



NEWS CAPSULE

PHE scam

GUWAHATI, June 11: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today directed his vigilance cell to conduct an inquiry into the Rs 46-crore scam in the PHE department schemes relating to procurement of mobile water treatment plant and 21,000 water filters, etc. – Staff Reporter

Rapists held

GUWAHATI, June 11: Four persons, including a police constable, were arrested last night by police from different places of Gossaigon subdivision for raping a pregnant lady at Tariapur on June 3. – Correspondent

AKRSU bandh

BONGAIGAON, June 11: The Prelio Ray faction of the All Koch Rajbongshi Students Union has called for a 36-hour Assam bandh from 5 am tomorrow demanding scheduled tribe status and Kamatapur state. – Correspondent

The Assam Tribune on Internet
<http://www.assamttribune.com> &
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Another scam in State excise dept

RITURAJ BORTHAKUR

GUWAHATI, June 11: In what appears to be another multi-crore-ruppee scam in the State excise department, extra neutral alcohol (ENA), used for producing distilled spirits like vodka, rum, whiskey, etc., was imported from other states using fake permits.

After the scam has come to light, Excise Minister Parimal Sankar Dasgupta has sought a report from the department, official sources told *The Assam Tribune*.

Initial investigations suggest that the scam took place between 2009-10 and 2013-14.

The sources said that the scam came to light following a probe by police in Haryana where a couple of ENA suppliers had lodged

forgery cases against some buyers in Assam, located in the districts of Tinsukia, Sivasagar, etc.

"The permits to import the ENA should be issued by the excise department here. The importer companies procured one permit. Later, they forged the signatures, made duplicates and with those they imported many more consignments. The suppliers are mostly based in Haryana and Punjab," sources privy to the preliminary investigations conducted by the excise department said.

A team from Haryana Police recently visited the State to verify documents, including certificates and permits produced by the importers here to the suppliers based in the north Indian state.

(See page 4)

Minister seeks report

Indian forces prepared to defend Kameng sector

R DUTTA CHOWDHURY

GUWAHATI, June 11: The Indian armed forces are fully prepared to defend the frontiers of the country in the Kameng sector in Arunachal Pradesh in case of any emergency in the wake of China's opposition to building infrastructure in the frontier state. However, lack of adequate infrastructure in the area, particularly road connectivity, is still a disadvantage.

Highly placed security sources told *The Assam Tribune* that the Indian Army personnel and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police men are regularly patrolling the patches along the international border, which are considered vulnerable despite the tough terrain. The two battalions of the Arunachal Scouts, comprising local youths, who know the ter-

rain well, are also helpful in keeping a close watch along the border. The Aruachal Scouts, raised in the line of the Ladakh Scouts, are of great help to the forces in patrolling the area as the men of the Scouts are well versed with the terrain and weather condition. In recent times, the number of Chinese incursions along the border in this sector has also come down and no major incident of face-off has been reported from any part.

Sources pointed out that the Indian Army strength along the international border has increased considerably over the years. During the 1962 war, the Indian Army was not prepared to face the Chinese, but the situation has changed drastically now. The 4 Corps of the Army is looking after the China border in the Kameng sector and three divisions of the

(See page 4)

GST Council lowers tax rates for 66 items

NEW DELHI, June 11: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council at its 16th meeting here on Sunday revised the rates of 66 items out of the 133 for which representations had been received seeking change from the items originally made in the four-slabs indirect tax structure, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said.

Following the 15th meeting of the council here earlier this month, held to decide on the six remaining items – including gold and beef – from the Srinagar meeting which had decided upon 1,211 items, Jaitley had said that a committee of officers would examine rate

adjustments, if any, based on the representations received from different trade and industry associations. Their recommendations were taken up by the council on Sunday.

The 133 representations received were considered at length and the officers' committee made their recommendations... the council has reduced tax in 66 out of the 133 cases," Jaitley, who heads the council, told reporters here following the meeting.

The Minister explained that the cases for reduction had been considered keeping two objectives in mind.

"One was to maintain

SC observations on 'bogus' PAN cards

NEW DELHI, June 11: As many as 10.52 lakh "bogus" PAN cards of individual income tax assesses, which is around 0.4 per cent of the total such documents, cannot be termed a "minuscule" number to harm the country's economy, the Supreme Court has said.

The apex court said that it has come on record that 11.35 lakh duplicate or fraudulent permanent account numbers have been detected and out of these, 10.52 lakh cases pertain to individual assesses. It made the observations in a 15-page judgement while upholding the validity of section 139AA of the Income Tax Act making Aadhar mandatory for allotment of PAN cards and filing of tax returns.

"It was sought to be argued (by the petitioners) that persons found with duplicate/bogus PAN cards are hardly 0.4 per cent and, therefore, there was no need to have such a provision," a bench headed by Justice AK Sikri said on Friday. "We cannot go by percentage figures. The absolute number of such cases is 10.52 lakh, which, by figure, no means, can be termed as minuscule to harm the economy and create adverse effect on the nation," the bench, also comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, said. – PTI

(See page 4)

Paresh Baruah heading NE militants mere speculation: DGP DEBASISH BARUAH

KAZIRANGA, June 11: The possibility of ULFA(I) chief Paresh Baruah becoming the leader of the umbrella organisation of all the militant groups of Northeast India is only a speculation, said Director General of Assam Police Mukesh Sahay.

"The race has already begun among the top leaders of militant outfits of the northeastern region after the demise of NSCN(K) chairman SS Khaplang who also headed the umbrella organisation," Sahay said during an exclusive interview with *The Assam Tribune* at the Police Guest House, Kohora today.

ULFA(I) chief Paresh Baruah was deputy to Khaplang in the umbrella organisation of the militant outfits of the northeastern region called the United Liberation Front of Western South East Asia. It was Paresh Baruah who initiated the move to form an alliance among the insurgent groups of the region to head the umbrella organisation.

The State police chief said even though Khango Konyak has taken over the charge of NSCN(K) only time will tell whether Konyak would be able to garner support from other militant outfits of the region to head the umbrella organisation.

Sahay said Khaplang could get support from most of the militant groups, including ULFA and he was respected by local villagers on the both sides of India-Myanmar international border.

"There is some kind of misunderstanding and disagreement among various leaders of different militants groups, so we will wait and watch who will be the successor to Khaplang," the DGP said.

Infrastructure still inadequate



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NEW DELHI, June 11: External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj today directed Indian Ambassador in the US Navtej Sarna to update Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh about issues relating to safety and security of Indians in that country.

Swaraj's direction came after the Punjab Chief Minister, in a tweet, requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Swaraj to take up the issue of security concerns of Indians living in the US with President Donald Trump.

"I have asked Sardar Navtej Singh Sarna, Indian Ambassador in Washington, to update you on this," Swaraj tweeted.

Earlier, Singh said in a tweet, "Indians, Sikhs in

US are not feeling safe, please take up their security with @realDonaldTrump on priority @narendramodi ji @SushmaSwaraj ji."

There has been a spate of attacks on Indians in several parts of the US in the last three months.

A 26-year-old man from Telengana was shot at an unidentified person in California in the US on June 4 and continues to be in "very critical condition". — PTI

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Modi lays foundation stone for AIIMS unit in Assam; to be completed in 4 years

In a big boost to the State's Healthcare sector, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Assam.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today laid the foundation stone of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Guwahati, to be set up at Chariali in Assam's Kamrup district.

Instead of conducting the ceremony at the site of the institute to be constructed 26 km away from Guwahati, Modi, who was on a two-day tour of the state, did it by video link from the state's capital, Sansapor station in the state's capital.

Guwahati AIIMS will be constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Swastha Suraksha Yojana at an estimated cost of Rs 1,200 crore.

Given the escalating costs of health care, the State Government needs to accord top priority on putting in place a quality health care delivery system.

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Sonowal attends Iftar party

GUWAHATI, June 11: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today said that the month of Ramzan symbolizes peace and brotherhood among people irrespective of caste, creed and religion, besides motivating us to maintain restraint and work for the underprivileged.

Sonowal, while attending an Iftar get-together titled 'Ramzan Aru Sampriti' organised by some journalists, urged one and all to work together for overall development of the State.

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NF Rly's energy bill down after 'green initiatives'

PRANJAL BHUYAN

Musafirkhana here this evening, the first get-together was also attended by people from different walks of life.

Advocate Neelkumar Zaman and chairman Haji committee said the initiative of the Guwahati-based journalists is a unique one and it was for the first time that such a programme was organised. The party was also attended by senior journalists like Wasbir Hussain, Mrinal Talukdar and Nava Thakura and senior police officer Kula Saikia. — Staff Reporter

NFR officials said that adaptation of energy saving LED lights, commissioning of solar panels and use of other energy saving devices have helped bring good results and now major initiatives like declaration of 'green corridors' on certain stretches and covering the zonal railway is now seeking to adopt some more such measures.

NFR officials said that adoption of energy saving LED lights, commissioning of solar panels and use of other energy saving devices have helped bring good results and now major initiatives like declaration of 'green corridors' on certain stretches and covering the zonal railway is now seeking to adopt some more such measures.

NFR has also converted 40 stations in the zone into 100 per cent LED ones, including 17 under Kathiar Division, eight under Alipurduar Division, six under Ranganya, three under Lumding and six under Tinsukia Division.

A 700 Kwp solar plant was inaugurated last month at the Guwahati station by Railway Minister Suresh Prabhakar.

There are plans for two solar panels of 50 Kwp capacity at NFR headquarters, besides at

and BEE rated equipment and distribution of LED strips under government scheme," said said.

Sources said the number of solar panels commissioned till April 30 this year included stand-alone types at 41 level crossing gates with a total capacity of 26.24 Kwp and another 29 locations with grid connections with a total capacity of 980 Kwp.

NFR has also converted 40 stations in the zone into 100 per cent LED ones, including 17 under Kathiar Division, eight under Alipurduar Division, six under Ranganya, three under Lumding and six under Tinsukia Division.

All these will be under PPA mode and grid connected. Besides, there are plans to set up 50 solar panels of 10 Kwp capacity each in Lumding, Tin-

sukha and Ranganya divisions, all of which will be the standard variety," officials said.

NFR Chief Public Relations Officer (CPR) Pranav Jyoti Sharma that the 81-km long Chhaparmukh-Silghat Town section is planned to be converted into a discharge-free 'green corridor' within this month.

"Four more sections – Ranganya-Murkongsele (448 km), Badarpur-Agartala (225 km), Silchar-Jiribam (50 km) and Silchar-Bharabi (83 km) – are

also proposed to be converted into green corridors within this financial year," he said.

Sharma said that around 3,000 environment-friendly and zero-discharge bio-toilets have been fitted in 865 coaches within NFR. "All coaches are expected to be fitted with bio-toilets by 2019-20," he said.

Under the Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DEL), NFR has set a target to distribute LED lights to its employees, of which 49,884 were distributed last fiscal and another 11,10,116 are to be fitted within the next few months.

Sources said that the electricity bill of NFR has fallen from Rs 988.80 million in 2014-15 to Rs 960.74 million in 2015-16 and further to Rs 948.77 million in 2016-17. Consumption of conventional energy has also shown a decline during this period.

Fake currency seized

GUWAHATI, June 11: Customs sleuths today seized fake currency worth Rs 1.88 lakh at Changsari. Official sources said, acting on a tip-off, customs sleuths launched an operation at Jaliukbari this morning.

"Later, we were told that the persons carrying the fake notes were waiting near Changsari Railway Station. We immediately rushed there and spotted the suspected vehicle. We were able to nab one accused Md. Rajab Ali of Kamrup. We found three fake notes of Rs 2,000 denomination," officials said.

There were more people inside the vehicle but they managed to flee. But while fleeing, the occupants threw out of the vehicle a bundle of notes.

There were 91 pieces of fake Rs 2,000 denominations notes in the bundle. Operation is on to nab the other members of the gang. — Staff Reporter

Programme on tree plantation

GUWAHATI, June 11: The departments of forest and of city-based Belota College recently conducted an awareness programme on tree plantation in the classroom of the Department of English.

The event was attended by students from different departments and was presided over by Pankaj Kumar Kalita, Assistant Professor of the Department of English.

The welcome speech was delivered by Kamaran Jaman, Assistant Professor of the Department of English. In his speech, Jaman emphasised the importance of awareness about tree plantation.

Speeches were delivered by all the faculty members of both the departments including Dibyajyoti Deka, Priyanka Basumatary, Kamaloni Bharadwaj, Ramesh Rai and Dharanidhar Singhla.

The speakers highlighted on burning topics like environmental degradation, global warming and depletion of the Ozon layer. — Staff Reporter

Tusker dead

GUWAHATI, June 11: The tusker that was rescued after it had been trapped on a marshy patch inside the Assam Wildlife Sanctuary two weeks back, died yesterday.

The elephant which was being treated and kept under observation by the forest department could not make the desired progress even though it had shown signs of recovery initially.

Padrita Banah, DFO, Guwahati Wildlife Division, told *The Assam Tribune*. — Staff Reporter

Workshop

GUWAHATI, June 11: A workshop on agricultural inputs dealing licensing and implementation of existing rules and procedures of seed fertiliser and plant protection chemicals will be held on June 14 at the Directorate of Agriculture here, said an official statement. — Staff Reporter

equivalence to the existing taxes, and in some other cases, the

Cancer Research Foundation anniversary

STAFF REPORTER

late Bindu Kumar Agarwal.

According to Dr Amal Chandra Kataki, chairman of CRFI and Director of Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute, the MoU that the State government had signed recently with Tata Trusts to start cancer wings in all district hospitals of Assam is a praiseworthy step. He added that both government-run and private cancer treatment centres should participate in rigorous research activities to fight the menace of cancer.

"A major driving force in the battle against cancer has been the immense scientific advancements in the diagnosis and for the treatment of cancers," stated Dr Manigreeva Krishnamurti.

BP Saraf and Arun Agarwal were feted for donating to the CRFI while Gitika Kalita was feted for donating an audio-visual aid to the Department of Preventive Oncology. Manju Choudhury was felicitated for donating an ECG machine to the institute.

Indian forces ...

(Contd from page 1)

Army are deployed for the job. The Air Force striking power has also increased considerably as advanced landing grounds have been prepared and now India has two Sukhoi squadrons based at Tezpur and Chabua. Artillery-wise also, India is in a better position now as even Bofo guns have been placed in this part of the country.

