

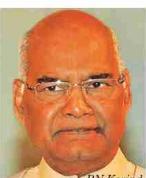
Cong targets NDA VP candidate Venkaiah Naidu

NEW DELHI, July 24: The Congress today sought to embarrass NDA vice presidential candidate M Venkaiah Naidu by raising the issue of alleged irregularities in land deals involving him and his family members and demanded answers since he always spoke of transparency and probity.

Accusing Naidu of land grab in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district that was reserved for the poor, destitute and landless, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said Naidu was "forced" to return that land after public protests and political pressure.

Responding to Ramesh's allegations, Naidu, until recently Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Urban Development, said all these things have been answered and mentioned earlier. "Some people went to court, and the court has also dismissed it. I feel really sorry that they could stoop down to this level in this election also," he told reporters.

Kovind's college to celebrate his swearing-in as President



Pyarelal, sister-in-law of RN Kovind

KANPUR, July 24: Students, teachers and staff of the college where Ram Nath Kovind studied up to intermediate level are planning hearty celebrations for tomorrow when he will be sworn in as the 14th President of India.

Thrilled over one of their own ascending to the top-most constitutional post in the country, the management of the BNSD Intermediate College has decided to illuminate the premises and organise a community feast tomorrow.

The college is also busy making preparations for a live telecast of the oath-taking ceremony for its enthusiastic students and staff members.

Principal RC Singh said the students and teachers would also distribute sweets in and outside the college.

BJP activists will celebrate the day as the "Gaurav Diwas" in the city, district unit president Surendra Mathani said.

Meanwhile, eight members of the President-elect's family left for the national capital last night by the Shram Shakti Express.

Kovind's elder brother

Union Minister and senior BJP leader Ananth Kumar said whatever allegations Ramesh has tried to level are "baseless and unsubstantiated."

Ramesh did not give any proof to back up his allegations beyond the sequence of events allegedly involving Naidu and his family members.

At a news conference here, Ramesh also alleged that on June 20, 2017, the Telangana government issued a "secret order" exempting the "Swarna Bharat Trust" of Naidu's daughter from paying development charges of more than Rs 2 crore to the Hyderabad Metro-politan Development Authority.

The Congress leader alleged further that in July 2014, the Telangana government placed an order of Rs 271 crore without inviting tenders for purchase of vehicles for the police from two car dealers - Harsha Toyota owned by Naidu's son and Himanshu Motors owned by Telangana Chief Minister's son.

"It is not a fact that such an order was placed in contravention of all rules and without even floating a tender?" he asked.

Ramesh also said that the Supreme Court on April 6, 2011 quashed the allotment of 20 acres of land to "Kushabhan Thakre

Memorial Trust" of which Naidu was chairman.

He said the Supreme Court also passed strictures against the Madhya Pradesh government in allotting this land in Bhopal on September 25, 2004.

"I think it is incumbent upon Venkaiah Naidu, it is incumbent upon the BJP to provide satisfactory answers, the nation wants to know," he said.

He said Naidu is a senior, experienced and articulate leader and a candidate for the post of vice president for BJP and he should explain to the country and answer the questions raised by the Congress party.

"Naidu has been a great champion of transparency, accountability, integrity and probity in public life, apart from being a master player with words and a poet of sorts. In the same spirit we are asking these questions," he said.

"Those holding the highest public offices must fully disclose their 'interests' as also 'special treatment' in the shape of state largesse for themselves and for their kith and kin," he said in his written statement.

Asked if he was alleging corruption by Naidu, Ramesh did not answer and instead demanded answers from Naidu and the BJP-PTI

IEDs pose huge challenge in efforts to counter Naxals

RAIPUR, July 24: Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) planted randomly in forests and places where frequent de-mining operations are not feasible pose a big challenge in the counter-insurgency operations in Chhattisgarh's Bastar division, says a senior police official.

At least 1,232 IEDs have been recovered by security forces of Bastar from 2010 to June 30 this year, as per the figures of the state police department.

As many as 66 security personnel were killed and 205 injured in IED blasts during the period, according to the statistics.

Akash is IED is commonly used as roadside bombs.

The Maoists have largely resorted to the use of IEDs to inflict casualties on security personnel. The devices sometimes are hidden underground or in bushes for years before the ultras use them in ambushes on national highways, important state roads and near the camps of security forces, according to police.

Security men recovered at least 170 IEDs of various nature (like pressure IEDs, pipe bombs) in the same period from the region, which comprises seven districts - Bastar, Kanker, Dongargarh, Narayanpur, Dantewada, Sukma and Bijapur - spread across 40,000 sq kms.

The pressure IEDs planted randomly inside the forests in unpredictable places, where frequent de-mining operations are not feasible, remain a challenge (for the security forces)," Deputy Inspector General of Police (Dantewada range) Sundarraj P said.

He, however, pointed out that the number of casualties due to IED blasts has gone down with the enhanced recovery of the explosives.

Asked about the need for advanced mine detection systems to tackle the IED threats, the DIG said, "Right now we have adequate equipment for detecting the IEDs (landmines). However, there is always scope for improvement in technology. This holds good for IED detection also."

According to police data,

nearly 22 security personnel sustained injuries in 31 IED blasts triggered by Naxals in the first six months this year in Bastar range, though no casualty was reported.

Five policemen were killed and seven others injured when Naxals blew up their anti-land mine vehicle in the same district in April 2015. - PTI

up by the insurgents by planting the IEDs in the past.

"The pressure IEDs planted randomly inside the forests in unpredictable places, where frequent de-mining operations are not feasible, remain a challenge (for the security forces)," Deputy Inspector General of Police (Dantewada range) Sundarraj P said.

Apart from the regular mine detection operations, the police have been making efforts to stop the supply chain of explosives.

"The Bastar police is taking all possible measures to block the supply of explosives to Naxals. But, in a few incidents in areas where mining is underway, the Maoists looted huge cache of explosives in the past," the DIG said.

"We are trying to check the leaking points (loopholes) also in order to totally clamp down on the supply chain of explosives," he said.

In March last year, seven personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were killed after Maoists blew up their vehicle with an IED in Dantewada district.

Five policemen were killed and seven others injured when Naxals blew up their anti-land mine vehicle in the same district in April 2015. - PTI



External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj meeting Foreign Minister of Iraq Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, in New Delhi on Monday. - UNI

Shortage of ammo plagues UP ATS: CAG

LUCKNOW, July 24: The Comptroller and Auditor General

has flagged shortage

of ammunition for the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad, noting that MP5 9 mm machine guns, UBGL and 12 bore pump action guns were provided to the special force without the requisite ammunition.

In its 'Performance Audit of Modernisation and Strengthening of Police Forces', the CAG observed that arms and ammunition are the most crucial requirement for operational activities of special forces like the ATS.

"The audit, however noticed that ATS did not get ammunition as per requirements. Arms like 9 mm MP5, 12 bore PAG, hand grenades, stun grenades and UBGL were provided for the first time to the ATS during 2013-15, but ammunition for these weapons was not provided except for hand grenades, which was also not as per the requirement," the CAG said in its latest report tabled in the UP Assembly.

The report further mentioned, "Ammunition for 303 CTN LMG was provided in 2010-11 without availability of the weapon, which resulted in

the ammunition lying in stock

activities in the state. The CAG observed that after various terrorist attacks in the country such as the Mumbai blasts, Mecca Masjid blast in Hyderabad and 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai (2008), the Uttar Pradesh Police in 2009 decided to establish a commando unit of 2,000 commandos and 'Hubs' on the lines of the National Security Guards (NSG). - PTI

the ammunition lying in stock even up to March 2016." In reply, the government said that there was no shortage of arms and ammunition in the commando training schools.

"Reply is contradictory to the fact that no commando training has been organised during last three years," the CAG said.

The ATS was established in November 2007 to combat

and effectively control terror

activities in the state.

The CAG observed that af-

ter various terrorist attacks in

the country such as the

Mumbai blasts, Mecca Masjid

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Ukraine slams Russia over arms given to rebels

KIEV, July 24: Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko today demanded Russia's Vladimir Putin halt arms supplies to rebels as the leaders of France and Germany tried to revive a peace plan.

After a spike in violence, the four leaders discussed the Ukraine crisis for two hours by telephone in the latest round of talks aimed at stalling a conflict that has killed 10,000 people since April 2014.

The conversation was the first to involve French President Emmanuel Macron since he came to power in May, becoming the main international moderator on the crisis along with Germany's Angela Merkel.

Last week saw some of the costliest clashes in months between Russian-backed rebels and government troops, after an insurgent leader announced plans to form a new "state" to replace Ukraine.

Poroshenko called the last days of July some of the bloodiest in 2017 and urged Russia "to immediately cease aggressive actions and supply of weapons to the occupied territories," Ukraine's presidency said in a statement after the talks. - AFP

Libya rescues Europe-bound migrants off Tripoli

TRIPOLI, July 24: Libya's coastguard rescued at least 150 migrants who were trying to reach Europe today, after their inflatable boat had engine problems and began to sink, a navy spokesman said.

The migrants, mostly Africans and including two women and four children, were spotted off the coast of the capital Tripoli.

A coastguard patrol was informed that a boat had run into trouble around seven nautical miles offshore and a rescue mission was launched, Colonel Abu Ajela told AFP.

A witness said people traffickers had taken the migrants out to sea and left them there after removing the engine on the inflatable boat and replacing it with another that quickly broke down.

The migrants were brought ashore to a naval base in Tripoli where authorities gave them food, water and medical assistance before handing them over to a detention centre.

Human traffickers have exploited years of chaos in Libya since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi to boost their lucrative but deadly trade. - AFP

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INVERTER

Home Services & repairing Inverter, Battery online UPS Testing & Installation, Ph. Nandan 84867-25990. Inverter/P/A2700/8

Inverter/Battery sales and services. Home delivery available. Old Batteries sale and purchase. Contact: Dipu Sinha, 985431403 (M). Inverter/P/PA181/3

PUBLIC NOTICE

By an affidavit before Notary Guwahati Sl. No. 83 Dt. 24.7.2017 have changed my earlier name Mr. Nurul Islam to Nurul Islam Sattar and my fathers name Abdus Sattar to Abdul Sattar, Borborua, Dibrugarh. PN/P/PA217/1

1 Tomy Bhattacharya, D/o Sri Dhiraj Kr. Bhattacharya has changed my name as Tomy. Guwahati - Karimpur (M). Henceforth I shall be known as Tomy Bhattacharya in future for all purposes. PN/P/PA209/1

Kabul car bomb by Taliban claims 26

KABUL, July 24: At least 26 people were killed and 41 wounded today after a Taliban-claimed car bomb struck a bus carrying government employees through a Shiite neighbourhood in Kabul, raising fears of sectarian violence in the Afghan capital.

The assault came as a presidential spokesman said the Taliban also killed at least 35 civilians in an attack on a hospital in central Ghor province over the weekend.

The deadly attacks underscore spiralling insecurity in Afghanistan as the resurgent Taliban ramp up their offensive across the country, while security forces struggle to contain them.

In today's blast the bus was carrying employees of the ministry of mines, passing from western Kabul to the downtown ministry during rush hour, interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish told AFP.

It was struck by the car bomb as it passed through a busy area.

of the capital that is home to many Shiite Hazaras, a persecuted ethnic minority.

An AFP photographer at the scene saw multiple bodies and wounded people in the street, surrounded by shattered glass as security forces cordoned off the area.

The bus's charred remains were left smoking in the middle of the road as the wounded were rushed to hospitals in ambulances as well as private cars and taxis.



"It was a huge explosion, my house nearly collapsed," a neighbourhood resident who gave his name as Mostafa told AFP, adding that the street was "filled with human flesh and blood".

"It was horrible," said shopkeeper Momin. "It is a crowded area — many of my friends and other shopkeepers are either killed or wounded."

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the blast, which came just before 7 am. The group rarely claims attacks with

high civilian casualties, but does frequently target government employees.

Afghan presidential spokesman Shah Hussain Murtazawi put the toll at 26 dead and 41 wounded.

At a press conference, Murtazawi also said at least 35 people were killed in the hospital attack over the weekend. - AFP



People gather during a protest against the Supreme Court legislation in Poznan, Poland on Sunday. - UNI

Polish President vetoes judicial reforms

WARSAW, July 24: Polish President Andrzej Duda today vetoed controversial judicial reforms that had prompted huge street protests and threats of unprecedented EU sanctions.

"I have decided to send back to parliament — therefore, to veto — the law on the Supreme Court, as well as the law on the National Council of the Judiciary," Duda said in a televised declaration.

This law would not strengthen the sense of justice" in society, he said, adding that his decision followed extensive consultations with legal experts over the weekend.

"These laws must be amended," Duda said.

The reforms would have increased political control over the judiciary, sparking an outcry amongst critics who said the ruling right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party was seeking to reduce the independence of the courts.

"It should not be part of our tradition that

the attorney general can interfere in the work of the Supreme Court," Duda said.

The role of attorney general is held by the justice minister in Poland, and the change was among reforms that had sparked concern over the rule of law.

The Polish senate had on Saturday backed the reforms, but they had still needed the president's sign-off.

But Monday's veto was a surprise as Duda is closely allied with the PiS.

Thousands of protesters had taken to the streets across Poland in recent days to oppose the bill, including huge crowds who held a candlelight protest outside the Supreme Court on Sunday night urging Duda to veto the changes.

The European Commission had threatened to halt Poland's voting rights over the proposed reforms — a so-called "nuclear option" that the EU had never invoked — while the US had also expressed concern. - AFP

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Trump slams Attorney General for not probing Hillary Clinton

WASHINGTON, July 24: US President Donald Trump today slammed his own attorney general for not probing the alleged links his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton had with the Russians during the last year's presidential polls.

Over the past week, Trump has been attacking Attorney General Jeff Sessions for his decision months ago to recuse himself from the investigation into Clinton's campaign and a trusted adviser.

He had said last week that he will stay in this position as long as it is appropriate.

The new White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders yesterday said that the President has full confidence in Sessions.

Trump, who has 34.4 million followers on Twitter, fired

a series of tweets on issues close to him.

"So why aren't the committees and investigators, and of course our beleaguered Attorney General, looking into Crooked Hillary's crimes and Russia relations?" Trump asked in a tweet.

In one of the tweets, he was critical of one of his own lawmakers in the Congress expressing his frustration over the failure of his Healthcare Bill to get through the legislative process.

"Republicans have a last chance to do the right thing on Repeal and Replace after years of talking and campaigning on it," Trump tweeted.

Trump said after more than a year of investigation against

him there is zero evidence found about his campaign having connection with the Russians.

"After one year of investigation with zero evidence being found, Chuck Schumer just stated that Democrats should blame ourselves, not Russia," he said.

