

NEWS CAPSULE

Pak champion

LONDON, June 18: A dominant performance spanked India by 150 runs in the summit clash of the Champions Trophy here today. Indians were all out for a paltry 158 in 30.3 overs in reply to Pakistan's 338 for four wickets in the stipulated 50 overs. – PTI
(Details on Page 15)

Abu Salem step

MUMBAI, June 18: Gangster Abu Salem convicted for his role in the 1993 Mumbai blasts case, has moved a European Union court in Strasbourg to have himself sent back to Portugal from where he was extradited to India to face the trial. – PTI

Explosive haul

BANGKOK, June 18: Security forces today recovered electronic detonators and gunpowder from inside a passenger bus in Barpeta district. Police said 200 pieces of electronic detonators and gunpowder were found in a cement bag. – PTI

The Assam Tribune on Internet
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Erosion by Barak river near a bridge at Katigara, on Sunday. – UB Photos

GST return filing rules relaxed for July-August

NEW DELHI, June 18: The GST Council today relaxed return filing rules for businesses for the first two months of the rollout of the new indirect tax regime even as it stuck to the July 1 launch date. The industry has been pushing for deferment of the tax implementation.

As per the revised return filing timeline decided by the Council for July, the sale returns will have to be filed by September 5 instead of August 10.

In relief for AC hotels, the Council decided to raise the threshold for the 28 per cent tax to Rs 7,500 from Rs 5,000 at present. This would mean that

(Also see Page 11)

Companies will have to file sale invoice for August with the GST Network by September 20 instead of September 10 earlier. "To dovate and lack of preparedness, a slight relaxation for two months – July-August – has been given. From September, strict adherence to time will go on," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said here on July 1.

The official launch of the goods and services tax (GST) is slated for midnight of June 30 and July 1. – PTI

(Also see Page 11)

CM launches mobile app for Majuli

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, June 18: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today unveiled an android mobile app for disseminating information on Satiya culture, Mising culture, carbon registry, information on hotels, transport, lodges, car mechanic, car rentals and all information regarding district administration, etc., of Majuli.

Sonowal also participated in a function christened Making of Developed India (Modi) fest organised at Garmaru in Majuli. The programme,

(See page 7)

popularly known as Modi Fest, was organised to showcase the achievements of the NDA Government at the Centre in the last three years led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sonowal said the Centre has launched several schemes for the benefit of the people belonging to all sections and to generate awareness about the schemes, Modi Fests are being organised to enable the beneficiaries to reach recipients.

Launching the Ujwala scheme at Majuli today, the Chief Minister said the government is

path of mutual respect, mutual

(See page 7)

Centre asks states to develop border areas

R DUTTA CHOWDHURY

GUWAHATI, June 18: The Government of India is of the view that the governments of the states having international border should play a crucial role in border management as only deployment of forces is not adequate to deal with the situation. The Centre feels that the people living along the international border areas should also be involved in border management and that can be done only through overall development of the border areas.

Highly placed sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) told *The Assam Tribune* that the Government of India is ready to extend support to the states having international border for the development of the border areas, while the concerned state government would have to play a crucial role in this regard.

Sources pointed out that Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh has already start-

ed a series of meetings with the governments of the states having international border so that the issues can be addressed properly to ensure overall development of the border areas.

The Union Home Minister recently held a meeting with the governments of four states having international border with Myanmar in Aizawl and called upon the states to intensify the pace of development along the border. He asked the states to improve road communication, health care facilities, education facilities in the bordering areas.

He also said that the states should increase number of police stations and outposts near the international border areas. Increasing the strength of the police force in the bordering areas of Myanmar is vital because of movement of militants from their bases in the neighbouring country and because of lack of adequate police presence, the people living near the international border are often at the mercy of the militants. This problem should be addressed immediately so that the people can be involved in effective border

(See page 7)

development of the border areas to improve border management. He convened a meeting with the states having international border with China in Gangtok last month where the issues relating to the development of the areas along the



India, China hold talks on strategic ties

BEIJING, June 18: India today said it looks forward to strengthen its strategic partnership and mutual dialogue with China as the two sides held amicable differences over a host of issues, including the USD 50 billion CPEC and India's NSG membership bid.

Minister of State for External Affairs Maitri Singh met Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting being held here to finalise the agenda for this year's BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit to be held in September in China's Xiamen city.

They discussed steps to strengthen strategic relations on the directions laid down by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping during their meeting at Astana recently. Wang referred to the fruitful and constructive meeting between Xi and Modi on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on June 8-9 at Astana. Xi and Modi have "laid down directions for us and both the countries to proceed with a path of mutual respect, mutual

cooperation on how to improve the existing mechanisms so that more trade, commerce and people to people contacts can take place," Singh said.

"We both are Asian neighbours, two growing economies, people with ancient relations, we make the path for others to follow. India looks forward to strengthening and deepening its strategic partnership and mutual dialogue with China," he said, adding he looks forward for many interactions with Wang.

(See page 7)

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Dredging won't impact aquatic biodiversity of Brahmaputra: Expert



AJIT PATAWARY

GUWAHATI, June 18: Leading hydro-biology expert of the State, Prof SP Biswas is of the opinion that dredging can be undertaken to make the Brahmaputra bed deep enough for the purpose of enhancing its water holding capacity. It will have no adverse impact on the aquatic biodiversity of the Brahmaputra river system, he said.

The professor said he had seen how the dredging of the Kushiyara in Bangladesh was able to restore the river. "Now the river is a prominent habitat of the Ganges dolphin and other large fish species," he added.

"Removing silt will not affect the benthic organisms or productivity of the Brahmaputra as its sandy bed is not stable. The Brahmaputra is counted among the highest silt-laden rivers in the world. In fact, coarse sand engulfs the upper stretches of the river and hence, removing this sand layer will have no adverse impact on the river's biodiversity," Prof Biswas said.

He opined that dredging of the river is essential. "It is not adverse to aquatic biodiversity; rather, it will create the much-needed 'cover' for the aquatic mega-fauna," he said.

He, however, maintained that construction of embankments or expressways on both sides of the river should be done in such a way that connectivity of the river with other

channels and natural wetlands remains undisturbed.

"The Brahmaputra is like a highway. It always has the provision for extra space for smooth traffic and the wetlands connected with it also act as reservoirs for holding excess water," he said.

The professor said he had seen how the dredging of the Kushiyara in Bangladesh was able to restore the river. "Now the river is a prominent habitat of the Ganges dolphin and other large fish species," he added.

"Removing silt will not affect the benthic organisms or productivity of the Brahmaputra as its sandy bed is not stable. The Brahmaputra is counted among the highest silt-laden rivers in the world. In fact, coarse sand engulfs the upper stretches of the river and hence, removing this sand layer will have no adverse impact on the river's biodiversity," Prof Biswas said.

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Girl raped, set ablaze

KHAGARIA, June 18: A college girl was today allegedly raped and set on fire by her boyfriend at her house in Bihar's Khagaria district. The young man entered the house of the girl and raped her before setting her on fire with kerosene oil at Temthia Karari village, Superintendent of Police Minu Kumar said.

A woman heard the girl crying from inside the room and ran to the door from outside. On hearing her cries, her relatives and neighbours broke open the door of her room and took her to Sadar hospital where she died, Kumar said. - PTI

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**MPs, MLAs to use different coloured ballot paper**

NEW DELHI, June 18: It will be green-coloured ballot papers for Members of Parliament and pink for MLAs who vote in the presidential election on July 17.

In case the NDA and the O position their own candidates and none withdraws till July 1 evening, the Election Commission will initiate the process of "final printing" of ballot papers as a contest would then become imminent.

The value of an MLA's vote depends on the population of the State he or she represents. But the value of the vote of an MP does not vary – it is 708.

Hence, the different colour of ballot papers will help the returning officer count the votes based on the value.

The total value of the electoral college is 10,98,903.

The ballot boxes will be brought to Delhi for counting on July 20.

The electoral college which elects the President through

the system of proportional representation comprises elected MPs and members of State Legislative Assemblies – a total of 4,896 voters, including 4,120 MLAs and 776 elected MPs.

While 233 are elected members of the Rajya Sabha, 543

Prez polls

are from the Lok Sabha.

In a set of directions issued to the States, the Commission has said that while "the ballot papers for use by elected members of both houses of Parliament shall be printed in green-coloured paper, those for use by elected members of legislative Assemblies shall be printed on pink-coloured paper."

Ballot papers for Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Uttaranchal, West Bengal and Puducherry, which are required to be printed in languages other than Hindi (and/or) English, will be printed in the respective States.

Electronic voting machines are not used in these elections as EVMs are formatted for first-past-the-post system of voting.

"They are not meant for proportional representation by means of single transferable vote," Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi had said while announcing the presidential polls. - PTI

Shah meets Uddhav, seeks support for presidential poll

MUMBAI, June 18: BJP president Amit Shah today held a close-door meeting with Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray as part of the ruling party's efforts to ensure support of allies in the presidential election.

According to a source in the Shiv Sena, Shah told Thackeray that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would decide the NDA's candidate for the highest constitutional post.

To this, the Sena chief said they would take a call on support after the BJP reveals its choice for president, the source said.

Shah, along with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, visited Thackeray's residence 'Motashree' and held a close-door meeting which started around 10 am and lasted nearly 75 minutes.

The Sena chief was asked to know the name of the ruling party's candidate before deciding its support for the July 17 presidential election.

The source said, "Shah said the name of the candidate would be announced by Narendra Modi. We are hopeful of receiving Shiv Sena's support."

Thackeray told Shah that his party should declare the name, then only the Shiv Sena can decide whether to extend

support."

The meeting comes a day after the BJP chief, who is here on a three-day visit to strengthen the party organisation in the State, said his party would consult its allies before finalising the NDA's presidential candidate.

The Shiv Sena, the BJP's oldest ally, had earlier said it may choose an "independent" path in the election to the highest constitutional office.

It had backed Congress nominees – Pratibha Patil and Purnab Mukherjee – in the last two presidential elections.

The Sena, which has often been critical of the BJP and the莫迪 Government, recently suggested the name of MS Swaminathan, the father of India's Green Revolution, for President. - PTI

BJP registers protest against egg attack on Union ministers

BHUBANESWAR, June 18: The BJP today took out a silent protest march across Odisha against egg attacks on several Union ministers during their visits to the State recently, saying their novel peace method was to counter violence.

Besides protesting the egg attack allegedly by BJD activists on the vehicle of Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram in Kendrapara on June 14, the party activists also sought proper probe in the gangrape and killing of a widow in Dhenkanal district recently.

Party activists and leaders covered their mouths with black tapes and held placards while staging the silent protest and dharnas in areas under all the municipalities, Notified Area Councils (NACs) and Zilla Parishad Zones of the State.

The BJP leader claimed that some people close to a senior BJD leader of the area were allegedly involved in the brutal gang rape and murder of the 45-year-old widow, but they were not held responsible.

Another BJP leader Pinky Pradhan claimed that the probe into the incident, which was as barbaric as Delhi's Nirbhaya episode, had been directionless.

Claiming that the ruling BJD has been shaken by the rising popularity of BJP in the State, the BJP leaders said the regional party was now resorting to violence against their political opponents in a desperate attempt to regain its grip over the people. - PTI

"The decision to hold silent

protest in a peaceful manner was taken to counter violent methods being adopted by the ruling BJD in the State," BJP Odisha unit vice president Samanta Mohanty said, referring to the egg attack on Oram's vehicle during his Kendrapara visit. The party activists also protested the egg attack earlier on Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh's vehicle in Bhubaneswar, he said.

Stating that violence has no place in a democratic set-up, the BJP leader said the frequent attacks on Central ministers by alleged "BJD goons" had posed a serious threat to the democracy.

Alleging that investigation into the Dalit woman's gangrape and killing in Kankalabhadra area of Dhenkanal was conducted in a shoddy manner, Mohanty said some more people were involved in the June 12 incident, but they were not booked by the police.

The BJP leader claimed that some people close to a senior BJD leader of the area were allegedly involved in the brutal gang rape and murder of the 45-year-old widow, but they were not held responsible.

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Sikh man arrested, handcuffed in US for carrying kirpan

WASHINGTON, June 18: A 33-year-old Sikh convert was handcuffed and arrested in the US for carrying a kirpan after a customer at a grocery store called police.

Harpreet Singh Khalsa, who was born as Justin Smith, has worn the ceremonial knife known as a kirpan every day since he converted to Sikhism nine years ago.

Khalsa, who owns a catering business, was quoted by The Baltimore Sun as saying that he has been stopped multiple times by police, and was arrested again last week outside a grocery store in Catonsville, Maryland, after a customer called police.

Khalsa said he explained to the officers that the knife is part of his religion, but they frisked him, took the kirpan, placed him in handcuffs and drove him to the local precinct.

Khalsa was later released without charges, after police "confirmed that the knife was a kirpan and part of his religion and not a threat to the community." Baltimore County Officer Jennifer Peach was quoted as saying.

"The officer did follow all Maryland and county laws properly in this incident. There is no exception to the deadly weapons laws at this time," Peach said.

She said the department is providing education and guidance to its officers about Sikhs and their culture.

"This incident clearly illustrates that this is an increasingly diverse country, and BCPD (Baltimore County Police Department) works hard to understand and respect the many cultures that call Baltimore County home," Peach said. Stressing on the importance of the kirpan, Khalsa said, "We don't consider it a knife, but a visual reminder to stand up to justice."

"The kirpan obligates a Sikh to the ideals of generosity, compassion and service to humanity," Harman Singh, legal director of the New York-based Sikh Coalition, was quoted as saying.

"It acts as a reminder to its bearer of a Sikh's solemn duty to protect others and promote justice for all," she said. Khalsa said he was shopping on Monday when police approached him, walked him out of the store and took his kirpan. - PTI

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Russia slams Trump's 'Cold War' policy on Cuba



President Donald Trump signs an executive order on a revised Cuba policy aimed at stopping the flow of US cash to the country's military and security services.

MOSCOW, June 18: Russia's foreign ministry today said it regretted US President Donald Trump's policy reversal on Cuba, calling it reminiscent of the Cold War era.

Trump vowed Friday to overhaul his predecessor Barack Obama's deal to restore ties with Cuba, promising instead to support the Cuban

people against Raul Castro's government.

Moscow said Trump's policy changes showed that "anti-Cuban discourse is still widely in demand. This cannot but cause regret."

It said that easing of sanctions under Obama was a "well-thought-out political decision in which there were no losers except marginal Castro opponents."

Russia said it was reaffirming its "unshakable solidarity with Cuba."

Cuban President Raul Castro visited Russia in 2015 while President Vladimir Putin visited the island on a tour of Latin America in 2014, meeting both the president and the revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, who died last year. - AFP

Taliban attack kills five Afghan cops, injures 15

KABUL, June 18: At least five Afghan policemen were killed and 15 people injured in a suicide bomb and gun attack by Taliban insurgents on the police headquarters in an eastern city today, authorities said.

The assault on the headquarters in Gardez, which was still continuing, was launched at 6:00 AM, said the regional police commander, Asadullah Shirzad. Five civilians were among the wounded.