During the 1962 war, the Indian Army suffered because the men were sent from different parts of the country and they were not acclimatised. But now the situation has totally changed. The Army personnel are properly acclimatised at different heights from the sea level before they are sent to the forward posts as it is not easy for anyone from the plains to get acclimatised in the heights of the international border in Arunachal Pradesh. "In case of any war, proper planning and motivation of the men are key factors. The highly-motivated Indian Army men, led from the front by the young officers, won the Kargil war for India. The motivation level of the armed forces is quite high and they can take on any challenge to defend the frontiers of the country," the sources added.

The sources pointed out that India also raised a Strike Corps to be sent to the international borders whenever necessary, while the personnel of the Special Frontier Force, comprising mostly Tibetans, can also be rushed to the borders whenever required. However, they admitted that China is still way ahead of India as far as infrastructure is concerned. For quite a long time, the Government of India did not create infrastructure along the border apprehending that the enemy may use it. But the policy has now changed and the Government of India also started building infrastructure along the border, including roads. The Dholu-Sadiya bridge, christened Bhupen Hazarika Setu, opened up a new road towards the border with China, while several other new roads are also coming up. "There are very few places along the border through which the Chinese Army can try to come inside India because of the natural barriers and such vulnerable portions are closely monitored," the sources added.

Though China has been creating infrastructure by India in Arunachal Pradesh and the Indian forces are prepared to face any eventuality, the security sources said, "It is very unlikely that China will go for a war like 1962. Any country will thoroughly examine the benefits of a war before launching an attack against any country. The Chinese know very well that the situation has changed a lot since 1962 and if they go for any misadventure, they would also suffer heavy losses. Moreover, at the diplomatic level also, China will face problems worldwide if it attacks India. That is why, India is not apprehending any war with China but the forces are fully ready to defend the frontiers of the country in case of any eventuality," sources added.

Another scam ...

(Contd from page 1)

There were signatures of senior State excise officials in the forged permits, but those officials have claimed that the signatures are fake. In fact, a deputy commissioner of excise has lodged a case with Hatigaon police here over the signature forgery issue.

Sources in the excise department said that the scam could be to the tune of several crores of rupees. Excise Minister Parimal Suklabaidya told this newspaper today that a high-level inquiry would be conducted. "Police is conducting an investigation. We will also conduct a probe from the department," he said.

If the officers are claiming that the signatures are forged, But if any officer is found to be involved, he or she will not be spared," the minister warned. There are two distilleries (Khatkhati and Chayagon), eight bottling plants, 50 bonded warehouses and over 2,000 retailers, including wine shops and bars, in the State. Many wine shops and bars are currently closed due to the Supreme Court ruling over their distance from highways.

GST Council ...

(Contd from page 1)

equivalence to the existing taxes, and in some other cases, the reduction is required because of the changing nature of the economy and changes that have occurred in consumer preference," he said.

Elaborating on some of the reductions, Jaitley said the tax on cashew has been cut from 12 to 5 per cent. Packaged foods like food and vegetable products such as pickles, chutneys, ketchup and instant food mixes, among others, which historically were taxed at 18 per cent, are going to be taxed at 12 per cent as these are items used by common people, he said. Tax on cutlery will come down from 18 to 12 per cent, while computer printers will be lowered from 28 to 18 per cent. Insulin and aspirin will go down from 12 to 5 per cent.

Among other goods, Jaitley said school bags have been lowered from 28 to 12 per cent. All goods and services under the pan-India GST regime, which will subsume the existing multiple central and state levies, have been categorised in four tax slabs of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent, besides those items that attract zero tax. On Entertainment Tax, Jaitley said that the GST Council has decided on a two-slab structure for cinema tickets, whereby those costing less than Rs 100 would be taxed less at 18 per cent, while those above will attract tax of 28 per cent. — IANS



Rabha dance being performed during Baikhu Utsav organised by All Rabha Students' Union at Odalbakra Bishnu Rabha Uddyan in Gweahati on Sunday. — UB Photos

Cong slams BJP chief for comment on Gandhiji

STAFF REPORTER

Leaders of the state of Nelson Mandela had adhered to the ideals of non-violence to bring an end to the racial discrimination of the apartheid era while former American President Barack Obama also stuck to the Mahatma's ideals of non-violence, said the APCC.

Pinto pointed out the fact that to win the hearts of the people, the BJP, after coming to power at the Centre in 2014, had declared the ideals of the Mahatma as the ideals for a 'clean India'. The symbol of the Mahatma's spectacle is made of the clean India propounded by the BJP after its 2014 electoral victory.

The participants of the demonstration demanded an apology from the BJP president for this comment of his.

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), which organised the protest demonstration in association with the Guwahati Metro Dis-

trict Congress Committee, described the comment of the BJP chief as a reflection of the ignorance of the saffron party about Gandhiji and the freedom struggle of the country.

Shakti pointed out that the BJP's shrewd 'trader' while addressing a party meeting at Raipur yesterday.

The participants of the demonstration demanded an apology from the BJP president for this comment of his.

The chief guest of the programme organised by the APCC here, while addressing the gathering, said that the Mahatma's ideals of non-violence enunciated by him are in line with the agenda of the RSS," said Saikia.

He talked about the unplanned demonetisation by the government at the Centre and its effects on the banking industry. He also deliberated on the government's proposal for 'Turn Around Plan' for the ten public sector weak banks and highlighted the reaction of the AIBOC to that, which forced the government to change its plan.

Dev said the government and the RBI are leaving no stone unturned in their attempt to merge and privatisate the public sector banks in particular. He attributed the menace to the corruption and inefficiency of the public sector banks.

The elephant which was being treated and kept under obser-

vation by the forest department could not make the desired pro-

gress even though it had shown signs of recovery initially.

Padrita Banah, DFO, Guwahati Wildlife Division, told *The Assam Tribune*. — Staff Reporter

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slabs of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent, besides those items that

attract zero tax. On Entertainment Tax, Jaitley said that the GST Council has decided on a two-slab structure for cinema tickets, where

by those costing less than Rs 100 would be taxed less at 18 per

cent, while those above will attract tax of 28 per cent. — IANS



Ansu's dream: to lead women's team to Everest

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, June 11: After creating a world record by scaling the Mount Everest twice within five days, mountaineer Ansu Jamsenpa now nurtures a dream of leading an all-women expedition to the world's highest peak, doing her own bit of promoting empowerment of women.

Her true grit, now recognised the world over, is a part of inner strength that she derives from positive thinking, Jansen-

pa said in a candid discussion with scribes here on Saturday.

As the Guest of the Month at the Guwahati Press Club, the ace mountaineer narrated her journey of scaling the world's highest peak on five occasions, another record for any Indian woman mountaineer.

After her successful summit on May 16, 2017, she completed her double ascent on May 21 this year. The mountaineer from Arunachal achieved the feat of scaling Mt. Everest within 10 days in 2011



Ansu Jamsenpa addressing the media at Press Club on Saturday. - UB Photos

powerment. Of course, lots of details like sponsorship and team selection are yet to be planned," she added.

Though worried about the changing climatic condition around the highest peak and growing number of untrained climbers leading to accidents and inconvenience, Ansu said that inexperienced and untrained people must not go for such expeditions as they put their lives in peril and also create inconvenience for others. "The Nepal government must look into that aspect," she added.

The ice climber has many other future plans, including turning her focus on smaller unclimbed peaks. Regarding the possibility of another Everest climb with her daughter, Jansenpa said that she would like to go for such an expedition but only if her children are interested in taking up the journey.

"If they want to go for climbing Mount Everest, I would definitely support. However, I would never push them to take up this journey, just because they are my children," she added.

For women inspired by the life andfeat of Jamsenpa, her only advice is to be self-reliant in every field and never look

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STAFF REPORTER

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Above SBI North Kokrajhar Branch, J.D. Road, Tengapara, Kokrajhar, B.T.A.D (Assam), Pin-783370 Ph. No.: 0361-271267 / 271268	2nd Floor, A/IT & SC Building, NH-37, Jawahar Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022 Ph. No.: 0361-2132929	Lahowai College, Lahowai, Dibrugarh-786010, Ph. No.: 0373-2381546

SC/ ST candidates registered under Employment Exchange may contact National Career Service Centre (formerly Coaching cum Guidance Centre) for SC/ST Rehabari, Guwahati - 8, (Ph No.: 0361-2735911) for free training as well as stipend scheme sponsored by DGET, Govt of India, in 'O' level courses (IT & CMM).

Foundation day

GUWAHATI, June 11: The Government of Assam will soon formulate a textile policy to give a major fillip to the handloom and textile sector in the State. The proposed policy will focus on integrating production and marketing of handloom and textile products, economically empowering the weavers and making a niche for handicrafts of the State in the world market.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said this while reviewing the activities of the handloom & textile department at a meeting held at Janata Bhawan here on Friday. The Chief Minister further directed the department to set up a state-of-the-art emporium showcasing unique and attractive fabrics of all communities of the State

for marketing of the handicrafts.

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On the occasion of WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR, 12th June 2017

Let us all pledge to play an active role to creat a Child Labour free Society

For more information please contact local Labour Office or Visit: labourcommissioner.assam.gov.in

Jamsenpa/03/3341/17

MESSAGE FOR TODAY

We cannot discover new oceans until we have the courage to lose sight of the shore.

— MURIEL CHEN

The Assam Tribune

ULFA talks

The interests of long-term peace and stability in the State warrant that the peace process with the pro-talk ULFA faction initiated several years back is brought to a logical conclusion within a definite time frame. While the talks had a positive beginning several years back, things have fizzled out since, stemming largely from the Centre's inability to carry forward the momentum with the required vigour — something critical to finding a lasting solution to the vexed problem of insurgency in the State. The main issues raised by the ULFA in its charter of demands relate to having constitutional safeguards for the State's indigenous populace for securing their political rights as also their hold over land. This is definitely an issue intrinsically linked to the people's identity and existence, particularly against the backdrop of large-scale infiltration from Bangladesh effecting demographic changes in the State. Worse, the infiltrators are increasingly gaining access to political rights as citizens — something laid bare by no less an authority than the Gauhati High Court time and again. The circumstances make it amply clear that the future of the indigenous people stands jeopardized unless a safety mechanism is put in place. This must be done even if it requires the Constitution of India to be amended.

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju's statement that the demands raised by the pro-talk ULFA are worth discussing and that the Centre is keen to hammer out an amicable solution on their basis is welcome. The logical step on the part of the Centre, therefore, would be to sit with the next round of negotiations with the outfit and round up the dialogue within a reasonable time frame. Prolonging the talks to an infinite period will only lead to complications, not the least being those created by the presence of an overground militant group having arms. With the death of SS Khaslang, the NSCN (K) supremo, a hardliner, it could well be the opportune time for the Government to extend the olive branch to the outfit and make it agreeable to a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue. Apart from the ULFA, several other militant outfits in the region have been on ceasefire agreements with the Government. The core issues raised by the insurgent groups need to be deliberated upon. Any delay or dithering on this will only complicate the conflict situation. Another predicament before the Government concerns the presence of several factions of the militant outfits. The ULFA itself is a divided house with 'c-in-c' Paresh Barua representing its hardline face and shunning dialogue. Many of the outfits in the region have more than one splinter groups and it would be far from practical to have talks with all those. Aspects such as their 'mass base', their demands, their stand on talks, their sincerity in abjuring violence, etc., need to be weighed carefully before any engagement in talks.

Tea concerns

Reportedly, a book by a former scientist from the Tocklai Tea Research Institute has asserted that tea production in the North-east has reached a plateau and a holistic effort needs to be made if the industry is to retain its sustainability. Figures released by sources in the industry seemingly do not support such a contention. In 2011-12 Assam produced around 582 million kg of tea amounting to approximately 53% of the tea produced in the country, while in 2015 she produced around 631 million kg which was approximately the same percentage for total Indian tea production. A rise of 50 million kg in production within a period of 3-4 years seemingly shows a growing rather than a stagnant trend. Yet, when the warning comes from a scientist belonging to the oldest and premier tea research organization in India, it has to be taken with serious concern. Perhaps other factors, such as the increase in number of small tea growers, who currently produce a sizeable volume of tea in the North-east, are responsible for the sustained growth in production witnessed in the past decade while the reality, as the author suggests, is far more bleak. According to him around 45% of the total area under tea have low-yielding bushes which are over 40 years old and also suffer from high vacancies, poor bush frame and low plant population.

Unless these areas are replanted now in a large-scale way, there might even be a decline in tea production in the future. Unfortunately, no such attempt has been made by the industry, as revealed by the fact that the rate of replanting is a low 0.52% in Upper Assam and 0.45% in the North Bank. The author also laments that many planters by and large do not follow good tea growing and manufacturing practices and do not regularly monitor soil fertility. They also neglect to implement latest agro-technology in areas such as pruning, tipping, manuring, etc., even as they indulge in wastage of inputs. Not only such factors, according to the author, have ensured that tea plantations have remained stagnant in the amount produced per hectare, but in the absence of a long-term strategy there will be a threat to commercial sustainability. It would be interesting to note what the response of other professionals in the tea industry, including scientists from the Tocklai Research Centre itself, would be to such a prognostication. While tea is a major industry in Assam, small tea growing has provided much needed gainful employment to a large number of youths in the North-east. Thus any recession in the tea market would impact negatively on the economy of this region. It is incumbent upon the industry to take a hard look at the scenario and take necessary measures to remove any lacunae.

Retrospecting Indo-Pak relations

■ Mausumi Mahanta

It is baffling that two young nations emerging from the ashes of British India, having a shared history and culture, are at loggerheads even today almost 70 years since becoming independent, and we can only turn to the archives. There is a theory among certain schools of Indian historians that had it not been for three events stretching from the 17th to the 20th centuries, India would not have been partitioned on the lines it is today. The first event was the Maratha defeating his elder brother, Crown Prince Dara Shikoh who would have been an Emperor like Akbar governing the Indian Empire on the basis of tolerance, mutual accommodation and non-discrimination between Muslims and Hindus. The second event was Ahmed Shah Abdali defeating the combined Maratha and Mughal forces in the third battle of Panipat in 1761. The third event was Motilal Nehru suggesting and Mahatma Gandhi agreeing to Jawaharlal Nehru becoming president of the Congress Party at the young age of 40, marginalizing Mohammad Ali Jinnah in national politics. Eventually Gandhi's popularity, rooted in Hindu philosophical thought, led Jinnah to become an advocate of a separate Muslim state in subcontinent India and he labelled nationalists Muslims like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Hakim Azmal Khan, among others, as Hindu stooges. The point being made is that the hostility between India and Pakistan predates the partition of India by a long span of time.