Schumer, the senate minority leader, in an interview to The Washington Post over the weekend said that Hillary Clinton had herself to blame if she lost to somebody who has 40 per cent popularity.

"When you lose to somebody who has 40 per cent popularity, you don't blame other things — Comey, Russia — you blame yourself," Schumer said. - PTI

These stellar nurseries can produce dozens or even hundreds of stars with different sizes and masses.

"The Sun, though isolated from other stars today, is thought to have formed in a cluster with many other stars, so the environments we are studying can tell us a lot about the origin of our own solar system," said Wolf-Chase.

Stars form when cold, rotating clouds of gas and dust in space are pulled together by gravity into flattened "disks" that spin faster as they shrink, similar to what happens when twirling figure skaters pull their outstretched arms in towards their bodies. - PTI

New ways to see Milky Way star formation developed

WASHINGTON, July 24: Scientists have discovered new evidence of stars forming in our Milky Way galaxy, by using a telescope equipped to detect infrared light invisible to our eyes.

The "exciting" finding reveals how stars, including our Sun, grow up within clusters and groups, researchers said.



The team led by Grace Wolf-Chase, astronomer at Adler Planetarium in the US, found huge gas clouds moving outward from areas where "baby" stars are forming, using a new way of disentangling these outflows from other processes in densely-populated stellar nurseries.

The Office of the Block Dev. Officer, Borobazar Tribal Dev. Block, Chirang invited bid for the work under AOP fund of BTC for the year 2016-17 in Bid system (F 2 Form) affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs 8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty-five) only from the registered contractors of Class-I (A, B & C) and Class-II category of Assam PWD (Road & Building) for the work as details below.

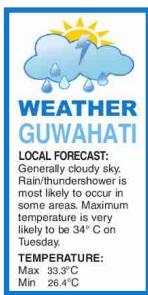
Sl. No.	Name of the work	Bid Value	Cost of Tender paper	Time for completion of work	Earnest Money
1.	Impt. of road from Oxiungi Ananda bazar road to Bhawarguri village road.	Rs. 9,50,000.00	Rs. 500.00	45 days	1% for ST, SC, BC Category & 2% for General Category
2.	Earth. of Bhawarguri playground field	Rs. 9,70,295.00	Rs. 500.00	45 days	
3.	Earth. of culvert at No.1 Daranga (No 2 Hadan)	Rs. 4,95,000.00	Rs. 500.00	60 days	
4.	Box culvert (with wings) at No.1 Daranga (No 3 Hadan)	Rs. 4,95,000.00	Rs. 500.00	60 days	
5.	Box culvert at No 1 Daranga (No 4 Hadan B)	Rs. 10,52,480.00	Rs. 500.00	60 days	
6.	Ring culvert at No 1 Daranga (SC area)	Rs. 5,65,588.00	Rs. 500.00	60 days	
7.	Box culvert at No 2 Arongon Revenue village (Sonujhar)	Rs. 10,43,566.00	Rs. 500.00	60 days	

Detail SNIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. In case the office remains closed on tender issuing/opening opening date the same will be issued/received/opened cm the next working day.

- Date of Issue of Bid Document: 25/07/2017
- Date of issue and submission of Bid Document: 28/07/2017 up to 2.00PM
- Date of opening of Bid : 28/07/2017 at 2.30 PM

STORIES & PROCUREMENT

NOTICE NO. 35/2017 Dated: 24-07-2017. (1) All tenders have been uploaded on Indian Railway-E-procurement portal (IR-Eprocurement) at <http://ir-eprocurement.gov.in>. For details & necessary guidelines for quoting against e-tender, Please visit IR-Eprocurement portal (<http://ir-eprocurement.gov.in>) and are due to be opened on 21-08-2017, 22-08-2017 and 28-08-2017. (2) The prospective tenders are advised to get them registered on website <http://ir-eprocurement.gov.in> for the same. Registration is mandatory for participation in e-tendering and is free of charge. (3) Please submit your quotation in the prescribed format. Description, PLN, No. Quantities, Tender no respectively Adjuster assembly lash, 16340144, 3560 LC gate signal by MACLS (3 nos) and LC gate panel by Domino Panel (1 nos) in Timeline Division, Tender Value: Rs. 1,11,690/- SL. No. 2, E-tender N-2017-18-TSK-T-14, Brief Description of Item: Replacement of worn out MLR, SFT, SFT-1, SFT-2, SFT-3, SFT-4, SFT-5, SFT-6, SFT-7, SFT-8, SFT-9, SFT-10, SFT-11, SFT-12, SFT-13, SFT-14, SFT-15, SFT-16, SFT-17, SFT-18, SFT-19, SFT-20, SFT-21, SFT-22, SFT-23, SFT-24, SFT-25, SFT-26, SFT-27, SFT-28, SFT-29, SFT-30, SFT-31, SFT-32, SFT-33, SFT-34, SFT-35, SFT-36, SFT-37, SFT-38, SFT-39, SFT-40, SFT-41, SFT-42, SFT-43, SFT-44, SFT-45, SFT-46, SFT-47, SFT-48, SFT-49, SFT-50, SFT-51, SFT-52, SFT-53, SFT-54, SFT-55, SFT-56, SFT-57, SFT-58, SFT-59, SFT-60, SFT-61, SFT-62, SFT-63, SFT-64, SFT-65, SFT-66, SFT-67, SFT-68, SFT-69, SFT-70, SFT-71, SFT-72, SFT-73, SFT-74, SFT-75, SFT-76, SFT-77, SFT-78, SFT-79, SFT-80, SFT-81, SFT-82, SFT-83, SFT-84, SFT-85, SFT-86, SFT-87, SFT-88, SFT-89, SFT-90, SFT-91, SFT-92, SFT-93, SFT-94, SFT-95, SFT-96, SFT-97, SFT-98, SFT-99, SFT-100, SFT-101, SFT-102, SFT-103, SFT-104, SFT-105, SFT-106, SFT-107, SFT-108, SFT-109, SFT-110, SFT-111, SFT-112, 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BED colleges asked to install CCTVs inside exam halls

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 24: For smooth conduct of BED examination for the session 2016-17 and onwards, all the government BED colleges, College of Teacher Education (CTEs) and NCTE-recognised, private BED colleges have been directed to install CCTVs in the examination halls.

The footage of the CCTVs may be submitted to the Directorate of SCERT Assam as and when required for submission to the authority in due course of time. This (order) has been issued with the approval of Minister of Education, Government of Assam.

Chir Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today admitted that the people are not happy with the progress of development works and the "work culture" of the officials,

People not happy with pace of development, admits CM



Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal addressing senior officials on Monday. – UB Photos

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 24:

Chir Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today admitted that the people are not happy with the progress of development works and the "work culture" of the officials,

even as he laid stress on expediting file movement to stimulate overall development of the State and speedy implementation of the government schemes.

"There are murmurs among the people that the progress of various works

has been slow. People are not happy with the work culture of the officials," Sonowal said, chairing a meeting of senior government officers at the conference hall of Janata Bhawan in the city today.

He said for speedy disposal of files, efforts have

to be taken at all levels of a department.

"All the government departments have to take the responsibility to restore people's trust in governance. To achieve the desired changes in real sense of the term, the government has to work resolutely," he said.

"The fruits of governance have to be delivered even in far-flung areas," he said.

Sonowal also said that the government officers have immense experience and this vast experience has to be translated into action. The senior officers have to be the role models for junior officers and other employees.

Sonowal also reiterated that the present State government is committed to making the State free from corruption, pollution, terrorism and illegal foreigners and for that everybody has to take responsibility.

He accused the Centre of not taking the issue seriously.

Gogoi said that India needs a "full-time" Defence Minister as the same person can not be expected to handle two critical portfolios like Defence and Finance.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has been holding the additional charge of Defence since Manohar Parrikar resigned and

Gogoi concerned at CAG report on Army readiness

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 24: Expressing concern over the latest report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) about the Indian Army facing critical shortage of ammunition, former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi today said that the issue is of great concern and called for having a full-time Defence Minister.

Addressing the media here, Gogoi said that the findings of the CAG are "shocking and very unfortunate" and said that in case of a war with China, Assam and the Assamese people will suffer a lot.

He accused the Centre of not taking the issue seriously.

Gogoi said that India needs a "full-time" Defence Minister as the same person can not be expected to handle two critical portfolios like Defence and Finance.

Regarding the election of Ram Nath Kovind as the President of India, Gogoi said that while he welcomes the election of a Dalit to the highest office of the country, the Modi government is only paying lip service with regard to measures for welfare of the weaker sections.

Gogoi said that allocations for Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes under various sub-plans have been drastically slashed by the Modi government and the number of welfare schemes for such communities have also been drastically reduced.

He said that while Modi celebrated the third anniversary of the NDA regime at the Centre by holding events in Assam, the Prime Minister has not found time to visit the State now, when large parts of Assam have been ravaged by flood.

He supported AASU's call for a White Paper from the Centre on measures to control flood and erosion in Assam.

Gogoi was also critical of the Sarbananda Sonowal government and alleged that during the present regime corruption in Assam has reached unprecedeted levels.

He said that while BJP came to power at Dispur talking about "parivartan", no developmental initiative has been taken by the government so far and even National Highways in the State as well as major roads in Guwahati have started to resemble ponds.

State to have training policy soon

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 24:

Eighteen officers of the Commissionerate of Industries and Commerce, Assam, underwent two days' residential training from July 23 to 24 at the Royal Global University (RGU) here.

The training programme on Leadership, Motivation, Communication Skill and Soft Skills' was organised by the Royal School of Business, RGU and it was sponsored by the State Department of Industries and Commerce.

Addressing the valedictory ceremony today, Commissioner of Industries and Commerce Dr KK Dwivedi expressed hope that the interactive and participatory training programme will benefit the officers in improving the morale and self-confidence of the officers to be ambassadors of industrial growth in the State.

Dr Dwivedi further stated that the government would soon frame a training policy for the state where officers can choose a week-long training programme on a subject of their preference through a

Catholics urged to help find solutions to burning issues

GUWAHATI, July 24: The Catholic Association of Guwahati, representing the members of different Catholic churches under the Diocese of Guwahati, in its special general body meeting held on Sunday at Peace Centre Ambari here, called upon the Catholic community at large to come out of its isolation and actively identify itself with the social issues being faced by the State and the country today.

The Association urged the Catholics to direct their efforts towards finding permanent solutions to issues like flood, erosion, foreigners problem, rural and urban unemployment, need for communal harmony and forging a strong national unity.

It called upon all Catholic institutions and organisations to come forward and extend support generously by way of providing relief and rehabilitation to the flood-hit families of Assam in this time of crisis.

New body formed

GUWAHATI, July 24: A special general meeting of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP)'s Guwahati city unit was held here yesterday. In the meeting, the Jamnastomi Utsav Ujapon Committee was formed. The meeting was presided over by Santi Kr Singh, the newly elected president of the VHP's Guwahati city unit, stated a press release issued here on Monday.

Additional directors of Industries and Commerce Manjula Saikia Bhuyan and PK Saikia, Chancellor of RGU AK Pansari and Pro-Chancellor AK Modi were also present at the valedictory programme.

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GUWAHATI,

MESSAGE FOR TODAY

To find a fault is easy; to do better is difficult.
— LOUIS NIZER

The Assam Tribune

Disturbing report

For the generation which had been through the 1962 India-China war, the recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the army and ordnance factories tabled in Parliament is particularly disturbing. This startling report states that the Indian Army is confronted with a critical shortage of ammunition, so much so that at the moment it does not have the capacity to engage in a full-scale war! The dearth is tellingly evident in the army's tank and artillery divisions and 121 out of the total 152 types of ammunition do not meet the minimum level required for a full-scale war. Astonishingly enough, this inadequacy had been pointed out by the CAG in its report two years back, but no one paid any heed to its warning and there has been no move to rectify the shortfall. The current report criticizes those responsible for keeping the army battle ready for not bringing about any improvement in the availability of War Wastage Reserve, which is ammunition required for 40 days of intense war. Out of 152 types of ammunition only a paltry 31 meet the 40 day requirement, while 121 types are still below the authorization level. Even in the case of Minimum Acceptable Risk Level, which measures ammunition for a 20 day war, most types of ammunition fall short of what is needed, yet this lacuna has not been rectified.

Of great concern is the information provided in the CAG report that majority of high calibre ammunition relating to Armoured Fighting Vehicles and artillery, crucial to provide sustained superior fire power during a 40-day war, is below the critical level. Similar is the situation with the fuse, which according to the CAG is "the brain of the artillery ammunition" – the report stated that 83% of high calibre ammunition for tanks and artillery were not in a state to be used because of the shortage of fuses. The report has lambasted the performance of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) which has failed to meet production targets, while procurement orders placed by the Army Headquarters as early as 2009 with agencies other than the OFB are still pending! One needs to place such shortcomings in the context of recent developments with our two hostile neighbours, China and Pakistan. At the moment the two armies of India and China are at eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation at the border in Doka La area in the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction. Simultaneously, relationships between India and Pakistan is at the lowest ebb, and possibilities of escalation of conflict relating to Kashmir cannot be ruled out. Thus it is highly disturbing to learn about the inadequacies in India's defence preparedness. Similar inadequacies had enabled the Chinese Army to overrun India's defences in 1962 – those responsible for equipping our army should learn a lesson from that debacle.

Crime by minors

In a disquieting development having ominous societal portents, the number of minors committing crimes has recorded an increasing trend in the State. As per official data, over 800 minors including 80 girls have come into conflict with the law in the past five years – a high incidence by any standard. Matters stand compounded by the abysmal juvenile justice system, with thousands of cases pending with the juvenile justice boards and child welfare committees across the State. The plummeting standards of juvenile justice dispensation are effectively creating a situation in which many child offenders are turning out to be hardened criminals for want of rehabilitation. Concerns continue to be raised by various quarters including the media and the Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights but the required interventions from the State Government are not forthcoming from the Government. A major factor behind the lopsided functioning of almost all the juvenile justice boards happens to be inadequate infrastructure and lack of public prosecutors. The situation is disturbing because it has caused a huge pendency of cases, resulting in many children spending their time in reform homes while awaiting justice. The condition of the reform homes is another big concern, as they lack the necessary ambience as well as amenities to serve the purpose of a reform home.