One of the attackers was still holding out more than five hours after the coordinated assault began, Shirzad said.

"The first attacker blew up

his vehicle at the entrance to the headquarters, opening the way for two others who opened fire on security forces, and another suicide bomber was shot dead," he said.

The head of the police hospital, Dr Shir Mohammad, confirmed the casualty toll.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement.

Since the beginning of their spring offensive in late April,

the Taliban have been mounting lethal attacks on the positions of the Afghan army and police, who have lost several dozen men in recent weeks.

Foreign forces assisting the Afghans have also been targeted. Seven US soldiers were wounded yesterday in an insider attack at a military base by an Afghan soldier described as a "patriot" by the Taliban.

They are battling to topple the government of President Ashraf Ghani and oust the Western forces that support him. - AFP

Philippines eyes truce with Communist rebels amid siege

MANILA, June 18: The Philippine government said today that it would suspend offensives against Communist guerrillas to reciprocate a similar plan by the insurgents and allow troops to focus on quelling a bloody siege by Islamic State group-aligned militants that has dragged on for nearly a month in a southern city.

Despite the peace overtures, Philippine troops killed five Communist rebels in separate clashes in the south while the guerrillas stormed a police station and seized 12 rifles and pistols, two-way radios, laptop computers, jewelry and a patrol car, said police Chief Superintendent Cesar Hawthorne Binag, who condemned the attack. Criminal complaints will be filed against the attackers, he said.

The rebels claimed responsibility for the attack, saying in a statement that they waged the assault to punish Manila policemen for their alleged involvement in extortion and for failing to stop the spread of illegal drugs and gambling. - AFP

Three Communist guerrillas were killed in Davao Oriental province and two others died in Compostela Valley in

separate clashes with army troops Saturday, military officials said.

In the central town of Maasin, about 50 Communist rebels attacked a police station and seized 12 rifles and pistols, two-way radios, laptop computers, jewelry and a patrol car, said police Chief Superintendent Cesar Hawthorne Binag, who condemned the attack. Criminal complaints will be filed against the attackers, he said.

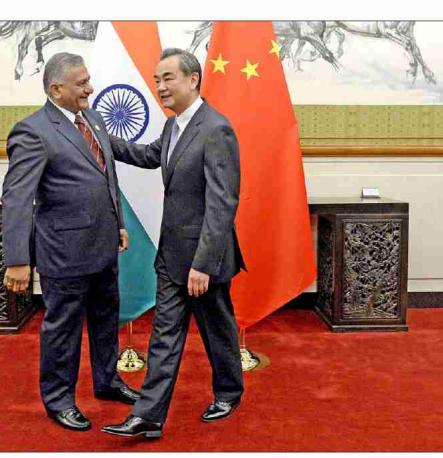
The rebels claimed responsibility for the attack, saying in a statement that they waged the assault to punish Manila policemen for their alleged involvement in extortion and for failing to stop the spread of illegal drugs and gambling. - AFP

The flowing of hills situated between Pedrogao Grande, Figueiro do Vinhos to the west and Castanheira de Pera to the north, which 24 hours before had glowed bright green with

eroded over either side of a national motorway for a distance of about 20 kilometres, as blackened trees leaned listlessly over charred soil.

A burnt-out car sat beside partly destroyed and abandoned houses, while a few metres away police in face masks surrounded the corpse of a man hidden under a white sheet.

Secretary of State for the Interior Jorge Gomes said 62 people burned to



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (R) greets Indian Minister of External Affairs Vijay Kumar Singh at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China on Sunday. - UNI

Huge forest fires kill 62 in Portugal

PENELA (Portugal), June 18: Ragging forest fires in Portugal have killed at least 62 people, most of whom burnt to death in their cars, the government said today, in one of the worst such disasters in recent history.

The fire broke out yesterday in the municipality of Pedrogao Grande in central Portugal, before spreading fast across several fronts.

Today, nearly 900 firefighters and 300 vehicles were still battling the blaze as scenes of devastation could be seen around the town.

"Unfortunately, this seems to be the greatest tragedy we have seen in recent years in terms of forest fires," said a visibly moved Prime Minister Antonio Costa, who declared three days of mourning starting today.

The flowing of hills situated between Pedrogao Grande, Figueiro do Vinhos to the west and Castanheira de Pera to the north, which 24 hours before had glowed bright green with

calypso plants and pine trees, were completely gutted by the flames.

A thick layer of white smoke hover-

death, mostly trapped in their cars engulfed by flames in the Leiria region.

"It is difficult to say if they were fleeing the flames or were taken by surprise," he said.

More than 50 people were injured, five critically, including one child and four firefighters.

"The number of fatalities could still rise," Costa said. "The priority now is to save those people who could still be in danger."

The European Union said it would provide firefighting planes following a request from Lisbon.

"France has offered three planes through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and they will be quickly sent to assist the local emergency efforts," EU Commission for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides said.

Portugal was sweltering under a severe heatwave over the weekend, with temperatures topping 40 degrees Celsius in several regions. - AFP

Thousands march for refugees in Madrid

KATHMANDU, June 18: Scores of people were injured, cows dead in Nepal fire

The central town of Maasin, about 50 Communist rebels attacked a police station and seized 12 rifles and pistols, two-way radios, laptop computers, jewelry and a patrol car, said police Chief Superintendent Cesar Hawthorne Binag, who condemned the attack. Criminal complaints will be filed against the attackers, he said.

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eroded over either side of a national motorway for a distance of about 20 kilometres, as blackened trees leaned listlessly over charred soil.

"No human being is illegal," the crowds chanted as they walked under scorching heat past clothes shops in central Madrid, holding banners that read "Brides not walls" and "Enough with excuses, no more barriers".

The protest, organised by dozens of NGOs including Amnesty International, comes after a few days before World Refugee Day on Tuesday.

It also comes as the deadline nears to relocate 160,000 refugees across Europe under a solidarity plan put in place in 2015 to try to remedy the continent's biggest-ever migration crisis and ease the burden on frontline states Italy and Greece.

By the start of June, though, fewer than 20,000 refugees had been relocated.

Spain, which had pledged to take in more than 17,300, was far only welcomed just over 1,300, according to Amnesty.

"Spain is doing absolutely nothing of what it should be doing, it's a disgrace – Spain

and Europe," said Carlos Diez, a 55-year-old secondary school teacher at the protest.

Also at the march was Christian Lele, a 27-year-old from Cameroon who entered Spain illegally in 2014 by climbing over a border fence between Morocco and the Spanish territory of Melilla – one of only two land borders between Africa and Europe. "I wanted to study, change my life, help my family," he said. "You can't live well (in Cameroon) with the life they pay you." Lele got to Morocco a year after he left his country by hitching rides across the continent. - AFP

Judge declares mistrial in Cosby sexual assault case

WASHINGTON, June 18: The judge in famed American stand-up comedian Bill Cosby's sexual-assault case declared a mistrial on Saturday, after a jury was unable to reach a verdict following six days of deliberations.

The 79-year-old Cosby, who had pleaded not guilty to drugging and molesting the former director of operations for Temple University's women's basketball team Andrea Constand, in 2004, will be released on bail. But the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office, in Pennsylvania, said it would retry the case. Efe news reported.

The case comes as part of the Syrian army's support to the "efforts of national reconciliation," according to the report. Although Daraa is within the four de-escalation zones agreed between Russia and Turkey, the Syrian regime has continued to attack this city, which is partially controlled by rebel forces, Efe news reported.

Daraa is where the Syrian protests against President Bashar al-Assad first erupted in March 2011, later escalating into a fully-fledged civil war that is still ongoing. - IANS

had touched Constand beneath her clothes after giving her pills. That testimony had been read to the jury earlier in the trial.

Cosby said in that decade-old testimony that he had given Constand a non-prescription allergy medication, Benadryl, to relax her because she said she was stressed. He added that the sexual contact was consensual.

The 44-year-old Constand, however, testified during the trial that the pills Cosby gave her at his home outside Philadelphia in 2004 left her powerless to fight off his advances. She also denied that the two had had a romantic relationship prior to that encounter.

The jury of seven men and five women had been deliberating since Monday, when attorneys for both sides gave their closing arguments. In its final statements, the prosecution repeatedly referred to a deposition in a 2005 civil case filed by Constand, in which Cosby testified that he

Cosby faces three counts of aggravated indecent assault. He is accused of assaulting Andrea Constand without her consent, assaulting her when she was unconscious and assaulting her using drugs to substantially impair her ability to consent in his home outside of Philadelphia in early 2004. - IANS

Yemen cholera toll reaches 1,054: WHO

SANA'A, June 18: The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that the toll in the cholera outbreak in Yemen has reached 1,054, with the total suspected cases reaching 151,000.

The outbreak has spread fast in 20 out of 22 Yemeni governorates in just seven weeks, since April 27, Xinhua news agency reported on Sunday. Last month, the WHO said the number of suspected cases could reach 300,000 in the next six months.

The organisation warned that the healthcare system in Yemen is on the verge of collapse as many hospitals have shut down because of the ongoing conflict, saying only 45 per cent of them are still operational and they are facing a shortage of supplies and staff.

Two thirds of the total population, around 19 million, need humanitarian and protection aid.

About 10.3 million people are close to famine and 14.5 million lack access to safe drinking water. - IANS

MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Conquer your bad habits or they will conquer you.

— ROB GILBERT

The Assam Tribune**Police accountability**

A police force which is dedicated and accountable to civil society is critical to the healthy functioning of a democracy. Disturbingly police accountability has nosedived in recent times in the maze of a growing police-criminal nexus besides uncalled-for political meddling and intrusion in the functioning of the police. This has served to erode public faith in the police in an unprecedented manner. Growing criminal tendencies of the men-in-uniform are also testified to by official data. As many as 320 police personnel including officials have been arrested in connection with various offences in the State since 2012. The ills eating into the vitals of the Police Department should worry all, including the Government. Indeed, much of the inefficiency and dehumanization of the police stems from its growing nexus with criminals besides politicization of the law-enforcers. While it would be wrong to accuse the entire police fraternity of maintaining unholy relations with criminal elements, it is a fact that the growing police-criminal-politician coalition is eroding the common man's faith in the police. Rather than an unconvincing negation which would find few takers, the situation demands a serious introspection by the police to see where it has gone wrong. Corruption and growing dehumanization of the police is as grave a challenge as is combating sophisticated crimes. For enjoying the people's faith, the police urgently needs to adopt a humane approach. Eroding public trust on the police invariably results in lack of people's cooperation with the police – something so essential for fighting any crime.

That the police is more used to toeing the lines of its political masters even when it means acting in gross violation of the law is a reality. However, putting the blame for this not squarely on political intervention cannot be acceptable because, as the enforcers of the law, the police have to act within the confines of the law and not for any considerations to the contrary. We certainly have upright officers – a rare and vanishing breed though – who refuse to mortgage their conscience to their political bosses while striving to uphold the law. The prevailing situation warrants a thorough reform of the police forces. Induction of manpower and modernization of the police are an urgent need, as our forces continue to be hamstrung by manpower crunch and the dearth of scientific training and logistics. But even a bigger challenge lies in doing away with corruption and growing dehumanization of the police, and restoring people's faith in it. Many of our police stations and outposts are poorly equipped and this seriously affects their functioning. Another imperative need is to separate law and order from routine investigations. The abysmal conviction rate is yet another concern, as a very high percentage of the arrested criminals manage to get away due to poor investigation and prosecution.

Hope from science

Currently humanity is confronted with a host of lethal problems that are challenging the very survival of the species. It is at such a moment that mankind has no other option but to look towards science and scientists to meet these ever increasing challenges. Take, for instance, the enormous pressures that are being placed on the food and water resources of the planet due to the population explosion. With arable land areas being a constant factor, agriculture scientists have so far succeeded in creating hybrid varieties of food grains that yield more per hectare than conventional methods, thereby staving off to some extent the spectre of widespread famines. Similarly, the water resources of the earth are being depleted at an exorbitant rate. Experiments are on only to produce water from the gases present in the atmosphere, but also to try and tap the vast oceans to convert potable water from saline sea-water. Since the onset of the industrial revolution in the 19th century, there has been unsustainable usage of fossil fuels leading to increased carbon footprints and consequent global warming. Even as nations attempt a concerted action to bring down rising temperatures, the world is suddenly confronted with sceptics who threaten to throw a spanner into the attempt. Fortunately, scientists are engaged in creating alternative solar and wind energy sources which sander elements can use to prevent an imminent cataclysm.

Nothing more illustrates this absolute dependence of mankind on science for survival than the field of medicine. Even as scientists in laboratories were experimenting with drugs to fight formerly incurable diseases like cancer, HIV and hepatitis C, and exploring into the secrets of new viruses such as the Zika, a deadly threat has come from unexpected quarters. The discovery of antibiotics in the last century had been hailed as a miracle which saved countless human lives from diseases that earlier claimed innumerable victims. But then the world suddenly discovered that the over-use of antibiotics had enabled viruses even for common ailments to develop resistance. The emergence of the so-called 'superbug' had put the men of medicine in a quandary because relatively minor cases of pneumonia failed to respond to antibiotics and therefore led to deaths. Scientists raced against time to combat this new menace and, apparently, have succeeded in the laboratory in developing an antibiotic that can combat superbugs which have developed resistance to nine other kinds of medicines. This wonder drug, developed from a strain of bacteria found in the soil, can reportedly cripple bacterial cells' inner machinery while leaving other tissues unscathed. Though it has so far not been tested on humans, researchers are optimistic that they have achieved a breakthrough. This is yet another salutary example of the reality that mankind will in future rely more and more on science for hopes of survival.

Farmers' suicide a national tragedy**■ Dr Kamala Kanta Saharia**

A farmer committing suicide is the biggest tragedy for the family, a great loss to the community and an insult to the nation. Politicizing the same by different political parties is heinous, highlighting it from commercial angle in media is terrible and the government not being able to stop such incidents is the biggest failure. India is basically an agricultural country. The farmers should have enjoyed the maximum luxury. About 54% of the total population are fully dependent on agriculture against the facts that (i) this sector contributes only 14% to the country's GDP; (ii) the average age of farmers is gradually increasing to 52 years; (iii) some 250 farmers are leaving this occupation daily; (iv) landless, marginal and small farmers constituting about 85% at present and (v) huge misappropriation and irregularities in funds surging every day. All the above five factors are dangerously poised. The situation is dragged from bad to worse by the successive governments' failure to frame out a uniform, progressive and solid agricultural policy in the country. The ad hoc schemes, temporary arrangements, provisional aids, one-time grants, some subsidies, minimum support price and adequate compensations might have been there from time to time to mitigate the acute crisis; but they failed to provide sustainability. Governments come to power by making several promises to them and

also chalk out the policies that ultimately fail to reach the farmers. The journey from farm to mouth, field to factory or farmer to fosterer is drastically derailed, dangerously deviated or destructively dwindled. It is the wrong philosophy of the government to continuously trust such experts who have remained in position for long and harmed the national interests in all opportunities coming their way by restressing compensation, irregularities and illegalities. Therefore, post-independence agriculture, in spite of many landmarks, failed to make itself remunerative. Prices of all other commodities shot up, but the farm gate price of agricultural products did not.

