

## NEWS CAPSULE

### Medical benefit

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: The State health department will distribute cheques to beneficiaries of Atal Amrit Abhiyan on Saturday, for which patients suffering from six scheduled diseases, including cancer and heart ailments, are given financial aid. — Staff Reporter

### Dergaon mishap

DERGAON, Aug 23: One person died and three others were seriously injured when a car they were travelling in collided with a pickup van on NH-37 at Santipur near here last night. — Correspondent

### Courtesy call

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today called on Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on what was described as a courtesy call. He met the Vice President at his official residence here. — Sp Correspondent

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## Floods hit NRC update process

R DUTTA CHOWDHURY

- Over six crore documents had to be verified
- Around 95 per cent work completed

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Two waves of major floods have severely affected the NRC (National Register of Citizens) update work as the officers engaged in the process had to get involved in flood relief works.

However, the officers involved in the process are confident that they would be able to meet the deadline of December 31 fixed by the Supreme Court to publish the draft of the NRC.

Highly placed official sources told *The Assam Tribune* that as the process of verification of the documents is now on, senior officers posted in the districts including the deputy commissioners, circle

officers, etc., have to be involved in the process. But all such officers are now involved in flood relief works, which slowed down the process. It may be mentioned here that the State so far faced two waves of floods this year starting from March 31. Because of the severity of the floods, almost all the district-level officers including the deputy commissioners had to devote their time and energy in relief and rescue operations.

Under the circumstances, the

officers had very little time for the verification of the documents for NRC update. However, sources said that the process of verification of the documents will be expedited now as the flood situation is gradually improving and "we are confident of meeting the deadline set by the Supreme Court for publishing the draft of the NRC."

On the progress of verification of the documents, sources revealed that around six crore documents had to

(See page 4)

## Sonowal seeks revival of State paper mills

CHIEF MINISTER Sarbananda Sonowal with Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in New Delhi on Wednesday. — UB Photos

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Union cabinet today increased the "creamy layer" ceiling for the other backward classes (OBC) category to Rs 8 lakh per annum from the existing Rs 6 lakh for the Central government jobs, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said here.

Briefing reporters on the

decisions taken by the Union

cabinet, he said those in the

OBC category earning up to Rs

8 lakh per annum would now

get the reservation benefits.

Responding to a question,

Jaitley said a proposal to ex-

pend the decision to public sec-

tors undertaken was under "active consideration" of the

government. — PTI

## Unicode standard for Assamese in the offing

KALYAN BAROOAH

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: In what has been described as a historic occasion for Assam, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has formally accepted the proposal of a separate Assamese code chart submitted by the Assam government.

Dr Sikhar Sarma, who was

part of the delegation that

attended the meeting with BIS,

told *this newspaper* that today's

meeting delayed on the issue

and accepted the Government

of Assam proposal, which will

be submitted to the Interna-

tional Standard Organization

for consideration and accept-

ance as international standard.



Assamese script does not have its separate identity in the digital world and shares the Bengali codes," Dr Sarma said.

Though BIS does not pro-

vide the Unicode, it is a mem-

ber of the ISO that provides

Unicode.

The Assam government had submitted to the BIS that Assamese is a historically evolved script with its own set of characters and symbols rep-

resenting written texts. But the non-inclusion of this in

Unicode and ISO standards has

triggered problems in using

the language in computers.

During the initial days of

digital standards for the Indian

languages in the first Indian

(See page 4)

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Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal with Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in New Delhi on Wednesday. — UB Photos

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Mamata, Sharad to attend RJD rally on Aug 27, says Lalu

PATNA, Aug 23: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and rebel JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav would attend the RJD rally here on August 27 and Mayawati's absence from the event was not a "set-back," party chief Lalu Prasad said today.

"I had a talk with Mayawati. She said senior BSP leader Satish Mishra would come for the rally," he told reporters.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief said senior Congress leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and CP Joshi would also attend the rally with a message from All India Congress Committee (AICC) president Sonia Gandhi.

Asked about the chances of Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi attending the event, Prasad said, "He could also be there." He also claimed that Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee and rebel JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav would be on the dais that day.

Asked about Kumar's and JD(U) principal general secretary KC Tyagi's comments that Sharad Yadav attended the RJD rally against the party line, he would lose his Rajya Sabha membership. Prasad claimed that there was no such provision.

"Is there any provision like this in any party? Politically parties leaders attend rallies organised by others... It does not come under anti-defection law," he said. Prasad further said, "Sharad Yadav represents the true JD(U)."

Sharad Yadav, who had attended a parallel 'Jan Adalat' meeting, instead of attending the JD(U) national executive meeting on Saturday, had asserted, "Mahagathbandhan jaaon hain" (the grand alliance is continuing). - PTI

## SC to decide today on privacy issue

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Supreme Court is likely to pronounce tomorrow its judgement on the vexatious issue whether the right to privacy can be held as a fundamental right under the Constitution.

A nine-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar had on August 2 reserved its verdict after hearing marathon arguments for six days over a period of three weeks, during which submissions were advanced in favour and against the inclusion of the right to privacy as a fundamental right. - PTI

## TMC leader's house blown off in Bengal

SUB (WB), Aug 23: The house of a local TMC leader at a village near here in Birbhum district was blown off under unknown circumstances today.

