemes since 2013-14.

Record files of DAY-NULM distributed: The file records on Deen Dayanand Tyoda National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM) were distributed among Self Help Groups of North Lakhimpur Municipality areas in North Lakhimpur on Wednes-

day. A meeting was held for the occasion at the office of the North Lakhimpur Municipality Board, North Lakhimpur which was chaired by its Vice-Chairperson Renuka Gohain Baruah.

The meeting was inaugurated by the district president of BJP Phanidhar Baruah who also distributed the record files to 311 SHGs under North Lakhimpur Municipal Board. The Project Officer of NULM-North Lakhimpur and North Lakhimpur Circle Officer Manjeet Borkakati also attended the function.

It may be recalled that Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY) is a Government of India scheme for the helping the poor by providing skill training. The objective of the scheme is to train 0.5 million people in urban areas per annum from 2016. The aim of the scheme is skill development of both rural and urban India as per requisite international standards.

CID-level probe demanded

CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI, April 28: The Common Peoples' Forum (CPF) has demanded the institution of a CID-level inquiry into the misuse of funds in the Agriculture department of Hailakandi, Cachar and Karimganj districts of Barak Valley.

The president of the forum, Abdul Malik Mazumdar alleged that huge amount of funds meant for poor farmers has been misappropriated by the officials of the Agriculture department and the matter should be enquired into. He said that the CID is inquiring into the scandals of Agriculture department in other districts of the State barring Barak Valley. Mazumdar alleged that there was huge misappropriation of money in the name of the distribution of power tillers and tractors, waste land development etc. The CPF has threatened to launch a movement against the corruption in the Agriculture department if an inquiry is not instituted in the three districts of the Barak Valley.

Youth dies

RANGIYA, April 28: An unidentified youth who was found lying unconscious near NH-31 at Indiana on Thursday afternoon, later died at the Rangia CHC where he was shifted by the local people. Locals suspect that the deceased might have been intoxicated with some drugs and left at that place. The person was yet to be identified. – Correspondent

Foundation of auditorium for journalists laid

CORRESPONDENT

NALBARI, April 28: The MLA of Nalbari LAC, Ashok Kumar Sarmie on Thursday formally laid the foundation stone of an auditorium on the top of the market building near Golpark of Thana Chowk for use by journalists.

The building will be constructed by the Nalbari Municipal Board in association with the Nalbari Zilla Press Club at a cost of Rs five lakh provided by the MLA from his MLA's local area development fund.

Laying the foundation stone of the building, the MLA said that the auditorium will minimise the problems faced by the *mosti* correspondents in writing and sending news from the headquarter town. He called upon the journalists to extend their helping hands for the development of Nal-

bari town.

Addressing the foundation laying function, Dr Basanta Kumar Bhattacharya, former president of Nalbari Zila Sahitya Sabha said that the role of an impartial and courageous journalist has a positive impact on the society.

The meeting presided over by Kamlesh Sarmie was addressed by Hanif Nurani, chief executive officer of Nalbari Municipal Board.

Earlier, speaking in the meeting Bipasha Das, chairperson of Nalbari Municipal Board said that Nalbari Zilla Press Club must follow the agreement for using the auditorium and to clear the monthly rent to the board as per the agreement signed. On the occasion, a programme 'Gite Mate Basanta Esandhya' was also held at the Nalbari Natya Mandir premises.



Singer Zubeen Garg performing during Rangali Bihu celebration at Raidongia in Nagaon on Wednesday. – UB Photos

Stone-carrying trucks seized

CORRESPONDENT

BAIHATA CHARIALI, April 28: Acting on a tip-off, a Forest Department team under the leadership of Robin Baihara, Range Officer of Sila Forest Range office under North Kamrup Division, Rangia on Wednesday night seized three illegal stone-carrying trucks with stones from Mandakata-Kunnagar area.

Though the drive to detain the trucks and the persons involved in illegal activities began from the evening, it was successful at about 2-30 am. The registration numbers of the trucks seized by the team are AS 01 A 8872; AS 01 BC 3175 and AS 12E 6270 respectively. Finally the trucks were brought to the Sila Forest Range Office by crane. The drivers and helpers of the trucks including the owners managed to flee from the spot.

In this drive, the Circle Officers of Kamrup and North Guwahati Revenue Circle and Officer-in-Charge of Baihata Chariali Police station also cooperated with the Forest team. The Forest department sources said that though the present value of the seized materials was estimated to be Rs 20,000-30,000 but the Government is expected to receive approximately Rs one lakh from the trucks including fines.

It is to be mentioned that earlier, the Forest team under the leadership of this ranger was able to seize four illegal sand-carrying trucks at Baihata Chariali on National Highway 31.

Explosives recovered, two youths held

ANN Service

BADARPUR, April 28: A massive amount of explosive goods were recovered from Bilaura Railway Station, under Badarpur Rly Subdivision on Wednesday, by the Railway Protection Force, at about 9 am.

In connection with this, two suspected tribal youths were nabbed by the RPF, who have been identified as Jahn Khubang (31) and Lalrotni Sangma (35). The explosives recovered from them included 30 packet detonators, 575 gelatin sticks and 10 (ten) bundles of fuse wires. Besides, fake I-cards and ATM cards were also recovered from them. Sources informed ANN Service that these two youths were coming from Sikkim to Bilaura railway station on way to Dimapur station by the Silchar-Guwahati fast passenger.

make it a never-ending endeavour, contrary to Government-sponsored plantation programmes whose average rate of success and sustainability is very limited, the DC maintained. "The Government-sponsored programmes will be going on as usual but in this venture, the public will lead from the front and not the Government officials."

The meet discussed many relevant issues including checking of illegal tree felling, mushrooming of illegal sawmills, controlling of stray cattle, awareness at the grass root level beginning from

the school students, necessary recognition for committed nature activists, low cost plant guards, judicious use of plants depending on the nature of the respective soil, formation of nature clubs, convergence of plantation programmes of different government agencies, availability of saplings in remote areas among others.

The meeting also discussed how to make the district polythene free. ADCs Narayan Nath, Bidyut Bikash Bhagawati and Kalpana Deka respectively took part in the discussion along

Cash looted from Armyman

RANGIYA, April 28: Unidentified miscreants looted cash of around Rs 1.8 lakh from the possession of one Sandip Kumar, an Army personnel of the Jai Regiment of the Indian Army on Thursday. Some powder was reportedly sprayed on the victim at a grocery shop near the Rangia PS where he was buying some goods and when there was extensive irritation on his body, the miscreants cleverly looted the cash. The incident was captured in the CCTV of the shop. Further investigation is on by the police. – Correspondent

Darrang DC calls for sustainable mass plantation

CORRESPONDENT

MANGALDAI, April 28: The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, Ashok Kr Barman has advocated the need for a fool-proof planning for mass plantation and its sustainability in the future and appealed to the local people to come forward and lead this as a green revolution.