Only the market managers and the middlemen made enough money from agriculture. The last three years of the BJP-led NDA Government tried to see many changes in agriculture sector. Many innovative practices have been introduced like ensuring urea to the field instead of factories; immediate and improved compensation devices to farmers in case of disasters, new crop insurance policy, increased support price, construction of cold storages, transport facility, seed purchasing loans and so on. But, all these steps are vetoed by the traditional money lending nexus, which still prevails, mid-

brought land reforms and the famous milk strike of 1946 under the leadership of Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri brought the AMUL pattern in place. But, in Assam it started way back in 1894 on January 28 when 140 peasants were killed and another 150 injured by the British in a small place called Patharughat in erstwhile Darrang district of Assam. Although, many historians call it a battle, it was not so, as no peasant ever used any arm in that confrontation, which was later agreed to by none other than JD Anderson, the then Deputy Commissioner of Darrang. It was

diemian continue to go for bulk purchase the produce, delay the payments, indulge in false weighing and adulterations, etc. So, the farmers are left with no option but to fall into their trap.

The history of farmers' revolt in the country is quite old. Their revolts yielded ground-breaking changes in the system. Way back in 1913, agitations in Uttar Pradesh brought the first ever cooperative in the country; the strikes of 1920s

a peaceful protest against the unjustified hike in land revenue. But the incident even today cries to get national recognition as the first ever farmers' protest against the British rulers.

The post-independence agitations of farmers as such are almost always losing propositions. Still farmers agitate for their rights, privileges and the share of pride and glory. One of the very important features of farmers' strike in the country is that it is independent and not affiliated to any political party.

It is spontaneous. It surfaces due to the construed situation where the survival of the farmers is threatened. Politicians taking advantage afterwards and supporting such agitations are a different issue. As soon as the political colour was tagged to the farmers' agitations, they failed.

The present spurt in farmers' protest, especially in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, was also peaceful and democratically managed till the political parties joined them and maligned the whole spirit. However, the immediate good signal to the nation is that, a new generation of leadership among the farmers in the country has surfaced. The chain of events in different States kept the governments guessing. Two major reasons of the present peasant protest are (a) bumper production this year after the two con-

The farmers are not asking for immediate relief. The demands include policy change, infrastructure development, financial support, worthy pricing, enough procurement and market linkage.

Vishaka guidelines and need of awareness**■ Dr Sriparna Pathak**

Despite the economic strides India has made, the benefits of growth have not had an equal trickle-down effect across the genders in India. In 2016, India was ranked 108th on the annual Global Gender Gap index compiled by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum. In terms of gender equality, India ranked as low as 87th, despite a jump of 21 places as compared to 2015, largely due to the progress on the education front. In terms of employment, the picture is extremely bleak. Women's participation in India's workforce is miserable. Findings of the 68th round of National Sample Survey indicated that in 2011-12, 24.8 of every 100 women worked in rural area, while the corresponding number for men was 54.3. Women's participation in urban areas, as revealed by the same data set, was drastically low. For every 54.6 employed men, there were just 14.7 working women. While economic independence of women has been recognized as one of the most important measures to ensure gender equality, the picture

in India with respect to women's employment is extremely bleak. The causes definitely are attributable to the patriarchy that prevails in the Indian society.

The stranger fact is that out of the very few who do choose employment, the threat of workplace harassment still looms large. Harassment at workplace is neither new nor rare. Yet, it is neither reported nor discussed adequately. Harassment is that is meted out to women in work places is never acknowledged. The silence around harassment only helps accentuate it. The harassment that creeps into the workplace is an extension of the patriarchal violence to be found at society. At the very basic level it is a show of male dominance and the inherent inability to deal with women at par with men. Such forms of complete suppression run deep in the annals of patriarchal societies.

In order to deal with workplace harassment, and more particularly sexual harassment, the Supreme Court of India, in 1997 passed a landmark judgment in the Vishaka case,

laying down guidelines to be followed by establishments in dealing with complaints about sexual harassment. These guidelines were superseded in 2013 by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. As per the Act, "It shall be the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent or deter the commission of acts of sexual harassment and to provide the procedures for the resolution, settlement or prosecution of, facts of sexual harassment by taking all steps required." Four years after the Act came into existence, the picture has not turned any brighter. As per a survey conducted by the Indian Bar Association in 2017, 70% women said that they did not report sexual harassment by superiors because they feared the repercussions.

An IndiaSpend analysis of available data and conversations with working women showed there was an increase in reported cases of harassment to 2015, the year for which the latest data are available. Between 2014 and 2015, cases

of sexual harassment within office premises more than doubled – from 57 to 119 – according to the National Crime Records Bureau data. There has also been a 51% rise in sexual harassment cases at other places related to work – from 469 in 2014 to 714 in 2015.

In Assam, as revealed in a research article by Dr Parmita Dey of Cotton College, 55.56% of women respondents do not think they are treated at par with men in their work places. In this context, Dr Dey states: "The cultural socialization in a patriarchal society is so deep that even the educated women find themselves powerless. Men make themselves visible, while women remain invisible." The research also states that majority of women employees, i.e. 72.22% women workers are not aware of the Vishaka guidelines. Only 27.8% women employees knew about it.

A quick look at the websites of pre-primary educational institutes reveals that close to zero information is available on the issue of workplace harassment. Neither is there a mention of an internal complaints committee, which as stipulated by

Act is to exist to address issues of harassment. One of the few detailed posts on the guidelines is to be found on the website of IIT Guwahati, which indeed is a laudable step.

India has one of the youngest populations in the world. In order to reap benefits of the demographic dividend, India needs to not only educate its youth, but also educate its youth and women in particular of their rights, and how they cannot be trampled upon. The Act clearly states that "sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and her right to life and to live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business which includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment". Despite having laudable elaborate laws to deal with harassment, unless awareness creation is ensured, the onus of which lies with the universities of the country, gender equality shall remain a faraway dream for India and the Indian women shall continue to languish beneath the chains of patriarchy.

Letters to the EDITOR

Sir – There are many

Assamese people who have brought laurels to our State by dint of their rare talent. Some of them have even earned special reputation at the national level and become household names across the country. Music

director duo Jeetu and Tapan are among them. These exceptional musicians have worked in as many as 37 leading Hindi movies. They also worked in many other films of different languages like Assamese, Gujarati, Bangla, Bhojpuri, Dogri, etc. They have also arranged music in 28 television serials and countless documentaries, tele-films and video films. Perhaps they are the only living music directors who have worked with singers like Dr Bhupen Hazarika, Lata Mangeshkar, Kishor Kumar, Mohd Rafi, Manna Dey, Asha Bhosle, Mohendra Kapoor, Suresh Wadkar, Udit Narayan, Alka Yagnik, Kumar Sanu, Sadhana Sargan, Anup Jalota, Vinod Rathor, Kavita Krishnamurthy, Sonali Vajapeyee and so on.

Although they have contributed immensely to the mainstream Indian cinema, I do not think they have got the recognition they really deserve. We strongly feel

Recognition for Jeetu-Tapan

they are worthy of receiving the Padma awards, etc. Hence, I appeal to all ministries and departments concerned to forward their names for such national awards so that they can get national recognition during their lifetime. Yours etc., PRABHAT GOSWAMI, RG Barua Road, Guwahati.

Detention camps

Sir – It is quite absurd to believe that the detention camp which have been established to keep the doubtful Bangladeshi citizens for deportation to their home country have of late been home to many genuine Indian citizens as well. It has been observed that many citizens who have been declared as foreigners by tribunals possess genuine documents of citizenship. But due to lack of legal aid, etc., those people languish in the camps for an uncertain time. What has been more worrying is the fact that there have been instances where the parents are genuine Indian citizens whereas their sons or daughters have been declared as foreigners by the tribunals. Many of them are declared foreigners by default as they skip the show cause notices by tribunals as most of them are uneducated and lack legal knowledge but when they are pushed to the detention camps, only then they bring the proof of citizenship. However, it

involves a lengthy legal procedure to challenge the verdict by filing writ petitions in high courts, which demands both time and money. The Government should direct the district legal service authorities in the district courts to take a serious note on such cases and help such genuine Indian citizens by providing free legal aid. Yours etc., SHAJID KHAN, Tangla College, Charkabori, Pandu.

Uniform for Cottonians

Sir – Through your esteemed daily, I want to attract the attention of the authority concerned regarding the introduction of uniform dress code for the Cottonians. I am for the introduction of a suitable uniform for the Cottonians so that they have a unique identity. Without uniform the economic differences of the students get highlighted. We have seen the benefit of having uniform in almost all colleges of our State. I think it is high time to introduce uniform in the new Cotton University from the very beginning of its journey. Yours etc., PRANAB KR BOSE, Gauripuri, Dhubri.

Loan waiver

Sir – The BJP-led State governments in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are on a spree in waiving farm loans completely to appease the

farmers who are engaged in fierce movements. The farmers in other States like Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan are also clamouring for loan waivers. But, if the government goes with such loan waivers, it is estimated that almost Rs 3 to 4 lakh crore will have to be waived. This act will have very adverse effects on the banking system and our economy. Farm loans waiving means huge loss and increased NPAs. The farmers should realize that loan must be repaid at cost and they should think twice while availing loans from banks. Banks are not responsible for any damage to crops. Yours etc., GAURIM KUMAR CHAKRABORTY, Pandu.

Presidential poll

Sir – The election of a new President of India is due in July. Considering the fact that it is a vast country with a multitude of ethnicity and political identities (and also considering the mindset of the people), it is very difficult to zero in on someone who can be perceived to be unbiased or neutral. Therefore, taking into account the cultural richness and philosophical wisdom of this ancient country, a scholarly person of unassailable integrity must be chosen by a unanimous decision of both the ruling as well as the Opposition parties. At this point of history, India is

passing through a lot of changes in its socio-political life. So, only a non-political person will be fit to represent the country as its constitutional head. The Indian politicians, all said and done, unfortunately are incapable to rise to the level of a statesman. Yours etc., SANJIB SABHAPANDIT, Mother Teresa Road, Guwahati.

GST anomaly

Sir – I would like to invite the attention of the Prime Minister and the Union Finance Minister to the fact that the limit of exemption and composition scheme of Rs 20 lakh and Rs 75 lakh are contrary to the IT Act, Section 44AD, where a turnover up to Rs 2 crore does not mandate to maintain accounts books but the dealer is required to maintain the same for GST purpose. A turnover up to Rs 50 lakh has no IT liability whereas in GST, a turnover of over Rs 20 lakh attracts liability. These two Acts are contrary to each other and do not help a small trader. These anomalies are required to be corrected for the benefit of the small traders. Yours etc., NIRMAL AGARWAL, Guwahati.

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

Man-made factors mostly behind frequent flash floods: Report

R DUTTA CHOWDHURY

GUWAHATI, June 18: With floods becoming a regular feature in Guwahati city, making life miserable for the people, a report of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), prepared in collaboration with All India Disaster Management Institute, has outlined some of the key issues causing such havoc and pointed out that most of the reasons are man-made.

The report pointed out that most of the causes of such disasters in the city are man-made, which include lack of drainage, unmanaged solid waste, reclamation of low-lying lands and unchecked and unplanned urban growth, hill cutting, etc. Another reason is the increased intensity of rainfall occurring in a very short duration. Back flow of the water from River Brahmaputra due to blockage in the drainage system through Bharali, Khanajan, etc., also causes floods frequently every monsoon. The Bharali basin is the most flood-prone

area in the region. This is probably because most of the drains fall on the upstream side of River Bharali. The river is at a higher level than the level of the drains leading to the retarded outlet of the water. Moreover, there is heavy siltation and dumping of garbage in the Bharali.

The report pointed out that human intervention and degradation in the watershed region above Guwahati also aggravated the problem. The most serious environmental problem in the hilly regions now is deforestation. Its effects, if unchecked, are sure to bring about permanent ecological harm with dramatic increase in the flash flood problem in Guwahati city. Deforestation on hill slopes leads to loosening of soil, creating massive erosion along the hill edges. Excessive rain, too, adds to the woes and it carries this loose soil down to the drain channels and causes silting in the city.

Guwahati city faces a severe problem of landslide during monsoons, for which rain is the

primary reason, but the triggering cause is excessive cutting along hills and encroachment on them by migrants. Earthquakes too add to the problem as the entire NE region falls under seismic Zone-V, the report

Is, swamps and marshes around the city has also reduced the retention capacity of the drainage system, causing the flood level to rise. The desire to have a better life and to earn good fortune lures mi-

grants from villages and towns towards cities, Guwahati is fac-

ing a major threat from this problem as a big portion of the migrant population illegally occupies hillocks to build their shacks. They exert pressure on the already tottering infra-structure of the city and make the flood mitigation process a difficult task.

Guwahati city faces the

burden of unplanned road building in sensitive eco-zones comprising hillocks, forests and wetlands. Because of unprecedented growth in the population of the city, construction of roads for trans-

portation had become neces- sary. Since there had been very little concern for natural environment in the process, the severe effect of this neg- ligence is now showing up in the form of frequent flash floods and landslides in and around Guwahati.

Migration has been a continuous phenomenon for Guwa-

hati city in the past few dec- ades. Economic opportunities along with many social and political reasons cause migration of people to the city. Better urban services as compared to other rural areas such as education and medical facil-

ities, economic opportunities

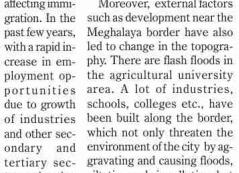
but also causes problems of water-logging and flash flood down the slope. There is a need for regulating cutting of trees and encroachment in forest areas.

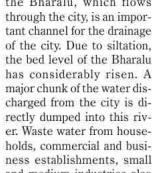
One of the important tributaries of the Brahmaputra, the Bharali, which flows through the city, is an important channel for the drainage of the city. Due to siltation, the bed level of the Bharali has considerably risen. A major chunk of the water discharged from the city is directly dumped into this river. Waste water from households, commercial and business establishments, small and medium industries also end up in the Bharali River, which gets discharged into the Brahmaputra. Even in the upper reaches, the waste wa-

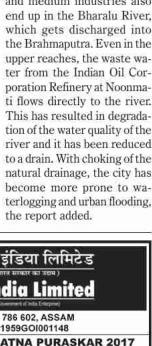
ter from the Indian Oil Corporation Refinery at Noonma- ti flows directly to the river. This has resulted in degradation of the water quality of the river and it has been reduced to a drain. With choking of the natural drainage, the city has become more prone to waterlogging and urban flooding, the report added.

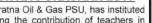


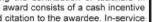


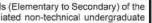


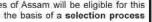




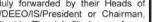


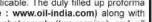


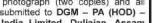


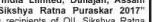


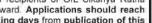




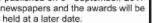


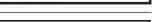






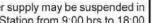




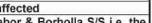


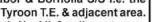


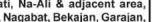


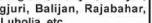




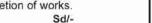


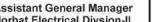


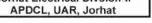








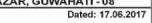




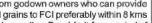


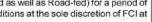


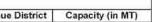




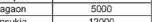








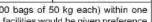


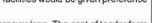


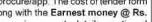


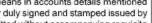


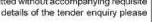








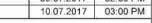




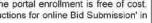




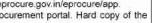




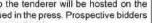


















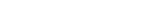
















<img alt="A flooded



Villagers affected by the floods of Hungora river protesting at Nowbocha in Lakhimpur district, on Saturday - UB Photos

ABSU expresses serious concern over Darjeeling situation

CORRESPONDENT

KOKRAJHAR, June 18: The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) on Saturday expressed its serious concern over the present situation in Darjeeling area of West Bengal.