Shocking as it sounds, official data attributes as much as 25% of crimes in the country to juveniles. The malaise is deep-rooted and society as a whole has to wake up to the distressing development. In Assam also, we have had a number of serious crimes including murder and rape committed by juveniles in recent years. It will not escape any discerning observer how greed for money, drinking, and misuse of modern technology like the internet have triggered a spurt in juvenile crimes. At the same time, the developments are more symptomatic of a far deeper malaise that has set in our society and it would be a fallacy to look at the penchant for violence among children in isolation. We also have a large number of children in slum areas exposed to various forms of exploitation while at work. As they often come into contact with criminals, they tend to take to crimes sooner than later. Then, in a decadent society where gaining material prosperity has become the be-all and end-all and where moral values have been rendered obsolete, crimes by minors do not come as a big surprise. An overdose of crime, violence and sex is now a routine in not just the entertainment industry but the media itself. It is hardly surprising that our children – with their young minds constantly fed on the lure of the lure, violence and sex – should be trying to emulate those criminal and unethical acts. Unfortunately, proper guidance and discipline at home which could have had a negative impact on undisciplined behaviour and criminal tendencies among children is fast diminishing.

Revenue (mal)administration in Assam

■ Swapnanil Barua

Asman was swept away, a year ago, by the three words – *Jaatि, Mautि, Bheti*. Loosely translated, it would mean people, land and home. All three would relate to land and its administration, of which, people know very little and is taken for granted. Few Assomiyas know that all land in the State belongs to the Government, which is leased out to you for 99 years, if you are a *myati patadar* and for a year if you are an annual *patadar*. The difference between the annual and *myati patta* is that you cannot officially sell or transfer annual *patta* land. All other unleased land is government *khas* land. Any annual *patta* land purchased is illegal and the land can be reverted to the State. If you pay the lease amount regularly, your annual *patta* land can be converted into *myati patta* land, on payment of a premium. The *myati patta* gives you the right to sell your land, unlike the annual *patta*. A person may encroach government land (*khas* or unleased) and pay a fine, called *touz bhabra khazana*, which does not give him any rights and he may be evicted. Besides these there are lands called VGR and PGR lands, which are reserved for grazing of cattle in villages (VGR) and pastures (PGR). Tea garden lands were leased on initially for 99 years called Special Cultivation Grants, like the Chaloonsi Grant in Noolmati, Guwahati.

In addition to this, there are the different forest lands from unclassified forests to national parks. All these records are kept in a map of my assigned area (*laat*) by the *Mandal*, also recorded in a field index called a *chittha*. The *chittha* also contains the annual lease rent is collected by a commission agent called the *Manadar*, who keeps a copy of the records of rights called the *jambandhi*. This document is a glossary of all matters related to the landholder and his land. In the event of the failure of the *patadar* to pay the rent, the land was auctioned and transferred to the name of the pur-

chaser. It was this facility used by the influential people to gain hold of lands, especially of tribal and innocent villagers, who were content to continue tilling the land and share the produce, with the new owners. Vast tracts of lands in the vicinity of British Guwahati were captured by such dups in collaboration with the revenue staff, who kept some land for themselves too. The other method of land aggrandizement was to get allotment of government

Revenue authorities allowed land in tribal belts to be sold to non-tribals officially and later allowed mutation with legal ownership of those purchasers. The entire greater Guwahati is a good example of such criminal connivance and negligence to enforce laws.

lands in the guise of tea cultivation, plant a small section and keep the rest fallow. A case in point, all lands of greater Guwahati belonged to six or seven families, particularly in the Beliha Mouza. It was this cheating of tribal people and capturing of lands by immigrants since 1900 prompted Gopinath Bordoloi to create tribal belts and blocks. The *Sattras* and religious institutions enjoyed revenue free (*Lo-kherga*) and half revenue (*nisf-kherga*) lands.

Revenue maladministration started with the British including the tribal villages inside/near forests into reserved forests, making them encroachers overnight and in

perpetual conflict with the state. Then the authorities allowed the *Sattras* to sublease their lands. So long as the sublease holders were disciples of the *Satra*, the institution had a control over the lands. Over the years the sublessees further subleased the lands to non-disciples, leading to the *Sattras* losing control and even possession of their lands. Now the *Sattras* raise a big hue and cry over the lost lands and expect the Government to fix it

from the occupants. However, no *Satra* has any plan how they will utilize the land and keep it under their possession, once restored. On the other hand, the Government cannot legally evict occupants of *Satra* land, as it is private land of the *Satra*, over the use of which only the *Satra* has control, not the Government. Once subleased, the *Satra* lands should have reverted to the Government, which would have made eviction easier.

Revenue authorities allowed land in the tribal belts to be sold to non-tribals officially and later allowed mutation with legal ownership of those purchasers. The entire greater Guwahati is a good example of such criminal connivance and negligence to enforce laws. Tribal belts today mostly exist only in name as non-tribals form a majority in those areas. When it comes to actual tilling of the land, it is mostly the migrant labourers who do the job. They enter as labourer, then buy the subleases and later buy out the tribal owners, who prefer the comfort of ready cash and leisure, till the money lasts. Once

the money is spent, these people move out to encroach upon forest lands, completing the cycle from being landholders to landless. Revenue authorities have failed doubly, in preventing entry of non-tribals into tribal blocks and later giving them legal rights, fulging official records and procedures.

The 50s saw socialist ideas ruling the roost. Ceilings on land holdings came to give land rights to the actual cultivators. As minimal or no compensation would be paid for the land acquired, landholders, rather than getting nothing, sold their lands to people who had the money to buy, who were mostly non-Assamese traders. Lands which should have become ceiling *sarkari*, became *patta* land. Whatever ceiling surplus *sarkari* land was available was surreptitiously taken allotment in the name of opening schools, housing colonies for LIGs, opening warehouses, NGOs, small tea gardens, cooperative societies, hospitals, etc. None of the activity for which the land was taken was actually put to use for that purpose, but later sold at premium market prices, which was way beyond what the Government got as the allotment premium. All this happened in the 70s and is still continuing today, spearheaded by political leaders, business-men and bureaucrats.

Unremunerative agriculture forcing farmers to sell their lands, where speculators are entering the fray. The law is being bent with convenience of the revenue officials.

To save the situation, the Government has to begin by putting a stop to the malpractices and then begin the tough job of undoing the damage done. It's a Herculean task ahead which will require men of mettle.

Cattle slaughter ban: cruelty vs federalism

■ Abhijit Borah

Recently, the Ministry of Environment and Forests have come up with regulations that ban the sale of cattle for slaughter. The central regulation for cattle protection has been notified at the backdrop of rising cases of violence against the cow traders by Hindu vigilante groups. The rules have been notified under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

With the advent of the new rules, such as an extraordinary act of the Government is being flooded with criticisms. While some have cited it as an attack on federalism, yet there are pressure groups for which the new regulations seem to be appealing. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressed his strong dissent against the decision of the Centre. He opined that such restrictions go against the principle of secularism and federalism as enshrined in the Constitution. It amounts to the intrusion into the right of the States in the federal structure of the nation.

Undoubtedly, the introduction of such restrictions in a hasty manner would prove to be a challenge in upholding the plurality of the nation. It

is believed that the new rules will affect the minorities of the nation, particularly the Muslims. In Kerala, West Bengal and several other States, a vast majority of people consume beef. So, these States should have been consulted before making such regulations.

Apart from the criticism of breaching the cardinal principle of federalism, it's also believed to be against the fundamental right of the citizens as the right to food is a fundamental right. The right to choose of food is a part of fundamental liberty, conscience and privacy. The new regulations are expected to have direct impact on the marginalized community of the nation. The rules will hurt millions of farmers and squeeze supplies to the country's meat industry. This will compel the country's Rs 1 lakh crore meat and allied industries that source about 90% of their requirements from animal markets. It has introduced a lot of paper works for cattle traders who are predominantly illiterate and poor. As per the new regulations, a trader has to submit five copies of proof of sale – one each to the local revenue office, the local veterinary doctor in the district of

the purchaser, animal market committee, apart from one each for buyer and seller. There's a concern that the new rules will introduce the 'inspector raj' as it mandates the veterinary inspector to certify proper loading and unloading of animals.

The Environment Ministry insisted that the new rules had nothing to do with what Indians eat. The prime focus of the regulation is to protect the animals from cruelty and not to regulate the existing trade in cattle for slaughter houses. As mentioned, the rules come under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960. And indeed, many of the provisions do actually have direct bearing on animal cruelty. Rule 22, however, is different. While the title of every other rule refers to all animals, this one is titled 'restrictions on sale of cattle' – not animal, just cattle. If the concern is the welfare of animals, then why has this section singled out only cattle?

Rule 22, among other things, requires both the seller and purchaser to provide an undertaking that they aren't trading the animal for slaughter. This is the most controversial portion of the rules, one that has been singled out as effectively a backdoor ban on cattle slaughter. But why does slaughter make its

way into the provision?

Is slaughter cruel? Individuals might have different opinions, but the Government is clear on its stand. Indeed, the official position of slaughter – specifically killing animals for food – is established in the very Act. As per Section 11, killing an animal for food can't be considered cruelty unless those actions involve unnecessary suffering. Surprisingly, Rule 22 doesn't point out any such unnecessary suffering. It simply bars the sale of all cattle meant for slaughter in open market.

So, which part involves cruelty? It can't be the slaughter itself, since the law expressly establishes that killing of animals for food is, per se, not cruelty. Is it the Government claim that simply taking cattle to an open market for sale constitutes 'unnecessary suffering'? If that were the case, the rules should be banning these markets and preventing animals from being brought for any purpose, whether agricultural or for slaughter. Instead, the rules actually lay the groundwork to legalize, modify and regulate animal market. So, where's the cruelty?

Clearly, the new rules aren't free from flaws as it selectively picks on cattle, instead of covering all animals. The new rules don't impose an outright ban on cattle slaughter, and licence breeding still remains legal. Regulating cattle trade is a State subject but animal welfare is overseen by the Centre. So the Environment Ministry notified the rules under the animal welfare law but gave district administrations the power to enforce them – watered down the strong criticism of attack on federalism. Many foreign industries, including major fashion labels, buy leather worth billions of dollars from India every year to make high-end shoes, handbags and jackets. The new regulations will choke off India's supply of beef and leather to the foreign groups and prohibit the growth of the foreign industries.

Is the ban on cattle slaughter an attack on federalism? Does it amount to cruelty to animals? Does it violate the right of the citizens to their food choice? While the admissibility of the Centre is still debatable, what is clear is that the economic impact of this cattle slaughter ban would perhaps be catastrophic.

Letters to the EDITOR

Time zone and daylight saving time for NE

Bangladesh, India would have saved huge units of electricity by shifting the IST meridian eastward from 82.5°E longitude to 90°E. Daylight saving time constraints often hamper international events in our region. Does Bangladesh offer quality manpower because of UTC 06:00? Gujarat pushed back working hours by an hour. Even banks follow state guidelines. Rajasthan went ahead with half an hour. British knew it and used it for tea plantations, where 'begon' time started one hour ahead to make the most of the daylight. The delay over availability and usability of daylight has resulted in loss of workable hours.

Advancing the clock or adjusting back by an hour is not a new thing for the world. The NE must reset the clock an hour or two ahead of the IST. Even a five-day week will work wonders, from productivity to saving electricity. The Railways and Defence have their own working hours as per region. The US follows nine time zones. India stretches 3,000 km from east to west and makes sense for separate time zones. China follows one 'Beijing time' to enhance national unity. The UK is not on GMT throughout the year; it uses British Summer Time (BST) one hour ahead of GMT, and the Arab clock begins at sunset. Hope New Delhi will give a serious thought to examine the merits of having separate time zones to save precious DST for the North-east as well as the western region. Yours etc., KAMAL BARUAH, Rukminginagar, Guwahati.

MBBS admission

Sir – Through your esteemed daily, I would like to make the authorities aware about the tough rules for admission into the MBBS course of 2017 under the Assam State quota. Although I was not surprised when I was rejected at the MBBS counselling, I was extremely disappointed. My father was a State Government employee of another State; so I had to take my education outside Assam. I came to know that if one takes education in Assam, then only he/she is eligible for the State MBBS seats. I fully understand that the rule is for betterment of Assamese society. However, since I am Assamese by birth, I couldn't avail the MBBS seat in Arunachal Pradesh (the State where I got my education). In this context, in either of the way (because of Assam State rule and Arunachal education), I would be a loser. Such a rule would be detrimental for a student's career. Moreover, the rule has been implemented from July 2017 with retrospective effect. Many bright students have been deprived of a medical seat in Assam in State quota merely because he/she did not study in Assam despite having a permanent residence certificate. Further, our Constitution provides me the right to education and to lead a dignified life including livelihood under Article 21. If I would be deprived from getting a medical seat despite holding a good rank just because I have completed my education in Arunachal Pradesh, it would be a violation of my fundamental right too. Thus, the State Government should think over the decision once again for the larger benefit of the students who hopped from Assam but studied outside the State. Yours etc., PROGYN BORTHAURUK, Niharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh.

Summer vacation

Sir – That the month-long summer vacation of the school students of the State is about to be over in a week or so, the students will have to be busy in studies. They have to be tirelessly busy for six

months with loads of exams from time to time and become physically and mentally fatigued during this hectic period. Summer vacation is something that may bring some kind of recreation and refreshments to the students. They can recharge their minds and bodies during the vacation. Study loads become a bit lesser and they can find themselves involved in other co-curricular activities like singing, dancing, painting, literature, etc. Nowadays various summer camps are organized with workshops and coaching on music, dance, literature, fine art, drama, sports, etc., where the children get an opportunity to practise their hobbies. Moreover, during the vacation, they may offer a helping hand to their parents in the work in the agricultural field and other household works. This leads them to become socially-attached and environment-friendly persons in future. Summer vacation plays an important role in the all-round development of a student. Yours etc., KALYAN RABHA, Bhergaon, Udalguri.

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

Safe drinking water a myth

PRAKRITI KR CHAKROBORTY

Safe drinking water is the most important thing for all human beings. Availability of pure drinking water is an indicator to ascertain the level of human health risk in the area they are living in.

At present, in Guwahati city, 10 piped water supply systems of various capacities are being operated and maintained by different organisations. Each of these piped water supply systems has its own treatment unit for purifying water tapped from the Brahmaputra. Four piped water supply systems, owned and managed by Railways, Guwahati Refinery and Defence agencies, have been providing water to their own establishments and employees.

The other six piped water supply systems - three owned and managed by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation, two by the Public Health Engineering and one by the Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water and Sewerage Board - are providing drinking water to about 30 per cent citizens of the city. However, the consumers have been facing inconvenience in their day-to-day life due to extremely unsatisfactory service provided through these piped water supply systems.

It's a basic consumer rights to know how safe his or her drinking water is from health point of view. In the USA, in compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under



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the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) Rule, every year by July 1, each of the water supply providers has to publish 'Annual Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report' furnishing information related to water quality they are providing to the consumers and other relevant information like performance, etc.