He was addressing a meet attended by representatives of local leading NGOs, public organisations, leading citizens, heads of different educational institutions, forest officials, senior



Customers purchasing gold jewellery at a shop on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya at Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, on Friday. — UNI

RGVN(NE) Microfinance Ltd to start operations soon

BUSINESS REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 28: RGVN (North East) Microfinance Ltd, which has received a licence from the Reserve Bank of India to open a small finance bank in North East India, will launch a small finance bank in the name and style of 'North East Small Finance Bank' (NESFB) around the first week of June next. This was announced by the top brass of RGVN (NE) MFL at a press conference here today.

Making a humble beginning in 1995 as RGVN-CSP, RGVN (NE) MFL incorporated itself as a public limited company in 2008. It currently operates in the seven North-Eastern States and West Bengal with a network of 139 branches and

customer base of over 4.07 lakh. Despite having 60 per cent of its branches in the unbanked and under-banked areas, it could boast of a business volume of approximately Rs 688 crore on March 31, 2017.

Providing a brief account of the beginning of RGVN (NE) MFL and its upcoming "graduation" as a small finance bank, Deep Joshi, Chairman of NESFB, said, "RGVN (NE) MFL raised many eyebrows when it started out its operations and we worked on to reach today's status. NESFB will also continue to work on its core values and strengths with a view to carry forward the mission of financial inclusion and to provide financial services at affordable rates to the underprivileged, under-banked and

unbanked people in India."

Elaborating on the services and products of the upcoming bank, Doshi said, "NESFB has planned for various liability products, including daily/weekly deposit accounts, fixed deposit accounts, etc., with competitive interest rates for the benefit of our clients. NESFB has also designed products

that will not only provide its clients the facility to make regular and target-based savings, by providing loans at affordable rates of interest."

Giving details about the upcoming NESFB, its MD and CEO Rupali Kalita said, "RBI has approved 164 branch offices across 9 States, including 8 States from the North East and West Bengal, thereby added on an optimistic note.

The bank is planning to achieve a business of Rs 1,100 crore by March 2018 and ramp up to Rs 2,000 crore of business in 2 years' time," Kalita added on an optimistic note.

Starting with 2016-17, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said in a circular:

To promote transparency in remuneration policies so that top executive remuneration is aligned with the interest of investors, fund houses will have to make the disclosures pertaining to a financial year on its website under a separate head 'remuneration'. Under this, MP houses will have to disclose name, designation and remuneration of CEO, CIO and COO as well as salaries drawn by top ten employees in terms of remuneration for that financial year. Besides, name, designation and remuneration of every employee whose total package is equal to or more than Rs 1.02 crore for that financial year need to be disclosed.

Besides, MP's total Average Assets Under Management (AAUM), as well as debt and equity AAUM and rate of growth over the last three years would have to be disclosed.

The fund houses will have to disclose these information within one month from the end of a financial year

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Salary details of part-time employees, who received at least Rs 8.5 lakh

per month during their stint with the company should also be disclosed.

Meanwhile, on the issue of institutional investors, SEBI voiced serious concern over the standard of corporate governance, saying the country lacked a code of conduct. "Is the system of corporate governance in the country working satisfactorily... majority would say no," SEBI Chairman Ajay Tyagi said, while addressing the annual session here of industry chamber the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Noting that according to company ownership patterns in the Indian context, "Fifty per cent ownership is with the promoters, while institutional investment is increasing, nowadays touching 30 per cent", Tyagi said there is "no code of conduct" for institutional investors. "What are their responsibilities, once they are significant

shareholders? Our impression, and this is the saddest part, is that promoters prefer institutional investors who are passive," he said.

"There is need for a common stewardship code. Just increasing the institutional share without taking active interest and responsibility does not serve corporate governance," he added.

Pointing out that investors' rights are a SEBI subject, the Chairman said: "If promoters' plus institutional shareholding crosses 80 per cent, then retail, minority investors really become a minority...who will take care of their interests?"

"Then there is the issue of independent directors, who have not been discharging their functions properly. They have no commitment to any cause, resign without giving any reasons, just say they are sick...giving fake reasons." — Agencies

FIPB abolition in final stages

NEW DELHI, April 28: Abolition of the 25-year-old Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) is in the final lap and this will set the stage for more reforms in the FDI policy, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said today.

He also said some "tough steps" are required so that India increasingly becomes a tax-compliant country.

Jaitley had in his Budget for 2017-18 proposed abolition of FIPB—an inter-ministerial body under the Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs that processes FDI proposals and makes recommendations for Government approval.

"I am now in the final stages of doing away with the FIPB because 90 per cent of the investment in India comes under the automatic route. So, for the balance 10 per cent, we need multiple forums to give approval or (do) need just one forum in one ministry?" he said, addressing CII's annual meeting here. The Government is yet to announce the modalities of the new system of processing applications which fall under the approval route.

FIPB was initially constituted under the Prime Minister's Office in the wake of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s.

With FDI investment already liberalised and rules simplified significantly, abolishing FIPB will help streamline the process for foreign investment in India. — PTI

Improving power sector

Sonowal holds discussion with German officials

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 28: Aiming to bring about revolutionary changes to the power sector in the State, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today held a discussion with Indo-German Energy Programme (IGEN) officials here.

IGEN is German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's initiative for carrying out viable energy security programmes in developing countries.

Saying that providing stable power supply and reducing loss in transmission is a prime objective of the Government, Sonowal stated that German expertise and technical know-how this regard would be of immense value for ensuring electrification in the rural areas of the State. He said that revitalising the power sector would also give momentum to the growth of industrial sector and help in economic development of the State.

Explaining the functioning model of IGEN, Director of Indo-German Energy Programme Winfried Damm said that

India now consumes more than 6,600 terawatt-hours (TWh) of energy per year, but its per capita electricity consumption of around 1,000 kWh, is less than one seventh of that of industrialised countries. This creates considerable challenges in all areas of society and in rural and urban regions.

For combating these issues, Damm suggested saving energy along the entire supply chain and in applications and production, thereby optimising resource use and reducing costs and introducing renewable energy sources on a large scale and integrating these into the power grids so as to diversify the energy source mix.

Saying that IGEN is carrying out programmes in 23 cities of 17 States in India currently, Damm said that the main objective of the programme is to reduce carbon emission and thereby offset global warming.

The IGEN programme will utilise their vast experiences in managing power to help the State Government in formulating policy, programme, guidelines and standards for energy sector, supply clean cooking en-

ergy, provide energy in agricultural sector, rural electrification, maintaining energy efficiency, renewable energy generation and transmission.

The Chief Minister, while appreciating IGEN for carrying out power projects in different States of the country with success, sought cooperation from the programme officials to revolutionise the State's rural electricity sector and for bringing major industries to the State without harming the environment by opting for renewable energy sources.