"The outburst of tension in Darjeeling area is nothing but an unwarranted outcome of the autocratic rule of the Bengal Government as well as the Government of India's utter negligence towards the problem", said ABSU president Promod Boro in a press meet held at the Bodola House here.

Condemning the unprovoked action on the part of the Bengal police and their indiscriminate 'torture' of freedom fighters,

civilians on the streets of Darjeeling, the ABSU president also alleged that the recovery of the so-called lethal weapons from the office of the GJM as shown in the media footage was nothing but a planted act of the Bengal police. The torching of the vehicles of the media house was a part of conspiracy hatched by the Bengal police to blame the GJM, he alleged.

He also said that the demands of GJM are historically legitimate, correct and justified. "As the member of the National Federation for New States (NFNS), we express our support and solidarity towards the Gorkha peoples' movement for Gorkhaland", Boro said.

At the same time, the ABSU urged the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha leadership to lead the movement through democratic, peaceful and non-violent means and appealed to both the agitating leadership and the Bengal administration to restrain themselves from violence and maintain peace in the area.

The ABSU further urged the Government of India's immediate intervention into the matter and concede to the Gorkha people's demand for a Gorkhaland State for permanent peace in the region. "We demand immediate intervention of the Government of India on the matter of Gorkhaland movement as it was a pre-

poll commitment of the BJP and the central committee of BJP should clear its official stand on the issue," Promod Boro said.

Reiterating the Bodoland State demand, the ABSU president said if the Central and State Government failed to resolve the Bodoland issue immediately, then the movement groups will be compelled to launch a series of agitation programmes like the indefinite national highway and railway blockade programme from September next. The press meet was also attended by B Sunthagura, chairman NDFB (P) and Garjan Marshahary, Deputy chief convenor PJCABM.

One run over

CORRESPONDENT

UDALGURI, June 18: One unidentified person, aged about 40, was run over by the Tezpur bound Up passenger train near the railway gate of Udaguri railway station at about 2.00 pm on Saturday.

Meanwhile, an eyewitness told mediapersons that the deceased was seen jumping in front of the running train and his head was completely cut off by the train. The railway police from Ranagpara later took the body into custody and sent it for post mortem, the Udaguri railway station sources informed.

OBITUARY

Ashok Pait

S I L A P A T H A R, June 18: Ashok Pait, a former president of Silapathar MMK, former TMPK leader breathed his last on June 13 at 4 am at his Silapathar residence. He was 50.

He was a member of the Dhemaji District Regulated Marketing Board, the organising secretary of Sammilan Gana Shakti, and the former president of the Kujan Gaon Panchayat. He was associated with social, political and cultural activities in his life time. He involved in the autonomy movement of the Mising Autonomous Council.

Several organisations like the Takan Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), Takan Mising Mine Kebang (TMMK) and Mising Mimang Kebang (MMK) have condoled his demise.

He leaves behind his wife, a son, four daughters, and a host of relatives.

Abdur Rahman

CORRESPONDENT

RANGIYA, June 18: Abdur Rahman, a resident of Solamari village of the locality died on Saturday at his own residence. He was 70.

He was a retired Post Master and was associated with number of local social, cultural and religious organisations. He leaves behind his wife, four sons, a daughter, relatives and well wishers.

Cleanliness drive under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

CORRESPONDENT

TEZPUR, June 18: The District Legal Cell Authority, Sonitpur and the District Health Society, Sonitpur conducted a cleanliness drive programme on Saturday under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan at the Kanakata Civil Hospital here.

Audi Bhattacharya, secretary, District Legal Cell Authority, Dr Durlob Ch Saikia, District Surveillance Officer, Dr Nilshik Das, Superintendent, Kanakata Civil Hospital, DIG, SSB Frontier Division Tezpur and its jawans, students of Nursing School, employees of the Kanakata Civil Hospital and the common

people of Tezpur town participated in the cleanliness drive.

Inaugurating the programme, Dr Durlob Ch Saikia said that Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a national programme which was officially launched on October 2, 2014 at Rajghat, New Delhi, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "It is India's largest-ever cleanliness drive with three million government employees, and especially school and college students from all parts of India, participating in the campaign. The objective of Swachh Bharat is to reduce open defecation through the construction of individual, cluster and community toilets.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan will also take the initiative of establishing an accountable mechanism of monitoring latrine use. The Government is aiming to achieve an Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by October 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, by constructing 12 million toilets in rural India," Dr Saikia said adding that the Government of India restructured the Comprehensive Rural Sanitation Programme and launched the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) which was later renamed as 'Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan', by the then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

Solution to burning problems demanded

A CORRESPONDENT

TIHUA, June 18: Expressing strong resentment against the alleged negligence towards solving some burning problems of Tihu town by the concerned authority, the Senior Citizen Sammelan of Tihu recently held a discussion with Jupiter Das, Chairman of the Tihu Town Committee and submitted memorandum to the chairman

and to the Circle Officer of Tihu separately which was handed over to Gagan Sarma, senior officer of the office in absence of Pami Brahma, Circle Officer, Tihu. The memorandum demanded construction of public toilets, cleaning of the drains for solving the waterlogging problem, digging out the outlet to Tihu river in connection with the drainage system and repair of pitiable roads.

Meanwhile, the road from Gandhi Bhawan to Tihu railway line passing by the BED College (Ward No-4) is in a very dilapidated state. Crater-sized potholes have come up near the BED College. The residents along this road have strongly demanded repairing of this road as early as possible to prevent gully problems and repair of pitiable roads.

Bimal Ch Goswami: a tribute

Bimal Ch Goswami

Bimal Chandra Goswami was a true pioneer of adventure activities in the North East. Bimal, as we called him, was the son of Ayodhya Prasad Goswami and Kamala Goswami and was born at Golaghat on December 3, 1959. He was the third child among four siblings.

I met Bimal when I joined Assam Mountaineering Association (AMA) in the year 1979, he was a year senior to me at AMA. From the very first day we were friends. For Bimal, AMA was everything, he did everything possible to see AMA grow and prosper.

At the time when our other friends and members left to look for lucrative opportunities and careers, Bimal stood by AMA as if his roots were actually

there. He loved AMA from the core of his heart, the plot of land on which the AMA office stands now in the corner of Nehru Stadium Complex in Guwahati was allotted by the authorities after a long struggle by him.

Bimal was the man who first initiated that we organise a adventure programme for children. Thus we organised and started the first ever Children Adventure Orientation Camp in India, maybe in the year 1991, for children aged between 5 and 12 years. Later, again with his initiative we organised a high altitude trekking expedition to Sandakphu (12000 ft.) for children, that was again a first of its kind maybe in the world. Bimal with help from his friends successfully organised the Gorichen II expedition (1993) and Associate Member, IMF (2006-2009).

We have lost a great friend and the people in general have lost an efficient adventure sports organiser. He leaves behind two beautiful daughters and his wife. Farewell my friend till we meet again.

- Atanu Phukan

Compensation for farmers, arrest of spurious seed suppliers demanded

CORRESPONDENT

BARPETA, June 18: The Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, Barpeta district committee has demanded adequate compensation to farmers who suffered heavy losses due to chaffy crops, and arrest of traders who supplied spurious seeds and also a ban on outsider suppliers dealing with such seeds.

A group of KMSS activists gathered in front of the office of the Deputy Commissioner here on Saturday morning and demonstrated in support of their demands. They shouted slogans against the Agriculture Minister of the State in particular and the State Government in general.

Leaders of the organisa-

tion, Nirjan Roy and Dandani Barman while addressing the gathering blamed the Government for its anti-farmer stand and failure to compensate the poor farmers for their heavy and irreparable losses.

Talking to mediapersons at the venue of the demonstration, Hussain Muhammad Sahjahan, convenor of the Ganjamukti Sangram Samiti alleged that the Agriculture Minister and the administration have established an unhealthy relationship with clever businessmen responsible for such a situation of the farmers and hence taken a soft stand towards them. He claimed that an amount of Rs 22,000 is required to cultivate a bigha of paddy and the Government should pay at least this amount as compensation.

The organisation submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner narrating the entire incident. They stated that APC 837 variety of paddy, the cultivation of which has led to the misery of farmers in the district was supplied by Advanta company. It was marketed by Krishi Kalyan Beej Bhandar, a Barpeta-based seed retailer. They demanded stern action against both of them.

Vandalised: An irate mob vandalised the office of the Howli Town Committee in Barpeta district and the NRC Kendra located in a room of the office building and also tore some important papers. However, the police brought the situation under control before the mob could inflict further damage. Meanwhile, the town committee has lodged an FIR with the Howli Police Station.

Meritorious students feted

CORRESPONDENT

ONGC donates Rs 17.12 crore for Yamuna conservation

ANN Service

SIVASAGAR, June 18: The ONGC involved in hydrocarbon exploration and production in Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat districts of Assam had donated Rs 17.12,62,600 under its Corporate Social Responsibility project for preservation and cleaning of the historic Yamuna canal of the Ahom era surrounding the famous Shiva doul in Sivasagar. This was stated in a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Sivasagar by the ONGC authority.

The letter said that the ONGC has secured the 4th position in the Higher Secondary Arts Examination along with the heads of nine schools were warmly felicitated.

The secretary of KTC Chandra Gogoi, a total of 97 meritorious students who passed the HSLC examination with flying colours including Sugandhi Neog of Bopasbari Kamaraiga who secured the 4th position in the Higher Secondary Arts Examination along with the heads of nine schools were warmly felicitated.

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Seven get rigorous imprisonment for life in murder case

CORRESPONDENT

BARPETA, June 18: The court of the District and Session Judge here sentenced seven convicts to rigorous imprisonment for life after finding guilty in a murder case.

Abul Hussain, son of Rafet Ali and a resident of Khandakapara Bhabla under Barpeta police station in Barpeta district, was attacked by a group at around 12 noon on October 24, 2001, with sharp weapons. While victim Abul Hussain sustained serious injuries, two others, Arfatun and Jibu Ali – who tried to prevent the attack – sustained injuries.

Abul Hussain was rushed to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital where he succumbed to injuries after 27 days.

Relatives of Abul Hussain filed an FIR following which the District and Session Judge of Barp-

eta commenced the judgment in 2004 acquitting the accused on the ground of technical fault in the report of the medical officer. The petitioner then approached the Gauhati High Court which also upheld the decision of the Session Court.

Later, the petitioner moved the Supreme Court. A two-judge bench of the SC nullified the technical fault in the report of the medical officer and questioned why the statements of the eye witnesses were not given due importance and taken into consideration. The bench referred the case to the Session Court for re-examination.

On May 24 this year, the District and Session Judge heard the matter and passed its verdict on June 16. It also fined the accused Rs 10,000 each failing which they will have to undergo another six months of imprisonment.


**WEATHER
NORTHEAST**

Forecast for North Eastern States: Moderate rains/ thundershower likely to occur at most places over Assam and Meghalaya and at many places over Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

Warning: Heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places over Assam and Meghalaya from June 18, 20, 21 and 22 over Assam and Meghalaya on June 19 and 22 and over Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, 20, 21 and 22. Heavy to very heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places over Assam and Meghalaya on June 20 and 21.

Temperature:

	Max (°C)	Min (°C)
Dibrugarh	28.2	23.6
Tezpur	28.5	23.6
Silchar	28.3	23.9
Dibrugarh	30.0	24.4
Jorhat	31.8	24.4
N Lakhimpur	27.5	23.5
Sibsinghar	27.5	23.5
Imphal	25.4	22.0
Itanagar	27.4	21.8
Aizawl	27.4	17.8
Agartala	33.2	26.0
Kohima	28.0	18.0
Pasighat	26.7	23.0
Cherrapunji	22.5	17.8

(Cherrapunji)

IPFT creating trouble in Tripura: CPCM

AGARTALA, June 18: The CPI (M) on Sunday alleged the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) there might be trying to create trouble at the behest of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

"Calling railway and national highway blockade for indefinite period demanding Tripuraland is a serious issue and the IPFT has been backing from the PMO itself," said party secretary Bipan Dhar.

NC Debbarma who was suspended from the party for taking bribe from the BJP in the run up to the Simant-Tanakari by-election, has been dancing in the BJP's tune to create unrest in the State, he said while addressing a press conference here.

He said even as the BJP state unit president Biplob Deb has opposed backing Tripuraland demand of IPFT, there might be Dibrbarma's understanding with NC Debbarma for political gain.

Noting "Tripura's identity will be jeopardised if Tripuraland demand is achieved, Dhar sharply criticized Deb for turning gun at the CPI (M) led Left Front government.

"Biplob Deb doesn't know the State's political history - separate statehood demand was raised two years after CPI (M) coming to power (1978). Now the IPFT, a mass of outworn NLFT has been demanding Tripuraland," he pointed out. - Correspondent

Death toll rises to 6 in Meghalaya landslides

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, June 18 : The death toll in yesterday's landslide in two districts of the state has climbed to six with three more bodies being recovered from under the debris.

A magisterial inquiry has been instituted by the Ri-Bhoi district to probe into the construction of dwelling units for labourers on a steep hill, Gotmare said.

Another incident the body of a child was recovered at Mawjoring in East Khasi Hills district. Altogether nine persons were injured in the landslides and are recovering in different hospitals.

A road at Byrnihat was also damaged today due to the rain. Incessant rain over the past 48 hours has caused the landslides.

NGOs seek better connectivity at Dainadubi

CORRESPONDENT

TURA, June 18: NGOs at Dainadubi in North Garo Hills of (NGH), including the GSU, AAYE, ADE, AWYU, PJAC and FKJGP have sought for better network connectivity and more network towers in and around the Dainadubi areas.

The demand comes in the wake of the recent kidnapping of a 6-year-old which the NGOs believed could have been avenged in the area. "Most of the areas around Dainadubi, including Gairong, Dangkong, Chima Impel still have no proper telephone connectivity. The kidnappers used this knowledge and made off with the boy as they knew there was no way the parents could have contacted

the police," said Sandro Marak, general secretary of Public Joint Action Committee (PJAC).

The NGOs have also decided to meet the Deputy Commissioner of NGH for a permanent solution to the perennial problem.

GJM extends support to Gorkha agitation

AIZAWL, June 18: The Mizoram branch of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) has extended its support to the demand for Gorkha State in northern West Bengal, which has been reviewed following the West Bengal Government forcing Bengali as a compulsory subject for the school students in Darjeeling.

"The enforcement of Bengali as a compulsory subject in all schools under the Gorkha Territorial Administration is an attempt to oppress the language and identity of the Gorkhas," the GJM Mizoram branch said in a statement today.