The Muslim League's demand for separate electorates for Muslims in 1906 and the British Government acceding to it set the ball rolling for

communal politics. At the same time it is also true that BC Pal, Aurora, Indra Ghose and others sought to base the movement for Swaraj on the religious mysticism of Hinduism, which estranged the Muslims and weakened the secular character of the national movement. With the establishment of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1915, the gap between the two communities widened. Moreover, while the leaders of Congress leaders insisted on the need for secularism, these ideas were by no means universally shared lower down in the party hierarchy, or even by all Congress ministers.

By the late 1920s, the Muslim League was advocating the continuation of British rule in India. When the Second World War broke out, Jinnah announced unconditional support for Britain against

Germany whereas the Indian National Congress offered conditional support, demanding that Britain should commit in advance dominion status to be followed by complete independence once hostilities ended. The British Government naturally felt good about the Muslim League and supported the Pakistan Resolution in the Lahore session of the League in 1940. However, Jinnah himself saw the idea of Pakistan as a bargaining counter initially useful for blocking possible British concessions to the Congress and gaining additional favours for Muslims.

Yet the country was partitioned as a necessary evil, and Jinnah was not wrong when he said he had received

"a moth-eaten and truncated Pakistan". Pakistan as it emerged was subject to frustrations and disappointments. The Muslim League did not get the whole of Punjab, Bengal and Assam to be part of Pakistan, as it had demanded. The Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and NWFP were not in favour of the creation of Pakistan. India has a larger number of Muslim citizens than the whole of Pakistan. Thus the two-nation theory of Jinnah stands defeated. Pakista-

Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh heightened this bitterness and, more importantly generated a genuine apprehension that India would try to nullify Partition by subverting the state of Pakistan, by breaking it up or reworking it into what Pakistanis called the Hindu plan of 'Akhand Bharat'.

Pakistan's military adventures against India in 1948 and 1965 stemmed from a subconscious desire to rectify the unfair arrangements of the Partition and the artificially nurtured memories of Muslim superiority. India's role in the liberation of Bangladesh reinforced the Pakistani fear psychosis, and impacted on both the ideology and identity of the country.

Another element of the Pakistani mindset is of a certain envy that certainly exists. Both countries achieved independence at the same time but while India, despite all its diversities, tensions and problems, has consolidated its democratic and administrative institutions, Pakistan has gone through a roller-coaster ride of constantly changing political arrangements and political institutions which have no coherence and stability. The armed forces remain the ultimate centre of authority. This bothers Pakistanis when they compare themselves with Indians, but instead of taking a rational view, they assert that being different from India in respect of practising democracy is necessary for safeguarding Pakistani identity.

The net result has been a consistent policy on the part of Pakistan not to allow normal and easy people-to-people contacts between Indians and Pakistanis that would have surely ended the myths and misinterpretations of Indian intentions.

dians and Pakistanis that would have surely ended the myths and misinterpretations of Indian intentions.

With regard to the Indian mindset, majority of Indians have accepted Partition, the fact that a fair number of Muslims have stayed back in India and are now an integral part of the Indian polity have generated the forces of reason and moderation. However, this fabric becomes dented occasionally. Pakistan has taken advantage of the existence of a large Muslim community in India to sow dissension within the polity, focusing on the role of a protector of the rights and safety of the Muslims in India. This is a major irritant to the people of India. At the same time it cannot be denied that Indian Muslims remain subject to greater economic pressures and the resulting socio-political difficulties despite India's genuine and deep commitment to secularism. Hence, some segments of India's Muslim leadership easily fall prey to Pakistan's intrusive policies and their patriotism is questioned by Hindu extremist elements.

Keeping the above in mind, the need of the hour is to dismantle communal forces irrespective of its religious affiliation, modernize and secularize the nation; beef politics must end, and 'Sarka Saath Sarka Vikas' carried out in true spirit to remove fault-lines of discrimination and prejudice. In place of chest thumping by political leaders in the aftermath of surgical strikes on Pakistani soil, the changing ideology in Kashmir needs to be addressed squarely in the eye. Amid heightened tension in Indo-Pak relations, the silver lining is the return of Uzma Ahmed to India, whose case was judged on humanitarian ground by the Pakistani Home Ministry and not through the prism of India-Pakistan relations.

Prohibiting child labour

■ Arpan Dutta

Every human has to perform certain unavoidable jobs suited to his/her age. For children, in modern days, their main job is to keep themselves busy with education. Nowadays it has become a fundamental right for the children to have free and compulsory education for the age group of 6-14 years. The Government of India also implemented this right through the 86th amendment to the Constitution of India in 2009. That Act is commonly known as the Right to Education Act, 2009. Accordingly, the Government of India has not only been providing school dresses and books, etc., also midday meals free of cost under the banner of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan throughout the country. Still, regrettably, quite a good number of children keep themselves away from earning education in the institutions not because of their unwillingness to attend classes but only because of compulsion to earn money. And this compulsion has been used as an advantage by some section of people for their selfish gains.

It is observed that children have

been engaged in different sectors of informal economy including agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, manufacturing, food processing, printing-binding and other service sectors, not to speak of household workers. In some occupations, child labour is involved in all stages of production from gathering raw materials to assembling the finished products. Irrespective of the economic sectors, children have to work in unhealthy conditions and are often exposed to toxic chemicals, insect bites, etc. And naturally, children working in various manufacturing units are exposed to metal and other dusts and become victims of diseases like silicosis (glass manufacturing), asbestososis (cement slate), bronchial asthma (sil, garment, textile, carpet, printing press), tuberculosis (beedi manufacturing, cement plant), tetanus (rag picking), eye diseases, etc. Sometimes child labourers have to face untoward situations while they are working in chemical as well as manufacturing industries. There they have to inhale toxic gases that come out from the furnace, apart from the danger of burn and eye injuries, etc.

The prevalence of child labour adversely affects the children and impedes their overall development. Therefore, a clear national policy and governmental action focusing on the range of interrelated factors like poverty, unemployment and illiteracy is required to end such labour exploitation of children. Due to the deprivation of children from their right to education, the average literacy rate has also been affected badly. As such, the Government of India had introduced the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1956, aiming prohibition of employment of children below 14 years in 18 occupations and 65 processes. Again the Government has made the right to education a fundamental right for children through enactment of the RTE Act in 2009. Truly, encouraging results have also been achieved through the enforcement of this Act, particularly in the progressive increase in enrolment in the schools and also in the reduction of the magnitude of child labour, reportedly from 12.7 million in 2001 to 10.1 million in 2011. Significantly, the NESSO Survey report also showed a decline of working children from 9.07 million in 2004-05 to 4.98 million in 2009-10.

It is worthwhile to mention that there have been scopes for granting punishment to the violators of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act (shortly CALPR) 1986. Offences under Section 3 or 3A committed by an employer shall be cognizable and the punishment by way of imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months, which may extend to two years, or with fine which shall not be less than Rs 20,000, which extend to Rs 50,000. For repeat offence, the violator is punishable with imprisonment for not less than one year, which may extend to three years. The said Acts also provide punishment to parents and guardians if they permit their wards to work for commercial purposes. But with a view to making the CALPR Act more effective, it has been amended last year which imposes a complete ban on employment or work of children below 14 years in any occupations, even as household workers. All children below 18 years are totally prohibited from working in any of the hazardous occupations or processes in mines, explosives, hazardous occupations set forth in the Factories Act 1948.

In contrary to the above, of course, exemptions have been provided to children helping their families or family enterprises after school hours and during vacations. Exemptions have also been provided for certain cases like children working as an artiste in an audio-visual entertainment industry, including advertisement, films, television serials or any other such entertainment or sports activities except the circus, subject to maintaining of the RTE Act.

But surprisingly, in spite of having all these, there is no dearth of child labourers in India or in the State of Assam. So far our State is concerned, the Government of Assam has cut a sorry figure in achieving encouraging results pertaining to prohibition of child labour. Really, quite a good number of children are yet to be rescued from the field of engagement in hotels, restaurants, brick factories, shops, bakeries, masonry and private houses. So the authority concerned should play an active role in such a way that the children's primary education can be jeopardized in any way. Additionally, it is also a prime duty of the citizens to cooperate with the Government machinery so that the RTE could be fulfilled rightly.

Letters to the EDITOR

Sir,— I would like to thank the

State Government and the

authority concerned for the

release of fund about Rs 17 crore for

necessary works relating to update

of NRC (AT, June 5).

The completion of the remaining works of NRC is indeed a matter of serious

concern. The BJP-led State

Government to had promised that

no illegal immigrants would be

apprehended in the State. Therefore,

the release of fund gives a feel that

the problem of illegal immigrants

would be solved soon, upon proper

implementation of law. I would

also request the State Government

to take effective steps so as to

speed up this NRC update process.

Yours etc., GAURAV GAUTAM

SAHA, MG Road, Nagaon

UPC and IDOL exams

Sir.— Through your esteemed

daily, we want to write a few words

about the coming second semester

internal assessment examination of

the Institute of Distance and Open

Learning (IDOL), Gauhati University.

The MCQ-based examination of

some subjects to be held on June 11 has been postponed due to the recruitment examination of the Gauhati High Court held on the same day. The internal assessment examination is rescheduled and will now be held on June 18 next. But the preliminary examination (2017) of UPSC Civil Services exam will also be held on the same day (June 18). Some examinees of IDOL will also appear in the UPSC preliminary examination. Hence, the examinees who will also appear in the UPSC exam will be deprived of appearing in the IDOL exam.

Therefore, we request the IDOL authorities to change the date of the said examination. Yours etc., NABIN CHANDRA LAHKAR, Rupak Nagar, Tezpur.

Atal Amit Abhijan

Sir.— The introduction of the

Atal Amit Abhijan, a scheme to

provide financial aid to the poor

and needy patients, in our State is

welcome. Hundreds of cancer

patients have received Rs 2 lakh

as financial assistance from the

Government to continue with

their treatment. Cancer treatment

costs a lot and for a common man,

it becomes difficult to continue

with the treatment due to financial

issue. When cancer and poverty

get mixed together in someone's life,

the individual suffers doubly.

Schemes like Atal Amit Abhijan

are a boon to the suffering cancer

patients because it has infused

their hearts with hope. Such a

scheme has bright smiles on the

lips of the patients who are dealing

with the dreaded disease. Yours etc.,

Dr GITARTHA ROYME-DHII, Survey, Guwahati.

Compartamental exam

Sir.— The SEBA is holding

HSLC/AHM compartmental

(single chance) at the end of July, 2017, the result of

which is to be declared on or

before August 20, 2017. This is a

welcome step. But the concern is

that the AHSEC has notified that

the last date of admission into HS

First Year class for the academic

session 2017-18 is up to June 30,

2017 (AT, June 8).

As such, I would like to ask the authority concerned

about the fate of the students

appearing in the compartmental

examination, as no successful

student shall be admitted into the

HS First Year class in the institu-

tions under the AHSEC after June

30, 2017. I urge the Government

of Assam to clarify its stand in this

regard. Yours etc., Shyamal

CHAKRABORTY, KAHILIPARA, Guwahati.

Young citizens

Sir.— I wish to appeal to the young citizens of Assam that in this present world economic scenario, it is now time for us to shed some of our old ideas and set the real world, where astounding progress in standard of living is happening in all spheres, such as education,

health care, mass transportation, etc., have surpassed that of ours by a considerable distance. The small neighbouring countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia are examples. China is now a very distant dream for us.

The real issues like generation of employment for skilled and unskilled young Assamese youths through industrialization,

generation of power through renewable sources, thrust on tourism, etc., need urgent

attention from the present Government.

Our young voters should be more involved in these issues so that Assam moves

along with the rest of India.

Yours etc., BIJAY BARUA, Dhakukhania.

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AIR-165

Rushikesh Jayavant Najan



AIR-183

Yash Baheti



AIR-196

Ram Goyal



AIR-210

Prashant Rammani



AIR-214

Divyansh Mittal



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AIR-273

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AIR-282

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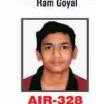
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Devotees taking out a procession on the occasion of Madhabdev birth anniversary at Barpeta Satra on Saturday. — UB Photos

Excise officials accused of extortion, sexual harassment

CORRESPONDENT

MANGALDAI, June 11: A case has been registered by the police against a few officials of the Darrang Excise Department on serious charges of extortion and sexual harassment.

According to the police, a woman of village No. I Chenga under Pathorguri Police Out Post had lodged an FIR before the police complaining that in the early morning hours of May 19 last, a team of Excise constables identified as Babul Ali, Noor Ali and Nathon on the pretext of conducting a search operation entered her bedroom and sexually harassed her. Then the Excise team physically tortured her husband Ratul Bhuya on charges of dealing in illicitly distilled country liquor before taking him to Mangaldoi. There the Excise team demanded Rs 10,000 for releasing her husband and she paid Rs 7,000 in cash to the accused Excise officials in the presence of one Dipen Thakuriya. The FIR which was lodged reportedly on May 21 also mentioned that, as her husband had sustained some injury on his head due to the physical torture by the accused Excise officials and thus he needed immediate medical treatment, there was a delay in the filing of the complaint. The police of the Pathorguri Out Post forwarded the FIR to Sipajhar Police

Station where a case (No. 383 / 17 U/S 448 / 354 / 325/384 and 34 IPC) was registered on May 23 last.

On the other hand, Preetam Barua, Deputy Superintendent (i/c) of Excise, Darrang on being asked about the charges refuted it as false and baseless. He stated that there is no constable by the name Babul Ali. There is one constable named Babul whose official name is Iskander Mirza. Similarly, the name of constable Noor Islam has also been wrongly mentioned in the FIR. According to him, lady police constables provided by the Darrang Police on requisition had accompanied them and packets of illicit liquor were seized from the house of the complainant. Regarding allegation of demand of money to free the husband of the complainant, the Superintendent termed such allegations as very common against them.

Mention may be made here that there have been a series of public allegations against a section of constables of the local Excise department including one of the accused in the above-mentioned case Babul Ali—of maintaining an unholy nexus with the illegal liquor traders. Babul who had allegedly been closely associated with liquor baron Rajesh Jalani, is presently facing an inquiry by the CID of the Assam Police. He has reportedly been posted in his home district since 2005

with just an 11-month transfer-break in between. Moreover, another transfer order issued by the Office of the Excise Commissionerate, Guwahati at the fag end of the tenure of the then Commissioner of Excise Samson Singh, reportedly at the initiative of the then Deputy Commissioner of Darrang Manoj Kumar was cancelled without being made effective by an order (Memo No. III-162/2015-16 PT/05-A) issued a fortnight later on September 16, 2016.