IGEN also offered to set up one photovoltaic thermal project at Guwahati for demonstrating the effectiveness of the plant to which the Chief Minister readily agreed and directed Chief Secretary VK Pipersenia to identify a suitable location for the same.

Minister of State (Ind) for Power Palab Lochan Das, Additional Chief Secretary of the Power Department Rabib Bora, and Commissioner-cum-Secretary to the Chief Minister Sanjay Lohia were also present in the meeting.



Deep Chandra Joshi, Chairman of North East Small Finance Bank addressing mediapersons in Guwahati on Friday.

— Photo: Samarendra Sarma

GST seminar at Guwahati

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 28: A GST Awareness Program was organised for contractors, suppliers and transporters of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. in Guwahati by the Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) in association with the State Commercial Tax authorities.

Viney Kumar Patra, Commissioner of Central Excise & Service Tax, Guwahati in his address urged all the Central Excise, Service Tax and VAT registrants to enrol themselves in GSTN to avoid any difficulty in transacting business under GSTN.

He said that GST - the One Tax, One Nation & One Market Tax Reform - would pro-

vide seamless flow of goods, services and credit in the chain of business. He also informed that barring crude oil, natural gas, aviation turbine fuel, diesel and petrol all other petroleum products are subject to the levy of GST and these five would also eventually will be brought under GST at an appropriate time by the GST council.

G Dasgupta, Deputy Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, Assam explained important provisions of GST in detail and discussed specific issues related to the sector and elaborated how GST would ultimately be easy for compliance and beneficial to all.

In the technical session, Debasish Banerjee, Trainer Superintendent of Central Excise & Service Tax, Guwahati made a detailed presentation which was followed by a question and answer session where queries related to taxability of goods purchased from another State, flow of credit, filing of returns, e-Way Bill, threshold limit, etc. were discussed. The Assistant Commissioners (GST Awareness Campaign) of Central Excise and Service Tax Department were also present in the programme.

Earlier, in the inaugural session Executive Directors of IOCL, Jogen Borpujari and Dipankar Roy appealed to the contractors, suppliers and transporters of IOCL to utilise this opportunity to become GST compliant.

Tax compliance a must for pushing digital economy'

NEW DELHI, April 28: Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad today called on tax practitioners and administrators to keep tax compliance in mind as India's digital economy expands.

"We are creating a big ecosystem of digital economy. Indian digital economy is going to become a USD 1 trillion economy in the coming five years," Prasad said while speaking at a conference on tax system.

The digital economy includes communications services, IT and IT-enabled services, e-commerce, manufacturing and digital payments.

"In this ecosystem, surely issues of tax, compliances, border or no border will come. That is one area I would expect that sometime in future you people need to reflect, act and also give feedback as to how we can promote digital economy without disturbing innovation and enterprise while ensuring tax compliance," Prasad said.

He said that the Government is working very aggressively to ensure there is tax compliance in the system.

Prasad said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken the lead in convincing the world that things have to be operated in a fair and transparent manner.



"If some people seek to tinker with the system, there must be a mechanism available for automatic sharing of information. America has followed it immediately. Our Prime Minister went to Switzerland, they also agreed to open up," Prasad said. — PTI

Over 29 million smartphones shipped to India in Q1

NEW DELHI, April 28: Smartphone shipments in India grew 15 per cent to 29 million units in March quarter compared to the year-ago period, with top five brands capturing almost 70 per cent of the total segment, research firm Counterpoint said.

India is one of the world's largest and among the fastest-growing smartphone markets. With sales slowing down in matured markets like the US and Europe, handset makers are expanding their presence in the Indian market, bringing in

the best devices from their portfolio.

During the said quarter, Samsung continued to lead the market with 26 per cent share, followed by Chinese players Xiaomi (13 per cent), Vivo (12 per cent), Oppo (10 per cent) and Lenovo (8 per cent).

Overall, the mobile handset market grew by six per cent in the January-March 2017 quarter with smartphones and feature phones contributing equal share.

Samsung led the tally here too with 26 per cent share, followed by Itel (nine per



cent), Micromax (eight per cent), Xiaomi (seven per cent) and Vivo (six per cent).

"India's smartphone market is witnessing a focus shift in distribution strategy by major brands. Offline brands like Oppo, Vivo and Gionee have now started focusing on on-

line channels as well to gain extra market share," Counterpoint Research Analyst Karn Chauhan said.

He added that online-only brands like Xiaomi and Itel are moving fast into offline markets to widen their reach to the mass market, addressing

consumers in tier-II and III cities, but each with marginal shares.

Shobhit Srivastava, Research Analyst at Counterpoint, said the ASP (average selling price) of smartphones in India increased by Rs 2,000 during the March quarter compared to the year-ago period.

"The reason for the hike in ASP is the growing number of users that are upgrading to their high-end specifications offered by brands in the Rs 8,000-20,000 price segment," he added. — PTI

The harsh and piercing sound of a drill machine shattered the peace of a fog-soaked morning as I stepped in through the main gate of the half-a-century old Assam-type house in Biswanath Chariali last January. The well-packed drawing room of Kushal Deka was no less than a mini art house, portraying the varied symbols of Assamese culture like the *japi*, varied sculptures, paintings, etc. The stacks of certificates and mementos are reminders of the unparalleled achievements of the man, difficult to measure on a conventional scale. I spoke to him to understand what it takes for such a spirited fight in a lone battle against all odds to uphold the value of amateur theatre in a place like Biswanath Chariali. The sound of the rotating drill doesn't disrupt anymore as Kushal Deka informs that he is building a new house in his backyard, the upper floor of which has been designed to be a private theatre hall.

It is not very often that we see a whole floor of personal space kept aside only for theatrical activities, that too by a 50-year-old man who has been in continuous financial constraints to run his family, while keeping his passion for drama alive throughout.

"Art itself is very introvert," he says. "It takes its own path only for itself. It doesn't bother how many people see it or hear it." Creative art

Mrinmay Bhuyan



emerges only from crisis, he believes, as he mentions about Habib Tanvir, the popular Indian playwright who had to face tremendous financial crunch, yet he created some memorable plays. "I don't expect a full house out front. A small conscious audience is enough. My production is like my own child. Others may or may not like my son or daughter," Kushal Deka maintains.

We talked in length about his struggle to stand up as an actor since his childhood when he was often rejected by his senior in local shows. "But I was adamant," he says, recollecting his days in Chatia around 1970. "Atul Pachani was playing the role of a rickshaw-puller in a post-war production, directed by Rafiq Hussain. Jahan Barun and Arun Hazarika were mentors of the workshop. I asked for a small role, only to be denied. Then I requested them to just let me cross the stage, walking by the rickshaw-lah, only for appearance."