Extending its support to the Gorkhas State demand, the GJM Mizoram said "Gorkha State is the Constitutional rights and the ultimate political goal of the Gorkhas in India, which must be solved in the political level soon." - Correspondent

CBI probe demanded

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, June 18: Welcoming the termination of services of MKR Pillai as consultant at PHQ Kohima, the Nagaland Public Rights Advocacy and Action Forum (NPRAAF) has appealed to the Nagaland Chief Minister to order a CBI probe to unearth the entire corrupt nexus and put behind bars all involved in the scam.

In a statement, the NPRAAF said removing him from the contractual service alone has not solved the larger issue of corruption.

"The people of Nagaland are closely watching the episode as it unfolds. The Chief Minister's seismic action will earn him

The victims were from two families and were residing at makeshift camp at the site when the landslide hit on Saturday morning while they were asleep.

A magisterial inquiry has been instituted by the Ri-Bhoi district to probe into the construction of dwelling units for labourers on a steep hill, Gotmare said.

Another incident the body of a child was recovered at Mawjoring in East Khasi Hills district. Altogether nine persons were injured in the landslides and are recovering in different hospitals.

A road at Byrnihat was also damaged today due to the rain. Incessant rain over the past 48 hours has caused the landslides.

BSF personnel on a rescue operation in south Mizoram on Sunday. - Photo: Newmai News

NORTH EAST

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017



BSF personnel on a rescue operation in south Mizoram on Sunday. - Photo: Newmai News

Flood creates havoc in Mizoram

NEWMAL NEWS

AIZAWL, June 18: Even as the flooding of Khawthlangtupui River in Tlabung sub-division area in south Mizoram's Lunglei district bordering Bangladesh is gradually receding, many dwelling houses are still under water.

A Tlabung based journalist Vanalhatriappa Khangte said that at least 30 others were swept away and over 70 others were badly damaged in Tlabung sub-division area by the flash flood caused by incessant rains since June 12.

The water level has crossed some feet above the danger mark. Khangte said that at least 9 houses in Tlabung town were swept away and 13 others

have been damaged by the flash floods. Over 228 dwelling houses in the town were submerged during the peak of the flood, he added.

Over 1500 families within Tlabung sub-division have been affected by the flood caused by overflowing of Khawthlangtupui river. Meanwhile, several families have been evacuated to the community halls, school buildings, and government buildings, he also said.

While some of the affected families have returned to their houses, many are still staying in community halls as

their houses need to be repaired.

The State health department and 159 battalions of Border Security Force (BSF) who are guarding the border took out rescue operation and provided free medical aids to the flood victims.

The flooding of Khawthlangtupui river also wreaked havoc in Tlabung area disrupting power and water supply. Many educational institutions have also been closed for one week as either being submerged by water or occupied by the evacuated families. The flash flood preceded by landslides also resulted in the death of ten people in the area.

New insurance scheme in Manipur soon

CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL, June 18: The Manipur Government is planning to introduce a health insurance scheme to provide financial assistance to those who cannot afford medical treatment. According to Chief Minister, N Biren Singh this scheme will help improve healthcare service for the rural people in the State.

He was speaking at the North East Health Conference Building Ecosystem for Quality Healthcare Delivery' organised by Confederation of Indian Industry held here recently.

Biren Singh said that India has witnessed a mark improvement on healthcare sector under bold leadership of Narendra Modi. "We expect more development in the years to come," he said.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that the Central Government gave its nod for setting up a 100-bed Cancer Hospital and 60-bed Mental Hospital in the State.

Highlighting some of the recently taken initiatives in the healthcare sector, Chief Minister said that various drugs items are made available at subsidised rates in 26 State-run hospitals and 57 notified medical test would be done free of cost in Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS), seven district hospitals, 17 community health centres, 85 primary health centres and 9 urban primary health centres.

In a release, BAN took strong exception to the PHQ "still being under the spell of Pillai", by citing statements made by DGP LL Doungel who "was trying to shield Pillai" by praising him as "quite competent and helpful etc."

It also slammed PHQ for being clueless about the Nagaland Police truck found in Pillai's home in Kerala. It further termed the suo moto case taken up by State Vigilance Commission (SVC) on appointment of Pillai as "totally unsatisfactory" and an "eye-wash" because SVC ignored the entire gamut of Pillai's role in shady deals, contracts/supplies awarded under the table without NIT.

Lauding the IT Department raids on firms owned by Pillai in Kerala and Karnataka, the Business Association of Nagas (BAN) questioned the IT Department in Nagaland under whose nose money was being siphoned off for decades.

and the Government credibility which is long lost," it stated.

The NPRAAF stated that there was no need of consultants in the first place, and all there was a genuine need of consultant, the Government should have recruited former IPS and NPS officers from Nagaland through an open interview and not directly appointed corrupt former police constable who rose to the rank of ASP through manipulation.

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Asking the IT Department



Deserted Senapati Bazar during a 12-hour bandh called by UNC in Imphal on Sunday. - Photo: Newmai News

Five smugglers nabbed

NEWMAL NEWS

SHILLONG, June 18: The Border Security Force (BSF) along with a team of the Meghalaya police raided a house near the Indo-Bangla border at Shella, East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya and seized a gold bar worth over Rs 3.15 lakh and apprehended five individuals in this connection.

The arrested persons are Wali Ul Miraz (31), Imran Khan (27), Shaharuddin (28), Sirajul Haque (30) all hailing from Barpeta Assam and Sido-Rongshon of Shella. He further said, "The sudden increase in smuggling activities have put BSF troops more on the toes. We are determined to foil any ill design of the smugglers on the international border".

Apprehended persons and all the seized items handed over to concerned department for further legal action.

Meanwhile, heavy rain has also disturbed the administrative toll of few BSF outposts in Purnanagar, Sheila, Thariaghata, Betgora, Omikhowa, Mukamehara areas in East Khasi Hills district, Barnambari, Kachaudogri in South West Khasi Hills district, Sonai in West Jaintia Hills Dist and Angratoli in South Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. Flood like situation at places has caused some damage to the Indo-Bangladesh Border Fence (IBBF) at many places.

UDP criticises Meghalaya Energy Corporation

CORRESPONDENT

TURA, June 18: Despite the United Democratic Party (UDP) coming down heavily on the incompetence of Meghalaya Energy Corporation Limited (MeECL) due to absence of electricity for the last couple of months at Rari village.

"This does not make sense. In this modern age how long does it take for a transformer to be transported to the village and set up? Can't they understand the plight of school-going children at a time when education in Garo Hills is near the

bottom of the country? This reeks of ignorance and incompetence," said Anand Marak, the joint secretary of UDP.

The party members have now decided to take up the matter with the district administration and have also stated that they will seek an inquiry of months at Rari village.

Around 40 households of the village have been without electricity for the last couple of months despite an NOC from the MeECL authorities for the replacement of the transformer.

"They were promised the new transformer on May 19

and it has been more than 20 days since then but there has been no change in the situation being faced by the villagers," added NIGH president Youth Wing, Chenshirth Marak while also questioning the local MLA, Brigadier Marak on his silence on the matter.

Interestingly when an opinion was sought from the Additional Chief Engineer (ACE) on the delay, the ACE denied even knowing the problem existed as the information was yet to reach him. He also said that once the matter was raised to him, it would join a queue of pending

requests for transformer change and could take months, even years for electricity to restored going by the pathetic record of the MeECL in the state.

"We just cannot sit idle knowing that they are ruining careers through their inept handling of affairs. If required we will even file a case in the court against this incompetence. This cannot be an example of a progressive state when basic electric supply is in such tatters. The Government should haul themselves up for this and introspect," added Anand Marak.

Cong will form next Govt in Nagaland: NPCC chief

KOHIMA, June 18: The Congress has claimed that it would form the next government in Nagaland as Naga people are "not happy" with the ruling Naga People's Front (NPF)-led DAN Government for "allowing" BJP to grow in the State.

"Naga people are not happy with NPF-led DAN Government for allowing BJP to grow on its shoulder thereby threatening the religion and identity of Naga people", Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) president K Therie said.

"We are confident that people determined to form a change and they will deliver judgement very soon," he said.

On the statement of Chief Minister

Shurhozelie Liezetsu that "Congress era is over in the State", Therie said it is too early to say that as Congress is the only political party against all BJP's political wings in the State.

"We also expect a transparency and anti-BJP vote to turn in our favour in the 2018 elections," he said adding that the fate of NPF and BJP would be something like "Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall and all the King's horses and all the King's men could not put Humpty-Dumpty together again".

"We are confident that people determined to form a change and they will deliver judgement very soon," he said.

On the proposal of Chief Minister



Chief of Molom village Latasheh Kuki speaking at an outreach programme in Dimapur on Saturday. - PIB

GST rollout on July 1; two slabs for lottery

NEW DELHI, June 18: The GST Council today unanimously agreed on July 1 rollout of the goods and services tax (GST) despite some pending issues, with Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley saying that India does not have the "luxury of time" to defer implementation of the new indirect tax regime.

"The GST Council categorically agreed on the implementation of GST from July 1," Jaitley told reporters here after the penultimate meeting of the Council before the single pan-India GST is officially rolled out on the midnight of June 30, replacing the existing myriad Central and State levies on both goods and services.

"A number of companies and trades have been raising the issue of the lack of their own preparedness. We do not have the luxury of time to defer implementation of GST," he said, announcing that the next meeting of the Council headed by him would be held on June 30.

Regarding the government's prepar-

edness, Jaitley noted that over 80 per cent registered entities have already received their provisional GST registrations.

"If you take from the old system of registration, then there are 80.91 lakh assesses, of whom some will get excluded. Registrations are going on satisfactorily and 65.6 lakh have already taken provisional registration, which is good enough to file returns," he said, adding that some new trades will come under the GST for the first time.

In this connection, the Finance Minister said that the Council has allowed businesses a relaxation of time for the first two months (July-August) for filing their returns. These would also need to submit only a simple declaration initially, and would have time to furnish the exact "invoice-by-invoice data" later.

The GST Council today also decided on a two-slab structure for taxing lottery tickets, which Jaitley said proved to be a contentious issue.

While State-run lotteries will be taxed at 12 per cent under the GST, State-authorised private lotteries will attract tax at the highest rate of 28 per cent.

The Council deferred a decision on e-way bills due to lack of consensus, which means States which have an e-way bill structure in place can continue with it, while others are exempted.

Briefing reporters here during a pause in the Council's 17th meeting, Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Yamalama Ramakrishnudu said that he had requested that textiles and fertilisers be exempted from the GST.

He also said that commercial tax from all border posts will be removed from July 1 with the implementation of the GST.

Ramakrishnudu also said that the Council turned down all the other representations for revision in rates, after it had agreed to revision for a number of items at its previous meeting here on June 11. — IANS



Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs, etc., Arun Jaitley chairing the 17th meeting of GST Council, in New Delhi on Sunday. Minister of State for Finance Santosh Kumar Gangwar and Revenue Secretary Dr Hasmukh Adhia are also seen. — PTI

Seminar on GST held

GUWAHATI, June 18: The North East Automobile Dealers Association (NEADA), under the aegis of All India Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA), conducted a seminar on "Readiness for business in GST era" at a hotel here yesterday.

The seminar was attended by 200 dealer personnel from all over the Northeast.

The President of FADA, John Paul and Joint Commissioner of Taxes, Assam, Rajesh Agarwal, also graced the event.

During day-long programme,

experts conducted sessions on various aspects of GST and its impact on business. In the interactive session with the Joint Commissioner of Taxes, Assam, Rajesh Agarwal, the dealers gave their feedback to be put forward to the GST Council.

Another banker said "they will also decide on appointment of insolvency professional (IP) who will later decide on the resolution plan and submit it to the lenders for their consideration". — PTI

Bankers to meet from today to decide on large defaulters

MUMBAI, June 18: Bankers are meeting from tomorrow to finalise their next course of action to tackle the 12 bad loan accounts for immediate referral to NCLT after the RBI named the largest defaulters to face bankruptcy proceedings.

The first set of six troubled accounts are Bhushan Steel (Rs 44,478 crore), Essar Steel (Rs 37,284 crore), Bhushan Power and Steel (Rs 37,248 crore), Alok Industries (Rs 22,075 crore), Amtek Auto (Rs 14,074 crore) and Monnet Ispat (Rs 12,115 crore), a banker said.

According to RBI, these 12 accounts owe Rs 2.5 trillion to the system, which constitutes around 25 per cent of gross bad loans.

The other accounts named for bankruptcy action, according to bankers, include Lanco Infra (Rs 44,364.6 crore), Electrosteel Steels (Rs 10,273.6 crore), Era Infra (Rs 10,654.4 crore), Jaypee Infrastructure (Rs 9,635 crore), ABG Shipyard (Rs 6,953 crore) and Jyoti Structures with a defaulted loan of Rs 5,165 crore.

Last week, the RBI's internal advisory committee (IAC)

had sent the list of 12 accounts to bankers for immediate reference under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

These 12 accounts are led by SBI (six of them), PNB, ICICI Bank, Union Bank, IDBI Bank and Corporation Bank, according to bankers.

Govt may push wage code Bill in monsoon session

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Labour Ministry is likely to push the Code on Wages Bill for passage in the monsoon session of Parliament beginning next month.

The Code would ensure universal minimum wage for all industries and workers. It will also cover those workers who are getting monthly pay of higher than Rs 18,000. At present laws on wages do not

cover workers getting monthly wage of more than Rs 18,000.

"We are aiming for that," replied Labour Secretary M. Satyavathy when asked whether the Code on Wages Bill would be pushed in the forthcoming session next month.

The minister panel on labour issues headed by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has already approved the Code on Wages. The

ministry is in the process of getting the draft law approved from the Union Cabinet after vetting by the Law Ministry.

The Code on Wages Bill seeks to empower the Centre to set a minimum wage across sectors and States will have to maintain that. However, States will be able to provide for higher minimum wage in their jurisdiction than fixed by the Central Government. — PTI

100% acceptance of VSS: GM

NEW DELHI, June 18: Almost all of the 400 employees of General Motors in India, who were offered a voluntary separation scheme (VSS), have accepted the deal, according to the company.

General Motors had last month offered the VSS after it decided to stop selling vehicles in India by the end of the year. The scheme began on May 19 and ended on June 15. Majority of the employees who were offered the scheme were from marketing, sales, finance and administration departments. — PTI

Finmin asks large PSBs to explore ways

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Finance Ministry has asked four large PSU leaders to explore opportunities for acquisition of small and mid-sized banks with a goal to create global-sized lenders, sources said.

One of the possibilities is that large public sector banks (PSBs) like Punjab National

Bank, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank and Bank of India could try looking for potential candidates for acquisition, they said.

So, informally, the Finance Ministry has sounded them that they should study the possibility for mergers and acquisitions so as to acquire scale and size of State Bank of India (SBI), the sources added.

There are factors like regional balance, geographical reach, financial burden and smooth human resource transition that have to be looked into while taking a merger

decision, they said, adding, there should not be merger of a very weak bank with a strong one "as it could pull the latter down".

However, the clear picture would emerge only after the NITI Aayog report sets the tone and tenure of the roadmap.

Acquisition of smaller banks

for the second round of consolidation in the banking sector.