The matter was also raised before the State Excise Minister Primalal Shukla-baidya by representatives of several local public organisations including AYCP when the Minister visited Mangaldoi recently on May 5.

Meanwhile, on being asked about the progress of the investigation, SI Abbash Ali, the Investigating Officer and also the In-Charge of Pathorguri Police Outpost on informed that statements of all the three accused Excise officials namely Iskander Mirza @ Babul, Noor Islam and Padmaran Nath have been recorded but they are waiting for the instructions of their senior officers to undertake further action. On the other hand, Sreejith T. Superintendent of Police, Darrang has assured early framing of the chargesheet of the case at the court even though the accused could not be arrested as per provision of the law.

Kokrajhar to host Prag Cine Awards 2017

CORRESPONDENT

KOKRAJHAR, June 11: A mega event of the north-eastern region in the cultural field, the 'Prag Cine Award' presentation function will be held at the Bodola Cultural Complex in Kokrajhar with a two-day programme on June 17 and 18.

The mega event is being organised by Prag News in association with the Bodoland Territorial Council with the aim of enhancing the sense of brotherhood in the region.

Addressing a press meet recently at the PWD guest house, Kokrajhar, the CMD of Prag News Sanjeev Narain said that as the Assamese film industry came into existence with the release of the film *Jyoti* in 1935, the Bodo film industry

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STAFF REPORTER

The ceremony was attended by Prof S Parasuraman, Director, TISS, RC Jain, Commissioner & Secretary, Secondary Education Department, Prof DK Srivastava, Deputy Director, TISS, Krishna Baruah, OSD RMSA, Assam and Amina Charania, ITE-Lead, Tata Trusts and Course faculty and Associate Professor, CEI&AR, TISS.

The convocation ceremony celebrated the certificate recipients' programme completion with six awards given for outstanding performance, best trainer and mentor, and most active online participants, NGOs, volunteers, who completed the course, were also felicitated.

The course seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the role of technology in teaching and learning while critically evaluating value of ICT applications and programmes in schools. It is designed for in-service teachers in upper primary and secondary government school teachers.

S Parasuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences said, "When the certificate course was presented to the academic council, the academic council for the first time felt this is an amazing

experiment. It is an experiment whereby we are reaching the teachers who are the most critical to and are the backbone of our schooling system and if they are empowered, trained and motivated then their teaching children will become fair and enjoyable."

RC Jain, Commissioner & Secretary, Secondary Education Department, while lauding the initiative, said that the aim and objective of the programme was to create good faculty and through them expand to more and more schools.

"For this, the teachers' role is much more. We are providing them with a teaching system and a methodology that did not exist before. ICT-based education is the only module that can make classrooms attractive," he said.

ITE has reached 120 government schools/model schools intensively and 600 government schools as outreach schools in Assam. In close coordination with RMSA, each master trainer will continue to handhold a group of 15 teachers whom they have trained in the course. The next six months' programme will be prepared by ITE-TISS to be implemented in local school clusters.

14 staff who have been chosen

for the awards by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, 12 are from the Kaziranga National Park that shows the commitment of our employees," elated Singh said while sharing the results with this correspondent. He also informed that rhino poaching has been declined due to active vigil of the staff.

In this connection, a meeting was held at the Pub-Jyoti Nainghar under the presidency of Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya on June 5 to discuss ways to plant 1000 tree saplings in the area. The society has been working with the motto of a green and pollution-free world. This was stated in a press statement.

AMSU felicitates meritorious students at Tinsukia

CORRESPONDENT

TINSUKIA, June 11: The All Moran Students' Union (AMSU) has felicitated meritorious students of the Moran community for their excellent results in the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) and Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate (HSSLC) examinations this year at a function held at the District Library auditorium here today.

A total of 270 students of the community secured first division in the HSLC, while 160 got first division in the HSSLC. They were given a *gamosa*, a packet of books and a citation by the student body.

The programme was addressed by noted

Meritorious students felicitated

ANN Service

Regarding the pollution of water by arsenic contamination, the Minister said that appropriate measures will be taken.

Referring to the Public Distribution System (PDS), Daimari said that action is being initiated against ration card holders who do not genuine BPL families may get the food items under the Food Security Act. Regarding the black marketing of kerosene oil, the Minister appealed to all concerned to create awareness against black marketers.

KALIABOR, June 11: Four hundred and forty four meritorious students were felicitated at a function at the Kaliabor College auditorium recently.

The HSLC, HM and HS (Arts, Science, Commerce) passed meritorious students were felicitated at the function organised by Keshab Mahanta, Water Resource Minister where Dr Kandarpa Kr Deka, VC, Srimanta Sankaradev Vishavidyalaya, Nagaon was the chief guest while Raja Babu Saikia, HS (Science) topper from Ramanuj College, Nagaon was the invited guest. Besides, Dilip Kr Bora, Principal, Ramnaujan College attended as the distinguished guest. Manoj Kr Das, Director, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati was another invited guest at the programme.

Speaking at the function as the chief guest, Dr KK Deka while congratulating the meritorious students for their success, appealed them to become self-dependent and hard working.

Earlier Keshab Mahanta, Water Resource & IT Minister read out the welcome address and congratulated all the meritorious students of Kalabor and blessed them for a better future.

Saplings planted

GUWAHATI, June 11: More than 300 tree saplings have been planted in the greater Pub-Jyoti Nagar, Assam Nagar, Ganesh Nagar and Gopal Nagar areas of Nominat in a programme organised by the Himaaya Welfare Society on the occasion of World Environment Day. The plantation programme that began on June 5 will conclude tomorrow.

In this connection, a meeting was held at the Pub-Jyoti Nainghar under the presidency of Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya on June 5 to discuss ways to plant 1000 tree saplings in the area. The society has been working with the motto of a green and pollution-free world. This was stated in a press statement.

Mismanagement bane of Assam's first tea company

ABHIJIT KHATNIAN

DOOMDOOMA, June 11: Assam Company India Limited, formerly known as the Assam Tea Company was the first tea company in Assam set up by the colonial British in 1839 with its headquarters at Nazira. This oldest tea company of the State having 14 big tea gardens across the State, has been suffering a lot due to sheer mismanagement.

The 14 gardens of the company situated in Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Nagaon districts are: Dighalbarang, Naduwa, Thamri, Rongorong, Majan, Dimjan, Greenwood, Hozelbank, Domar Dallang, Khumta, Kathalguri, Mokhlu-

ti, Kondoli and Borbaruh. But, due to the mismanagement by the company, these gardens have been suffering a lot for the last couple of years. Now the situation has become so bad that the company has failed to pay wages to its labourers. Not only the labourers, the staff and the managers of these gardens have also not received their salaries for the last several months.

Dighalbarang Tea Estate is situated at Doomdooma. The labourers of the garden had to receive their fortnightly wages on last Thursday, but they have not got it till today. Moreover, they have not received their rations. The ASEB has disconnected electricity supply to the garden due to



non-payment of electricity tariff. On the other hand, the AGCL has also stopped sup-

plying gas to the factory of the garden due to non-payment of bills. The management has not

deposited the nearly two crore rupees for the Provident Fund of the labourers. Around Rs 80 lakh has also not been deposited by the company for the gratuity of the labourers.

It is alleged that the present owner of the company AK Jajoiya has diverted the funds of the company to invest in some other business in which he suffered a great loss and this has led to the present situation. Once the productivity of the gardens of this company was very high and the company used to get good rates for their manufactured tea. But due to the lack of proper maintenance the productions in the gardens of the company has gone down.

The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) has expressed serious concern over this situation. Addressing a press conference at the ACMS Doomdooma Branch Office, its general secretary and a former labour minis-

WEATHER
NORTHEAST

Forecast for North Eastern States: Heavy rain in the region is very likely to occur at a most places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura and light to moderate rain/rainstorms will likely to occur at a few places over Arunachal Pradesh. Strong surface wind with wind speed 30-40 kmph will prevail over Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

Warning: Heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh on June 12 and 13 and over Assam, Meghalaya on June 13. Heavy to very heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura on June 12 and over Assam and Meghalaya on June 12 with isolated extremely heavy falls.

	Max (°C)	Min (°C)
Dibrugarh	34.4	24.5
Tezpur	34.1	26.3
Silchar	35.9	25.2
Dhubri	34.9	27.4
Jorhat	34.3	26.0
N Lakhimpur	36.4	26.4
Shillong	25.3	15.8
Imphal	26.5	22.5
Itanagar	36.2	25.8
Aizawl	29.7	11.6
Agnasa	29.0	20.0
Kohima	28.4	18.0
Pasighat	35.5	24.5
Cherrapunji	26.7	16.8

2 militants nabbed in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 11: Manipur-based armed group Kuki National Front's former Defence PRO was rounded up along with a small arms and mobile phones during an operation by a combined team of Imphal West and Imphal East districts commandos during a night operation in Kangpokpi district.

DGP Manipur LN Khaitan told reporters here on Sunday that the operation was conducted "on receipt of an input about the presence of some Kuki cadres who were involved in serious crime at Saperamea village" in the hill district.

The team arrested one Letthoson alias Soson, former Defence PRO of KNF and recovered one .22 revolver with six live rounds and two mobile phones.

A case has been registered and investigation is on to find out his involvement in other cases, the State police chief said. In another search operation, police commandos arrested an active over ground worker of PLA, he added. – Correspondent

Girl commits suicide in Tura Women PS

TURA, June 11: A 18 year-old girl from Eman Gaudagre village in South Garo Hills today committed suicide by hanging herself within the premises of Tura Women Police Station.

According to police, the girl, identified as Silbinala M Samanta, had come to Tura a few days ago to meet a friend and had taken up residence with another friend working as a maid at Dobaispara locality here.

The problem began today when the girl refused to go back home, which raised suspicions of the house owner. He along with residents brought the girl to Dobaispara Beat House at about 8 am today.

"As there were no women personnel in the Beat House, she was brought to Tura Women PS. At about 10.30 am she wanted to go the bathroom and a woman constable went along with her," said West Garo Hills district police chief, Dr MGR Kumar.

When the girl did not come out even after 15 minutes, the door was forced open and the body was found hanging.

"We are still investigating the cause of her apparent suicide and are not ruling out a love angle in the case. An inquest was performed and the body has been sent for post mortem," added Dr Kumar. – Correspondent

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana launched in Arunachal

CORRESPONDENT

ITANAGAR, June 11: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu along with Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju and State's Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Kamling Mosang today launched the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), an ambitious scheme of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas which aims to provide free LPG connections to BPL families in the country.

Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 1 last year,

PMUY aims to safeguard the health of women & children by providing them with a clean cooking fuel – LPG, so that they don't have to compromise their health in smoky kitchens or wander in unsafe areas collecting firewood. Under this scheme, five crore LPG connections will be provided to BPL families with a support of Rs 1,600 per connection in three years.

As a symbolic launch of PMUY in the State, 24 beneficiaries were handed over LPG connections in a function at State Banquet Hall here today. Expressing gratitude to PM

Modi for launching the people-oriented scheme, Khandu said the scheme would benefit Arunachal Pradesh immensely as more than half of the population, especially in the rural areas, still use firewood for cooking and hence indirectly impacts the State's rich forest cover.

Hailing the scheme as one of the best, Khandu announced that the State Government would offer additional Rs 1,000 to each beneficiary. With this announcement, a beneficiary of the State would avail a total of Rs 2,600 as assistance for one connection that includes secu-

rity deposit, pressure regulator, safety hose, consumer card and installation charges.

"In these three years, Modiji has taken several big decisions and launched more than 90 schemes catering to every section of the society. It is now our responsibility to take these schemes to the genuine beneficiaries in a transparent and judicious manner," Khandu said while reiterating his call for change of people's mindset and to develop work culture.

Informing that highest number of cases of lung cancer are reported

from North East, MoS Rijiju blamed it on use of firewood for cooking in almost all households of the region. He said PMUY will now change this scenario and in the process provide a clean environment and preserve forests. He asserted that it was the responsibility of each one in the State Government to successfully implement all schemes launched by the Centre.

As per Oil Industry records, Arunachal Pradesh, as on May 1, 2017, has around 3.04 lakh households with an LPG coverage of 64 per cent. In order to achieve 100 per cent penetration in days to come, oil marketing companies will be organizing 'melas' and camps at various locations for releasing LPG connections to BPL families.

Besides, seven new LPG distributors are in pipeline to meet the surge in LPG demand in the State.

Also present in the function were Parliamentary Secretaries Take Taki (Food & Civil Supplies) and Techi Kaso (UD & Housing), Chief Secretary Shakuntala D Gamlin, Indian Oil Chief General Manager KK Handique, DK Ray from HPCL and Panjaj Das from BPCL.

Mizoram fruit, veg vendors 'lost' Rs 60 lakh due to blockade

CORRESPONDENT

Dr Zothansanga Zadeng from Kohima to Serchhip. When the transfer protest was at its height, joint action committee of Serchhip requested the government to withdraw the transfer order for Dr Zothansanga Zadeng and transfer Dr Zochampia instead to Serchhip. In response to Serchhip's request, the government withdrew the transfer of Dr Zothansanga Zadeng and transferred Zochampia instead.

The road block on the 850 km long National Highway 54, connecting Assam and Mizoram, had caused hardship to the people as large number of vehicles were stranded leading to shortage of essential commodities.

The government had issued a transfer order for surgeon

action leader said. The delay of trucks carrying highly perishable fruits for even a day would cause a loss, he said.

The joint action committee of Kohima lifted the blockade at 10.30 pm on Friday, after the State Government succumbed to their demand for revocation of transfer order of a surgeon from Kohima district hospital.

More than 400 hundred vehicles, carrying essential goods and other commodities from neighbouring Assam, entered Kohima district since Friday night.

"The cost of a truckload of fruits and vegetables is around Rs 3-4 lakh. The suppliers already paid the price before the trucks reach here," an Associate

of the Association said.

After NSCN-K abrogated the ceasefire before Government of India in 2015, the Nagaland Government in consultation with Centre had been sending delegations to meet the NSCN(K) leadership in Myanmar to convince the rebel outfit to re-enter the peace process to find an early solution to the Naga political problem which is "honourable and acceptable to all stakeholders".

Liezietsu appealed to the Nagas to "resolve and dedicate themselves to work with renewed vigour and determination to find a solution to the Naga political problem which is honourable and acceptable to all stakeholders".

On behalf of the government and people of Nagaland, the Chief Minister conveyed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members. – PTI

sues of substance were discussed," he said.

However, the Naga leader died before things could be taken forward to their logical conclusion.