That little boy, deemed unsuitable for stage at that tender age, enjoyed being a prompter or a drop-screen operator before finally making his entry on stage as an actor when he was 13 years

old. Since then there has been no looking back. "Before acting, I was made to dance," he explains with reference to his role in a dance-drama, an adaptation of Jose Marti (Cuban) poem, directed by Manisha Hazarika. He was a comedian too, performing in different places with Atul Pachani and Ajit Barthakur. At one time, he played the *tabla*, too, with established singers. "I learned *tabla* myself," he says, remembering his grandfather, seeing his interest, presented him the instrument.

Starting from the cultural city of Tezpur to Biswanath Chariali, through Jamugurihat, this



world can't mould it for commercial gain. Let art be in its virgin form." Today, leading a vibrant campaign for amateur theatre in Assam, Kushal Deka, with his group Barnam, has redefined the terms of professionalism in theatre. It's an instinct rooted deep inside him from the days when, as a child, he used to run through the fields, through the mud and water in Puthimari, his paternal village in Kamrup district.

The drill machine is now silent; but the work still goes on, unstoppable, with an unseen drill in the heart of Kushal Deka to show the world what art really means. The building in his backyard, under construction, would surely accommodate not only the young players to expose their talents, but the hopes and aspirations of the people of Assam to see the rise of a new cultural horizon at the holy Biswanath *Ghat* across the mighty river. Now this well-known director is ready to perform a play scripted by the acclaimed playwright of the present generation Hiloi Kumar Pathak. In my *tete-a-tete* with the director, he described this new venture and how it is an honourable endeavour on the part of his group to act on this script.

Bihu at Santiniketan

For the first time, Rongali Bihu was celebrated at Santiniketan on April 16 with an event titled *Rongali Rong*. Inaugurating the festival, the premises of Gulancha Bon of Purpapali, Biplob Laha Chowdhury, Head of the Department of Centre for Journalism and Mass Communication, who spent nine years in Assam, dwelt at length on Bihu and recalled his connection with the State.

Apurba Das

Dr Sangita Saikia, Associate Professor of the Assamese Department of Visva-Bharati University spoke briefly about Bihu festival.

The programme started with the playing of the *pepa* by a student Krishnapatim Bordoloi. The highlights of the programme were a Bihu group dance by Puja, Chandamita, Nilakshi and Roselin, a Bihu song by Raj Mullick, Deputy

Registrar of Visva-Bharati University, a Tiwa Bihu dance performance by students Puja Das and Chandamita, a *huchori* performance by a group of teachers and students.

It is noteworthy that the celebration was marked by the participation of teachers and students of various departments and members of the Bengali society of Santiniketan. The programme was impressively compared by Ankita Mazumdar and Diganta Deva. Dr Surya Kumar Saikia, Associate Professor of Zoology offered the vote of thanks. The celebration came to a close with a rendering of *O' Mor Apnor Desh*.



Phaguni Palashor Rong

A music video titled *Phaguni Palashor Rong*, based on Bihu tunes is drawing the attraction of the viewers, particularly because of the performance by popular actors Utpal Das and Pallavi Bora, with the song rendered by Ripunjay Gogoi and Jonmoni Narah, under the music direction of Dipak Sarma. The choreography by Nitul Konwar is praiseworthy, with lyrics and tunes by Mintu Bikash. The video has been produced under the banner of Om Sanskriti Prithivi.



Antareen releases

Asamese film *Antareen* will be releasing all over on May 5. The film, based on eminent litterateur Rita Choudhury's novel *Torali*, centres around a young woman's fight against social injustice inherent in our society in the garb of patriarchy. It didn't take too long for the critics to take note of this film at the festival circuit where it has garnered plaudits. It has even received the Best Feature Film award at the 3rd Indian Cine Film Festival in Mumbai, in 2015. Produced by Manabendra Adhikary under the banner of Artha Films, *Antareen*'s screenplay has been penned by Monjul Baruah.

Fathered by a politician's loveless extramarital passion, Torali's life is a quest for sanctuary from her father's loveless world, but her intent to uncover her father's transgression gets her trapped in a mental asylum. Shackled, she finds Samiran, who takes up her fight against the wrongs of a patriarchal world.

The film's shooting took place in different locations within Assam, including the State Mental Hospital in Tezpur.

Monjul Baruah joins a growing list of new wave filmmakers who are simultaneously expressing and developing their own cinematic vocabulary. He is confident that his movie will surely find its place in the heart of the viewing public.



ROVING EYE

Apurba Kumar Das



Meghranjani mesmerises Mumbai audience

Kathak dance exponent Meghranjani Medhi kept the audience spellbound with her performance at a programme of dances under *Utsav Music* on March 17 at the Experimental Theatre in Mumbai. As an invitee at the programme titled 'Mera Shayam', Meghranjani presented her latest composition *Meera*, depicting the devotion of Indian women for Lord Shri Krishna, based on different Indian classical dances and the Kathak style. She was supported by her noted musician father Jayaprakash Medhi and the dance performance was directed by her mother Kathak exponent Marami Medhi. Gayatri Hazarika lent her voice to the songs, with *tabla* accompaniment by Dibyoyoti Changmai. It needs mention that eminent Indian dancers like Rukmini Vijayakumar, Arushi Mudgal, Prateeksha Kashi and Astha Dixit performed in the function as invitees.

Readers are hereby invited to contribute original articles related to culture of the North-East (film, music, drama, etc.) along with photographs. They may be e-mailed to cultural@assamtribune.com.



Features Editor

Playing with colours

It is often argued whether children, from the preparatory stage to around fourth standard or so, should be allowed to make whatever they like when it comes to drawing and painting. At home, of course, parents would have no problem in letting their child be on their own and play with colours, as this would ensure a better order at home for the parents and give them enough time and space to go through their household chores. But, when it comes to art lessons, the same parents would probably expect the art teacher to be strict and methodical in approach, and any supposed leniency and casualness on his/her part would not be palatable for them. So the teacher, in turn, might choose to please the guardians by following a strict pattern even if such a rudimentary stage, setting aside his/her core belief in giving freedom to the child to fly in the world of the imagination.

Children are a fountain of creativity. Be it the imaginative stories they tell their parents, the amazing games they play with their toys, their creativity and hidden talents surface in innumerable ways. At this stage, they are not conscious about their own identity and they care a hoot about what people watching them would think about their activities. But, growing up, they become aware and start giving importance to

things such as how to hold the pencil, wax crayons or pastels and how to apply the colours with these tools. If the art teacher tries to tinker with the child's imagination, and tells them to alter their work so as to fit in the 'standard' form, then this would not be correct form of development is concerned. Of course, the child might be good enough to do exactly what the teacher has said, but what would fall by the wayside is the naturalness of the child's creativity and his/her 'abstract' imagination.