In the last consolidation drive, five associates and Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) became part of SBI on April 1, 2017, catapulting the country's largest lender to among the top 50 banks in the world.

With the merger, the total customer base of the SBI reached about 37 crore with a branch network of around

24,000 and nearly 59,000 ATMs across the country. The merged entity began operation with deposit base of more than Rs 26 lakh crore and advances level of Rs 18.50 lakh crore.

The government in Februa-

ry had approved the merger

of these five associate banks

with SBI. Later in March, the Cabinet approved merger of BMB as well. SBI first

merged State Bank of Sa

mashtra with itself in 2005. Two years later, State Bank of Indore was merged with it.

Enthused by the success of

SBI merger, the Finance Minis-

try is considering clearing

another such proposal in the

public sector banking space by

this fiscal-end.

Another round of merger

should kick off once the non-

performing assets (NPAs) sit-

uation improves. — PTI

Retailers rule out sales hit due to GST rollout

MUMBAI, June 18: Organised retailers do not expect the goods and services tax (GST) to impact their sales despite general fears that it could disrupt businesses, and hope to be fully ready for the uniform tax regime in the next few weeks.

"As GST will be rolled out from July 1, we have to be prepared. It will lead to better compliance and an organised way of doing things," Ashwin Khagwala, Chief Financial Officer at Reliance Retail, told PTI.

Speaking on the occasion, the President of CIEL HR Services expressed his satisfaction over the activities of NEADA and congratulated it for its dynamic role, the release added.

There are factors like regional balance, geographical reach, financial burden and smooth human resource transition that have to be looked into while taking a merger

decision, they said, adding, there should not be merger of a very weak bank with a strong one "as it could pull the latter down".

However, the clear picture would emerge only after the NITI Aayog report sets the tone and tenure of the roadmap.

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"As GST will be rolled out from July 1, we have to be prepared. It will lead to better compliance and an organised way of doing things," Ashwin Khagwala, Chief Financial Officer at Reliance Retail, told PTI.

"We are not anticipating any sales disruptions. Nobody has expressed concerns on that... For retailers, benefits will come as and when manufacturers change the prices, which in turn will pass on to consumers," he added.

Juwards, large retail companies, including Reliance Retail, Future Group, Trent HyperCity and DMart, among others, are looking at aggressive price reductions. The common objective of all retailers is also that margins should be protected, while ensuring that prices remain under check.

"We will reduce prices by 2 to 20 per cent on various consumer products," said Kishore Biyani, Chief Executive of Future Group, which also sells lots of private labels.

"GST will create a level-playing field for modern trade," he added, explaining that the biggest challenge is to see that customers are not unhappy.

While there maybe temporary procedural hiccups, most retailers believe that the new taxation structure is about simplification and ease of doing business.

Retailers are in talks with FMCG companies to align with their businesses, and ensure that margins for modern trade is not compromised, while continuing momentum of consumer sales.

Companies like denim retailer Pepe Jeans said it has been preparing for GST since January.

"Since January, we have been placing orders with only those vendors who are GST-compliant. There are some challenges that will arise though, but those can be sorted out over time," a top Pepe Jeans official said. — PTI

Indian co eyes driver's seat

NEW DELHI, June 18: Mid-summers, a group of IIT graduates and their seniors were sweating it out on the outskirts of Gurugram, fiddling with their laptops to calibrate sensors as they prepare for yet another round of testing a fully driverless shuttle.

The campus of Hi-Tech Robotic Systems Ltd offers very limited space for such testing but that has not stopped the company from developing Novus Drive autonomous shuttle that can ferry over six persons, which was showcased at the Auto Expo last year.

Gaurav Singh, an alumnus of Carnegie Mellon University has spent close to three years on the project and for him seeing the shuttle drive on its own is a feeling that words cannot easily describe.

Driverless vehicle tech

"This is about passion. To come up with such a product out here in India and not America, also shows what we can achieve with dedication and hard work," he said.

The company founded in 2004 by Anuj Kapuria, who dropped out of his PhD programme at Carnegie Mellon Univer-

sity, has been working silently over the last decade to master driverless vehicle technology – a domain where Google and Tesla are the front runners.

However, being an Indian company in an area where not many have ventured into, it has not been an easy journey for Hi-Tech Robotic Systemz to

come up with a driverless shuttle and such technology for other vehicles.

"One of the most challenging parts is the awareness and trust among global customers about the technology coming from India for self-driving vehicles," Kapuria told PTI.

Yet, he said the company has been able to overcome the hurdle through intellectual property which it has generated over years both in the US, Europe along with India and other emerging countries.

When asked how confident is the company of competing with the likes of Google, Tesla and other global firms in the area of autonomous driving, he

said: "We are competitive to the enabling tech if not better."

Elaborating further, he said: "When we compare with Google or Tesla, we still need to clock more self-driving miles to make our autopilot and fully autonomous algorithms more robust, which we are doing by collecting lots of data with our driver assistive systems."

Need for regulatory support:

Kapuria said while companies in India like Hi-Tech Robotic Systems can play their part in the global pursuit for perfection of autonomous driving technology, government also needs to play its role to support the industry.

"We still do not have the regulatory framework to enable testing of autonomous vehicles," he said. — PTI

Guwahati tea auction centre

As per the latest auction sale (No 24) held at Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) on June 13-14, the total tea offering were 1,03,391 packages, out of which 80 per cent were sold.

Prices for brighter Assams teas were firm to occasionally dearer. Medium and plainer sorts teas sold as per the quality. TGBL and HUL actively participated along with western Indian

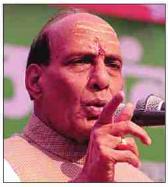
buyers. The auction average price for this week stood at Rs 144.47, up by Rs 1.71 from last year.

Top garden price

BOP	Price	BOP/SMBP	Price	OF/PF	Price
HALM	436	HALMOL	355	SOTAI	316
SOTAI	346	SOTAIOL	337	MAMOLUXI	300
DULATING	328	LURWAH	348	HOKK-IMOL	277
HALM	226	MAHALOMI	338	BAHANALIE	276
LOHPOHA	292	BANAVALE	328	LURWAH	274

Secretary, Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association (GTABA)

Shun violence & talk instead, Rajnath tells GJM protesters



NEW DELHI, June 18: As Darjeeling remained on the boil over a separate statehood agitation, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh today appealed to

the protesters not to resort to violence and, instead, hold dialogue to resolve any issue.

He said resorting to violence would never help them in finding a solution and asked the people living there to remain calm and peaceful.

"All concerned parties and stakeholders should resolve their differences and misunderstandings through dialogue in an amicable environment," Singh said.

In a democracy like India, resorting to violence would never help in finding a solution, he said, emphasising that "every issue can be resolved through mutual dialogue".

"I appeal to the people living in

Darjeeling and nearby areas to remain calm and peaceful. Nobody should resort to violence," the Home Minister said in a series of tweets.

Singh also spoke to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today and discussed with her the situation prevailing there.

"She (Banerjee) has apprised me of the situation prevailing in Darjeeling," he said.

Singh had yesterday also spoken to Banerjee and asked her to take all possible steps so that peace is restored in the picturesquely hill station where people are protesting against "imposition" of Bengali in

schools by making the language mandatory.

The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), which is in power in the semi-autonomous Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, is spearheading the agitation there demanding a separate State of Gorkhaland.

Darjeeling remained on the edge today as thousands of protesters assembled at the central Chowk bazaar carrying the body of a GJM activist, who was killed during clashes with police, and raised slogans demanding a separate State of Gorkhaland.

Security personnel in large

numbers were deployed in the hill district of West Bengal after widespread clashes between Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) activists and the police were witnessed yesterday.

The GJM has claimed that two of their supporters were shot dead by police in Singmaria yesterday. The police rejected the allegations of firing by its personnel, and said one person was killed during the clashes.

This was the first death since violent protests returned to Darjeeling on June 8, after a gap of a few years.

The protesters, also carrying black flags and the Tricolour, assem-

bled at the Chowk bazaar. They shouted slogans demanding that the police and security personnel be "immediately removed" from Darjeeling.

"We think the police and security personnel should be immediately removed from Darjeeling to create a conducive environment for talks. The Government should allow us to carry out a peaceful and democratic agitation," Darjeeling MLA Amar Rai of the GJM told reporters here.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had yesterday said that the ongoing agitation in Darjeeling hills was a "deep-rooted

conspiracy" supported by the insurgent groups of the North East and some foreign countries.

The GJM had rubbished the allegation made by Banerjee, saying that she was trying to maligned the Gorkhas fighting for their identity.

The police, who have been on high alert after yesterday's violence and arson, conducted route marches with the Army in several parts of the hills.

Police pickets and barricades were placed in front of the Government and GTA offices, and various entry-exit points of the hills. Several women police personnel have also been deployed. - PTI

Law for eunuchs soon

JAIPUR, June 18: The Centre is contemplating a law for eunuchs which would be enacted by the end of this year, Union Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot said.

Speaking at a programme here, the Social Justice and Empowerment Minister said the Government has taken a decision to enact a law for eunuchs for their welfare.

He said the law will help in bringing eunuchs to the mainstream of society and benefits of various schemes and programmes will reach them. Provisions for scholarship, education, assistance for their education abroad and many more benefits will be provided to them by the law. - PTI

Woman killed over dowry

BADAUN (UP), June 18: A woman was allegedly killed over dowry by her in-laws and the body was hanged from a tree outside their village, the police today said.

The incident took place in Ha-

nsara village here late last night.

Pinky Yadav had in 2012 entered into wedlock with Sunil Kumar. A few days after their marriage, the woman's in-laws started harassing her for dowry. - PTI

Kerala in the grip of viral fever, 103 deaths so far

T H I R U V A N A N - THAPURAM, June 18: With over 100 deaths being reported since January in Kerala due to various types of fever, the Government today appealed to the people to join the sanitisation drive on a war footing.

According to Health Department sources here, as many as 103 people, including women and children, have succumbed to various types of fever, including H1N1, leptospirosis and dengue from January till date. Of the total 103 deaths, 53 people have died of H1N1 and 13 due to dengue, the sources said.

Breeding of mosquitoes due to piling of waste was considered to be prime reason for

the spread of fever and other communicable diseases, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, adding that social hygiene was essential to keep disease at bay.

Political party activists, representatives of local self-Government institutions and members of socio-cultural outfits and clubs should take part in the sanitisation drive on a war footing," he said in a statement.

Stating that the Government had already stepped up its sanitisation drive with the support of local people, Vijayan said fever cases have reduced in those places where waste management and mosquito control measures have been implemented effectively.

The department burn the midnight oil in trying all permutations and combinations to offload the sudden fiscal burden of nearly Rs 36,369 crore.

This, coupled with Rs 34,000 crore for implementation of the 7th Pay Commission recommendations, has put an additional burden of a whopping Rs 70,000 crore on the State's coffers.

The Government faces other major chal-

lenges, including arranging funds for mega projects like the Purnavati e-way. The Government admitted that it could manage to make just 63 per cent of the State roads pothole-free by the June 15 deadline set by the Chief Minister.

Distribution of free laptops among students – mentioned in the BJP's *sankalpa* (election manifesto) – is another challenge confronting the Yogi Government,

which was inaugurated on March 19.

No date has been announced for the scheme to be launched. With certain law and order incidents, especially caste and communal clashes, threatening to eclipse the achievements of the 45-year-old saffron-clad Chief Minister, his officials are going the extra mile to ensure there is no dent in the BJP's image in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The Chief Minister and his Cabinet colleagues have already sought more time saying they inherited a "jungle raj" from the SP Government and it would take some time to set things in order.

Soon after being sworn in, the CM had claimed he would prove his Government's commitment to good governance first by ridding the roads of potholes completely by June 15. - PTI

Challenges galore as Adityanath completes 100 days as CM

LUCKNOW, June 18: As Yogi Adityanath completes 100 days in office this week as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, formidable challenges, including funds for the farm loan-waiver, any law and order to stain him at his face, with the Opposition claiming the misses have outnumbered the hits.

The loan-waiver, a major pre-poll promise of the BJP is making the Finance De-

partment burn the midnight oil in trying all permutations and combinations to offload the sudden fiscal burden of nearly Rs 36,369 crore.

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Uttar Pradesh Governor Ram Naik with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath appreciating T-shirts for International Yoga Day, at Governor House in Lucknow on Saturday. - UNI

অসম চৰকাৰৰ সাংস্কৃতিক সঞ্চালকালয়ৰ উদ্যোগত আৰু বৰপেটা জিলা প্ৰশাসনৰ সহযোগত ৪৮ তম বিশ্ব ভাৰত দৈৰ্ঘ্য আৰু ২০১৭ বৰ্ষৰ বিষুও বাতা বাঁটা প্ৰদান অনুষ্ঠান

স্থান : বৰপেটা পৌৰসভাৰ খেলপথাৰ

।। ২০ জুন, ২০১৭ মঙ্গলবাৰে দিনৰ ২:০০ বজাত ।।

অনুষ্ঠানত অসমৰ মাননীয় মুখ্য মন্ত্ৰী শ্ৰীযুত সৰ্বানন্দ সোগোৱালদেৱে

প্ৰসিদ্ধ চিৰশিঙ্গী শ্ৰীযুত পুলক গণ্ডে

আৰু বিশিষ্ট ন্তাৰশংকা শ্ৰীযুত শৈলেন শহীকীয়াক

২০১৭ বৰ্ষৰ সমানীয় বিষুও বাতা বাঁটা প্ৰদান কৰিব।

।। সমানীয় অতিথি ।।

শ্ৰীযুত ৰণজিৎ কুমাৰ দাস, মাননীয় বিধায়ক, সৰভোগ সমষ্টি তথা

প্ৰাক্তন অধিকাৰ, অসম বিধানসভা

।। বিশিষ্ট অতিথি ।।

শ্ৰীযুত নৰ কুমাৰ দলো, মাননীয় মন্ত্ৰী, সাংস্কৃতিক পৰিক্ৰমা বিভাগ

।। বিশেষ অতিথি ।।

শ্ৰীযুত হৰীকেশ গোস্বামী, মুখ্য মন্ত্ৰীৰ মাননীয় প্ৰেছ উপদেষ্টা

আৰু

শ্ৰীযুত গুণীজ্ঞনাথ দাস, মাননীয় বিধায়ক, বৰপেটা সমষ্টি



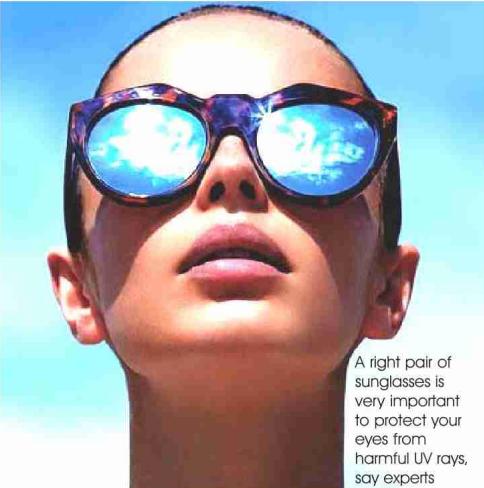
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মাননীয় মুখ্য মন্ত্ৰী, অসম



শ্ৰীযুত
পলক গণ্ডে
প্ৰসিদ্ধ চিৰশিঙ্গী

শ্ৰীযুত
শৈলেন
শহীকীয়া

সকলো ৰাইজৰ উপস্থিতি আন্তৰিকতাৰে কামনা কৰা হ'ল।



A right pair of sunglasses is very important to protect your eyes from harmful UV rays, say experts

With an eye on protection...