Liezietsu appealed to the Nagas to "resolve and dedicate themselves to work with renewed vigour and determination to find a solution to the Naga political problem which is honourable and acceptable to all stakeholders".

On behalf of the government and people of Nagaland, the Chief Minister conveyed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members. – PTI

NSCN-IM forgives Khaplang

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, June 11: NSCN-IM has condoned the death of NSCN-K chairman SS Khaplang, who passed away at Taga in Myanmar on June 9.

In a condolence message today, NSCN-IM said, based on the declaration made by its former chairman Isak Chishi Swu on forgiveness and reconciliation, it has forgiven Khaplang of all political mistakes and crimes, however, grave they might be, he had committed in the name of Jesus Christ.

In his message on the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour which falls on June 12, the Governor pointed out that the International Labour Convention (ILO) launched the Day in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it.

Stating that each year on June 12, the Day brings together governments, employers

and workers organisations, civil society as well as millions

of people from around the world to highlight the plight of child labourers and what can be done to help them, he felt the need to intensify and accelerate action to end child labour, including in areas affected by conflict and disasters.

Acharya claimed that actions are being taken against child labour mainly tackled through an integrated approach which includes measures to reduce poverty, provide universal education and promote social and economic development. Wholesome childhood experiences must not be burdened with hazardous, unhealthy engagement in work that denies children the opportunity of an education. Children must enjoy their childhood, he added.

Join hands to fight child labour: Acharya

CORRESPONDENT

DIMAPUR, June 11: Nagaland Governor PB Acharya has called upon the people to join efforts in fighting against child labour and to take a concerted stand against the unacceptable abuse of the rights of children and barrier to their proper development.

In his message on the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour which falls on June 12, the Governor pointed out that the International Labour Convention (ILO) launched the Day in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it.

Stating that each year on June 12, the Day brings together governments, employers

Spl drive for first time voters in Tripura from July 1

CORRESPONDENT

AGARTALA, June 11: With the Tripura Assembly elections round the corner, a special drive giving focus on first time electors in the age group of 18 to 21 will be conducted from July 10 to July 31 next in the State, according to official sources.

"Prior to launch of the special drive, the month of June shall be utilised for preparatory works such as identification of gaps in the polling stations with relatively less enrolment during the summary revision", said Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sriman Tarinikant at a press conference at Civil Secretariat here on Friday.

He said during the special drive, the Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will carry the Form 6 so that it can be filled on the spot by the un-enrolled voters. In course of the process, all citizens will be eligible to submit forms as usual in Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) office, through BLOs, on-line submissions and post too, he said.

"On Friday I had a meeting with representatives of all recognised political parties and sought their cooperation to ensure that no eligible voter is left unenrolled in the electoral rolls," he said.

During the meeting, representatives of political parties raised some issues related to the electoral rolls. "Shifting voters and duplication in the electoral rolls also came up for discussion. The Election Commission will apply technology to identify duplicate voters in the electoral rolls to ensure error-free photo electoral rolls", he said. As of now, the State has 25,05,906 electors as on January 1, 2017. The State is scheduled to go for Assembly elections early next year.

6 year-old Garo boy still in captivity

TURA, June 11: A six year-old boy, who was kidnapped by a group of about five criminals on June 8, is yet to be traced, police said.

The minor, son of one Inderswell Sangma of Dangkong in North Garo Hills was kidnapped by the gang after locking his parents in an adjacent room.

The kidnappers, who also forcefully took the family car, later abandoned the vehicle near Nohbari in Assam, leaving behind a phone number to contact.

Police believe the kidnaping to be the handwork of a criminal gang led by one Mitun Sangma of Menadoba.

The local MLA of Kharakata, Cherkar W. Morris, has issued an appeal to the abductors for the safe release of the boy. The kidnapping has also been condemned by local NGOs.

"We are yet to make any headway in the case though all efforts are being made to end the boy's rescue," said district police chief, Dalton Marak. – Correspondent



A woman died when a landslide swept away her house in Aizawl on Saturday. - Photo: Neweast

Meghalaya unveils Road Safety Policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, June 11: In line with the Centre's Road Safety policy, Meghalaya too has approved a road safety policy which envisages setting up of driving schools in all the districts, strict compliance of guidelines to issue driver's licences, amongst other steps.

Commenting on the issue of driver's licence illegally, Sangma said recently the Government would take board various departments like Transport, Health, Road, Finance and others for the successful implementation of the policy approved by the Cabinet.

According to the Chief Minister, data showed that in India 16 persons die every hour in road accidents. More than 1.4 lakh people lost their lives in road accidents in 2015.

"There is a huge shortage of good drivers in the State. We are therefore setting up driving schools in all the districts of the State," the Chief Minister said.

Reducing the number of accidents in the State and also make the roads safer for the pedestrians.

"Concerns of pedestrians would be given priority in the policy as majority of people along the roads are pedestrians. We would also encourage walking and cycling as an alternative to vehicles for a healthy lifestyle," Sangma stated.

He said an initial corpus fund of Rs 3 crore would be created for implementation of the policy, which includes legal assistance, wherever necessary.

During implementation of road projects, not less than five per cent

would be set aside for road safety measures. For projects over Rs 10 crore, road safety audits would be mandatory.

Research on road safety would also be conducted with the assistance of the Central Government. Sangma said, a road safety training and research institute would be established to conduct such research activities.

The Transport department, the nodal agency to implement the policy, would also conduct period checks on vehicles so that these are road worthy and safe. Such checks would also be conducted in the case of drivers.

Sangma said that enforcement of traffic rules would be one of the other priorities under the policy. He said, traffic police would be provided with modern equipment such as speed guns, breath analysers, wheel clamps and such equipments.

Moreover, the emergency response teams would be strengthened. "Steps would be taken to improve the emergency medical response in Government Hospitals," the Chief Minister added.

Awareness programmes on road safety would also form a core of the policy. Such awareness programmes would be held throughout the States, he informed.

GST Council to examine traders' concerns over rates: Meghwal

CHANDIGARH, June 11: The GST Council will examine the concerns of trade and industry regarding the rates and the rollout of goods and services tax (GST) will be from July 1, Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said today.

"If any trade or business organisation feels there's any anomaly in the calculation of rate of tax or input formula under GST, they can send their representations. The government is open (to look at it) if the amendment is in the interest of country, trade and traders. But it is the GST Council which is to make a final decision on it," Meghwal, Minister of State for Finance, told reporters here.

He said he will collect the feedback of trade and industry on GST by June 14 and then submit a report to the BJP national president Amit Shah.

To a query on suggestions/feedback received from trade and industry, Meghwal said the common concern among representations was related to SSI sector coming under GST net.

"There was one thing common among representations given by the trade and industry. For example, marble industry in Rajasthan stated that only 5-10 per cent units were paying excise duty at present while 90 per cent units were out of excise net because of SSI exemption available up to the turnover of Rs 1.50 crore. There is an exemption on the payment of ex-

cess duty to the SSI sector. It is the biggest issue. The government will certainly examine it," he asserted.

The minister said the trade and business with turnover of up to Rs 20 lakh will be exempted from GST.

Apart from this, there will be a composition scheme for businesses with turnover of up to Rs 50 lakh. "Under this scheme, one per cent from traders, two per cent from manufacturers and 5 per cent from restaurants will be charged," he said.

Meghwal said the government has received suggestions from several trade bodies for increasing the turnover limit under the composition scheme. The GST Council on Sunday increased the turnover limit to Rs 75 lakh, as against Rs 50 lakh that it decided earlier.

The minister said that the textile sector in Surat and Rajasthan has also expressed concern over imposing 5 per cent tax on textile items. "We are examining it," he said.

To a query on compensation, he said a provision has been made in the GST Act for compensating revenue loss to the states which will be paid from the corpus created from cess collections.

He dismissed charges of "financial dictatorship" saying the GST Council was the best example of cooperative federalism.

"All decisions in the GST Council were taken unanimously. No decision was imposed," he said. - PTI

CAPSULE

E-payments grievance

NEW DELHI, June 11: The government is working on setting up a toll-free phone number - 14442 for grievances Redressal of customers related to digital payments. The Ministry of Electronics and IT along with National Payments Corporation of India is working on a mechanism to provide a common number, 14442, where customers of all digital payments platform will be able to register their complaint, official sources said. - PTI

EPFO investment

NEW DELHI, June 11: Retirement fund body EPFO will park about Rs 22,500 crore in its external account funds this month following the approval of its trustees to enhance investments in equity or equity-linked schemes last month, a senior official has said. "The EPFO had invested Rs 1.5-lakh crore 2016-17... Thus the EPFO investments in ETIF in 2016-17 would be about Rs 22,500 crore," EPFO's Central Provident Fund Commissioner VP Joy told PTI.

NPCI campaign

NEW DELHI, June 11: The NPCI has invited bids from media investment agencies for its proposed media campaign to widen the reach and thrust of NPCI's digital payments segment. National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) invites responses to RFP for engagement of media investment agencies; it said in an advertisement. - PTI

GM separation offer

NEW DELHI, June 11: General Motors, which has decided to stop selling vehicles in the Indian market from year-end, has given its employees here less than a month to opt for a voluntary separation scheme (VSS) as it starts winding down operations in the country. After announcing its decision to stop retailing vehicles on May 18, the company has informed its employees the very next day about the VSS that will close on June 15, 2017. - PTI

Discovery target

NEW DELHI, June 11: US-based Discovery Communications executive said to become one of its top 10 markets globally in the next decade as it takes steps to cater to mass viewing segment including sports. "If you look at pure number's prospective then I would love India to be among top-10 markets for Discovery globally..." Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific SVP and GM South Asia, Karan Rajan told PTI.

Future Generali

MUMBAI, June 11: Future Generali India Life Insurance is planning to open 11 branches this fiscal across the country and scale up its workforce by adding 400 executives, a top company official said. "We are taking a long-term view of the industry... which we are focused on expansion," Future Generali India Life Insurance MD and CEO Munish Sharda told PTI here.

Century Ply capex

MUMBAI, June 11: Century Plywood and Timber today said it has chalked out a capex plan of Rs 282 crore in next two years for its various expansion projects. The company had drawn up a Rs 751-crore capex plan... It is now investing Rs 22.63 crore in the current fiscal and remaining Rs 60 crore in FY19. - PTI

Jaitly to review situation with PSB chiefs today

NEW DELHI, June 11: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley will meet heads of PSB banks tomorrow to discuss the issue of non-performing assets (NPAs) and the steps being taken by them to expedite the recovery of bad loans which have crossed Rs 8-lakh crore.

Besides, the minister will review the financial performance of all the public sector banks (PSBs) at the meeting, the first between Jaitley and them in the current fiscal.

The meeting also assumes significance as it will be the first after last month's promulgation of the ordinance amending the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

The government had through the ordinance empowered the Reserve Bank to ask banks to initiate insolvency proceedings to recover bad loans and promised more measures to resolve the NPA crisis.

Apart from the financial performance review, the meeting will take stock of the status of stressed assets and various measures taken to clean up the balance sheets of banks so that they can start lending.

"Major issues on the agenda of the meeting, the first during this fiscal, include issues and solutions relating to Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of the Public Sector Banks (PSBs), status of MSE Credit,

the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016". - PTI



Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal visiting the Milk Processing Unit of Sitajakhal Milk Producers Cooperative Ltd in Morigaon on Sunday. - UB Photos

Beauty, personal care market to touch \$10 bn by 2021: IBHA

NEW DELHI, June 11: Beauty and personal care (BPC) market in the country is expected to touch \$10 billion by 2021, growing at an annual rate of 5-6 per cent on the back of evolving consumer awareness and aspirations, according to a report by IBHA.

On a global comparison, per capita spend in India at \$7 (about Rs 450) on BPC is significantly lower than that in developed nations and the market is estimated to be \$8 billion, according to the Indian Beauty and Hygiene Association (IBHA).

Yet, the expansion of the market is in line with India's GDP growth, it said, adding, the rural market will also start driving growth.

"There is a paradigm shift in consumer preference from looking good to feeling good, and the industry is innovating to address the evolving consumer awareness and aspirations," IBHA said in its report.

The BPC industry is categorised into five segments - body care, hair care, face care, hand care and

colour cosmetics.

While the market is predominantly urban, going forward, growth is expected to rise in rural markets too. Godrej Group Chairman Adi Godrej, who is also a member of IBHA, said consumer behaviours and spending patterns have shifted and continue to shift as incomes rise and Indian society evolves.

According to the report, body care is the largest category and grew at about 4 per cent CAGR between 2014 and 2016 while colour cosmetics was the fastest growing category, at 12 per cent.

The premium segment is expected to grow at 6.3 per cent per annum, compared to the 1.1 per cent growth predicted for the mass market products, it added.

IBHA is a trade association of the beauty and personal care industry in India. Its members include Hindustan Unilever, Marico, Godrej, P&G, Johnson & Johnson, Wipro and L'Oréal India, among others. - PTI



Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs and Defence Arun Jaitly chairing the 16th meeting of the GST Council, in New Delhi on Sunday. Minister of State for Finance Santosh Kumar Gangwar and Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia are also seen. - UNI

ONGC keen on buying HPCL

NEW DELHI, June 11: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) is keen to acquire India's third biggest fuel retailer, HPCL, in a Rs 42,254-crore deal for getting parastatal Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) the two downstream oil refining and marketing companies.

While acquiring either one of them made a lot of business sense, ONGC found the nation's second biggest fuel retailer, BPCL, too expensive, sources privy to the development, said. BPCL has a market cap of Rs 10,738 crore and buying government's 54.93 per cent share would have entailed an outgo of Rs 55,885 crore.

ONGC is in favour of acquiring HPCL, which has a market cap of Rs 54,797 crore and buying government's entire 51.11 per cent stake would entail an outgo of Rs 28,006 crore. Another Rs 14,000 crore so would be required in case open offer has to be made.

Sources said while initially the government was looking at creating an integrated oil company through merger of an oil producer with a refiner, the idea was dropped for the fear of not repeating of the Air India-Indian Airlines merger.

Similar differences in work culture and ethos prevail in upstream and downstream firms and so the exercise under consideration now is to only help government mop up resources and HPCL would become a mere subsidiary of ONGC. - PTI

Unchanged GST rate disappoints telecom industry

NEW DELHI, June 11: Industry body COAI today said it is disappointed with the GST rate for telecom services being kept unchanged at 18 per cent.

The Cellular Operators Association of India – which has Bharat Airtel, Vodafone, Idea Cellular and Reliance Jio as members – has been pushing for lowering of goods and services tax (GST) rate for telecom services to five per cent in sync with essential services.