Detection of arsenic more than 0.1mg/litre (acceptable limit is 0.01mg/litre) and lead to the extent of 0.3mg/litre (acceptable limit is 0.5mg/litre) in treated water of all the six piped water supply systems by a study conducted by experts of the Assam Engineering College (AEC) in mid-March, 2017, exposed how badly the safety of drinking water is being compromised, putting

consumers to serious health risks. Consumption of drinking water having arsenic beyond permissible limit may result acute health problems like nausea, vomiting, neurological problem, etc. Long-term exposure to arsenic may cause skin lesion, risk of skin, bladder, lung cancer etc. Lead beyond the permissible limit in drinking water is a serious health threat to children. Effect of lead poisoning can stunt children growth and damage their nervous system.

Purpose of a water treatment plant is to treat raw water to make it safe for drinking. Various parameters of raw water quality can broadly be classified under physical, chemical and bacteriological categories. In the existing

water treatment plants for six piped water supply systems, provisions of treating arsenic and lead are not being maintained because it's not technically feasible. So, arsenic and lead content of raw water tapped from the Brahmaputra cannot be removed.

However, to ensure safe drinking water to entire population of Guwahati, at present work for installation of three mega piped water supply systems assisted by the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is going on.

JNNURM-assisted piped water supply system is proposed to be set up near Panu Ghat and other two piped water supply systems are proposed to be set up at Khariguli near Uzanbazar Ghat. Raw water sources for the three piped water supply systems will be the Brahmaputra river. However, no provision for treating toxic element like arsenic and lead is being kept in the proposed water treatment plants under these schemes.

A Water Quality Index is a means by which water quality data is summarised for reporting to the public in a consistent manner. It tells us, in simple terms, what the quality of drinking water is from a drinking water supply.

To assess suitability as a source of raw water, the experts from the Assam Engineering College extracted samples in March at different spots

along the 11-km-stretch from Uzanbazar Ghat to Pandu Ghat of the Brahmaputra.

The Water Quality Index found out by the experts indicated that the raw water of the Brahmaputra is not suitable as a source of raw water.

I have been trying to bring this issue to the notice of the Assam Pollution Control Board, the Public Health Engineering, the Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water and Sewerage Board and other organisations and individuals concerned, but in vain.

Guidelines for drinking water quality produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO) have been globally used and accepted as guide for consistently ensuring safe water for human consumption. The guidelines strongly recommend for preventing contact of water from the catchment of the source to the point of consumption. The Uniform Drinking Water Quality Monitoring Protocol circulated by the Government of India also emphasised the need of adopting Water Safety Plan (WSP) in Indian context.

In spite of specific guidance and directives, none of the organisations currently responsible for managing water supplies within Guwahati city - has adopted Water Safety Plan. But the irony is that the Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water and Sewerage Board in its website indicated that it works to provide continuous and uninterrupted hygienic piped drinking water.

Film on witch hunting set for Oct 6 release
STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 24: The official trailer of the first full-length Assamese feature film on witch hunting problem *Lei Maatle* was launched today. The movie is scheduled for release on October 6 in all major cinemas across Assam and the North East.

At a function held here today, the trailer was released by veteran film and theatre personality Anil Das, actor and director of Centre for Inclusive Development in Tezpur University Dr Rajeev Doley, actor Sansas Samir and the director of the movie Dr Stanish Lahkar.

Releasing the trailer, Dr Lahkar said: "It gives me utmost pleasure to launch the trailer for the movie buffs. We had launched the teaser of the film in March and the response was quite encouraging."

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Guwahati-78109, Assam
Quotations are invited for supply & installation of
1. I.C ENGINE TEST SETUP
2. FUEL GAS ANALYZER
For details please visit www.iitg.assam.ac.in/home/tester19
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Anniversary of Income Tax Dept celebrated

GUWAHATI, July 24: The office of the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, North Eastern Region, Guwahati celebrated the anniversary of the income tax department today.

The programme started with a walkathon from the old Ayakar Bhawan, Uzanbazar to the Ayakar Bhawan on GS Road, where a large number of officials and other stakeholders participated.

The departmental flag was hoisted on the Ayakar Bhawan premises by LC Joshi Ranee, Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, NER.

On the occasion, a cultural programme was also distributed in the multipurpose hall of Ayakar Bhawan where the inaugural address was given by Joshi Ranee. In his speech he spoke about the historical perspective of the day and vision and mission of the department.

Joshi Ranee also informed the gathering that the NE

region has registered a healthy growth rate in direct tax collection at par with the other parts of the nation.

A cultural programme was presented on the occasion by the Song and Drama Division of the Govt of India. The programme was also attended by representatives of the Tax Bar Association, ICAL as well as service organisations and pensioners' associations.

On the occasion the three top individual tax payers of the NE region were felicitated. They were Anjana Bora (Brahmaputra Television Network), Bhagya Kalita and Prakash Mittal.

Prizes were also distributed to the winner of a drawing competition among the school children conducted by the department. The theme of the competition was, 'Income tax in Nation Building'. The oldest retired person of the department Anjali Dutta Choudhury was also felicitated.

Gaurav Gogoi later told this newspaper that they were demanding a discussion on lynching when the Speaker suspended six of the Congress MPs. "One principle we will raise the demand tomorrow as well. This is a serious issue and we will continue to raise the matter," he said.

Later in a statement, Gogoi said, "I along with few of my colleagues were approached from the Lok Sabha for raising our voice against lynching and demanding an answer from the Government. It is wrong to raise our voice against lynching and hate mobs, for demanding justice for victims and punishment for the guilty?" The BJP is on the side of the vigilantes, he added.

Sushmita Dev said that they have taken a serious view of the BJP MP Anurag Thakur taking video of the proceedings using his cell phone. The Congress Parliamentary Party later formally wrote to the Speaker demanding action against Thakur as his act "according to the rule is forbidden."

Will safeguard ...

(Contd from page 1)
unrealistic illusions," he said ahead of the 90th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Commenting on the over a month-long military stand-off between the troops of the two countries at Doklam area in the Sikkim section, Wu urged India to "correct its mistake".

Stating that the PLA has taken emergency measures in the region and continues to increase focused deployments and drills, he said, "We strongly urge India to take practical steps to correct its mistake, cease provocations, and meet China halfway in jointly safeguarding the border region's peace and tranquillity."

His comments came as NSA Ajit Doval is set to travel to Beijing this week to attend the BRICS NSAs meeting scheduled to be held from July 27-28 during which he is expected to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi. Both Doval and Yang are Special Representatives of the two countries in the boundary talks. — PTI

HS topper felicitated

GUWAHATI, July 24: Rabajabu Saikia, topper in the higher secondary science stream of 75 at a get-together of its members held in the city today. He was also given a token gift. The members congratulated him on being selected for admission to BITS Pilani.

'School safety' prog

JALUKBARI, July 24: The 1st Battalion National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) today conducted a 'school safety' programme at Arya Vidyalaya College here in which 552 individuals, including 528 NCC cadets and 24 NCC instructors were benefited.

During the programme the 1st BN NDRF gave a presentation on school safety, disaster in general, drop cover and holding method during earthquake, demo on basic life support, bleeding control, emergency moves, improvised rescue aids and school evacuation drill.

1st BN NDRF has been providing disaster response in the NE states and also helping in capacity building by training to state police and SDRF personnel, NCC cadets, school children etc. Its mock exercise on school safety proves very helpful for students and staff of schools to prepare for disaster situations. — Correspondent



Representatives of Sri Sri, a forum of working journalists of Gauhati, handing over a cheque of Rs 25,000 to Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal as contribution towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, in Guwahati on Monday. — UB Photos

NH repair ...

(Contd from page 1)

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar first tried to pacify the opposition leaders, saying the government "could discuss the issue in the coming days" if the business advisory committee decides. But the protesters didn't relent, prompting Kumar to ask the Speaker to take strong action.

Gaurav Gogoi later told this newspaper that they were demanding a discussion on lynching when the Speaker suspended six of the Congress MPs. "One principle we will raise the demand tomorrow as well. This is a serious issue and we will continue to raise the matter," he said.

Later in a statement, Gogoi said, "I along with few of my colleagues were approached from the Lok Sabha for raising our voice against lynching and demanding an answer from the Government. It is wrong to raise our voice against lynching and hate mobs, for demanding justice for victims and punishment for the guilty?" The BJP is on the side of the vigilantes, he added.

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Indian forces ...

(Contd from page 1)

forces have undergone tremendous changes since then. He expressed the view that even in 1962, the Indian Air Force was not properly utilized. But over the years, the Air Force has undergone "phenomenal changes" and the force can now be compared with the best in the world. He pointed out that in recent times, a number of advanced landing grounds were constructed near the international border with China, while, Su-khoi bases have been set up in Tezpur and Chara to deal with any threat to the nation. However, at the same time, he pointed out that despite some face-offs, no bullet was fired along the border with China since the 1962 war and it is unlikely that both the countries would go for a war now.

Sela tunnels ...

(Contd from page 1)

Assam and Kalakatang in Arunachal Pradesh. "Due to construction of tunnels across Sela pass the road length reduces by approximately 6.50 km in addition obviates high altitude, steep gradient and hair pin bends on either side of Sela pass which would bring relief to commuters as lot of hardships have to be faced in winter season due to snowfall at on Sela pass," the release said. "Sela tunnel will add to the tourist potential of Tawang and attract more tourists making Tawang a more popular destination in North East region," it added. — PTI

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ADVT. NO.: NLJUAAENG/FICATERING/2017-18 Date: 24-07-2017

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National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam (NLJUJA) invites the sealed bids through open EOQ under the two-bid system from reputed firms/agencies who have successfully provided Catering Services in any Government Institution/ Academic Institution / PSU or any other reputed organization with at least twoyears experience for providing Catering Services from breakfast to dinner.

Sealed envelope contains the tender paper must be addressed to the 'Registrar, National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam.

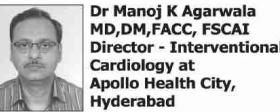
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SECOND AND FINAL COUNSELLING AND ADMISSION NOTICE OF THE FOUR YEAR B. TECH. PROGRAMMES

ACADEMIC SESSION: 2017-2018

CEE-2017 and JEE(Mains) 2017 qualified applicants are invited for the Second and Final Counselling and Admission into the Four Year B. Tech. Programmes conducted by the Dibrugarh University Institute of Engineering and Technology (DUINET) as per the following details:

* Date: 28.07.2017 * Time: from 10.00 a.m. onwards

* Venue: DUINET Core Building, Dibrugarh University

* Cut-off Marks

Category	CEE-2017	JEE (Mains)-2017
General	30 and above	All Applicants
OB/SC/OC	25 and above	
ST(P), SC and ST(H)	All Applicants	

* Important: Please bring a print copy of the online application along with a set of self-attested copies of all relevant documents.

* All original documents for producing before the Admission Committee.

* The Admission Fee, Course Fee, etc. to be deposited through online payment mode by using Debit Card/ Credit Card/ Net banking only.

* For details, please visit the detailed Notice for Second and Final Counselling and Admission to the Four Year B.Tech. Programmes given in the website: www.dibrug.ac.in.

Sd/-Deputy Registrar (Academic), D.U.

DIBRUGARH UNIVERSITY DIBRUGARH-786004

ADMISSION NOTICE
Masters Programme in Communication for Sanitation, Hygiene and Health
(A Multi-Disciplinary Masters Programme in collaboration with the UNICEF)
Session 2017-2018

Online applications are invited for admission into the Masters Programme in Communication for Sanitation, Hygiene & Health for the Academic Session 2017-2018 to be conducted at the Centre for Studies in Journalism and Mass Communication, Dibrugarh University.

Eligibility: Graduates in any discipline with at least 45% of marks in Major or in aggregate.

Method of Selection: Through Entrance Test and GD-PI.

Important dates:

Last date for submission of online Application:05.08.2017

Date of Entrance Test & GD-P1 :12.08.2017

Declaration of Result of Entrance Test :14.08.2017

Date of Admission :17.08.2017

For Online Application Procedure and other relevant details, please visit the Admission Notice given in the website: www.dibrug.ac.in.

Sd/- Deputy Registrar (Academic), D.U.

BK Handique Wildlife Award to Udalguri activist CORRESPONDENT

KALAIAGAON, July 24: Wildlife activist Rajen Boro of Bhutachang in Udalguri district has been selected for the 1st Bijoy Krishna Handique Memorial Award for leadership in wildlife conservation instituted by the Development Foundation of Assam (DFA).

The objective of the award is to honour the unsung heroes from different parts of NE region who have selflessly contributed towards carrying out our wildlife conservation activities. The selection panel constituted by DFA decided to confer the award to Rajen Boro in view of his significant role in mitigating man-elephant conflict through community mobilisation, collaboration with local youth, administration in various parts of Udalguri district, particularly in Bhutachang area under the programme 'Elephants on the Line' during 2014-16.

It may be mentioned here that Udalguri district has been vulnerable to man-elephant conflict resulting in the loss of 88 people and 40 wild elephants during last seven years, which is among the highest in Asia for a single district. The award carries a trophy, citation and a cash award of Rs one lakh. It will be presented at a ceremony at ITA, Makhinchuk, Guwahati on July 30, commemorating the second death anniversary of former Union Minister BK Handique.

People of Udalguri have expressed satisfaction at the selection of Rajen Boro of the district for wildlife conservation.

One killed in mishap CORRESPONDENT

DOOMDOOMA, July 24: One Durgamoni Tanti (27), a resident of Line No. 12 of Hukonguri Tea Estate was killed in a mishap that occurred at Borhapani under Doomdooma PS on Sunday evening.

According to eyewitness sources, Durgamoni was coming towards Borhapani from her residence for marketing on her bicycle when her bicycle was hit by a truck (AS 23 B-2546). She was seriously injured in the mishap and was taken to Tinsukia. But, on the way she succumbed to her injuries. Later, police from Maikupi PS seized the truck.

Brisk preparations on to celebrate I-Day at Golakganj CORRESPONDENT

GAURIPUR, July 24: Brisk preparations are afoot to celebrate the Independence Day with various programmes at Golakganj.

For the purpose, a general meeting was organised on July 20 last at the meeting hall of the Golakganj Development Block. The meeting was chaired by Chayanan Thakuria, newly-appointed Circle Officer, Golakganj. The objectives of the meeting were explained by Ray Head Assistant of the Office of the Circle Officer, Golakganj. A large number of senior citizens, headmasters, officers of different offices, i/c, Golakganj, PS, principal, Chilari College attended the meeting.

After detailed discussion in the meeting, it was decided to celebrate the Independence Day with a two-day long programme. The Circle Officer will hoist the National Flag and the *smriti tarpan* will be performed by Sabita Rani Pradhan, veteran social worker of the locality. Besides cultural programmes, various sports items and felicitation of the toppers of HSLC and HSSLC under the circle will also be held.

For the successful observance of the Independence Day, a number of sub-committees were also formed in the meeting.

Proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill opposed

CORRESPONDENT

MORAIGAON, July 24: The Indian Society for Cultural Co-operation & Friendship (ISCUF) has vehemently opposed the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill which is slated to be tabled in the current session of Parliament.

The Assam State unit of ISCUF organised a citizens' convention at Morigon Ganighi Bhavan on July 23 where two intellectuals from Guwahati addressed the gathering. The open session of the convention was presided over by Dr Rabin Hazarika, senior citizen, Morigon town. Explaining the purpose of the convention, Dr Dibendra Mananta, secretary, Assam unit of ISCUF said that the BJP Government is planning to enact the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill with an aim to settle the Hindu Bangla-

deshis in India whereby Assam will face an unprecedented situation. The completely sectarian Bill must be opposed by the people of Assam to save the Assamese nationality, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, noted journalist, Baikuntha Nath Goswami said that BJP's hidden agenda for a Hindu Rashtra was exposed as the party in power is planning to introduce the law amending the Citizenship Act which will lead the Assamese nation to an unprecedented situation.

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, noted journalist Haider Hussain said that it is a great tragedy that Assam and the Assamese nationality has reached this critical juncture as the capitalist BJP is going to fulfil its political agenda while all the regional forces have remained mute spectators.

Hussain questioned why organisations like

the Assam Sahitya Sabha have remained silent over the issue at a time the greater Assamese nationality is facing a serious challenge through the amendment of the Citizenship Act.

Speaking on the occasion, Narendra Nath Keot, retired principal, Morigon College, questioned as to why Sarbananda Sonowal Government has maintained a stoic silence over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill at a time when Mamata Banerjee of West Bengal and Manik Sarkar of Tripura have clearly said that they will not take any burden of Bangladeshis as a result of the proposed Bill.

Addressing the gathering, Aminul Islam, retired professor of Nagon College said that to create a situation of perennial communal tension in Assam and to gain electoral strength through religious polarisation, the BJP

has planned to amend the Citizenship Act in the Parliament.

Training camp: Recognition of prior learning and training for business correspondence and business facilitation under Prime Minister Kushal Vikash Yojana (PMKVY), the Dhrishree Skill Development Centre organised a three-day training camp at Morigon from July 21 to 23.

The objective of this skill development skill certification scheme is to enable a large number of youths to take up industry relevant skill training which will help them in securing a better livelihood.

On July 21, the training camp was inaugurated by Dipa Das, District Development Commissioner, Morigon in presence of Dhrishree co-founder Sailesh Thakur, Dhrishree NE operation head Paragdar Konwar and Shikha Chenglari.

In her inaugural speech, Dipa Das said that this programme will help the beneficiaries to develop their skill and quality. Sailesh Thakur said that under RPL-PMKVY beneficiaries are pre-screened, counselled with orientation programme and assessed in accordance with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) norms.

Paragdar Konwar said that this training course will cover introduction to financial inclusion and banking, banking products and customers, KYC and application transaction and tools, risk management and regulatory aspects.

Rehati Das, branch manager, Dhrishree, Morigon division said that the Morigon centre has conducted RPL under PMKVY for 30 beneficiaries in various job roles across Morigon. Training and assessment fees are completely provided by the Government of India, he added.

Students urged to develop nation through education

ANIN Service

BAIHATA CHARILLI, July 24: "Education is a sharp weapon against social evils like superstition, narrow mindedness etc., and to reform the society in a disciplined manner for peace and progress of the nation, education is a must. Without proper knowledge and education in social science, history and application of science and technology etc., no nation can move towards development. Of course, for the uplift of the nation, a culture of hard work is also essential," said Satyabrata Kalita, MLA of Kamalpur LAC in the open meeting of felicitation of meritorious students held at 66 No. B-Radakuchi LP School organised under the aegis of Adarsha

Abhilasha', an NGO of the locality on Sunday.

Participating in the meeting held under the chairmanship of Bhupen Bhagawati, ex-president of Baihata Chariali Press Club, during his speech, Deka called upon the students to respect their parents as their immense sacrifice, contribution and hard labour are the main catalytic factors behind their success and to be kind to them during their old age.

Participating in the occasion as guests, Dr Nripendra Nath Talukdar, head of the Department of Chemistry, Pub-Kamrup College, Chakra Dhar Nath, president of Modelart Sadori Sahitya Sabha, Hemela Das, a yoga teacher of the locality, in their speeches, encouraged the students to work for excellent results in the future and engaged themselves in the welfare of people.

Earlier, the *banti prajatan* was performed by Gautam Kumar Deka, senior member of Baihata Chariali Press Club.

During his speech, Deka called upon the students to respect their parents as their immense sacrifice, contribution and hard labour are the main catalytic factors behind their success and to be kind to them during their old age.

The programme of the day began with the hoisting of the flag of the NGO and 'smriti tarpan' by the senior members of the NGO. Nalini Kumar Deka, retired headmaster of Nana Girls' High School inaugurated the tree plantation programme.

In the meeting, a total of 35 meritorious students were felicitated with *phulam gamusa* and a citation each by the NGO.

Karengor Ligiri staged

CORRESPONDENT

DOOMDOOMA, July 24: At the initiative of Bhadrakanta Baruah, the headmaster of Borhapani ME School, Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla's immortal creation *Karengor Ligiri* was staged at Borhapani ME School recently.

The play was staged with new thought and technique and was planned and directed by Debajit Sharma.

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Call to probe Karbi Anglong fiscal scams

GUWAHATI, July 24: Voluntary organisation Assam Public Works (APW) today urged Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to institute effective inquiries into the various Karbi Anglong financial scams and thus to initiate steps for bringing the culprits involved in those cases to book.

The voluntary organisation said in a statement here that the Chief Minister had announced recently that steps would be taken to institute probe into the financial scams of Karbi Anglong. But of late, the Chief Minister approved the appointment of Tuliram Ronghang, who is supposed to

be the kingpin of all those scams, as the Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), going against his above announcement.

The voluntary organisation has alleged that a scam involving an amount of around Rs 700 crore meant for irrigation was also there in Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council during the previous tenure of Ronghang as the CEM of the KAAC. The amount was meant for the execution of two minor irrigation schemes – Dilangki and Langsoiit irrigation schemes – in the hills district. – Staff Reporter

Death of TE workers, former labourers

Govt denies existence of law to compensate dependants

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, July 24: Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Bandaru Datatreya denied existence of any law to pay sufficient compensation to dependants of labourers of tea garden in case of death of tea or ex-tea garden workers.

However, the Plantation Board Act, 1951 mandates the tea estates to provide basic welfare services and amenities, including housing, medi-

cal and primary education, water supply, sanitation to the tea workers.

Moreover, the workers of the tea industry are covered by all social security legislations like the Employees' Compensation Act, 1923, the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, the Maternity Benefit Act 1961, the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Equal Remu-

neration Act, 1976, the Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund, Pension Fund and Deposit-Linked Insurance Fund Scheme Act, 1955 – only for Assam.

Besides, the Government implements through the Tea Board various welfare activities for tea plantation workers and their dependents in tea estates. The welfare activities undertaken by the Tea Board under the Human Resource Development (HRD) Scheme aims at improving the health

and hygiene of workers, education of wards of workers and imparting training to improve skills of the growers/workers.

No. MAC/No.MAC/26(ACP/706/2016-17 Dtd. 09-06-2017 is hereby cancelled due to technical fault in BOD and a fresh Bid is invited on behalf of the Governor of Assam with Bid Price Rs. 1,19,94,591.00 for the construction of proposed 'Kamakhya Temple Complex under CSR initiative of Oil India Limited' from registered PWDs and MAC Contractor/ Firm/ Pvt. Ltd. Co. Class I (A & C). Details of the bids and Detail Notice Inviting Bid may be seen in the Mising Autonomous Council portal at assamtenders.gov.in

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This information will be registered with the E-tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam. (website: assamtenders.gov.in) All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Document.

Sd/- Principal Secretary,
Mising Autonomous Council,
Gognakhi, Dhemaji, Assam.

Dtd. 21/7/2017

No. CE/DEV/OIL-CSR/45/2017-189

TIME EXTENSION FOR TENDER
In continuation to the press notice issued vide letter No. CE/DEV/OIL-CSR/45/2017-185 dated Guwahati the 21st June/2017, the last date and time of submission of Bids are hereby extended up to 16.00 hrs. of 05.08.2017 for the following work:-

"Development works at Kamakhya Temple Complex under SWATCH BHARAT ABHIYAN under CSR initiative of Oil India Limited" from approved & eligible Contractors amounting to Rs. 42,18,480 Lakhs (Rupees Forty Two Crore One Hundred Eighty Four Lakhs only). Details may be obtained at website www.assamtenders.gov.in. Amendment / Addendum to the bid, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website an also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Sd/- Chief Engineer PWD (Roads),
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3
Janasanyog/916/7

No. 2017/AMC/2699

NOTICE
The tender notice inviting Expression of Interest for Empenagement of Architect advised vide this Office Notice No. AMC/2699 dt. 18/07/2017 in Assam Tribune publication dated 19/07/2017 will be extended to 31/07/2017 at 1:00 pm.

Intrested parties or their authorized representatives may be present at the time of opening of tenders.

Sd/- Principal Comm-Chief Superintendent, IC Assam Medical College & Hospital, Dibrugarh.
Janasanyog/922/17

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No. JCSE 29/2009/Pr/I

SHORT TENDER NOTICE
The Secretary, Jyoti Chitraban (Film Studio) Society, Guwahati invites bids for the below mentioned works from registered Class-I & APWD (building) contractors, reputed firms, designers, artist/ architect and individuals etc. for the construction of the following works:- Construction of Roads and cross drainages works including maneharneher under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) - Phase-II, Road network, Drainage work, in the District of Karimganj for total amount to Rs. 64,38,558.00 in a package. Details may be seen at website www.jyotichitraban.com and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads)
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3
Janasanyog/918/17

No. TBRPMGSY/2007/08/PV

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Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-

**WEATHER
NORTHEAST**

Forecast for NE: Moderate rain, thunderstorms very likely to occur at many places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura.

Warning: Heavy rainfall is very likely to occur in some isolated places over Assam and Meghalaya on July 25. Heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura on July 25.

Temperatures :

	Max (°C)	Min (°C)
Dibrugarh	33.0	24.2
Tinsukia	31.7	25.3
Silchar	32.5	24.8
Dibrugarh	30.0	23.0
Jorhat	32.7	24.7
Nilachalimpur	34.5	21.4
Shillong	21.0	15.9
Imphal	29.0	21.4
Itanagar	35.4	22.1
Aizawl	26.3	11.2
Agartala	27.4	25.0
Kohima	28.8	18.7
Pasighat	33.9	23.3
Cherrapunjee	19.4	17.7

Zeliang induces another Minister into his Cabinet

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, July 24: Nagaland Chief Minister TR Zeliang induced another Minister into his Council of Ministers today, taking the total number of Ministers in his Ministry to 12.

Governor PB Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly-induced Cabinet Minister EE Pangteang at Raj Bhawan, Kohima today in presence of Cabinet Ministers, MLAs and heads of departments.

Zeliang was sworn in as Chief Minister on July 19 and he proved his majority on the floor of the State Assembly on July 21. He induced 10 Cabinet Ministers on July 22.

Crisis continues

to the demands made by them on July 18 and 20 as to what ground he appointed Chief Minister TR Zeliang as NPPF Legislature Party whip and if he had done so by withdrawing recognition of Kiyaniyan Pesevey as official whip.

Talking to media persons in Kohima on Sunday evening, former Speaker Chotishah

Sazo reiterated that the Speaker was obligated to clarify the matter since NPPF is a registered party and its constitution accepted by the ECI.

Sazo explained that as per the NPPF constitution Article 5 and Section 10, the party

president authorises promulgation of ordinance to all members including the legislature. He further cited Tenth Schedule Para 2, 1b of the Constitution wherein it mentions that a political party has to give direction to its legislators whether to vote in favour or against or to abstain. This direction is issued by the Whip appointed by the party for its legislature, he stated.

Sazo pointed out that in the case with Zeliang, he appointed himself as leader of NPPF Legislature Party and also as the Chief Whip of the party when he was already expelled from the NPPF. He said the appointment of Kiyaniyan as Whip was not revoked nor withdrawn and therefore, naming Zeliang as the Whip of the NPPF will be challenged in court.

When the matter goes to Court on who is the Whip of the NPPF Sazo said if the ruling favoured NPPF party then all the 37 NPPF legislators who voted against the Whip will be disqualified unless the NPPF party condones it within 15 days.

Mizoram Govt & HPC(D) talks likely to be deferred

AIZAWL, July 24: The next round of peace talks between Mizoram Government and Manipur-based Hmar People's Convention (Democratic), scheduled to be held this month, is likely to be deferred, a senior official said.

"The talks have to be deferred as there are some matters to be cleared and approved by some government departments. Some other matters are pending due to unavoidable circumstances," Home department additional secretary Lalbikzama said.

Efforts were being made to resume the talks in August, he said. This round of talks, he said, was likely to be the last official level talks as there was a proposal to elevate the peace talks to the political level.

Both the sides were hopeful of the outcome of the talks which had commenced from August last in Aizawl, he said.

The ongoing talks had revolved around deliberations on the autonomy and functions to be accorded to the Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) which is most likely to be renamed as Sinlung Hills Council (SHC). The HPC(D) had earlier demanded a separate autonomous district council in Mizoram by carving out the areas in the north eastern part of the State, adjoining Manipur.

The programme was organised by Bio-Resources Development Center in collaboration with Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, NEIGRIMHS, North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homoeopathy, Meghalaya State Medicinal Plants Board and Directorate of Health Services.

provided to the people. She hoped that the seminar will help in improving the healthcare services in the State which includes conventional, ayurvedic, homeopathic and traditional healing.

The programme was organised by Bio-Resources Development Center in collaboration with Meghalaya Basin Development Authority, NEIGRIMHS, North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Homoeopathy, Meghalaya State Medicinal Plants Board and Directorate of Health Services.

Lyngdoh said more efforts must be taken so that integrated health services are

guiding the common people merely for election benefits of the party in helm of affairs", a statement informed that APCC is likely to take up with the Election Commission the issue of misuse of Govt machinery in the election as soon as the election notification for bye-election is announced.