Proper eye care is very important to protect your eyes from harmful UV sunrays which can damage the skin around the eyes, including the eyelids, and make them vulnerable to wrinkles, burning sensation and dark circles. A high-quality pair of sunglasses, along with daily eye care, can help, suggest experts.

Ronak Sheth, founder at Opium Eyewear, Uma Singh, medical consultant at Ozono Group, and Ganesh Iyer, Country Head at coolwinks.com, have tips to share:

• Tinted sunglasses that best suit your style with maximum protection from UV rays will help protect your eyes.

• Ultraviolet (UV) light damages the cornea and the retina. Look for good sunglasses that protect you completely.

• When the eye receives too much light, it naturally closes the iris. Once it has closed the iris, the next step is squinting. The result is damage to the retina.

Good sunglasses can block light entering the eyes by as much as 97 per cent to avoid damage. The

ultimate aim of using them is to protect your eyes from ultraviolet light emitted by the sun. Don't let this consideration take a backseat and make sure that the sunglasses provide UV protection.

• Certain surfaces, such as water, can reflect light. Good sunglasses can completely eliminate this kind of glare using polarisation.

Polarised lenses block most of UVA and UVB rays. They also block excess sunlight.

• Eliminate specific frequencies of light. Certain frequencies of light can blur vision, and others can enhance contrast. Choosing the right colour for your sunglasses lets them work better in specific situations.

• The size of the frame should be compatible to the size of your face. Sunglass frame size should closely mirror the face size – smaller frames work better with smaller face and vice versa. Determine your face shape and then go for your sunglasses shopping.

• Frame material plays a critical role in the comfort, usage and care for your sunglasses. Each frame material comes with its own advantages and disadvantages. There are various material options available in the market from metal and nylon to plastic and titanium. – IANS

Kids

13:30 The Tom And Jerry Show
14:00 Chhota Bheem
14:30 Chhota Bheem
17:00 Mighty Raju
17:30 Chhota Bheem
19:30 Hole In The Wall
20:30 Chhota Bheem

21:00 The Tom And Jerry Show
21:30 Chhota Bheem
22:00 Tom And Jerry Tales
22:30 M.A.D.
23:00 TeleShopping

CN

13:00 Just for Laughs
14:00 Top 20 Funniest
15:00 Standup
16:00 We Bare Bears
17:00 Ben 10
17:30 Ben 10 Go
18:00 Larva
18:30 Robo No. 21
21:00 Dragon Ball Super
21:30 Dragon Ball Z
23:30 TeleShopping

Zacfe

13:00 Just for Laughs

14:00 Top 20 Funniest

15:00 Standup

16:00 We Bare Bears

17:00 Ben 10

17:30 Ben 10 Go

18:00 Larva

18:30 Robo No. 21

21:00 Dragon Ball Super

21:30 Dragon Ball Z

23:30 TeleShopping

SCANDAL

17:00 The Big Bang Theory

18:00 Castle

19:00 Top 20 Funniest

21:00 Scandal

22:00 Murder in the First

23:00 Grace & Frankie

13:00 Shakti Ashtak Ke Ehsaas Ki

14:00 Shakti Ashtak Ke Ehsaas Ki

15:00 Shakti Ashtak Ke Ehsaas Ki

16:00 Shakti Ashtak Ke Ehsaas Ki

17:00 Shakti Ashtak Ke Ehsaas Ki

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infotainment

13:00 Natural Born Hunters

13:30 The Pack

14:00 Animal Attack

15:00 Animal Attack

16:00 Jungle Safari

17:00 Wild Africa

18:00 Natural Born Hunters

18:30 Fit for the Wild

19:00 Animal Planet Exclusives

20:00 Animal Attack

21:00 Lords of the Jungle

22:00 Animal Attack

23:00 Animal Attack

13:00 River Born

14:00 You Have Been Warned

15:00 Untamed & Uncut

16:00 Man V. Wild

17:00 Man V. Beast

18:00 You Have Been Warned

19:00 Untamed & Uncut

20:00 River Monsters

21:00 Discover India

22:00 The Hunt for Bear Grylls

23:00 Naked and Afraid

HISTORY

13:00 River Born

14:00 Food Tech

15:00 DANG! Yeh Mera India

16:00 DANG! Yeh Mera India

17:00 Strange Wars

18:00 Don't Battle Battles

19:00 Don't Battle Battles

20:00 OMG! Yeh Meri India

21:00 Only in Hollywood

22:00 Cool Countries

23:00 Baggage Battles

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL

13:00 Animal Fight Club

14:00 World's Most Extreme

15:00 Worst Weather Ever?

16:00 Extreme Weather

17:00 Science of Stupid

18:00 Beyond Magic with DMC

19:00 India's Mega Kitchens

20:00 World's Most Extreme

21:00 Primal Survival - The Air

22:00 Primal Survival - The Air

LOCKHORNS

DENNISTHEMENACE

"MY CELL PHONE BATTERY IS DEAD... LIFE IS GOOD!"

"YOU'RE NOT EVEN FIFTY TND, WHY WOULD YOU WANT MAMA TO GIVE YOU A BATH NEXT?"

THE PHANTOM

Entertainment

13:30 Udaan
14:00 Mahasangam
15:00 Bhagya Bala Bhag
16:00 Chhota Bheem
17:00 Kuch Rang Pyar Ke Asie...
18:00 Savitri Devi College and...

19:30 Deshansh
20:30 Chandra Nandi
21:00 Naiknarram
22:30 Diya Oberoi
23:00 Love Story of Mussoorie
23:30 Kishore Prem

23:45 Zee Star Plus

23:55 Star Plus

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Too early to respond to new US sanctions: Putin



MOSCOW, June 18: The president of Russia, President Vladimir Putin said that it was too early to respond to the newest round of sanctions recently imposed on the country by the US.

In an interview broadcast on Saturday, Putin told Rossiya 1 television channel that Russia first needed to see how the new restrictions would be implemented, Efe news reported.

"We should look how it will happen, that is why it is too early to speak about our reciprocal measures," Putin said.

"It will, of course, complicate Russian-US relations," Putin added. "I think that it is harmful."

The US Senate on Thursday had voted, by a 98-2 margin, to impose new sanctions on Russia for its alleged interference in the 2016 presidential elections, its 2014 annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine and its support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in the ongoing civil war ravaging Syria.

The Kremlin has fiercely denied any accusation of meddling in the US

electoral campaign.

The latest round of sanctions restrict dealings with Russian banks and energy companies and include additional punitive measures against its intelligence, defense, shipping, mining and railway industries.

"Whatever is going on, it certainly needs to be looked at to see what it will turn out to be in the end. But whatever it is and whatever decisions are made overseas, this will not catch us cornered," Putin said.

The Russian leader added that his government would probably have to adjust to the sanctions and take additional measures. - IANS

117 killed in US-backed Syrian offensive

CAIRO, June 18: At least 117 civilians have been killed in the Syrian city of al-Raqqa since June 6, when US-backed Syrian forces began an offensive to expel the IS, a British-based war monitor reported.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that the civilians, including 25 children and 21 women, lost their lives in fighting and airstrikes by the US-led international coalition. Efe news reported.

The SOHR explained that the coalition's airstrikes also injured hundreds of citizens, with some of the victims suffering mutilation of limbs or permanent disability. It added that the death toll could rise due to the serious condition of those injured.

Dozens of houses and civilian facilities in the Syrian city were destroyed because of the intense bombing against al-Raqqa city and its surroundings. The NGO added that the airstrikes and military operations of the Syrian Democratic Forces – a Kurdish-led alliance backed by the US – killed 142 ISIS militants, including local leaders. - IANS

Fresh landslides claim 5 lives in Bangladesh

DHAKA, June 18: At least five persons were killed and many dwellings damaged in rain-triggered fresh landslides in Bangladesh on Sunday.

Two siblings and a child are reported to have been killed in a landslide in hilly district of Khagrachari, some 259 km southeast of Dhaka, Xinhua news agency reported.

A woman and her daughter were killed in northeastern Moulvibazar district, some 203 km away from the capital city, when huge chunks of mud collapsed on their houses. The fresh deaths were reported as the wounds of last week's massive landslides are yet fresh.

Army and Fire Brigade Rescuers on Friday wrapped up search operations after four more bodies were recovered from debris of rain-triggered devastating landslides that struck the country's southeastern region Tuesday. - IANS

Missing US sailors found dead in warship's flooded compartments

TOKYO, June 18: The seven missing sailors from a US destroyer were found dead in flooded berthing compartments following the warship's collision with a cargo vessel off the coast of Japan, a Navy official told CNN on Sunday.

The Navy's 7th Fleet said the bodies were found on Sunday morning after the ship returned to its base in Japan.

"The families are being notified and being provided the support they need during this difficult time. The names of the sailors will be released after all notifications are made," the Navy said in a statement.

The bodies were taken to a US naval hospital in Yokosuka.

Fitzgerald's Commander Bryce Benson, was evacuated by a Japanese naval helicopter while

US military crews evacuated two injured US sailors.

All three were in stable condition at the US Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, said Commander Ron Flanders, a spokesman for US Naval Forces Japan.

The destroyer suffered severe damage to its starboard side, while the container ship sustained light damage.

The bodies were taken to a

a US naval hospital in Yokosuka.

Fitzgerald's Commander Bryce Benson, was evacuated by a Japanese naval helicopter while

the bodies were taken to a US naval hospital in Yokosuka.

The bodies were taken to a

Bombing at Colombia mall kills three

BOGOTA, June 18: A strong explosion from a bomb rocked one of the busiest shopping centers in Colombia's capital, killing three people, including a 23-year-old French woman, and injuring nine others, authorities said.

Witnesses told of being evacuated from movie theaters and stores after the blast yesterday in a second-floor women's restroom at the upscale Centro Andino in the heart of Bogota's tour-

ist district. Ambulances and firetrucks rushed to the scene and the injured were taken to a hospital, where two later died.

Policia said a bomb from an undetermined explosive had caused the destruction. Mayor Enrique Penalosa called it a "cowardly terrorist bombing."

He said the French victim, identified as Julie Huynh, had been in Colombia the past six months volunteering in a poor neighborhood and was preparing to return to France in the coming days. He said authorities were providing assistance to the victim's mother, who was also in Bogota.

Authorities' attention immediately focused on the country's largest still active rebel group, the National Liberation Army, or ELN, which in February claimed responsibility for a bombing near Bogota's bullring that killed one police officer and injured 20 other people. - AP



US President Donald Trump with First Lady Melania and their son Barron walk out from the White House in Washington, before their departure to Camp David, on Saturday. - UNI

NASA's Orion spacecraft passes key safety tests

WASHINGTON, June 18: NASA's Orion spacecraft – designed to take astronauts to deep space destinations such as the Moon and Mars – has successfully completed a series of tests for its critical safety systems.

Researchers tested the abort motor for *Orion's* launch abort system on June 15, firing the 17-foot tall motor for five seconds.

The motor was fastened to a vertical test stand with its nozzles pointed toward the sky for the test. It produced enough thrust to lift 66 large SUVs off the ground and helps qualify the system for future missions with astronauts.

"The launch abort system is an important part of making sure our crew members stay safe on the launch pad and on their way to space," said Robert Decourcy, manager for *Orion's* launch

abort system.

"It takes us another step closer to proving the safety of our spacecraft as we prepare for missions beyond the moon," Decourcy said.

The launch abort system is positioned on top of the *Orion* crew module and will play a critical role protecting future crews travelling to deep space destinations in *Orion*.

The abort motor is responsible for propelling the crew module away from the Space Launch System rocket in case of an emergency, and one of three total motors that will send the crew module to a safe distance away from a failing rocket and orient it properly for a safe descent into the Atlantic Ocean if such a situation ever occurs.

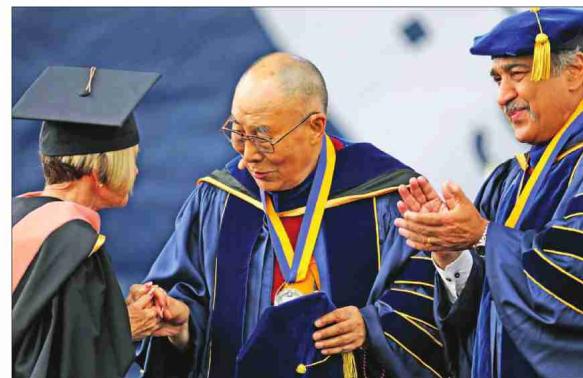
While engineers are just getting started analysing the data, the test veri-

fied the motor can fire within milliseconds when needed and will work as expected under high temperatures.

Researchers also evaluated how the parachute system that ensures the crew module can safely descend to Earth performs during a scenario in which an abort while on the launch pad is necessary.

When *Orion* returns to Earth from deep space missions beyond the Moon, the system will automatically deploy 11 parachutes in a precise sequence to help slow the crew module down from high speeds for a relatively slow splashdown in the Pacific Ocean.

However the parachutes must also be capable of sending the crew module to safety if it were to be jettisoned off a failing rocket without time for the full deployment sequence to occur. - PTI



The 14th Dalai Lama is presented the Revelle Medal, the school's highest honor, by Carol Chang, UC San Diego Foundation Board Chair, as Chancellor Pradeep K Khosla (R) looks on during the 2017 graduating class ceremonies at UC San Diego in San Diego, California on Saturday. - UNI

Five injured in blast at election office in Nepal

KATHMANDU, June 18: A bomb went off today at an election office in Nepal's Kapilavastu district, injuring five people ahead of the second phase of the crucial local body elections which are being held after a gap of 30 years.

The bomb exploded at the election office in Vadgaon Municipality of Kapilavastu district when a joint panel of Nepali Congress and CPN (Maoist Center) was returning after filing nomination papers for the second phase of local level election to be held on June 28.

The injured are being treated at a local hospital. No one has claimed responsibility for the explosion so far.

The process of filing nomination papers by candidates for the second phase of elections in 334 local units of provinces 1, 5 and 7 completed today. - PTI

Brazilian Prez accused of nation's biggest mafia

BRAZILIA, June 18: A Brazilian businessman said in an interview that President Michel Temer heads the country's biggest and most dangerous criminal organisation.

"The one who's not in prison (among the group's members) is in the presidential palace," Batista said. That group is very dangerous. You can't argue with them," Batista said in the interview on Saturday.

He said Temer called him every time he needed campaign donations for his Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) and its political allies or money for personal reasons. "Temer is very direct in asking for money. He's not a person who's careful with that," Batista said. Batista said the group's leaders received favours or were allowed to operate unimpeded, reports Efe news.

He added that the group's leaders included Temer and Eduardo Cunha, a former Lower House speaker and one of the highest-profile politicians to be sentenced to prison

25 civilians killed in Saudi-led airstrike in Yemen

SANAA, June 18: At least 25 people were killed in a Saudi-led coalition airstrike which saw a warplane bomb a popular market in Yemen's northern province of Saada, media reported on Sunday.