That's exactly the word to describe children's imagination. These ten-

artsCAPE

DEBASHISH BEZBARUAH



der minds think in the most abstract ways, and that is why we see weird shapes and colours in their art instead of the stuff we are familiar with. Tiny tots in the stage of scribbling need freedom, not hard instructions. Their natural flow of creativity must not be tampered with.

As the child grows up, however, he/she may be encouraged to enhance his/her skills with the help of observation and imagination. This is when a little supervision may be carefully introduced in the teaching process.

When children become mature enough to understand the nuances, they should be given opportunities to engage in observation and recollection. The creative horizons of a child can be broadened even without giving them hard instructions.

In this context, the best way to bring the best out of a child is to think like a child. If a teacher succeeds in getting a peek inside the child's mind, his task would become a lot easier. The sight of proper shapes in children's drawings may be pleasing to the eyes of adults, but it is nothing compared to the sheer thrill given by the imaginative 'imperfections' in their art.

If a child draws different kinds of fruits on the same tree, it should not be seen through the eyes of an adult and no attempt should be made to correct it right away. If the child paints the sky green, there has to be an unknown reason why the child has chosen to paint it that way. It is their brand of logic, and we adults must not necessarily try to dismiss it as incorrect.

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Priyanka Chopra in Kalpana Chawla biopic

A stress Priyanka Chopra is reportedly all set to star in the biopic of late astronaut Kalpana Chawla, directed by first-time director Priya Mishra. Chawla, an Indian-American astronaut, was one of the seven crew members who died in a space shuttle explosion in 2003. It was her second space expedition. The 34-year-old actress, who returned to India recently, after the completion of the second season of her TV series *Quantico*, will reportedly start work on this biopic next. Priyanka said, "I have been working on it for the past seven years. A new production banner will back the project."

In fact, Viacom 18 had announced "a film based on an astronaut" last year. Reports now suggest that the film will be produced by an international production company. Priya Mishra has reportedly met the late astronaut's family several times as a part of her research for the film. "It was last heading a TV channel creatively and post 2011, quit to pursue filmmaking. This is one of the two scripts that I have written," she said.

Alia Bhatt as Indian spy in new film

Alia Bhatt once donned a Kashmiri avatar for Imtiaz Ali's *Highway*. A wife in a war thriller all over again. According to rumours, Dharma Productions and Junglee Pictures have joined hands to produce a film about a Kashmiri woman married to a Pakistani army officer, who plays a spy for the Indian intelligence agency, across the border during the testing times of the 1971 Indo-Pak War.

While Alia Bhatt may be made a part of this spy thriller, it remains to be seen as to who will step into the role of the army officer. Interestingly, a similar character was portrayed by Preity Zinta in 2003's *The Hero: Love Story Of A Spy*, which featured Sunny Deol in a lead role.

Meanwhile, Alia will be next seen in *Dragon*. It is a superhero film and will see Alia and Ranbir Kapoor together on screen for the first time. Written and directed by Ayan Mukherji and produced by Karan Johar, it also stars Amitabh Bachchan.

Alia has also signed director Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* opposite Ranveer Singh. The film will be based on the life of street rappers. It will be produced by Excel Entertainment and Zoya's recently launched banner Tiger Baby.



Bihu down the years...



The Bihu performances on stage, commonly known as *Mancha Bihu* started in 1952 at the Latalis grounds in Guwahati, at the initiative of Radha Govinda Baruah and other enlightened stalwarts – a landmark event paving the way for the **Dibyendu Goswami** functions of to-day, spreading out to every nook and corner of Assam. So much so that of today, Bihu festivities have become synonymous with cultural evenings, quite different from what it used to be a century back as a totally rural and agrarian affair.

Down memory lane, one of the inevitable programmes in these cultural evenings were the musical concerts by the well-known or popular artists who enthralled the audiences with their catchy and evergreen numbers, and which continue even today. The frontrunners

included legendary Bhuben Hazarika, Khaigen Mahanta-Archanha Mahanta, folk artists duo Rameswar Pathak and Dhanananda Pathak, Mahananda Mazinbari Barua, Dwipen Baruah, Ridup Dutta to name a few, and they proved to be real entertainers and crowd pullers. Their mode of presentation on stage with limited instrumental support and their unique style of interacting with the large gatherings were much in demand and that have in due course become nostalgic memories.

As time passed, these spaces have been replaced by new trends in performing styles, backed by innovative presentations on stage. The traditional shows of yore, presented by these legendary stalwarts, have now become a thing of the past, not only because of their physical absence as such, but because the entire structure has been re-organised by the new generation performers who believe in "to-

tality of performance". These breed of artists are often seen engaging supporting performing artistes to correlate with their listed numbers, in order to add to their repertoire.

Angaraag (Papon) Mahanta who, of late, has risen to become one of the most sought after musical icons, especially for Generation Next, has always presented some extremely well-planned shows, creating a dignified ambience even during open-air Bihu festivities. Coming from a legacy in his own right, the singer-artist is a force to reckon with whenever the Bihu festival comes knocking, providing a fresh breeze of music and fun, too. Intrinsically based on folk fusions, his soft compositions are hugely received with thundering applause all throughout, achieving rare heights within the prevailing contemporary scenario.

The little wonder Nohid Afrin, a recent sensation, who has become a household name by now, too deserves credit for her performances delivered

on stage so far. The decency maintained in selection of compositions, as well as her rendition are really admirable. Says Loknath Goswami, an eminent artiste himself, besides being a prolific commentator: "Earlier, the legendary artistes came out for public performances with a well-prepared list of items, with new compositions invariably made for the occasion, which made their live show really enjoyable. Moreover, since they themselves were institutions of sorts, their fans ranged from six to 60 who used to throng the *Bihu pandals*".

The advent of the electronic channels has further changed the scenario in the last few years, transforming a bulk of the previous audiences to mere spectators before television sets, though the interest or curiosity to see the live performances still exists. Comments a lead guitarist who has been accompanying many top artistes for several years: "The feeling or enthusiasm that one gets to have a direct contact with one's favorite singing stars is something different and it is this zeal of the audiences that keeps us going throughout the season."

However, one common aspect that looms large at these *Bihu*s today is that they emphasise more on technical perfection, like improvised sound systems and use of other electronic devices for track modulation. Since the audiences expect special effects during the shows, the entire stage craft has also changed a lot.

As changes have embarked upon all art forms, Bihu cannot be an exception; hence, it has deviated vastly from its earlier pattern in the past few years. Moreover, it has also rightly opened up new vistas for performers and audiences, giving it a global exposure, thereby making it accessible to the whole world.