The debt-ridden industry has been saying that benefit of input credit is not enough to fully compensate the higher tax incidence in the new regime, and that telecom services are bound to become expensive for consumers once the new rates come into effect.

At present, telecom consumers are charged 15 per cent in the form of tax and cess over their phone bills. "We are disappointed that there has been no change in the GST rate for telecom, which is an essential service. It will increase the cost to consumers," COAI Director-General Rajan S. Mathews told PTI.

The GSC, chaired by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and having State counterparts as members, today lowered tax rates on 68 of the 133 items demanded by various sections of the industry.

Asked if there would be any further revision of rates, Jaitley said the fitment committee and the GSC have gone into the depth of all the cases and whatever rates have been decided are based on "informed reasons" and "detailed discussions".

"These broadly are the final rates... Just because somebody raises an issue does not mean you have to grant it," Jaitley said.

Last week, COAI had shot off a letter to the Revenue Secretary – the second such letter in a week – lamenting the high GST rate fixed for the telecom sector.

"While telecom is an essential service, it does not receive the benefits of that category... We seek your intervention that the government consider lowering the GST for telecom to be the same as that of essential services, that is, five per cent," Mathews said in the letter dated June 7.

The apex industry body had highlighted that Singapore has a GST rate of only 7 per cent on telecom services, Malaysia (6 per cent), and Australia (10 per cent). - PTI

LIC settles 99.92% claims in FY17

MUMBAI, June 11: The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has pulled off a record claim performance by settling 99.92 per cent of death claims in 2016-17 as against an industry average of 95 per cent.

The insurance behemoth is keen to push the boundary further, looking to settle 99.99 per cent claims on a monthly basis too in future.

"LIC has settled 99.92 per cent of death claims in 2016-17, which is undoubtedly one of the best performances not only in the country, but in the world," an LIC source said.

According to industry body Life Insurance Council, there are a total of 24 players, including LIC, active in the life insurance space and the industry average of death claim settlement stands at around 95 per cent.

"One of the fundamental reasons for the strong brand of LIC is our service delivery and... Our claim settlement operations in particular," the source said, adding that "we would expect that not only we continue to focus on this area, but further strengthen it by settling 99 per cent claims on month-on-month basis".

Till date, LIC has nearly 11 lakh such cases outstanding and expects that each and every case needs to be followed up to its logical end.

According to the source, the customer relationship management (CRM) department of LIC has been asked to ensure claim particular case is prepared for every outstanding case and that regular monitoring is done. - PTI

India likely to be power surplus nation in FY18

NEW DELHI, June 11: India may become a power-surplus country in the current fiscal as the energy shortage and peak power deficit was already less than 1 per cent in April with many States reporting nil electricity deficit.

According to Central Electricity Authority's latest monthly report for April, the energy shortage in the country is reported energy shortage of 4.5 per cent. It was 1.5 per cent in the Northern region.

Peak power deficit too has reduced to 0.8 per cent across the country in April this year. It was recorded at 0.1 per cent each in Southern, Eastern and Western regions.

However, the North-eastern region reported a peak power deficit of 2.2 per cent in April. It was 1.8 per cent in Northern region.

As per the Power Ministry data, many States have reported nil energy shortage and peak power deficit in April this year.

These States include Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, and West Bengal. - PTI

The latest auction sale (No 23) held at Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) on June 6-7, the total tea offering were 1,00,377 packages, out of which 67.7 per cent were sold. Good and improved liquor tea saw a strong demand. These teas were absorbed at firm to dealer levels. Medium category teas met with a fair demand as were irregular according to quality.

HUL operated at medium levels and while western Indian buyers actively participated. The auction average price for this week stood at Rs 142.13, up by Rs 0.91 from last week.

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Secretary, Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association (GTABA)

BOP	Price	BOPSM/BP	Price	OFFPF	Price
HUMLAPRI	375	SOTAI	348	DESP	326
SOTAI	375	HOOHAMOL	321	SOTAI	321
HOOHAMOL	289	MAHALUMI	231	HOOHAMOL	301
MACHILUR	283	LUKWAH	231	DECKALUJU	291
SOOKLATINGA	271	MACHILUR	231	MAHALUMI	285

Peace returns to Mandsaur, Chouhan ends fast

MANDSAUR/BHOPAL, June 11: In ferment for the last several days, Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur, the epicentre of a violent stir by farmers, remained peaceful today, prompting Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to end his indefinite fast.

Chouhan, who began the fast yesterday to calm frayed tempers of the farmers demanding a loan waiver and remunerative prices for their produce, announced a slew of schemes for their benefit, but issued a stern warning to those who engaged in "incendiary activities".

There was no curfew in all three police stations areas of Mandsaur city for the second day today, but prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC banning assembly of more than four people remained in force in the entire district.

Curfew will, however, continue in

Piplamandi Police Station area, about 15 kms from Mandsaur district headquarters, where the killing of five farmers in police firing on June 6 led to escalation of violence and arson that spread to several other districts of Madhya Pradesh.

"The situation is peaceful and there are no reports of violence so far," Collector OP Srivastava and SP Manoj Singh said.

Chouhan, under relentless Opposition attack over the farmers' stir, broke his fast about a day-and-a-half into it with a glass of coconut water offered by former MP Chief Minister Kailash Joshi.

"Peace has been restored in MP and no case of violence has been reported yesterday and today," Chouhan said before ending his fast.

"In a State where agriculture has flourished, it is impossible that farmers would

indulge in violence on such a scale. While any pain to farmers is unacceptable, those who have engaged in incendiary activities will be severely dealt with."

"Those whose properties have been damaged will be compensated, but it will be investigated who were behind this violence. I began this fast in accordance with *Rashtra dharma* (duty towards the nation) as it was in the farmers' agitation some people created a situation that caused me worry," he said.

BJP leaders have been accusing the Congress party of having stoked the agitation.

Earlier, Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav and social activists Medha Patkar and Swami Agnivesh were today detained in Ratlam district while trying to enter neighbouring Mandsaur to meet the families of the five farmers killed in police firing. — PTI



Union Minister for Urban Development, Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation and Information & Broadcasting, M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurating a 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sammelan' at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. — UNI

Maha Govt announces loan waiver for farmers

MUMBAI, June 11: The Maharashtra Government today announced a loan waiver for farmers and decided to form a committee to decide the criteria of debt relief, after which cultivators called off their protest.

The Government has decided to waive farmers' loans. The loans of farmers with small land holdings stand waived from today, " Revenue Minister Chandrakant Patil said.

Patil, who headed a high-powered committee set up by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, was speaking to reporters after holding discussions with farmer leaders here today.

Farmer leader and Lok Sabha member Raju Shetti, who participated in the talks, said he was happy that their demands had been met.

"Our issues have been resolved. We have decided to temporarily call off our agita-

tion, including the dharna protests scheduled for tomorrow and day after. However, if no satisfactory decision is taken (on the criterion for loan waiver) by July 25, we will restart our stir," Shetti said.

Another farmer leader, Raghunathdada Patil, said the Minister had assured them that "all loans" of farmers will be waived.

"The atmosphere now is like Diwali celebrations. 100 per cent of our demands have been accepted," he said.

The ministers' group has decided to restart fresh loan disbursement to farmers from today, Raghunathdada said.

"We are calling off the road and rail roko protests scheduled for tomorrow and June 13," independent MLA Bachu said.

"However, if the decision taken today is not implemented before July 24, the farmers will resume their agitation," Bachu said. — PTI

Pilots likely to move court

MUMBAI, June 11: Commercial pilots are likely to challenge in court a proposal that seeks to make it mandatory for commanders quitting their posts to serve a notice period of one year, double the six months in force now.

Pilots' bodies - the National Aviator's Guild (NAG) of Jet Airways and Indian Pilots Guild (IPG) and Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) of Air India - plan to move court next week, an IPG executive committee member said.

"We are opposed to any extension in the notice period and have already expressed our views to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). We are going to challenge the move," the member said.

The DGCA had last month proposed to make a one-year notice period mandatory for commanders and six months for first officers, or co-pilots.

The pilots' groups are planning to move the Bombay High Court, challenging the DGCA's draft civil aviation requirement (CAR) on this. — PTI

Lucknow students to perform yoga in UN HQ

NEW DELHI, June 11: As the city of *navaels* gears up to host Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the country's main Yoga Day event, a group of school students from Lucknow are practising to perform

various *asanas* at the UN headquarter in New York.

A 72-member team of City Montessori School (CMS), Lucknow, will leave for the United States tomorrow for a live performance at the United Nations Headquarter on June 21.

On May 19, they staged a special performance before Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence.

"We have trained 72 students from different classes to perform at the mega event on Yoga Day at the UN. It will also be attended by UN Secretary General António Guterres," CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi told this news agency.

"They will leave for the US tomorrow and also visit parts of New York during their stay. A special performance was arranged at the CM's residence where the students were also awarded," he added.

On PM Modi's call, the UN General Assembly declared in December 2014 that June 21 would be observed as International Yoga Day every year.

Lucknow will be hosting the main event for the Yoga Day this year in which the PM and Yogi will participate along with 55,000 people.

Besides Lucknow, the Government had been considering Bhopal, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Ranchi and Bengaluru as possible venues for the mega event.

The first Yoga Day celebration in the country was organised at the Rajpath in New Delhi on June 21, 2015, in which representatives of 191 countries had participated.

Last year, the main event was organised at Chandigarh. — PTI

Fasting Muslims to take part in Yoga Day event

LUCKNOW, June 11: At this year's International Yoga Day celebrations here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have for company scores of *Rozas*-observing Muslims who will be performing various *asanas*.

At least 300 Muslim men and women under the banner of the Muslim Rashtra Manch for UP and Uttarakhand, told this news agency. Azim Khan, the national president of Shriram Mandir Muslim Karsevak Manch, will also be performing yoga while fasting.

"We are opposed to any extension in the notice period and have already expressed our views to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). We are going to challenge the move," the member said.

The DGCA had last month contacted us about participating in the International Yoga Day celebrations, but at least 300 have confirmed their participation. Most of the participants will be observing *Rozas*, while performing *yoga*.

"In fact most of them are likely to arrive at the programme venue after *Sehri* (pre-dawn meal)," Mahiraj

Raees Khan, the UP and

Uttarakhand in-charge of Muslim Rashtra Manch, informed that the manch is trying to ensure attendance of at least 1,000 Muslim yoga enthusiasts at Modi's programme.

"So far, 300 have already confirmed their participation. Most of the participants will be *rozaardars*. Since 15 days, the participants have been practicing different *asanas* and postures," he said.

Singh said a request seeking a separate area for the Muslim participants will be made to the organisers.

Mohsin Raza, Minister of State for Muslim Waqf and Haj, when contacted, said, "I will also participate and perform yoga while observing *Rozas*. Both *yoga* and *roza* are good for one's health."

Raees Khan, the UP and

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Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar greeting RJD Chief Laloo Prasad on his 70th birthday, in Patna on Sunday. — UNI

Army's new job: catch 'em young in J-K, show them India, help them dream...

SRINAGAR, June 11: The Army is zeroing in on young stone throwers in Kashmir - not to lock them up, but to take them around India and give wings to their dreams.

A group of 20 boys from restive South Kashmir will be taken on an educational tour to showcase India and its development, a senior Army officer said.

The idea struck Major General BS Raju, General Officer Commanding of Victor Force, the Army's anti-insurgency grid responsible for much of South Kashmir, when he interacted with young boys caught throwing stones at security forces during counter-insurgency operations.

"One can easily make out that they indulge in stone pelting because that is what they have seen while growing up. They are prisoners of the images that they see around them since their birth," Maj-Gen Raju said, adding quite a few did not even know why they were throwing stones.

"It was surprising to find that many of them threw stones just

out of fun," he said.

The Army officer, who is the father of a son and a daughter, decided to go by the rule book of a parent and started interacting with these children and narrated his statement about India's diversity to them. It was heartening to find these boys listening with rapt attention and raising some valid questions," he said.

Recalling the Late President APJ Abdul Kalam's quote – "Dream, dream! Construct these dreams into thought, and then transform them into action" – the senior-most officer of the Army for South Kashmir soon started counselling the young students on careers.

"When one talks to them, one finds they too have dreams and, because of unforeseen circumstances, these dreams have no wings. My only attempt is to give wings to their dreams and that is why I thought 20 such children be taken around India under the Army's SodhBhawan scheme," he said.

The Army, with the help of the local police, has been identifying the ones who will be taken to Delhi, where they will meet people in the Government, to Mumbai, the financial capital of

10 killed as pilgrims fall into canal

MATHURA (UP), June 11: Ten persons died after a car in which they were travelling fell into a canal at Makera area here this morning, police said.

The vehicle carrying pilgrims from Melandpur Balaji Temple lost control and fell into the Makera canal, SP (rural) Aditya Shukla said.

Eight bodies have been fished out. Efforts are on to trace the remaining bodies, he said. We are probing the incident further, police said. — PTI

9 killed as bus overturns

MUMBAI, June 11: Nine passengers died and 12 others were injured when a private bus heading towards Latur overturned early today in Beed district.

Police officials have rushed to the spot and rescue operation is going on.

"The bus was travelling from Mumbai to Latur. The survivors have claimed that the driver was over-speeding, which could have led to this accident," Mahesh Tak, API, attached to Ambiora Police Station, in Beed district told this news agency.

The injured persons have been rushed to the Ahmednagar District Civil Hospital, which is around 70 km away from the accident spot.

"The accident took place at around 5.30 am when the bus was near Dhanora village and the driver lost control while the bus overturned," he said. — PTI

Couple beaten

JALANDHAR, June 11: Taking cognisance of a couple being beaten up for opposing the teasing of their daughter in Mansa district, the Punjab State Scheduled Castes Commission has issued a notice to the SSP asking him to submit a probe report within 15 days.

The incident in Mansa district is against the law. The panel has taken cognisance of the incident.



3rd International Day of Yoga 21st June, 2017

9 DAYS TO GO

Yogic Sukshma Byayam

Practice of this kriya makes the bones, muscles and nerves of the shoulder region healthy. It promotes microcirculation. These practices are helpful in cervical spondylitis and frozen shoulder.



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email: namassam15@gmail.com

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION, ASSAM

National Health Mission, Assam



Experts offer some tips on using essential oils effectively

Oiling ways

Esential oils are known to solve numerous beauty-related problems. However, there are a few dos and don'ts for using the oils. It is important to do a patch test before purchase and never should the essential oils be used near the eyes, say experts.