The airstrike happened on Saturday evening and targeted al-Mashakh popular market at the centre of Shada district in Saada, Xinhua quoted a Saba news agency report – which cited an official – as saying.

The official said the victims were customers and owners of commercial shops. A number of others were critically injured.

The agency gave no further details, but said it will publish pictures of the scene later on Sunday. Saada is the main stronghold of Shiite Houthi movement and where the group's leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi is based. - IANS

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Minister of Railways
through remote from New Delhi

In the august presence of

Rajen Gohain
Minister of State for Railways

Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma
Minister - Finance, Education & Health etc., Assam

Biswajit Daimary
MP, Rajya Sabha

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MP, Lok Sabha

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Fakhar, Amir win Champions Trophy for Pakistan

LONDON, June 18: An inspired Pakistan hammered a blundering India by 180 runs to lift the ICC Champions Trophy, riding on a scintillating hundred from rookie opener Fakhar Zaman and a sensational bowling spell from Mohammad Amir.

This is Pakistan's first ICC title triumph since their 2009 World Twenty20 win but more importantly it broke the jinx of not performing against India in big ticket matches.

For a team that can't play international cricket at home due to security issues, the victory has far-reaching implications.

If Zaman announced his arrival in international cricket with a match-defining knock, Pakistan cricket's 'enfant terrible' Amir finally managed to sing a redemption song that he has been longing for.

It was a charged-up performance from Sarfraz Ahmed's underdog team with left-handed opener Zaman after a lucky reprieve, scoring a pulsating 114 in three overs.

Amir (62-16-3) then tormented the Indian batsmen with a devastating first spell and eventually the defending champions were bundled out for 158 in only 30.3 overs.

The match turned out to be one of the

most nightmarish under-Virat Kohli's captaincy. It was a match where everything went awry for the 'Men in Blue' from the time Kohli went out for the toss.

On a flat deck, Kohli surprised everyone opting to field, a decision prompted by the current team's ability to chase any target. It started on a wrong note when a beautiful delivery from Asifirum Bumrah was nicked by an edgy Zaman only to be called no-ball due to overstepping; Zaman went on to score a ton.

The two spinners Ravichandran Ashwin (67 in 10 overs) and Ravindra Jadeja (67 in 8 overs) were then taken to the task with not a single wicket-taking delivery being bowled by the duo.

With no assistance from the pitch, their deliveries were thoroughly exposed against batsmen, who were ready to use their feet.

The 'Law of Averages' went certainly in favour with India's 'Three' after their brilliant run in the tournament. Worse, it happened in the final.

Rohit Sharma (0), Shikhar Dhawan (21) and Virat Kohli (5) were snuffed out by Rohit Sharma in a devastating first spell with three brilliant deliveries. The fate of the match

Russia start campaign with win over New Zealand



Russia's Fedor Smolov celebrates after scoring against New Zealand during the FIFA Confederations Cup match, on Saturday.

ST PETERSBURG, June 18: Hosts Russia got off to a winning start at the Confederations Cup on Saturday with Fedor Smolov's second-half goal sealing a 2-0 win over New Zealand in the tournament opener.

Russia went ahead in the first half of the Group A encounter through what was credited as an own goal from New Zealand defender Michael Boxall, and Smolov, the top scorer in the Russian league last season, wrapped up the points in the 69th minute.

Konta in Nottingham Open final

NOTTINGHAM, June 18: Johanna Konta booked a place in the final of the Nottingham Open with a 6-2, 7-5 win over Magdalena Rybarikova. The British No. 1 and top seed maintained her record of having yet to drop a set in the tournament as she closed in on her first WTA title on home soil.

Playing in the semifinals of the competition for the first time, Konta was quickly into her rhythm, breaking Rybarikova in the fifth game of the match. She did not look back, breaking the Slovakian again to confidently take the opening set 6-2.

Konta looked to be cruising as she broke in the first game of the second set, but Rybarikova immediately hit back. Temperatures continued to climb and there was a break in play as medics helped a female spectator who was struggling with the heat, with Konta handing over her umbrella.

The set went with serve until the 11th game when a double fault from Rybarikova gifted the 26-year-old Konta the advantage before she served out the match. Konta will now take on Donna Vekic in today's final after the Croat beat the fifth seed Lucie Safarova.

Konta, who was born in Australia but took British citizenship five years ago, is aiming to become the first British woman to win a WTA event on home ground since Virginia Wade at Eastbourne in 1975. Wimbledon, which Wade won in 1977, is not part of the WTA Tour.

Having reached the top six in the world rankings last month, Konta is also optimistic about an improved performance at Wimbledon, where she was knocked out in the third round last year, her best performance in the tournament.

Joining Konta at the Aegon International in Eastbourne, which starts on Monday, will be Angelique Kerber, after the world No. 1 accepted a wild card. Eastbourne will feature seven of the world's top 10 female players. - Agencies

It was the ideal start for the Russians in a game played at the new Krestovsky Stadium, where President Vladimir Putin and FIFA chief Gianni Infantino both gave speeches before kick-off.

Rivals Portugal, led by Cristiano Ronaldo, and Mexico meet in Kazan on Sunday, with Russia's next game against the Portuguese in Moscow on Wednesday.

This competition offers Russia a chance to showcase its readiness to host the 2018 World Cup amidst oil-field concerns surrounding hooliganism and security.

But it is also an opportunity for coach Stanislav Cherchesov and his side to show what they can do on the pitch, although they will face greater tests in their next two outings than what New Zealand provided.

"I liked New Zealand's team but luckily we managed to cancel out their

strengths and displayed ours, and that was the key to our win," Cherchesov said.

The Krestovsky Stadium was late in opening and came home well over-budget, while serious problems have been experienced with the playing surface.

But the venue, which will also host the final on July 2, came through this opening test unscathed, even if there was a considerable number of empty seats.

Cherchesov's men were too strong for a limited New Zealand side and were unlucky not to take an early lead, Viktor Vasin heading against the post from an Alexander Samedov corner, with Michael McGlinchey clearing off the line.

Dmitry Poloz then went down under a challenge from New Zealand goalkeeper Stefan Marinovic in the area, but the Colombian referee waved away the penalty appeals and there was no intervention from the video assistant.

Smolov had an effort ruled out for offside before the opening goal arrived just after the half-hour mark. - Agencies

Real slap £350m price-tag on Ronaldo



MADRID, June 18: Real Madrid say it would take a £350-million deal to allow Cristiano Ronaldo to leave the club, which they expect to offer Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester United.

The 32-year-old, unhappy at the Bernabeu because of a perceived lack of support over his battle with Spanish tax authorities, what he considers to be unfair press and the jeering he has received from some Real Madrid fans, signed a new five-year deal with the Champions League winners in November on £350,000 a week net.

His buy-out clause is set at £870m and though clearly no club – not even in China – could countenance meeting that, the Spanish newspaper with the closest links to Real Madrid, *Marca*, is reporting that it would take a £350m deal for them even

to consider selling Ronaldo.

That breaks down to £175m in transfer feed and £175m in wages over the four remaining years of his deal, for which Real Madrid would expect to be compensated given that the player would have breached his contract.

Real Madrid have reacted calmly to the briefing from his advisors that their star player wants to leave and that his decision is 'irreversible'.

They will not attempt to soothe him by phone over the next two weeks when he is playing for Portugal at the Confederations Cup in Russia. Instead, *Marca* have reported that the club plan a meeting in person between Perez, managing director Jose Angel Sanchez and Ronaldo after the tournament. - Agencies

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Murray in spotlight as Wimbledon looms

LONDON, June 18: Andy Murray says he has only a couple of years left at the top of men's tennis, but the world number one has no intention of relaxing just yet as he sets his sights on a third Grand Slam title.

While Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have defied the ageing process to win Grand Slams into their 30s, Murray believes ended a frustrating period marred by problems with injuries and illness.

With that in mind, the 30-year-old knows he must maximise his chances of adding to his haul of three Grand Slam crowns while he is at his peak.

"My coach, Ivan Lendl, was still competitive at the top until he was about 32 but, generally, over the past 20 to 30 years, normally by early 30s he would struggle to stay at the top," Murray told the BBC.

"I know some of the players have been doing really well until

their mid-30s recently, but that might not be the case with me."

"Maybe the next couple of years are the last few where I have a chance to compete for the majors and the biggest tournaments."

Fortunately for Murray's hopes of more silverware, he heads into the grass-court campaign back in form after his run to the French Open semifinals ended a frustrating period marred by problems with injuries and illness.

The Scot, who has battled shingles, an elbow injury and the flu in 2017, was beaten by Stan Wawrinka in five sets on the clay at Roland Garros.

But Murray is confident that he has rediscovered his rhythm in time to mount a strong defence of the Wimbledon crown he won for a second time last year.

The road to Wimbledon begins

across west London at the Queen's Club next week, when Murray will be aiming to win the grass-court event for a third successive year and sixth time in total.

First up for Murray in the opening round is British number four Aljaz Bedene.

Murray beat Bedene in the second round at Queen's last year and if he wins again he will face either 2010 Queen's champion Sam Querrey or another Briton, wild card Cameron Norrie – in the last 16.

He is seeded to face France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the quarterfinals and former US Open champion Marin Cilic in the semifinals, with a potential final against second seed Stan Wawrinka.

Winning at Queen's would be the ideal Wimbledon preparation for Murray, but he knows he must find a way to avoid the fitness issues that have troubled him this year. - AFP

Clinical India maul Pakistan 7-1 in HWL Semi-Final

LONDON, June 18: A clinical India demolished a hapless Pakistan 7-1 to register their third consecutive victory and seal a place in the quarterfinals of the Hockey World League Semi-Final here today.

It was a complete performance by the Indians who dominated their arch-rivals throughout the match to post a facile win and zoom to the top of Pool B ahead of The Netherlands.

Dragflicker Harmanpreet Singh (13th minute, 33rd), Balwinder Singh (21st, 24th), Akashdeep Singh (47th, 59th) and Pradeep Mor (49th) scored for India at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre, while Pakistan's consolation goal came from the stick of Muhammad Umair Bhutta (57th).

The 7-1 win was also India's biggest over Pakistan, bettering the 7-4 effort against arch-rivals in 2003 Champions Trophy and 2010 Commonwealth Games.

India are atop Pool B with three wins from as many games, just ahead of The Netherlands, who are placed second.

Pakistan, on the other hand, are at the bottom of the pool after losing all three matches they have played so far.

India will next play The Netherlands on Tuesday, while Pakistan will face Scotland tomorrow.

Contrary to the result, it was Pakistan who made a bright start but their domination lasted only for the first 10 minutes.

Pakistan had the first shot at goal when they earned a penalty corner but the effort sailed over the bar.

As the match progressed, India started to control the proceedings with Pakistan playing a catch-up.

Harmanpreet gave India the lead in the 13th minute, converting a penalty corner with a low ground flick. - PTI



Akashdeep Singh of India celebrates after scoring the fifth goal during the Hockey World League Semi-Final match against Pakistan at the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre in London, on Sunday.

Srikanth lifts Indonesia Open title



Kidambi Srikanth of India poses during the awards ceremony after the men's singles final against Kazumasa Sakai of Japan at Indonesia Open in Jakarta, on Sunday. Srikanth won 2-0 to claim the title.

JAKARTA, June 18: Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth clinched his third Super Series title, lifting the Indonesia Open men's singles trophy with a straight-game victory over Japanese qualifier Kazumasa Sakai in the final here today.

World No. 22 Srikanth, who had reached the finals at Singapore Open in April, outclassed Sakai, ranked 47th, 21-11, 21-19 in just 37 minutes to take home a cheque of USD 75,000.

"He was playing well, especially in the second game and I think for me coming back from 6-11 down and make it 13-13 was the turning point," said Srikanth, who had clinched the 2014 China Super Series Premier and 2015 India Super Series.

"My coach will have a special place in my heart as after he came, I reached the finals at Singapore and to win this tournament, which is considered the biggest tournament. I want to thank all the fans who have been rooting for me all this week," he added.

Srikanth played a patient game and didn't allow his opponent to engage in any fast-paced rally. He dictated the play with his precise angled returns and unleashed his smashes at perfect intervals to down his rival.

Playing in tricky windy conditions, Srikanth took time to gauge the conditions as his initial returns went wide and out.

But his rival also suffered because of similar unforced errors and the Indian led 6-4 early on. He consolidated his lead to reach 11-8 at the break.

After the interval, Srikanth continued to dominate the proceedings. His net dribbles were better than Sakai and with Sakai struggling with precision, the Indian zoomed to a 19-11 lead and sealed it with two lucky net chord points. - PTI

Harman edges clear, Thomas dazzles in US Open blitz



Brian Harman

ally haven't done yet, so that was nice.

"Struck it well, hit a bunch of greens, and that's what you've got to do to play well around here."

The world number 50 headed to the clubhouse on 12 under, one ahead of Thomas, Brooks Koepka and England's Tommy Fleetwood. The soft, forgiving conditions created opportunity for major momentum up the leaderboard for those players willing to take it.

And the prime beneficiary was Thomas, who catapulted up the leaderboard with his record-breaking nine-under-par 63. - AFP

SU DO KU

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Solution of last problem

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No ICC World T20 in 2018, next edition in 2020

LONDON, June 18: The World Twenty20 Championship's seventh edition next year is all set to be scrapped and pushed to 2020 as the top member nations will be busy with bilateral tournaments in 2018.

According to highly-placed sources in the International Cricket Council, the next edition of ICC World T20

will only be held in 2020. However, the venue is yet to be decided.

"Yes, it is true that we are skipping with World T20 edition in 2018. Look, no venue was decided. The primary reason is there are too many bilateral series happening between member nations. It was not possible to schedule the tournament in

2018," an influential ICC source told PTI about the development.

However, in all likelihood the tournament will be returning in 2020.

"Yes, the tournament will return in 2020. It could be South Africa or Australia. The other reason apart from the bilateral series was that

with too many ICC events on the anvil, the member nations were also of the view that it needed to be spaced out," the source said.

The previous ICC World T20s have been held in South Africa (2007), England (2009), West Indies (2010), Sri Lanka (2012), Bangladesh (2014), India (2016).

It was also clear that with almost all the member boards

having their own franchise-based T20 leagues, the World T20 despite its popularity, won't lose out on popularity rights.

Would it not be a setback for ICC if World T20 is not held, the source said: "Not at all. There are enough T20 leagues and the fans will have a lot to look forward to."

The other reason is bilateral series being a money spinner for all nations with major riches coming through broadcast deals.

Especially, if India tours

any nation, the host member board earns millions of dollars through TV broadcast rights.

As of now, the next Champions Trophy is scheduled for 2021 in India.

The main focus for the upcoming ICC Annual Conference starting here from tomorrow will be getting the long-standing proposal for the World Test

Championship. ICC has long planned at least one world event across all formats.

It is also learnt that BCCI may request an increase in their share from the now proposed USD 300 million but member boards are unlikely to give in to their demands if they consider them unreasonable. - PTI

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