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The movie *Beautiful Lives*, directed by Kankan Deka, was released in the cinema halls of Assam on February 17, 2017. Though the movie received lukewarm response from the audience, the critics and film buffs who have watched the movie have appreciated it for its unconventional story and theme. Also, the flawless acting by artistes like Boloram Das, Pakeezza Begum and Ashrumoni Bora were the highlights of the movie. The bold role essayed by Ashrumoni Bora has convinced many that this new actress will go places. In this interview with Ashrumoni Bora, the actress opens up about her experiences and future projects:

Beautiful Lives is your debut movie. Who offered you the role?

It was Kankan Deka who called me and told me about this film he was making. I didn't even know him. He told me about this 'bold' character that he wanted me to play... so he called me to Guwahati to read the script. I came down to Guwahati, along with my husband, we met him and he gave me the script. He said he wanted the character of Moni to be played by me, but before committing to the

A bold beginning

role he asked me to read the script thoroughly. My husband and I read the script. We went through it three to four times and I liked it a lot and finally said yes.

Did you have no qualms about doing the intimate scene in the film, as this is very unheard of in Assamese movies?

What we were more concerned about was the story. The story was so strong and appealing that these things didn't matter. Besides, we knew how much an Assamese film could offer. So we were confident.

How did you prepare for the role?

After reading the script, I tuned into her character. I became Moni. I am a rebel at heart, so I didn't have much difficulty in adapting myself to her mentality. The only difference between Moni and me is that she is a little more aggressive, which our audience will find hard to accept so soon. But if you look deeper, you will find a Moni hidden in the minds of all women. People keep her hidden in order to fit into the society, to live peacefully. When she

is cornered and pushed to a wall, she comes out.

Are you happy with the way your character has been depicted?

Of course, I am. The director Kankan Deka is very serious about his craft and he has established the character very well.

Not only the character of Moni, but also the story any production was top notch.

What are your plans for the future?

I am all game for a good character. If I get a role that appeals to me, I am ready to do it. Acting is my passion.

What are your dream roles?

I got a dream debut through *Beautiful Lives*, but I hope to do the role of Kanchan written by Anuradha Sarma Pujiari. Besides that, a role from any of the novels written by Rita Chaudhury.

What do you have to say about the lukewarm response of Assamese viewers towards Assamese films?

We want to change the dimension and the state of Assamese films. May be our audience thinks that Assamese films are all the same so they are not coming to the theatres. The audiences' taste needs to be changed and such changes can be ushered in by films that shock and provoke the audience's sensibilities. Kankan Deka and some other new-age filmmakers have the potential to change the scenario. Our fingers are crossed!



prelude

Morris dance is a traditional English ceremonial dance for men, but also danced today by women. There are regional variants, but the best-known form, spread by the national revival of folk dance from the early 1900s, is that known as Cotswold, which was mostly performed in rural villages of the south Midlands. Six dancers, known as a team, or side, wear ribbons and rings with bells attached to their legs. The team performs lines of three each, executing various figures in a light but energetic jumping manner, often swinging handkerchiefs or clashing wooden sticks.

Another popular form is that from the industrial north-west of England, which is, in part, distinguished by an emphasis on changes in spatial formation and a heavier style. Teams usually comprise eight or more dancers, sometimes wearing cloaks and often twirling brightly coloured cotton slings or holding sticks. From the 15th to the early 17th centuries, Morris dancing was often associat-

ed with guilds, the court, and town parishes, apparently undergoing a rural resurgence in the 18th century, but suffering a decline by the late 1800s in the south Midlands and rapid change in the more urban north-west. The later 20th century has seen a revival of Morris dancing, and the Cotswold form is mostly seen at summer fêtes and festivals.

harmonisers
From Tushu Das, Dimapur, Nagaland –
2) On April 1, 1957, the normally serious BBC TV news programme *Panorama* convinced thousands of English viewers that this type of food grew on trees. What?
3) A spheleophobe fears which insects?

the colosseum

■ Neelopal Deka

side screen

- Picture Clec: Just name the medal and to whom it is given. (Hirak Jyoti Lahari, Balijan Katakhichuk, Gohpur)



- Who painted *The Water Lily Pool*?
- Grandadilla is another name for which fruit?

unities

- From Tushu Das, Nagaland –
- What is the title of Marilyn Monroe's unfinished 1962 film?
- Who played Woody Allen's ex-wife in the 1979 film *Manhattan*?
- Which film was based on an unproduced play called *Everybody Comes to Rick's*?

do-re-me

- In 2010, two folk dances, one from Rajasthan and another from Manipur were declared a part of its intangible heritage list by the UNESCO. Name the two dances.
- The historic Ayodhya is located at the bank of which river? (Ningombam Duhiba, Cotton College, Guwahati)

- In which London building was the funeral of Princess Diana held? (Suman Das, Bharalumukh, Guwahati)
- Which are the two cities in the Charles Dickens novel *A Tale of Two Cities*? (Jorwaria Deka, Silchar)

- Pokew* is a type of which drink? (Nishamoni Borah, Lakhimpur)
- It is one of the oldest forms of dances in the world, originating in Kerala, known as the 'Ballet of East'. Which dance form is it? (Manash Jyoti Borah, Bamunimadam, Guwahati)

crescendo

- Many years ago, in Scotland, a new game was invented. It was ruled 'Gentlemen only. Ladies forbidden', thus, a new word entered the English language. Which game is it? (Dr Hemanta Kumar Kalita, Jyotisagar, Barpeta Road)

ANSWERS 1) President's Gold Medal for the All India Best Feature Film, now better known as National Film Award for Best Feature Film 2) Spaghetti 3) Waage 4) Claude Monet 5) Passionfruit 6) *Something's Got To Give* 7) Meryl Streep 8) Casablanca (1942) 9) Kali bari of Rajasthan and Sankirtan of Manipur 10) The Sarayu River 11) Westminster Abbey 12) Paris and London 13) Tea 14) Kathakali 15) Golf.

BOOKSHELF

A pioneering work

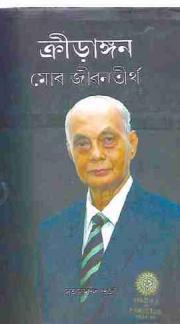
Gunin Hazarika

There is no dearth of autobiographical books in Assamese – right from *Satyaratna* Lakshminath Bezbaroa's *My fibon Swaran*, to the first president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Padmanath Gohain Baruah's *My Swaran* to Lakshmi Nandan Baruah's *Somor Baluka Rasi*. The book under review is also an autobiography. It is different because it is an autobiography of a sportsman, not of a literary, social or political person.