Sonia Mathur, beauty expert and training head at Organic Harvest, and Amit Sarda, Managing Director at Soulflower, have listed crucial points before you make essential oils a part of your daily beauty regime:

Dos:

A patch test before purchasing: It is necessary to conduct a patch test before purchasing essential oils and make sure it suits your skin type. Some of these oils can cause severe skin sensitivities and sun sensitivity. So, if you have a sensitive skin, it's always advisable to check with a qualified practitioner first.

Dilute essential oils before application:

Essential oils can be blended with base oils or carrier oils before applying to your skin. They are highly concentrated and should never be used undiluted on the skin. It needs to be mixed with carrier or base oil. The ratio should be three to four drops of essential oil in 10 ml of base oil. Some oils like olive, almond, jojoba, grape seed, and coconut oil can be used as carrier oil.

Always store essential oils in a cool dark place: Essential oils should be stored in a cool, dark place and out of direct sunlight. It is simply to help preserve their potency. Essential oils have a very long shelf life, some even last for years without losing their potency, if stored correctly.

Know your DAY

By JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Monday, June 12, 2017:

This year you have an opportunity to evolve to a new level of understanding and empathy. Others will note a newfound kindness emanating from within you. You might make some changes to your life as a result of this, and others respond to your irresistibility. You are tall, I'll want to get to know someone much better. If you are attached, the two of you might consider doing more traveling together. You are likely to gain more understanding of each other through sharing a hobby. Aquarians who know me, know I am thinking.

The Star Show: The kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

**** You might be adjusting to a boss or higher-up who seems to be changing. This situation encourages a transformation within you, perhaps a promotion. Don't be surprised if there is a reversal of sorts from a close friend or loved one. Tonight: A must appearance.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

**** Pressure builds, especially as you might have gained a new insight over the weekend. The issue might be how to incorporate this knowledge into various areas of your life. Take charge, and know that you are strong and determined to succeed. Tonight: Go with the inevitable.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

**** You have experienced so much change that you might want to regroup and take the lead. Understand what it is you want, and check in with others. Do they have the same objectives as you? You might need to go with the flow. Tonight: Share your ideas.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

**** A partner takes an unusually strong stand. You might not agree or even choose to say a lot, but try to be good of a listener as you can be. You are likely to hear some feedback that catches you off guard. You might be surprised to find a new friend or loved one. Tonight: Get into sharing more.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

**** Others seem anxious to express their perspectives. You have a way about you that appeals to many people. However, your popularity might not be as high as usual right now. Don't worry, this will change soon. Tonight: Share your ideas. A problem more carefully get feedback.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

**** You'll want to consider a matter involving travel and a work-related issue. You need to be highly organized if you want to get as much done as you would like to. Decide whether you need to schedule a doctor's appointment or not. Tonight: Know when to switch gears.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

**** You could be determined to add that extra zest to a situation – whether it's personal or professional makes no difference. Your smile says that you are a person by choice, and it is likely to add to your charm. Tonight: Go with the flow. Tonight: Spice up your life.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

**** You clearly have certain expectations from a key person in your life. How well what is happening could change, should you decide that your person doesn't add what you desire from the situation. Know that you are a person by choice, and it is likely to add to your charm. Tonight: Go with the flow.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

**** Reach out to those who have made an impact on your life, and be sure to spend time with these individuals. It is important to let others know they are appreciated. You could find that communication is laden with divisions and disagreements. Tonight: Talk it cheap; act nice.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

**** Investigate different possibilities more carefully than you have in the past. You have a way of drawing out others, but getting them to agree with you right now might be close to impossible. Know that there could be a change of heart. Tonight: Give others space to think.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

**** You seem to have above problems and not let them bother you. You might have to consider opportunities that might be appearing because of some of the hassles that others are experiencing. Trust your sixth sense, and know when to take action. Tonight: All smiles.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

**** You might need someone to regroup and think through recent developments. Seriously consider any changes that are likely to affect a difficult situation. Get feedback. Sometimes when we don't see the answer, we are standing in the way of the solution. Tonight: Catch some zzz's.

Thougt for the day

Greg's prime is elusive. You miss girls, when you grow up, must be on the alert to recognise your prime at whatever time of your life it may occur.

— THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE

Kids

CN

12:00 Box 10 Onwards
13:00 Klerkratu
13:00 Roff No. 21
14:00 Roff No. 22
15:00 Roff No. 21
15:30 Horni Henry
16:00 Horni Henry Bears
17:00 Ben 10
17:30 Teen Titans Go
18:00 Ben 10
18:30 Roff No. 21
21:00 Teen Titans Go
21:30 Ben 10
22:00 Ben 10
23:00 Dragon Ball Z
23:30 Ben 10

23:30 Ben 10

HOOT

12:00 Talking Cactus
12:30 Mr. Bean The Animated...
13:00 The Tom And Jerry Show
13:30 Mr. Bean The Animated...
14:00 Mighty Raju
14:30 Chhota Bheem
15:00 Chhota Bheem Shone...
16:30 Chhota Bheem
17:00 Mighty Raju
17:30 Chhota Bheem
18:00 Chhota Bheem
19:00 Chhota Bheem
19:30 Horni Henry
21:30 The Tom And Jerry Show
21:30 Tukheli Castle
22:00 Chhota Bheem
22:30 Ben 10 Jerry Tales
23:00 M.A.D.
23:30 Telephone

SONY

Entertainment

SONY

13:00 The Kath Gharma Show
18:00 Yeh Mohi Moh Ke Dhage
18:30 Peshwa Bajrangi
20:00 Dara Shikoh Mahaz
20:30 Jassi Ki Juggi
21:00 Beyond The Horizon
21:30 Rang Rasiya Ke As...
22:00 Crime Patrol Diw 100

13:00 Box 10 Onwards
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ZCAFÉ

13:00 Just 4 Laughs
14:00 Top 10 Funniest
15:00 Castle
15:30 The Big Bang Theory

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Tehran terror attack mastermind killed



TEHRAN, June 11: Iranian security forces have killed the mastermind behind the June 7 twin attacks in Tehran which claimed the lives of 17 people, the media reported on Sunday.

"The mastermind and main commander of the attacks on Parliament and the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini was killed," Iran's Intelligence Minister Mahmud Alavi said in a televised programme on Saturday night.

Alavi said the operation was carried out by security forces on Saturday in collaboration with the secret services of neighbouring countries, reports Efe news.

The minister said the terrorist had fled the country after the attacks claimed by the ISIS but did not reveal his identity or the country where he was killed.

In May, the Intelligence Ministry identi-

fied and neutralised almost one terror cell every day, but did not make the figures public to avoid spreading panic, Alavi added.

On Saturday, the authorities also announced the arrests of eight people in Alborz province, north of Tehran, who allegedly provided logistical support to the attackers.

With the latest arrests, the number of people detained since June 7 in relation to the attacks in the capital or extremist cells has passed 50.

The ministry previously said it had arrested 41 alleged ISIS members in the Kurdish provinces of Kermanshah, Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan and also in Tehran.

During the operations, the police seized documents, arms, explosives and ammunition from various terrorist hideouts.

The intelligence ministry on June 8 revealed the identities of the five attackers and said they had fought for the ISIS in Iraq and Syria. This is the first time the Sunni extremist group carried out attacks in Shia-majority Iran. – IANS

Around the WORLD

Worm grows two heads in space!



WASHINGTON, June 11: In a first, an amputated worm regenerated into a double-head creature after spending five weeks aboard the International Space Station (ISS), scientists said.

Flatworms in space are helping researchers to study how an absence of normal gravity and geomagnetic fields can have an unusual, behavioural, and biological effect.

The research has implications for human and animal space travellers and for regenerative and biengineering science. Researchers, including those from Tufts University in the US, sought to determine how microgravity and micro-geomagnetic fields would affect the growth and regeneration of planarian flatworms (D planaria).

They discovered that one of the amputated fragments sent to space regrew both heads of the worm.

In more than 18 years of maintaining a colony of D planaria that involves more than 15,000 control worms in just the last five years alone, researchers have never observed a spontaneous occurrence of double-headedness. – PTI

Woman assaulted, hijab ripped off

LONDON, June 11: A woman in the UK was allegedly pushed to the ground and her hijab ripped off amid a spike in hate crime incidents following the two terror attacks by Islamists that claimed 30 lives.

The assault took place in Fengate, Peterborough, after the woman had just got out of her car and crossed the road with her three-year-old daughter when she was pulled from behind and knocked to the ground.

She had her hijab pulled off and thrown towards her. No words were exchanged in the assault, but police have confirmed they are treating it as a racially or religiously aggravated hate crime, Peterborough Telegraph reported.

The male offender was described as white, tall, of medium build and wearing a black hooded top with the head pulled up. A police spokesman was quoted as saying that the victim was shaken by the attack but otherwise uninjured. – PTI

Gambler loses 70,000 pounds!

LONDON, June 11: It seems that British Prime Minister Theresa May was not the only one who "lost big" in the UK polls. A punter from the Isle of Wight lost 70,000 pounds on a Toto lottery, believing the election was "unlosable" for May.

British bookmaker William Hill took the wager on an unnamed punter shortly before the Conservatives crushed Labour in May's local elections.

The person was one of many who apparently believed the upcoming general election to be "unlosable", the bookmaker was quoted as saying by The Independent.

The Prime Minister was riding high with a seemingly unassassable double-digit lead over Labour's Jeremy Corbyn and the only question of pundits' minds seemed to be, "how big will the landslide be?"

Bookmakers hailed a bumper evening as large numbers of people placed big bets on the Conservatives to romp to a convincing victory which was not to be. – PTI

US AG to appear before Senate intel committee

WASHINGTON, June 11: Attorney General Jeff Sessions, whose contacts with Russia's ambassador to the US during the presidential campaign have sparked questions, has agreed to appear before the Senate intelligence committee as it investigates alleged Russian meddling in the election.

Sessions recused himself in March from a federal investigation into contacts between Russia and the presidential campaign of Donald

Trump after acknowledging that he had met twice last year with the Russian ambassador to the US. He had told lawmakers at his January confirmation hearing that he had not met with Russians during the campaign.

Sessions has been dogged by questions about possible additional encounters with the ambassador.

Earlier, provincial spokesman



May reaches 'outline' power deal after election fiasco

LONDON, June 11: British Prime Minister Theresa May reached an "outline agreement" with the ultra-conservative Democratic Unionist Party in order to be able to govern after a humiliating election that has left her authority in tatters.

She also confirmed to German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a phone call yesterday that Britain was ready to begin Brexit negotiations "as planned in the next couple of weeks," reassuring EU leaders who had expressed doubts after May's electoral losses.

May's Conservatives lost their parliamentary majority in Thursday's vote and need the support of the 10 MPs from Northern Ireland's DUP to have a majority.

"We can confirm that the Democratic Union-

ist Party have agreed to the principles of an outline agreement to support the Conservative government," a spokesman for May said. The spokesman indicated this would not be a formal coalition but a minority government with looser DUP support on a "confidence and supply basis".

"We welcome this commitment, which can provide the stability and certainty the whole country requires as we embark on Brexit and beyond," he said.

The details of the agreement "will be put forward for discussion and agreement."

Petition grows against May's pact

LONDON, June 11: A petition against British Prime Minister Theresa May's deal with the ultra-conservative Democratic Unionist Party gathered nearly 600,000 signatures today as concern grew over her plan to govern with their support.

"This is a disgusting, desperate attempt to stay in power," read the petition, which outlined some of the DUP's more controversial views including opposition to gay marriage and abortion. The petition echoed some of the slogans at a leftist demonstration by a few hundred people outside Downing Street today who chanted:

"Racist, sexist, anti-gay, the DUP has got to go".

Some Conservative MPs also spoke out on Saturday as officials announced that Northern Ireland's DUP had signed up to "an outline agreement" to back a minority Conservative government.

May needs the support of the DUP's 10 MPs to be able to govern after losing her parliamentary majority in Thursday's general election. – AFP

3 US soldiers dead in Afghan 'insider attack'

JALALABAD (Afghanistan), June 11: Three US troops were killed and another wounded during a joint operation in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province, the Pentagon said, in the latest so-called insider attack on international forces.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the deaths in the volatile district of Achin, which is also contested by Islamic State jihadis, saying it was carried out by an infiltrator.

The Pentagon said in a statement yesterday that the wounded soldier had been evacuated for medical treatment. "This incident is under investigation," the statement added.

In a letter yesterday to Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., Sessions said he had been scheduled to discuss the Justice Department budget before House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees but that it had become clear some members would focus their questions on the Russia investigation. Shelby chairs the Senate appropriations subcommittee. – AP

Earlier, provincial spokesman

Attaullah Khogiani told AFP that an Afghan commando had opened fire on US troops and was killed in return fire.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed on Twitter that US soldiers were killed in the attack. The insurgents are known to exaggerate battlefield claims.

In April, US military dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb ever used in combat on a complex of caves in Achin held by IS fighters. The deployment of the so-called Mother of All Bombs killed dozens of jihadis but fighting in the area has continued.

American troops have partnered with Afghan soldiers in raids against IS

Khorasan, claiming the local offshoot of the jihadist group based in Iraq and Syria is steadily losing ground in Afghanistan.

So-called "green-on-blue" attacks – when Afghan soldiers or police turn their guns on international troops – have been a major problem during NATO's long years fighting alongside Afghan forces.

Western officials say most insider attacks stem from personal grudges and cultural misunderstandings rather than insurgent plots.

Yesterday's attack came just hours after an errant US air strike killed and wounded at least six Afghan policemen in southern Helmand province, in the latest "friendly fire" incident. – AFP



Kosovo votes with war crimes court, graft in mind

PRISTINA, June 11: Kosovo votes today for a new parliament that will have to navigate tense relations with Serbia, endemic corruption and possible war crimes indictments for some of its leaders.

The early election is only the third since Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in 2008 but it "might be the hardest to predict," according to Florian Bieber, professor of Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz in Austria.

A month after the last government lost a confidence vote, the battle for a new prime minister pitched an ex-army general

commander against a former student protest leader and an economist liked

to French President Emmanuel Macron,

But overshadowing the election is a new special court set up to try war crimes allegedly committed by members of the pro-independence Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which fought Serbian forces in the late 1990s.

Among those some speculate could be on the list of indictees – which may be announced later this year – are President Hashim Thaci and outgoing speaker Kadri Veseli, who both had from the powerful Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK).

The European Centre for Minority Issues, a Germany-based research institute, said the court's arrest warrants could pose a threat to stability.

Such arrests, "compounded with the

political agenda, may severely hamper or even bring about the fall of the future government," it said. The new court was largely absent from the debate during the short election campaign.

But the threat it poses could explain why the PDK decided to end its ruling coalition with the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), said political scientist Loic Tregoures, a Balkans specialist.