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CAPSULE**HSBC Bank net up**

MUMBAI, July 24: A rise in core income helped HDFC Bank report a 20.2 per cent jump in June quarter net at Rs 3,894 crore, but the rash of farm loan waivers led to a dip in repayments leading to its highest NPA ratio in years. The country's second largest private sector lender reported a 20.4 per cent rise in net interest income at Rs 8,370.7 crore, which along with a 20 per cent growth in advances helped net interest margin to widen to an above targeted 4.4 per cent. - PTI

Ambuja Cements

NEW DELHI, July 24: Ambuja Cements today reported an 11.85 per cent growth in consolidated net profit at Rs 18.24 crore for the second quarter ended June 30, 2017, on account of higher sales. A part of the Swiss cement giant LafargeHolcim, the company had reported a net profit of Rs 642.11 crore during the same period of the previous fiscal, Ambuja Cements said in a BSE filing. - PTI

Travel Ninja

MUMBAI, July 24: Private health insurer Apollo Munich today announced the launch of India's first travel insurance channel, Travel Ninja, which will enable its customers to secure their trip in an easier and faster way. Travel Ninja is the first chatbot in the Indian travel insurance industry to sell travel insurance policies to its customers, the company said in a release issued here. - PTI

Zee Entertainment

NEW DELHI, July 24: Media firm Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) today reported a 15.84 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit at Rs 251.44 crore for the quarter ended June 30. This is against a net profit of Rs 217.04 crore posted during the same period a year ago. ZEEL said in a BSE filing. - PTI

Mahindra Finance

NEW DELHI, July 24: Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services (Mahindra Finance) has reported 46 per cent decline in net profit at Rs 56.42 crore for the first quarter ended June 30. The company reported a net profit of Rs 107.64 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2016-17 fiscal. - PTI

Kajaria Ceramics

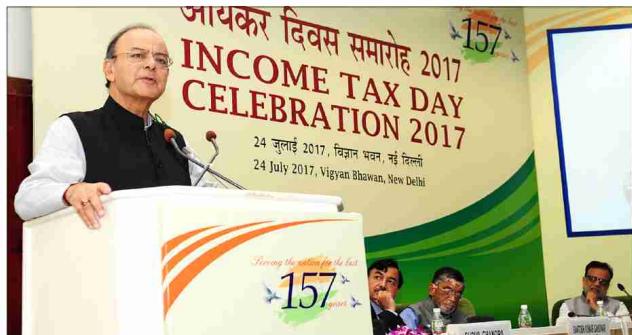
KOLKATA, July 24: At a time when the brokerage is estimating lower sales and profit in the Q1 period (ended June 30), Kajaria Ceramics Ltd, the company is bullish on the growth of tiles industry by six to nine per cent in the year, riding on conducive policy environment. "GST is positive for the industry. With affordable housing and focus on smart city projects, the industry is expected to grow at six to nine per cent a year," said Kajaria Ceramics Chairman and Managing Director Ashok Kajaria said today. - PTI

Multi-currency card

NEW DELHI, July 24: Standard Chartered Bank has launched a multi-currency forex card that offers customers the convenience of loading up to 20 widely used currencies on one card. The card comes with an online reload facility during overseas travel and is designed to offer travellers a secure way to carry money when travelling abroad. Standard Chartered Bank said in a statement. - PTI

JM Financial

MUMBAI, July 24: Leading brokerage and non-banking financial services player JM Financial Group today reported a 48.90 per cent jump in net profit for the three months to June at Rs 129.19 crore on a similar quantum of growth in revenue which rose to Rs 709.09 crore. JM Financial Group Managing Director Vishal Kampani attributed the numbers to healthy growth in the company's credit business arm. - PTI



Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs and Defence Arun Jaitley addressing a gathering on the occasion of Income Tax Day Celebration 2017, in New Delhi on Monday. Minister of State for Finance Santosh Kumar Gangwar and Revenue Secretary Dr Hasmukh Adhia are also seen. - PIB

Trade deficit with China a matter of concern, says Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, July 24: The Indian government is concerned about the country's growing trade deficit with China and is making efforts to realise greater access for Indian goods and services in the Chinese market, Parliament was informed today.

"Trade deficit with China is a matter of concern. We are discussing the issue with China for greater access for Indian products and services in the Chinese market," Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha during Question Hour.

"This is done through bilateral meetings and institutional dialogues. Indian exporters are encouraged to participate in major trade fairs

with which India has a trade deficit in the last three years, even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had raised the issue with the Chinese authorities at the highest level.

"Efforts are being made to increase overall exports by diversifying the trade basket with emphasis on manufactured goods, services, resolution of market access issues and other non-tariff barriers," Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha in a separate written reply.

"This is done through bilateral meetings and institutional dialogues. Indian exporters are encouraged to participate in major trade fairs

Lok Sabha today that the Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) had initiated 62 anti-dumping investigations till date on imports from China, which comprises nearly one-fourth of the total investigations started against all countries since January 2012.

She had earlier spoken of the difficulties in accessing the Chinese market faced by Indian firms, particularly by those in the IT and pharmaceuticals sectors.

Addressing the committee, which India has favourable trade balance are the US, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bangladesh and UK. - IANS

Digital transactions in all coop banks by March 2018: NPCI

BHUBANESWAR, July 24: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) today said all cooperative banks in the country would be part of digital transactions by March 2018.

"The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) ecosystem now covers all public sector banks and major private banks. We are in the process of extending the service for cooperative bank. All cooperative banks, which implemented their operations, would be part of digital payment service," said NPCI Managing Director and CEO AP Hota.

UPI is currently offered by 56 banks in the country.

Hota said technology companies such

UPI system now covers all PSBs, major private banks'

Hota said Google has requested the Reserve Bank of India to consider the firm's application to integrate its digital payment service, Android Pay, with UPI.

With the Union Government targeting 25-billion digital transactions this financial year, Hota admitted that NPCI has missed the target set for the first quarter.

"We have targeted 4 billion transactions in the first quarter but achieved 3.4 billion transactions. But we are trying to achieve the shortfall in the current quarter," he said.

Out of the 25-billion transaction target, NPCI is eyeing to achieve 10 billion transactions in the first half and the remaining 15 billion in the second half of the financial year.

Meanwhile, the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app has crossed 16 million downloads and four million active customer base by the end of June 2017. The BHIM app is a common platform across the nation for making simple, easy and quick payments. - IANS

Darjeeling planters seek Tea Board aid

KOLKATA, July 24: Reeling under distressed conditions owing to the loss of the entire premium second-flush crop, planters of Darjeeling have approached Tea Board seeking financial assistance.

"The Darjeeling tea planters have approached us for some special assistance due to the loss of the second-flush crop," Deputy Chairman of Tea Board Santosh Sarangi said. TPI

He said that though no specific figures were given, the planters had been asked to suggest

Loss of second-flush crop

what kind of package they require to mitigate the crisis.

"They came and apprised Tea Board about the situation in Darjeeling," he said.

Owing to the demand, then we will have to go back to the Commerce Ministry," he said.

Chairman of Darjeeling Tea Association (DTA) Binod Mohan said, "We are preparing a plan which will be finalised this week-end. We will then sub-

mit it to the Tea Board."

He said that Tea Board runs several schemes under which assistance would be sought.

"The second flush is gone totally. Now monsoon flush time has come. But there is still no production," he said.

Mohan said that owing to the prolonged closure, the bushes have overgrown. "After reopening, the bushes will have to be cut and wait for them to grow again," he said.

"We will have to wait for 10 days to three weeks to start plucking again," he said. - PTI

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India's growth likely to pick up in 2017, 2018: IMF

NEW DELHI, July 24:

With global economic recovery remaining on the back of better performing emerging economies, growth in India is expected to pick up further in 2017 and 2018, the IMF has said.

"Growth in India is forecast to pick up further in 2017 and 2018, in line with the April 2017 forecast," the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) report today.

"Pick-up in global growth anticipated in the April World Economic Outlook remains on track," the IMF report said. "While activity slowed following the currency exchange initiative, growth

for 2016 – at 7.1 per cent – was higher than anticipated due to strong government spending and data revisions that show stronger momentum in the first part of the year," it said, referring to India's demonetisation measure as well as to the base year revisions in GDP calculations made by the Central Statistics Office.

"Growth out-turns in the first quarter of 2017 were higher than the April WEO forecasts in large emerging and developing economies. "Inflation in advanced economies remains subdued and generally below targets; it has also been declining in several emerging economies such as Brazil, India and Russia," it added.

The IMF also forecasted that India must undertake, including replacing the demonetised currency and reducing labour and product market rigidities to ease firm entry and exit, expand the manufacturing base, and gainfully employ the abundant pool of labour.

In April, owing to the impact of demonetisation of high-value currency, the IMF had cut India's annual growth forecast by 0.4 percentage points to 7.3 per cent for 2017.

The IMF estimates a global growth rate of 3.5 per cent this year, which is projected to increase to 3.6 per cent in 2018.

"Global growth for 2016 is now estimated at 3.2 per cent, slightly stronger than the April 2017 forecast, primarily reflecting much higher growth in Iran and stronger activity in India following national accounts revisions," it said. - IANS

Jaitley tables Banking Regulation Bill in LS

NEW DELHI, July 24: Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley today introduced in the Lok Sabha a Bill which allows the Central to authorise the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to direct banks to initiate recovery proceedings against loan defaulters.

The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill will replace an ordinance that enabled this earlier.

The recovery proceedings

were introduced of the Bill. "It is a desperate step by a desperate government," Roy said.

"The same RBI is being authorised to regulate banks which has till date not been able to give (the total) amount of money deposited in banks after demonetisation," Roy said.

The Banking Regulation

(Amendment) Bill will begin

to be considered by the

Committee of Public Works.

Jaitley responded that the

objection raised by Roy had nothing to do with the introduction of the Bill.

"The issues raised by him can be discussed when the Bill comes up for discussion," the Minister said, after which it was introduced in the House.

Last month, the RBI identified 12 large loan defaulters who account for 25 per cent of the total NPAs, or bad loans, in the banking sector.

Jaitley has already begun under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, that provides for a time-bound process to resolve defaults.

Trinamool Congress member Saugata Roy opposed the

Organic food JV

IFFCO signs MoU with Sikkim govt, to invest Rs 200 cr

NEW DELHI, July 24: Fertiliser major IFFCO today said it has signed an agreement with the Sikkim government to explore business opportunities in organic food market with an initial investment of Rs 200 crore.

The foray into the organic food market and food processing is a part of the cooperative IFFCO's strategy to diversify its business.

IFFCO is into general insurance, agrochemicals, rural telecom, rural retail and farm forestry.

Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) has announced signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Sikkim government. "On the basis of the MoU, a joint venture – Sikkim IFFCO Organics Ltd (Sikkim-IFFCO) will be established to explore business opportunities in organic value chain," IFFCO said in a statement.

IFFCO will hold a majority stake of 51 per cent equity in the JV while the Sikkim government will hold 49 per cent.

"The initial investment for the project will be around Rs 200 crore, which will be increased to Rs 500 crore in phases," the cooperative said.

APART from fertiliser, IFFCO is into general insurance, agrochemicals, rural telecom, rural retail and farm forestry.

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According to the statement, the regulator carried out a comprehensive review of the transaction and concluded that there was no appreciable adverse effect on competition from the proposed merger.

"The CCI approval, within Phase I, is a very welcome development for both the Indian and M&A landscape and the telecom sector, and will serve to fuel more investment in capacity and coverage across a hitherto telecom sector in India," Shweta Shroff Chopra, Partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas, said.

Phase I refers to the deal being approved within 30 working days as provided by the Competition Act.

Law firm Trilegal, which advised Idea Cellular on the competition law aspects, said the deal with Vodafone India has received CCI approval.

"The proposed merger involved a merger of two of the biggest telecom companies in the history of Indian M&A," it said in a statement.

Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and Co advised Vodafone India and Vodafone Mobile Services, with Idea Cellular, on the deal.

According to the statement, the regulator carried out a comprehensive review of the transaction and concluded that there was no appreciable adverse effect on competition from the proposed merger.

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BJP demands reopening of Bofors probe

NEW DELHI, July 24: Ruling BJP MPs today demanded reopening of investigation into the Bofors kick-back scandal after a fresh media report suggested a financial quid-pro-quo before the gun deal was signed in March 1986.

Meenakshi Lekhi and Nishikant Dubey, both BJP members of the Lok Sabha, sought a probe since 2005 to establish whether illegal payments were made for buying the guns.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Lekhi said the 'genie' of Bofors case will continue to haunt the Congress party until a proper investigation is conducted.

Referring to a media report alluding to a quid-pro-quo, she said the ghost of Bofors has come to haunt again and it will continue to do so unless buried after proper investigation.

"No action was taken on documents received from Swiss Banks. Those documents are locked in government boxes," she said, adding no action was taken on Letter Rogatory sent. She went on to refer to bail being granted in the case despite it being an offence where bail could not have been granted.

"It is continuously stated that it is a 30-year-old issue, so why raise it now. I believe that unless it is

given a proper burial, the genie will continue to haunt," she said. "Today the genie is out of the bottle again. The country deserves to know what exactly happened."

Subeys said such a big corruption issue has again been highlighted on TV. India had in March 1986 signed a deal to buy 410 155mm guns. It is alleged that bribes up to USD 10 million were paid for the deal.

Dubey said a chargesheet in the case was filed on October 22, 1999 and a second on October 9, 2000. High Court, in a judgement, quashed the chargesheet on May 31, 2005.

When the chargesheet was quashed, CBI told the then government that the case should be revived but DoPT – the reporting administrative ministry of CBI – did not give permission, the BJP member said.

The Law Ministry also had said that this case should not continue, he alleged.

He went on to allege that when Supreme Court in 2006 gave an order, the entire money was withdrawn from London bank.

He demanded that CBI should reopen the case from 2005. "The central government should file an affidavit in Supreme Court for reopening of the case." – PTI



Former Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy participating in a dharna organised by HLL Lifecare contract labourers union in front of Accountant General's Office in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. – UNI

Naqvi flags off first batch of Haj pilgrims

NEW DELHI, July 24: Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi this morning flagged off the first batch of 300 Haj pilgrims from the Indira Gandhi International Airport here.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also was present on the occasion, the minister statement said. Haj pilgrims will also head towards Jeddah, Saudi Arabia today from other cities like Guwahati, Lucknow, Mangalore, Varanasi, Srinagar and Kolkata.

Addressing the pilgrims, Naqvi, the Union Minister of State for Minority Affairs, reiterated that the Centre would soon finalise the new Haj policy which will be effective next year onwards.

"A high-level committee constituted in this regard will soon submit its report. The new Haj policy is aimed at making Haj process transparent and smooth," he said.

The minister said the government was mulling revival of the option of taking pilgrims via sea route from Mumbai to Jeddah, considering this mode would help cut down travel expenses "by nearly half".

4,000 to 5,000 devotees could be ferried at a time, he added.

The practice of ferrying pilgrims from Mumbai to Jeddah by sea route was stopped in 1995.