Professor Sahajananda Ojha taught Political Science and retired as the Principal of the renowned ADP College. He was born in Angoor town, Nagaon, which holds the honour of being the first town of the North-East to host the National Football Championship Santosh Trophy, almost 60 years ago. Ojha has written very little about his family. His father and mother hailed from Barpeta, migrated and settled in Nagaon, in 1923. Ojha grew up in a traditional Assamese Vaishnavite family, where playing sports was a social aversion. Therefore, his father never encouraged him to play. But as a young boy growing up in the sporting atmosphere of Nagaon town, he could not resist the lure of cricket and played it like an 'errant boy'. His eldest brother-in-law Jitakanta Barooh, however, encouraged him to play. And the man who influenced him the most as a player and organiser was the legendary sports administrator, the first Director of the Sports Directorate of the Government of Assam, Nurul Amin.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part is about his family and journey in the sports world as a player and then as an organiser and sports administrator from the district to the international level. He has given a vivid account of the 1982–1983 tour of the Indian team to Pakistan when he was the Assistant Manager of the Indian squad led by Sunil Gavaskar. The second part contains an internal history of the Nagaon Sports' Association, and the third part has two articles, one on Assam sports, and the other on the sports history of the undivided Nagaon district.

The author is very conscious about the facts. He has preserved all his records and has given accurate dates of events. It is a pioneering book on sports literature in Assamese.



Kirangan: Mor Jibontirtha
Sahajananda Ojha:
Society for Socio-Economic Awareness
and Environment Protection,
Price: Rs 250/-

Relics of the past

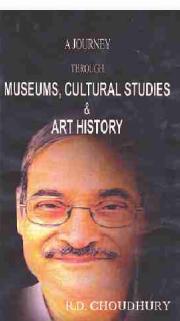
DK Bora

The author, Dr Rabin Dev Choudhury,

of the book *A Journey Through Museums, Cultural Studies and Art History* is a well-known name in the sphere of museums throughout the country. The title of the book might give the impression that it may be like any other book on one's life, but on leafing through the pages of the book, one finds instead of lengthy discussions on family history, he dwells on the topic of museums — a subject dear to his heart, and how he crossed many a hurdle to create a museum 'mouvement' in Assam. During his tenure as the Director of the Assam State Museum, he was able to create awareness even among the general masses that the museum is the showpiece of one's heritage, culture.

From this book, one can also discover the other side of the author who is equally sensitive to social causes. He realises that Assamese people are gradually turning into an endangered species in their own homeland. Their very existence is endangered by the silent aggression of illegal migrants from beyond the border. His relentless fight to save the land of the Vaishnavas *satras* from the clutches of illegal encroachers is no longer unknown to the people of the State, and of late, even the government has taken the issue of evicting the encroachers from *satra* land, leaving aside vote bank politics. Because of his relentless struggle for the cause, recently the Satra Mahasabha of Assam conferred on him the title of 'Satra Bandhu' – an honour he truly deserves.

All these and many other issues have been addressed through his *A Journey Through Museums, Cultural Studies and Art History*. The language is simple and easily comprehensible.



Journey Through Museums,
Cultural Studies and Art History
RD Choudhury,
Chandra Prakash, Guwahati,
Price: Rs 950/-

Four militants blow themselves up in Bangladesh

DHAKA, April 28: Four militants blew themselves up in Bangladesh after a 24-hour stand-off with the security forces which raided their 'den', the latest such incident amid an intensified nationwide crackdown on Islamist militants, police said today.

Police raided a house in north-western Chapainawabganj on Wednesday night, triggering a stand-off. "We found bodies of four militants as we entered the hide-out," a police headquarters spokesman told reporters in Dhaka as elite Special Weapons And Tactics unit wrapped up the security clampdown codenamed 'Operation Eagle Hunt'.

An injured pregnant woman, who is the wife of one of the slain militants, and her six-year-old daughter were brought out from the house as siege ended at the den of Neo Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, the spokesman said.

"She suffered a bullet wound on her leg," he said. Last month Bangladeshi police conducted series of large scale operations against militants, in which at least 17 suspected militants were killed.

On March 31, eight militants blew themselves up with a grenade after the security forces raided their hideout north of the Bangladeshi capital.

The official said the woman too was believed to be an operative of the banned outfit responsible for carrying out the deadly July 1, 2016 terrorist attack on a Dhaka church in which 22 people, including an Indian, were killed. – PTI



An injured Iraqi girl who had fled her home waits at Hammam al-Alil camp checkpoint south of Mosul, Iraq on Friday. – UNI

Taliban announce spring offensive, vow to build institutions

ISLAMABAD, April 28: Afghanistan's Taliban announced the start of their spring offensive today, promising to build their political base in the country while focusing military assaults on coalition and Afghan security forces.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid announced the launch of the offensive in an email statement, referencing a February report issued by Washington's special inspector general for Afghan re-

construction. That report said that the Afghan government had control or influence over only 52 per cent of Afghanistan's 407 districts last year, down from 63.4 per cent previously.

The Taliban dubbed this year's offensive "Operation Mansouri," named for the Taliban leader killed last year in a US drone strike.

Hence, keeping the evolving situation in mind, this year's Mansouri Operations will differ from previous ones in nature and

China warns N Korea of sanctions over nuke test: Tillerson

WASHINGTON, April 28: China has warned North Korea of sanctions if the reclusive nation went ahead with another nuclear test, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said.

"They (Chinese) confirmed to us that they had requested that the regime conduct no further nuclear test. In fact, we were told by the Chinese that they informed the (North Korean) regime that if they did conduct further nuclear tests, China would be taking sanctions action on their own," Tillerson told Fox News in an interview aired last night.

The US Secretary of State appeared to be praising China of its role in North Korea.

"We're asking a lot of the Chinese. I think in the past, the assumption has been the Chinese would only take limited action. We're going to test that assumption," he said in response to a question. Tillerson, however, said he does not seek a regime change in North Korea.

"We do not seek regime change in North Korea. We're not seeking a collapse of the regime," said the top American diplomat.

Meanwhile, a top American admiral told lawmakers that the goal of the North Korea's leader is to have nuclear weapons.

There is no doubt in my mind," Admiral Harry Harris, Com-

mander of the US Pacific Command, said when Senator John McCain Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee said it is clear that his goal is a nuclear weapon and the means to deliver it to the US. Harris said China has the capability to influence in effect North Korean behavior for a number of reasons.

"It had chosen not to exert the full range of its influence. I think we're in a different place now. I think the jury's out its early days. We'll have to see if China has changed its view of its willingness to influence Kim Jong Un," Harris said in response to a question.

North Korea, he said, remains the most immediate threat to the security of the US and its allies in Japan and Korea. – PTI

ASEAN to express grave concern over N Korea's nuke tests

MANILA, April 28: Southeast Asian countries will express "grave concern" over North Korea's nuclear weapons tests and ballistic missile launches despite Pyongyang's appeal for support, according to a draft statement due to be released today.

In a rare move, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-Ho wrote to the ASEAN regional bloc's secretary general appealing for backing in its row with the United States to prevent what it warned could be a "nuclear holocaust".

But Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers meeting in Manila today were expected to criticise North Korea for its two atomic weapons tests last year and subsequent launch of ballistic missiles, according to a draft of their statement obtained by AFP. "ASEAN expresses its grave concern over the escalation of tension in the Korean Peninsula," said the draft statement, which is due to be released after the ministers end their meeting today.

"ASEAN is mindful that instability in the Korean Peninsula will have serious impact to the region and beyond." The ministers will "strongly" urge North Korea "to fully comply" with UN Security Council resolutions and international laws, according to the draft.

However, ASEAN will also urge "all parties concerned" to "cease all provocative actions and exercise self-restraint to de-escalate the tension and refrain from actions that may aggravate the situation". – AFP

The Assam Tribune

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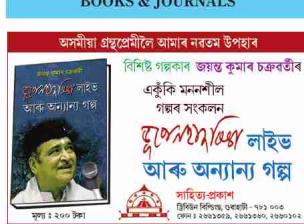
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Pope Francis visits Egypt to promote 'unity, fraternity'

CAIRO, April 28: Pope Francis began a visit to Egypt today to promote "unity and fraternity" among Muslims and the embattled Christian minority that has suffered a series of jihadist attacks.

The 80-year-old pontiff touched down at Cairo airport before he was ushered in a car to meet Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who welcomed him with a military brass band and priests lining up to greet the pope.

"It's a journey of unity and fraternity. Less than two days but very intense," he said of the 27-hour trip before disembarking.

He will later meet Muslim and Christian leaders before visiting a church that was bombed in December. That attack was followed by twin church bombings in April that killed 45 people, in the deadliest assault in recent memory on the Coptic Christian minority.

Francis will also meet Ahmed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of the prestigious Sunni institution Al-Azhar, sealing a recent improvement in relations between Catholicism and the



Sunni branch of Islam.

"This meeting will be an example and a model for peace precisely because it will be a meeting of dialogue," Francis said on the plane. Security will be extremely tight with Egypt under a state of emergency following the twin bombings claimed by the Islamic State group.

The head of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics will walk with Coptic Pope Tawadros II to the church where a suicide bombing killed 29 people in December.

Police and soldiers stood guard outside the Vatican residence in Cairo on Friday and armoured cars were stationed outside the Coptic Orthodox Saint Mark's Cathedral, which Francis will also visit. All of the country's churches have been placed under additional protection because of the risk of another assault timed to coincide with Francis being in the country. Despite the dangers, Francis is expected to conduct most of his business in a normal vehicle and electric golf carts. - AFP

B'deshi girl with 3 legs walks, runs after surgery

SYDNEY, April 28: A toddler born with three legs – because body parts of a twin had grown inside her – was returning home to Bangladesh today after complex and rare surgery in Australia enabled her to walk and run, her doctors said.

Three-year-old Choty Khatun was given little prospect of survival until she was brought to Melbourne last year by Australian charity Children First Foundation.

A team of surgeons spent several months mapping out a procedure to reconstruct her anatomy.

"A twin had grown out of her pelvis but the twin was only part of a twin... The problem is there's no place to hook up for this because she's a very unique individual so you have to try and work out what was where," Chris Kimber, the paediatric surgery head at Monash Children's Hospital, told AFP.

Netanyahu hits out at 'insensitive' German diplomacy

BERLIN, April 28: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today slammed Germany's foreign minister as "insensitive" over refusing to cancel meetings with rights groups critical of Israel's government, amid rising tensions between the two allies.

Netanyahu had scrapped talks with Sigmar Gabriel on last minute, after Germany's top diplomat pressed on with plans to meet with Israeli rights groups Breaking The Silence and B'Tselem. In an interview with Germany's biggest selling Bild daily, Netanyahu defended his decision.

"Foreign diplomats are welcome to meet with civil society activists and members of the opposition and anyone else they'd like," he said.

"But my red line is that I will not meet diplomats who come to Israel and lend legitimacy to fringe radical groups that falsely accuse our soldiers of war crimes and undermine Israeli security," he added. Pointing out that the meetings with the activist groups were held on a day when Israel was commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, Netanyahu said that "it was a particularly insensitive time to seek a meeting like this".

"These are the days we mourn the murdered members of our people in the Holocaust and our fallen soldiers. The Israeli army is the one force that keeps our people safe today," he said. - AFP



Myanmar State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, reviews honour guards upon arrival at the Manila International airport in Pasay city, metro Manila, Philippines on Friday. - UNI

India's economic growth unevenly distributed: Ansari

WARSAW, April 28: Vice President Hamid Ansari said today that despite the benefits of India's economic growth being unevenly distributed the "losers" from the market-led reforms have not challenged the country's democratic system.

Ansari said the new economic policies, including the liberalisation programme, were fostered in a democratic and liberative environment and India was "now getting used to its much higher rate of growth."

Addressing students at the University of Warsaw, the largest institution of higher education in Poland which was established in 1816, on 'Seven Decades of Indian Democracy', he spoke about the economic successes India achieved in non-traditional areas of exports such as the information technology industry, which rapidly grew to become a giant from a very modest beginning.

Another such area is that of pharmaceuticals, he said, where Indian ingenuity has brought huge reductions – sometimes a cut of 80 per cent or so in the price for many essential drugs, like AIDS medicines.

"Such growth has allowed us to lift millions of Indians out of abject poverty and to offer them a better quality of life," he said. - PTI

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Japanese Encephalitis is a disease spread by mosquito

IT'S ONCE AGAIN THE TRANSMISSION TIME OF JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS

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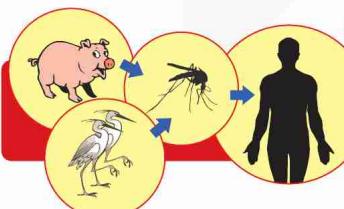
Acute fever, headache, mental irritability, vomiting tendency, convulsion and loss of consciousness may be the symptoms of Japanese Encephalitis

If any of the symptoms is observed contact nearest health workers (ANM/MPW), report to the nearest hospital and get right treatment

To prevent this disease

- Use LLIN mosquito net while sleeping
- Keep pigs and piggeries away from compound of your house
- To stop breeding of mosquito keep your house compound and drains clean
- Always wear fully covered clothes to get rid of mosquito bites
- Smoke your house in the evening
- Allow health worker to spray DDT inside of your house
- Keep doors and windows open during fogging and allow the smoke to come inside

Transmission cycle of Japanese Encephalitis



Government Services

- Free diagnostic facilities for Japanese Encephalitis are available at all the district hospitals and medical colleges
- Respective doctors of all the district hospitals are taking the required measures for treatment on an emergency basis
- ICU facility is available at every medical college of the state to treat patients suffering from Japanese Encephalitis
- Paediatric ICU facility is available at Golaghat, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur Civil Hospitals

For any help, dial 104

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