The party may have pushed for a snap election to consolidate its position before the court began work, he said.

The PDK's new alliance is seen as a "war of attrition" to win and has been dubbed the "war wing coalition" owing to the prominence of former KLA fighters. – AFP

Police dog fired from his job for being too friendly!



MELBOURNE, June 11: Every dog has its day! A one-year-old German Shepherd was "sacked" by a police academy in Australia for being too friendly but his social skills earned him

a new vice-regal job at the Queensland Governor's mansion.

Gavel was not found up to the task as he just loved rolling over and having his belly rubbed rather than standing to attention and looking menacing.

The police dog-in-training failed to make the final cut for Queensland Police Service (QPS) in Australia because of his overly-sociable temperament.

The pooch was fostered out to the Paddington residence of Governor of Queensland Paul de Jersey in April last year while he participated in a training programme at the police dog academy.

"Life as a police dog was not to be

after trainers ruled Gavel too sociable

for the frontline," the Brisbane Times reported. Gavel loved meeting strangers and would much rather play with someone than help arrest them.

The over-friendly canine was, however, offered a new job working for the Governor of Queensland, where he holds the official title Vice-Regal Dog.

His duties include greeting visitors to Queensland's Government House, and attending official functions with Governor Paul de Jersey. A spokesman for the Office of the Governor said Gavel had become a "valued and much-loved" part of Government House life.

"Gavel on occasions sits on briefings with the Governor," he said.

"Gavel has also demonstrated his capacity to uphold the ceremonial importance of his role at State of Origin," he said. Gavel was brought to the prestigious 40-acre Fernberg residence in Paddington, Brisbane as part of the 16-month dog squad training and socialisation programme.

He was one of 40 budding police hounds sent to foster homes across Queensland but was the only one to not be fostered by a QPS officer.

Despite having a prestigious family bloodline which saw him related to five current working QPS dogs, playful Gavel did not make the cut and was let go by the force. – PTI

Germany hit seven, Kane saves England's blushes



England's Harry Kane scores their second goal against Scotland during the 2018 World Cup Qualifying European Zone Group F match at the Hampden Park in Glasgow, on Saturday.

Ronaldo 'father to twins with surrogate mum'

LISBON, June 11: Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo has become a father to twins with a surrogate mother. Portuguese media reported.

Reports said the babies – a girl and boy named Eva and Mateo – were born on Thursday to a woman living on the US West Coast.

The captain of Portugal's victorious Euro 2016 team had his first son Cristiano Junior in June 2010 – also reportedly with a surrogate mother, although he has never confirmed it.

British tabloid *The Sun* had reported in March that the quadruple Ballon d'Or winner was expecting twins.

The 32-year-old striker is currently testing Spanish model Georgina Rodriguez.

The reports come after a twin-heavy week in the celebrity world, after George Clooney and his human rights lawyer wife Amal welcomed newborns Ella and Alexander. – AFP

ISL to unveil two new teams today

MUMBAI, June 11: The Indian Super League (ISL) organisers will unveil two new teams tomorrow, and they will be part of the 2017-18 season and beyond.

Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), organisers of the Indian Super League, will announce the winning bids for the new teams.

The winning bidders will be enrolled and awarded the right to participate in the ISL starting from the upcoming season.

An independent panel conducted the tender process, which commenced from May 12, 2017 through Invitation To Bid (ITB) and evaluated the bids to maintain an open and transparent process. – PTI

Bolt provides fireworks in Jamaican swan-song

KINGSTON, June 11: Usain Bolt parted with his devoted fans in an emotional farewell at the National Stadium as he ran his final race on Jamaican soil.

Bolt is retiring in August following the London World Championships.

On Saturday, Bolt was determined to put on a spectacle as he won the 100 metre 'Salute to a Legend' race in front of a raucous crowd of 30,000 on the same track where he launched his international career in 2002. The 30-year-old Bolt exploded out of the blocks and cruised to victory in a time of 10.03, well below his world record time but good enough to beat a solid field that included runner-up Usain Bolt.

After the race the world's fastest man took a victory lap then returned to the track and the No. 5 lane where he kissed

Jamaica's Olympic champion Usain Bolt gestures after winning his final 100 metres sprint at the 2nd Racers Grand Prix at the National Stadium in Kingston, on Saturday.

the finish line before flashing his signature lightning bolt pose for the final time at home



Pakistan, Lanka square off for CT semis spot

CARDIFF, June 11: Their campaigns back on track after upset wins, Pakistan and Sri Lanka face each other in their concluding Champions Trophy group match in a virtual 'quarterfinal' here tomorrow.

Both the teams lost their opening matches but bounced back into reckoning after progressing two of the tournament's biggest upsets so far.

Pakistan suffered a 12-run thrashing at the hands of archrivals and defending champions India but then notched up an upset win over world number one side South Africa to stay alive.

Sri Lanka too suffered a heavy 96-run defeat at the hands of South Africa but came up with a stunning batting show to shock India by seven wickets to place

themelves in contention for a semifinal berth.

Pakistani bowlers, except for Mohammad Amir, were hampered by the Indian top-order but they made amends against South Africa whose batting line-up has several match-winners like AB de Villiers and Hashim Amla.

Left-arm spinner Imad Wasim (220) and paceman Hasan Ali (212) bowled beautifully to restrict the Proteas to a meagre 219 for 8.

Babar Azam (21 not out) and Shoaib Malik (16 not out) got Pakistan ahead of their required run-rate to secure a 19-run win under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method when 119 for three off 27 overs. – PTI

MATCH STARTS AT 3 PM

in his glorious career.

The nine-time Olympic gold medalist Bolt did not run in the fastest 100 metre race of the evening, but his devoted fans didn't care.

Bolt ran in front of a sea of green and yellow clad Jamaican fans who showed their pride by dancing, waving flags and blowing vuvuzela horns while firecrackers lit the sky.

Since this was his first 100m of 2017, Bolt said he was more concerned with putting on a good show on Saturday as he eases his way into the season.

The Jamaican speedster Bolt said at Thursday's news conference that 2017 will be more about saying thank you to his fans rather than trying to break his world records of 9.58 seconds in the 100 metres and 19.19 seconds in the 200 metres. – AFP

one returned from a 15-month doping ban in April but has relied on wildcards to get into tournaments because her world ranking points expired while she was banned.

The 30-year-old Russian, who was champion at the All England Club in 2004, was due to play in the qualifying event in the hope of making the main draw. "After an additional scan, the muscle tear that I sustained in Rome will unfortunately not allow me to compete in the grass court tournaments I was scheduled to play," she said in a statement.

"I will continue to work on my recovery and my next scheduled tournament is in Stanford from July 31."

The former world number

Captain Morgan praises exceptional Stokes

BIRMINGHAM, June 11: Eoin Morgan said the potential of Ben Stokes is "through the roof" after having the best view in the house as the all-rounder's stunning century helped England knock out Lithuania.

England, already through to the semifinals of a tournament featuring the world's top eight One-Day International sides, were reeling at 35 for three chasing a target of 278 at Edgbaston on Saturday.

But in a match where their arch-villains had to win to join them in the last four, Stokes' 102 not out, and England captain Morgan (87) put on 146 for the fourth wicket at better than a run-a-ball.

By the time a second rain interruption saw the game called off, England were 240 for four off 402 overs and won by 40 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method.

A previous rain break gave Morgan and Stokes time to assess their approach after a top-order collapse threatened to undo England's earlier good work in restricting Australia to 277 for nine, with fast bowler Mark Wood taking 10 ODI best four for 33 and leg-spinner Adil Rashid four for 18.

When the match resumed, Morgan hit boundaries of the first two balls he faced

from Australia spearhead Mitchell Starc, part of a sequence of five fours in 11 balls. "We felt that the positive way was the

best way," Morgan told reporters of the chat he'd had with Stokes shortly before the match got underway again. "It managed to work, we did it in our own way."

He added: "So I did what I do, and obviously Ben's very naturally aggressive and finds attacking quite easy."

Turning to fellow left-handed batsman Stokes, now one of the hottest properties in world cricket after an impressive debut season in the Twenty20 Indian Premier League, Morgan said: "His potential is through the roof. He's always looking to influence the game – bat, ball, or even in the field."

"A lot of guys with potential like that, when things aren't going their way, back into a corner – but that's not Ben."

Australia captain Steve Smith, who skippered Stokes at IPL franchise Rising Pune Supergiant, added: "I always thought he was a good player. He's an incredibly strong lad and hits the ball very hard."

"I think he's probably developed some smarts... He's certainly a quality player, and he's in exceptional form at the moment."

For Australia, Stokes' effort meant both they and New Zealand, the team they beat in 2015 ODI World Cup final, exited the Champions Trophy without winning a game. – AFP



England's Ben Stokes in action against Australia during the Champions Trophy match at Edgbaston, on Saturday.

BCCI deny reports on CAC claiming money

NEW DELHI, June 11: The BCCI today published media reports that the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) wants to be suitably remunerated for picking the Indian team's head coach, terming them "baseless and malicious".

Reports in a section of the media claimed that the CAC – comprising Indian cricket legends Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman – want to be paid for picking the national coach.

"BCCI wishes to clarify that there have been such claims and the story carried by the newspaper is totally baseless and devoid of facts," Cricket Board CEO Ravi Shastri said in a release.

As per reports, the three former cricketers, who fielded their first meeting after the India-Sri

Lanka Champions Trophy game in London on Thursday, informed Indian team that they "don't want their services to be honorary".

BCCI stated, "The contents of this article are malicious and such attempts to dilute and misrepresent the continued contribution of these former legends of Indian cricket are totally inaccurate and unfounded."

"BCCI wishes to reiterate the fact that the guidance and recommendations of the CAC are invaluable for the betterment of Indian cricket and we urge the publication to withdraw the said article and make suitable amendments."

The CAC was formed by late BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya, giving a say to the game's greats in cricketing matters. – PTI

SU DO KU

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Solution of last problem

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9	10	6	3	2	12	5	4	7	1	5	11
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Originating from Japan, 'su do ku' is a mind game and a puzzle that can be solved with proper reasoning and logic. It is a 12x12 grid in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9 without repeating any.

I thought grass courts were for football: Ostapenko

PARIS, June 11: French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko will head to Wimbledon as the sport's newest star admitting that she once believed grass courts were suitable only for football and not tennis.

The 20-year-old Latvian stunned favourite and World No. 4 Simona Halep 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 yesterday to become tennis's most unlikely Grand Slam champion.

It was her first career title as she became the lowest-ranked winner in Paris, taking the trophy in just her eighth major appearance.

Next up on the Grand Slam circuit is Wimbledon where Ostapenko was junior champion in 2014.

However, she admitted that when she came across a grass court for the first time, it was hardly love at first sight.

"When I first played on grass I didn't like it, I really didn't understand it," she told a small group of reporters following her shock Paris win as she recalled playing on grass at Roehampton in England as a 15-year-old.

"I didn't see how people could play tennis on it. I thought grass is for soccer."

"But then I learned how to play it and understood the movement. Now I really like it."

Ostapenko said she was more than comfortable with dealing with her sudden fame which will be under a harsh spotlight when Wimbledon starts in four weeks' time.

Her home town of Riga got in the mood on Saturday when thousands of her compatriots watched her victory on a giant TV



Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko celebrates with the French Open trophy after winning the final against Romania's Simona Halep at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris, on Saturday.

India storm into Champions Trophy semis

LONDON, June 11: Defending champions India out-classed South Africa in all departments of the game to enter the semifinals of the ICC Champions Trophy with a comprehensive eight-wicket victory here today.

India will meet Bangladesh in the semifinals in Birmingham on Thursday.

The Proteas lived up to their 'Perennial Chokers' tag in a virtual quarterfinal clash that turned out to be a thoroughly one-sided encounter.

Shikhar Dhawan (78 off 83 balls) and skipper Virat Kohli (76 off 101 balls) made it look like a walk in the park as India chased down a target of 192 in only 38 overs.

It was India's third 50-plus win in the competition, while skipper Kohli made amends for a rare failure against Sri Lanka in the semi, notching up his 41st ODI half century.

On a day when it mattered the most, India brought their A-game to the fore while AB de Villiers' men wilted under pressure, as it has been with them in high-stakes games.

The Indian bowling was disciplined, the fielding exceptional with three run-outs, and



Indian skipper Virat Kohli plays a pull shot during the Champions Trophy match against South Africa at The Oval, on Sunday.

then there was a professional batting performance.

If it's the Champions Trophy, Dhawan can hardly put a foot wrong as he hit 12 fours and a flicked six off Morne Morkel over deep square leg.

If Dhawan muscled the ball through the off-side cordon, Kohli caressed it with care, hitting seven fours and a six as the duo added 128 runs for the

second wicket. A rhythm player to the core, Dhawan has made the best use of the second lease of life that he has got in this Champions Trophy. The ferocity with which he drove was a treat to watch. A lot of his shots were in the arc between cover and mid-off. When Imran Tahir bowled short, he pulled him with disdain.

By the time India's total

touched 100, the match was as good as over. It was Yuvraj Singh, who finished the match with a pulled six off JP Duminy. Earlier, an impressive bowling performance that was complemented by fantastic fielding effort, saw the holders skittle out South Africa for a paltry 191 in 44.3 overs after winning the toss.

It was yet another embar-

rassing batting collapse after the openers put on 76 runs. The world's number one team lost the last eight wickets for 51 runs after being comfortably placed at 116 for one at one stage.

Two run-outs of skipper AB de Villiers (16) and David Miller (1) within the space of six deliveries triggered the slide from which they could never recover, with almost all the Indian bowlers succeeding in choking the runs.

SCORECARD

South Africa: C de Kock b Jadeja

53, HM Amla c Bhoruji b Ashwin 35, F du Plessis b Pandya 36, AB de Vil-

liers b Pandya 1, JP Duminy b

Milner not out 20, CH Morris c Ku-

mar b Bumrah 4, A Pienaar b

Ibrahim 4, D Smith b

Kumar 5, M Morkel c Kohli b Kumar

0, Imran Tahir run out (Kohli/Chopra)

1. Extras: (LB-6, W-10) Total:

(all out in 44.3 overs) 191. Fall of

wickets: 1-10, 2-16, 3-16, 4-16,

5-17, 6-17, 7-17, 8-184, 9-184,

10-192. Innings: Bumrah 7.3-0-23-

Pandya 10.0-52-1, RA Jadeja 10.0-52-1, Rohit Sharma c de Kock b

Morkel 12, Shikhar Dhawan c Kohli b

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