India has a Haj quota of 1.70 lakh. Out of this, 1.25 lakh pilgrims travelled through Haj Committee of India, while the rest through private tour operators from 21 embarkation points. – PTI

UP Assembly adjourned till July 26

LUCKNOW, July 24: The Uttar Pradesh Assembly was today adjourned till July 26 after paying condolence to sitting BJP MLA Mathura Prasad Pal, who died due to prolonged illness.

After the House paid condolence to Pal, a BJP MLA from Sikandra constituency in Kanpur Dehat, Speaker Hriday Narain Dixit adjourned the House.

There would be no sitting of the House as decided by the business advisory committee, he said.

Pal (72), who was suffering from cancer, was on his way to Delhi for treatment when he died near Mathura on July 22.

Pal had recently come to the UP Assembly on a wheel chair to cast his vote in the presidential poll. – PTI

Nobody openly supporting India against China, Pak: Thackeray

MUMBAI, July 24: Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray today said India had failed to get international support on its issues with Pakistan and China despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi making friends with world leaders.

Thackeray, whose party is a constituent of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre and in Maharashtra, also said it would be an injustice to the nation if the senior ally remained embroiled in elections and internal politics.

"What has happened which caused a severe unrest in Kashmir and has made the dragon (China) our enemy? Are we lacking somewhere? The PM rooms around the world and has made many friends. Then, why is it that nobody is openly supporting us against these enemies?" Thackeray asked in the second part of his interview to SENA mouthpiece 'Saamana'.

"The BJP might be considering the Shiv Sena as its number one enemy. That is why maybe, Pakistan and China have been ignored? If they feel the Sena is a bigger enemy than these two nations, it is their misfortune, not mine," he said.

There has been nearly a month-long border stand-off between India and China in the Sikkim sector, which is seen as part of Chinese

coercive tactics to change the status quo. India has taken a strong stand against such a Chinese move.

According to Thackeray, China's strength cannot be ignored and India needs to make efforts to match it.

"If the ruling party remains stuck in elections and internal politics, it will be an injustice to the nation... You can win elections anytime, you have even won them. But, a war is a war and there is China on the opposite side," he said.

"On one hand, they (the BJP) have been able to get back Kashmir from Pakistan and on the other hand, China is trying to expand," Thackeray said. The environment in the country isn't good now, the Shiv Sena chief said, referring to the issue of gun rakshaks and instances of them resorting to violence.

"How many fronts will you be able to fight at the same time?" he asked.

Asked on his interaction with Modi during the NDA meet held before the presidential polls, Thackeray said the Prime Minister welcomed him with a lot of affection.

The PM requested him to sit with him to eat and affectionately asked about the wellbeing of his family members. Modi even spoke to him in Marathi, the Sena leader said. – PTI

CBI seeks arrest warrant against Bimal Gurung

KOLKATA, July 24: The CBI today sought an arrest warrant against the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) president Bimal Gurung, his servant Surinder Koli were sentenced to death by a special CBI court here today in the Nithari serial killings case for murdering 20-year-old domestic help Pinki Sarkar 2006.

Special judge Pawan Kumar Tiwari, who had convicted the duo on Saturday, handed down the sentence after which Pandher, who was absent at the hearing in the case.

Out of the 48 accused in the case against whom CBI has prayed for framing of charges for the murder of All India Gorkha League leader Madan Tamang in the heart of Darjeeling in 2011, 26 accused were present.

The Calcutta High Court on July 19 directed that all the accused, against whom CBI has sought framing of charges in the case, to be present before the court of the chief judge of City Sessions Court, which had fixed today for commencement of hearing.

The judge found both of them guilty of kidnapping, raping, murder and having hatched a criminal conspiracy.

The case related to the disappearance of Sarkar on October 5, 2006 when she was returning home from work along the road

Nithari killings: Pandher, Koli get death penalty

GHAZIABAD, July 24: Noida businessman Moninder Singh Pandher and his servant Surinder Koli were sentenced to death by a special CBI court here today in the Nithari serial killings case for murdering 20-year-old domestic help Pinki Sarkar 2006.

The CBI had filed the case after the victim's parents identified her clothes in April 2007 and later some of the skeletal remains were identified by matching the DNA samples with her parents.

Special senior public prosecutor Jai Prakash Sharma said the court termed it as a rare of the rare cases where there was no scope left for their reform or rehabilitation.

The judge found both of them guilty of kidnapping, raping, murder and having hatched a criminal conspiracy.

The case related to the disappearance of Sarkar on October 5, 2006 when she was returning home from work along the road

outside the D-5 residence of Pandher in Noida.

The CBI had said that Koli allegedly abducted her, raped her and later killed her. After the murder, he beheaded the victim and threw her head and garments in a drain behind Pandher's house, it had said.

The CBI had filed the case after the victim's parents identified her clothes in April 2007 and later some of the skeletal remains were identified by matching the DNA samples with her parents.

This is the second time that Pandher has been awarded death sentence. He, along with Koli, was given capital punishment by the special court on February 13, 2009 for the murder of 14-year-old girl Rimpal Halder at his house.

However, a division bench of the Allahabad High Court had turned down the trial judge's verdict and acquitted him.

The Noida police had discovered 14 skeletons from the drain near Pandher's house in Nithari

New law on Ganga cleansing on the anvil: Uma

NEW DELHI, July 24: Work on a new Ganga law to lay down guidelines for cleaning the holy river and implement the 'Namami Gange' programme is under way and will be shared with the states before tabling it in Parliament, the government told the Rajya Sabha today.

Responding to supplementaries during Question Hour, Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti said the new law has been submitted to the Ministry and discussions on it are under way.

Bharti also gave the assurance to members in the Upper House that after various initiatives taken by the Central government for Ganga river cleaning, its results will start showing in 2018 as promised earlier.

The Minister said the cleaning of the river was a gigantic task and it was not like rivers Thames or Rhine, where people do not take a dip in the Ganga where about 60 crore people bathe every year.

The government had earlier formed a committee to prepare the draft of the new Ganga Act, which aims at expediting implementation of Namami Gange programme and

lay down guidelines to rid the holy river of silt and pollutants.

The committee was headed by Justice (Retd) Giridhar Malviya, which has since prepared the draft and submitted it to the Ministry which is examining it further.

The committee was entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the draft law that should have provisions to ensure cleanliness and uninterrupted e-flow of Ganga.

79-year-old Malviya is the chairman of Ganga Mahasabha, which was formed by his grandfather and Banaras Hindu University founder Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. – PTI

Big B's UNICEF ambassadorship extended for 2 yrs

MUMBAI, July 24: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan's ambassadorship for UNICEF has been extended for another two years.

Bachchan, who had served as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Polio in India, took to Twitter to share the news.

"My ambassadorship for UNICEF extended for another two years after success of polio drive, now working for MR inoculation for kids (sic)," he wrote.

In his blogpost he shared, "There is the Unicef.. The UN Ambassadorship getting extended for another two years to work for the cause of the MR inoculation, MR not as in master, but measles and rubella infections."

The World Health Organisation also appointed Bachchan as its goodwill ambassador for hepatitis in South-East Asia region to boost awareness and intensify action to arrest the epidemic.

The 74-year-old veteran actor has been supporting and promoting various health and related issues in the country such as childhood immunisation programme, tuberculosis and Clean India campaign. – PTI



A road at Chomu House locality in Jaipur, which caved in after a heavy shower, on Monday. – UNI

After 50 yrs in political spotlight, it's 'Nomoshkar' to pvt life: Pranab

NEW DELHI, July 24: Sitting in the veranda of his home here, Pranab Mukherjee, then a young MP, saw horses from the Rashtrapati Bhavan pass by and jokingly told his sister that he would like to be a presidential horse in his next birth.

Indulgent as ever, Annapurna Banerjee, older to him by 10 years, prophesied that he would be President this life itself.

Today, President Pranab Mukherjee's last day in office, is the culmination of that prophecy for a man known as the quintessential Man Friday of the Congress, rewarded as President yet not trusted enough to be Prime Minister.

And the horse vignette from an interview that Banerjee gave could illustrate what is a fitting end note to a remarkable five-decade political career - some dreams do come true. India's 13th President will step down tomorrow for Ram Nath Kovind, a long way from the reluctant schoolboy of West Bengal's Mirital village who grew to be one of India's most respected politicians.

It all started when Indira Gandhi spotted him during a by-election in Midnapore where he was VK Krishna Menon's election agent. His astute management saw Menon, a Malayali contesting in West Bengal as a candidate of Congress' rival faction Bangla Congress, win with a huge margin.

Impressed by his political acumen, Gandhi brought Mukherjee into the Congress and initiated his parliamentary journey through the Rajya Sabha in 1969.

There have been many firsts since then for the 81-year-old, fondly known as Pranab Da.

He became India's youngest Finance Minister of India in 1982 at the age of 47. From 2004, he went on to head three crucial ministries - External Affairs, Defence and Finance - and became the first occupant of the Rashtrapati Bhavan to have this distinction.

He will also go down in history as the only non-Prime Minister who was the leader of the Lok Sabha for eight years.

Known for his political acumen and ability to form consensus across party lines, Mukherjee was heading 24 of 39

GOMs (groups of ministers) when he became President in 2012. Between 2004-12, he had chaired 95 GOMs.

That is why friends and rivals will agree that there was enough politics left in him when he accepted his retirement from active politics in the form of the presidency.

It's a mixed bag legacy for the politician who won his first election in 2004 from Jangipur in West Bengal.

Mukherjee's lasting contribution to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, for instance, includes introduction of an egregious tax change - a retrospective amendment to the Income Tax act that targeted Vodafone and allowed closed tax cases to be reopened. That amendment shook foreign investor confidence in India as a safe investment destination, say experts.

A tough taskmaster, avid reader and history aficionado, Mukherjee has ensured that he leaves his mark on the presidency. He has made it easier for common people to visit the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The long-neglected Durbar Hall was given a fresh lease of life with Mukherjee ensuring that important events

were held under its dome that had pigeons nesting in it.

The library was renovated. Books, including some rare ones, were catalogued and researchers given access.

The impressive presidential palace also opened its gates for writers, artists, innovators, scientists and students through an in-residence programme.

Author Amitav Ghosh, who spent four days in Rashtrapati Bhavan as part of the programme, described the initiative as an attempt at "democratising an essentially profoundly undemocratic building". – PTI



Kremlin warns against 'harmful' new US sanctions

MOSCOW, July 24: The Kremlin today warned that new US sanctions on Russia would hit the interests of both sides as Congress gears up to approve fresh punitive measures.

"We consider such a continuation of the rhetoric of sanctions counter-productive and harmful to the interests of both countries," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

In mid-June, the US Senate overwhelmingly passed tough sanctions, but the text stalled in the House of Representatives, until agreement was reached on Saturday.

The House is now set to vote Tuesday on a bill that targets Russia – for its alleged



We consider such a continuation of the rhetoric of sanctions counter-productive and harmful to the interests of both countries

meddling in the 2016 presidential election and its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 – as well as Iran and North Korea, for its ballistic missile tests.

Initially, US President Donald Trump resisted the legislation, which would prevent him from unilaterally easing penalties against Moscow in the future – effectively placing him under Congress's watch.

But he seems to be left with little option but to sign off on the move as a political firestorm swirls over potential collusion between his campaign and Russia.

Peskov said the Kremlin is still waiting and watching to see if Trump will approve the

Probe into assassination bid against Tamil judge

COLOMBO, July 24: Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena has ordered a police probe into the assassination attempt on a prominent Tamil high court judge and called for a special programme to strengthen the security of judges in the country.

Sirisena yesterday instructed Inspector General of Police Pujith Jayasundara to immediately implement a watertight security mechanism to ensure the safety of all judges.

He asked the police to conduct an in-depth investigation into the shooting incident which killed the personal protection office of Justice M Illachan.

The president also expressed condolence over the death of policeman Sarath Premachandra during the shooting, a presidential statement said.

Police said they have arrested two suspects and is searching for a third person over the shooting incident.

Justice Ilanchelian was unhurt while his personal protection officer was injured when an unknown gunman fired at his car on Saturday. The officer succumbed to his injuries yesterday.

Ilanchelian's car was caught in a traffic block in Nallur junction when the shooting took place.

The judge had claimed that it was an attack on him.

"I saw a civilian approach my escort and trying to remove his pistol. He fought for several minutes to grab the weapon," Ilanchelian told reporters yesterday.

A fearless judge, Ilanchelian had struck terror in the hearts of criminals in the Tamil-dominated Jaffna town.

Meanwhile, the lawyers in Jaffna today boycotted their normal duties to protest against the attack. – PTI

Kushner denies collusion with Russia

WASHINGTON, July 24: Senior White House adviser Jared Kushner is denying that President Donald Trump's campaign colluded with Russia, saying in a statement ahead of congressional interviews that he has "nothing to hide."

The 11-page statement provided to The Associated Press by a representative Monday details four contacts with Russians during Trump's campaign and transition.

"I did not collude, nor know of anyone else in the campaign who colluded, with any foreign government," Kushner said in the statement.

In it, he also details a June 2016 meeting with a Russian-American lawyer and says it was such a "waste of time" that he asked his assistant to



Kushner

call him out of the gathering.

Emails released this month show that the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., accepted the meeting at Arfa Karim Tower with the idea that he would receive damaging information about Hillary Clinton, but Kushner says he hadn't seen those emails until recently shown them by his lawyers. – AP

Iraq mulls future of Shiite militias

Post-Mosul victory



IS overran Mosul and pushed within 80 miles (130 kilometres) of the Iraqi capital.

Shiite Sheikh Fadil al-Bidayri was among the clerics at an emergency meeting in the holy city of Najaf in June 2014, when Iraq's Shiite religious elite, led by the country's top Shiite cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a call to arms as a last-ditch effort to protect Baghdad.

Tens of thousands of men, many of them members of the long-established Shiite militia with close ties to Iran, answered al-Sistani. In the days that followed, Iraq was

flooded with training, money and weapons from Tehran.

Billboards praising the groups, depicting Iraqi and Iranian paramilitary leaders side by side, popped up across Baghdad, alongside posters of martyrs honouring the fallen.

The government-sanctioned groups became known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces, known as Hashid al-Shaabi in Arabic.

Although the Shiite militias did not play a central role in the battle for the city of Mosul this summer, they moved into the deserts held by IS west of the city, massing around the town of Tal Afar and taking a border crossing between Iraq and Syria. They also took control of highways bisecting the Sunni heartland in western Iraq and used as vital military and civilian supply lines. – AP

8 dead after suicide bombers hit camps in Nigeria

MAIDUGURI (Nigeria), July 24: A civilian self-defence group says at least eight people are dead after female suicide bombers attacked two displaced persons camps in northeastern Nigeria's main city.

Spokesman Bello Danbatta tells The Associated Press that the attack started late Sunday night in Maiduguri and left another 15 people wounded.

The Nigeria-based extremist group Boko Haram often targets the city with suicide bombers and increasingly has been using female ones.

Danbatta says one bomber sneaked into the Dalori camp and detonated, and two other attackers exploded on or near the camp's perimeter fence.

Boko Haram's eight-year insurgency has killed more than 20,000 people, spilled into neighbouring countries and created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. – AP

China defends repatriation of North Koreans



COURTESY CRYPOLITICS.COM

BEIJING, July 24: China today defended its repatriation of North Koreans who have escaped across its border after a United Nations envoy voiced concern about increasing detentions and explosions.

Tomas Ojea Quintana, the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, said last week he had shared his concerns with Chinese officials in recent months.

But foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said on Monday that "the persons who illegally trespassed into China are not refugees" and would be handled according to "international law and humanitarian need".

"We hope relevant people can abide by principles on the Chinese side," Lu told a regular press briefing.

Ojea Quintana said on Friday he was "alarmed by a surge in detentions and forced repatriations of North Koreans" who are caught in China after making it across the border.

The envoy said he had reminded Chinese authorities of their obligations under the 1951 refugee convention as well as relevant parts of the UN system.

"I urge them again to address this problem by giving special protection to DPRK (North Korea) citizens who transit through China's territory," he said in Seoul.

If forcibly returned, North Korean defectors are at risk of persecution, arbitrary detention, torture or other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and execution, according to Human Rights Watch.

"Women continue to be especially vulnerable to violent practices when they are sent back. Strip-searches, cavity inspections, verbal abuse and sexual violence are still known to happen in holding centres near the border with China," Ojea Quintana said.

Human Rights Watch said in June, citing activists and family members, that at least 51 North Koreans had been detained in China since July last year, including a baby born in detention, four children and three elderly women in frail health.

Based on their information, the rights watchdog said it believed that at least 13 of the North Koreans had already been forcibly returned, while the others remained in China for now.

The Demilitarised Zone dividing the Korean peninsula is one of the most heavily fortified places in the world. Almost all North Korean defectors intending to reach South Korea cross first to China and then on to a third country before travelling to Seoul. – AFP

More than 140 migrants reach Cyprus by boat

NICOSIA, July 24: Cypriot authorities said a boat carrying over 140 migrants believed to be Syrians, more than half of them women and children, was escorted to shore by the coast guard Monday near the resort of Paphos.

Police said the 143 migrants, including 31 women and 50 children, said they had set off from the Turkish port of Marmara and paid up to \$2,000 each for the crossing.

One person was arrested as a suspected people smuggler, while arrangements were being made to take the migrants to a reception centre outside the capital Nicosia.

Cyprus, an EU member state located 160 kilometres from Syria's Mediterranean coast, has not seen the massive inflow of migrants experienced by Turkey and Greece.

Since September 2014, however, over a dozen migrant boats have reached the island, bringing in more than 1,100 migrants including the latest arrivals. – AFP

Palestinian stabs Israeli near Tel Aviv

JERUSALEM, July 24: A Palestinian stabbed an Israeli in the neck at a fast food restaurant near the commercial capital of Tel Aviv today before being arrested police said.

"A resident from Qalqilia, 21, stabbed an Israeli in the neck with a knife," in the attack in Petah Tikva, they said in a statement. "The attacker tried to flee" but was arrested by police.

The victim of the man, a 32-year-old Arab Israeli, was not believed to be life threatening. Police suggested the assailant may have thought his target was Jewish.

The attack was the latest in an uptick of violence since July 14, when three Israeli Arabs killed two Israeli security guards near the sensitive Haram al-Sharif mosque compound in Jerusalem before being shot dead. – AFP



Soon, pet translators may help you talk to animals

WASHINGTON, July 24: Pet translating devices that allow you to talk to your furry companions may become a reality within the next 10 years, experts suggest.

Using artificial intelligence (AI) software to help analyse the calls of prairie dogs – a type of north American rodents – researchers found that they had "a sophisticated communication system that has all the aspects of a language."

"They have words for different species of predator and can describe the colour of clothes of a human, or the coat of coyotes or dogs," said Con Slobodchikoff, professor at Northern Arizona University in the US.

Slobodchikoff is convinced that other animals use similarly decipherable language and is attempting to raise money to develop a cat and dog translation device.

"A lot of people talk to their dogs and share their innermost secrets," Slobodchikoff was quoted as saying by The Guardian.

Researchers suggest that devices that can translate animal language may be less than 10 years away. – PTI

Prannoy clinches US Open title

ANAHEIM (California), July 24: HS Prannoy notched up a thrilling three-game win over Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap in an all-Indian final to clinch the USD 120,000 US Open Grand Prix Gold here.

Prannoy, who lost a fair amount of his time to niggling injuries in his career, dished out a gritty performance to defeat Kashyap 21-15, 20-22, 21-12 in the summit clash which lasted an hour and five minutes.

"It was a good match, pretty intense match, a high quality match by both me and Kashyap. I think after losing the second game narrowly, I was calm, continued enough and it worked for me," Prannoy told PTV.

In the second game, Kashyap was playing better than the first game. He was putting a lot of pressure on him and he was also finishing the lifts that I was producing, that made the whole difference. But in the third game, I changed my strategy a bit and I had a good lead. So yeah, overall happy with the tournament. Now I am looking forward to New Zealand Open," he added.

The duo, who had a 1-1 head-to-head record having played each other at the 2014 German Open last time, engaged in fast-paced rallies and Prannoy more often sealed the rally with his powerful smashes.

In the first game, Kashyap moved to a

7-1 lead before entering the interval with a sizzling smash on the forehead of Prannoy, who slowly reduced the gap to 9-12 and then turned the tables with five straight points.

Kashyap clawed back to level things at 15-15 but Prannoy looked unstoppable as he reeled off six straight points to grab the first game with another cross-court smash.

The second game had some intense moments as the duo fought fiercely for each points. The rallies were more aggressive with each having their share of moments.

Kashyap lead 14-9 at one stage but Prannoy drew parity at 15-15. Kashyap continued to exert pressure on his younger colleague and had a 20-18 lead.

Prannoy grabbed two points before Kashyap roared back into the contest with another superb smash.

In the decider, Prannoy changed his strategy. His soft touch on his lifts and better net strokes earned him points as he zoomed to a 13-7 lead. The 24-year-old continued to move ahead and eventually sealed the issue when Kashyap misjudged a shuttle at the baseline.

"Ever since bursting on to the scene with a silver medal at the 2010 Youth Olympics, Prannoy has been often left on the sidelines due to injuries, affecting his training and thereby his progress." - PTI

He fought through a knee injury in 2011 and back injury in 2012 to reach the finals at the 2013 Tata Open. A series of semifinals at Bitburger, Syed Modi International, Macau and a final at Vietnam was followed by a maiden Grand Prix Gold win at Indonesia in 2014.

Another injury-marred year followed but he still managed to reach a career-best world ranking of 12. He recovered to win the 2016 Swiss Open but again sustained a toe injury at the Singapore Open and subsequently missed the Thomas Cup.

He was in rampaging form at the Premier Badminton League this year but injuries to his knee and toe once again came back to haunt him.

But he once again regained fitness and reached the semifinals at Indonesia Super Series Premier, stunning Olympic silver and gold medallist - Malaysia's Lee Chong Wei and China's Chen Long on the way.

"I have been playing well, if the injuries are off then I am okay, I could not play well in Canada, as I had an inflammation in the tailbone area. Probably that did the damage in Canada," he said.

"But I worked on it in the regular training and I am happy I could give my best here. I am not too disappointed with my losses at Australia and Canada as it knows its part and parcel of the game." - PTI



HS Prannoy (right) and runners-up Parupalli Kashyap.

Jamaica stun Mexico, book Gold Cup final with USA



Jamaica's goalkeeper Andre Blake leaps to grab the ball from Oribe Pineda of Mexico during the CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinal at Rose Bowl in California, on Sunday.

LOS ANGELES, July 24: Kemar Lawrence scored in the 88th minute to give Jamaica a shocking 1-0 upset of defending champions Mexico in a CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinal match.

The 24-year-old fullback for Major League Soccer's New York Red Bulls expertly curled a left-footed free kick around the Mexico wall and just past the crossbar to deliver Jamaica a stunned at the Rose Bowl.

The Reggae Boyz advanced to face the host United States in Wednesday's championship match at Santa Clara, Calif. The US squad beat Costa Rica 2-0 in a Saturday semifinal.

Despite sending most of their best players to Russia for the Confederations Cup, the Mexicans saw the dismal result as a reason for soul-search-

ing and self-examination, acting manager Luis Pompilio Paez said.

"The football of Mexico has to rise from this fall," he said. "There will be an individual and collective analysis as well as self-criticism."

"We have to make adjustments. We're determined to give out best. When we do not win, we all have to do self-criticism and reflections. This is a process and we all have to improve."

It was only the third-ever victory for Jamaica over Mexico as the Reggae Boyz avenged a 3-1 loss to the Mexicans in the 2015 Gold Cup final after battling them to a goalless draw earlier this month in the group stage.

"El Tri" trailed for the first time in the tournament when Lawrence chipped in the impressive shot from 25 metres

out of a free kick set up by Hugo Almeida's foul on Jamaican substitute Michael Binns.

Mexico goalkeeper Jose Corona was planted too far left to make a play on the ball, tucked just under the crossbar near the far corner of the woodwork.

The seven-time champions pressured Jamaica to the finish but could not net the equaliser.

"We had the illusion of giving a victory to the Mexican fans," Paez said. "What we lacked was efficiency."

"Jamaica gave priority to the defensive. Things were missing to score goals. We look for all the sides, as it is necessary to look for the goals. The effort was made, we were efficient, but not effective to solve."

The Mexican squad will now divert its attention towards the World Cup qualifying, which resumes in September. Mexico leads the six team CONCACAF qualifying table with four wins and two draws for 14 points.

"We want to go to a World Cup and transcend," Paez said. "We are very close to going."

Jamaica goalkeeper Andre Blake was credited with five saves, among his most impressive a two-fisted stop in the 65th minute off a Mexico free kick by Jesus Gallardo, whose line drive rocket from just beyond the penalty area was knocked away and cleared by the Reggae Boyz backline.

Time and again, Jamaica's shut-down defensive unit denied Mexico, Rodolfo Pizarro coming away empty in the 75th minute wide of the far post and Blake thwarting a Gallardo header in the 81st minute.

Jamaica's best chance before the game winner came in the 78th minute, a spinning header towards the bottom left corner of the goal by Jamaica's Damion Lowe batted away by Corona's right hand. - AFP

Tomic says he has no love for the game

SYDNEY, July 24: Australian star Bernard Tomic has admitted he is playing tennis just for the money and says he has no love for a game that has earned him millions.

In a frank Australian television interview, the 24-year-old told his fans to stay at home rather than paying to watch him play if they were opposed to his polarising on-court antics.

"Don't come," Tomic said on Sunday. "Just watch on TV, you don't have to pay anything."

Tomic, who was slagged with US\$15,000 fine after he claimed he was "bored" during his lacklustre first round defeat at Wimbledon last month, said he oscillates between full commitment and apathy on court.

"Throughout my career I've given 100 per cent. I've given 30 per cent. But if you balance it out, I think all my career's been around 50 per cent," Tomic, who has slid down the rankings to 73 from a career-high 17, said in the interview.

Tomic also noted his inflammatory comments after his loss at Wimbledon were "still achieved all this. So it's just amazing what I've done."

Asked to provide advice to aspiring tennis players he was blunt.

"Don't play tennis. Do something you love and enjoy, because it's a grind, and it's a tough, tough, tough life. My position, I'm trapped. I have to do it," he said.

"Tennis chose me. It's something I never fell in love with. You know I like it."

Tomic was also asked by his fans whether he was being paid to play.

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SC bars N Srinivasan, Niranjan Shah from attending BCCI SGM

NEW DELHI, July 24: Disqualified BCCI administrators N Srinivasan and Niranjan Shah were today restrained from attending the cricket board's special general body meeting on July 26 by the Supreme Court which directed that only office bearers of State cricket associations can take part in it.

The apex court's order assumes importance as for the last few months, both Srinivasan and Shah were participating in the Board's meeting as the nominees of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) and Maharashtra Cricket Association respectively.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra also indicated that it was willing to deliberate upon afresh the issues

like membership of associations, number of selectors and number of votes.

The bench, also comprising justices AM Khanwilkar and DY Chandrachud, asked BCCI and State associations concerned to deliberate on implementation of Justice RM Lodha committee recommendations, which were accepted by the apex court, "as far as practicable" in the July 26 SGM.

"The SGM shall be held at the time and date fixed. The meeting shall be attended only by the office bearers of the associations, not by nominees or representatives. All concerned shall implement the recommendations of the Justice Lodha committee report as far as practicable by the BCCI and State associations and the two

raised pertaining to membership, number of members of the selection committee, concept of associate membership, etc," the bench said.

"The purpose is to implement the report as far as practicable and, thereafter, it shall be deliberated as to how the scheme of things can be considered so that the cricket, the 'gentleman's game', remains nearly perfect. Be it noted, the issue with regard to disqualification or qualification of the representative is kept open," the apex court said.

The bench has fixed the matter for hearing on August 18 when it will consider two issues – implementation of Lodha committee report as far as practicable by the BCCI and State associations and the two

which are to be chosen to fill up the vacancies that has arisen in the apex-court appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) headed by former CAG Vinod Rai.

During the hearing, the bench observed that once Lodha panel recommendations have been accepted by the top court, it was "obligatory" for all the associations to implement them.

"You hold the meeting. Act on the Lodha committee's recommendations as to which will be implemented and which will not be implemented. You send only your office bearers. Do not send N Srinivasan and Niranjan Shah. We do not want to make it adversarial," it said, adding, "we do not want the meeting to be stalled". – PTI

Spinner Arlen Konwar calls it a day



SPORTS REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 24: Assam Ranji player Arlen Konwar announced his retirement. The veteran of 69 first class matches, Arlen is an employee of the NF Railway.

Hailing from Sivasagar, the offie started his first class career in 2001-02 against Jharkhand and went on to capture 212 first class wickets and scored 622 runs. He also played three Ranji Trophy matches for the Indian Railways team.

Arlen is the only player from Assam to take more than 200 wickets in Ranji Trophy.

To mark his retirement he ran across the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Setu yesterday. He took 1 hour and seven minutes to cross the 9.5km bridge from Dholka to Sadiya with his fans and after crossing the bridge he an-

nounced his retirement.

He played his last Ranji Trophy match against Services at the Assam Cricket Association's Barspara stadium here from January 5 to 7, 2015.

Talking to *The Assam Tribune* from Tinsukia, Arlen said:

"Now I will render my service for the cause of Assam cricket."

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