The house, belonging to the Trinamool Congress leader Sebab Khan Ainus, a resident of Barabgan village in the Lekhota police station area, was destroyed in the explosion at around 7 in the morning, the police said.

The police is yet to ascertain the cause of the blast and whether it was triggered by a bomb. Reporters are barred from going near the house by a section of villagers. - PTI

## NATIONAL

# Prabhu offers to quit following 2 train accidents in 5 days

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Taking "full moral responsibility" for the recent train accidents, Railways Minister Suresh Prabhu today indicated that he had offered to resign in a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi here.

Prabhu met the Prime Minister after a meeting of the Union Cabinet and left the city soon after, his staff told PTI.

"I met the Hon'ble Prime Minister @narendramodi taking full moral responsibility," Prabhu said in a tweet. The Prime Minister, he added, had asked him to wait.

"Accountability is good system in government. The PM will take a decision whatever request the rail minister has made," Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley told re-

porters after the cabinet briefing when asked about Prabhu's tweets.

Prabhu, under pressure from the Opposition to resign, said in a series of emotional tweets that he was "extremely pained" by the two derailments in Uttar Pradesh on August 19 and today. "In less than three years as Minister, I have devoted my blood and sweat for the better-

ment of the Railways. Under leadership of PM, tried to overcome decades of neglect through systemic reforms in all areas leading to unprecedented investment and milestones," he said.

"New India envisioned by PM deserves a Railways which is efficient and modern. I promise that is the path, on which Rlys is progressing now. I am

extremely pained by the unfortunate accidents, injuries to passengers and loss of precious lives. It has caused me deep anguish," he added.

On August 19, 13 coaches of the Kalima Uttrak Express derailed at Kathua in Uttar Pradesh, killing over 20 passengers and injuring over 150. Today, four days later, at least 100 passengers were injured

when the Kairiyat Express derailed in Auraiya in the same State.

According to sources, Lohani takes over from AK Mittal, who had submitted his resignation to the minister last evening. The resignation was accepted today morning. - PTI

Prabhu, who through this week gave out information on the Uttrak Express derailment and the restoration work through his official Twitter handle, had earlier taken action against eight officials, including a member of the Railway Board for the incident.

Soon after Prabhu's tweet about meeting the Prime Minister, the government announced the appointment of Air India CMD Ashwani Lohani as Chairman of the Railway Board.

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## India, Pak Army commanders hold meeting on LoC

JAMMU, Aug 23: Senior Army commanders of India and Pakistan today held a flag meeting on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir against the backdrop of numerous ceasefire violations and agreed to institute mechanisms for durable peace and tranquillity on the border.

At the meeting of Battalion Commander-level officers, the Indian side highlighted "abettment and support of the Pakistani Army to cross-border terrorism, sniping actions on the Line of Control and deliberate targeting of civilian population during cease fire violations," a defence ministry spokesman said here. The two sides agreed to keep the channels of communication open between local commanders at the LoC, he said.

"Indian and Pakistan Army held a flag meeting at Chakan-Da-Bagh in Poonch Sector at 11 am today, in the backdrop of numerous ceasefire violations and casualties to civilian population in the past several months," the spokesman said.

He said that both sides mutually agreed to the importance of exercising restraint on the LoC and keeping the channels of communication open between local commanders. Both sides also agreed for necessity to institute mechanisms to ensure durable peace and tranquillity along the Line of Control, the spokesman added. - PTI

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Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prime Minister of Nepal being received by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on his arrival in New Delhi on Wednesday. - UNI

## Nepalese PM Deuba arrives on 4-day visit

### Modi, Deuba hold unscheduled meeting

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold wide-ranging talks with his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba, who arrived here today on a four-day visit, his first trip abroad after assuming office in June.

Modi and Deuba will review the entire gamut of bilateral ties tomorrow and are likely to deliberate on ways to further deepen the Indo-Nepal relationship in a range of areas including trade and investment.

Deuba was received at the airport by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, reflecting the importance India attaches to its visit.

Official sources said it was an unscheduled meeting between the two leaders who will hold detailed talks tomorrow.

"Happy to welcome Rt Hon Shri Sher Bahadur Deuba ji, PM of close & friendly neighbour Nepal. Look forward to more extensive talks tomorrow," Modi tweeted later along with a photograph of the two. - PTI

origin, have been opposing the new statute as they fear it would marginalise them by dividing the country into seven provinces.

Madhesi protests from October 2015 to February 2016 had resulted in the closure of key trading points with India, triggering shortage of essential supplies in the landlocked country. The blockade of trade points with India ended in February after more than 50 people were killed in clashes with the police. - PTI



Police and paramilitary personnel conducting a flag march in Hissar on Wednesday, as precautionary measure before a court pronounce its verdict in a rape case against Sisra-based Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh on August 25. - UNI

## Govt finalises new cadre policy for IAS, IPS officers

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: A new policy for cadre allocation has been finalised by the Central government for IAS, IPS and other officers, aimed at ensuring "national integration" in the country's top bureaucracy.

Officers of all-India services – the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service (IFS) – will have to choose cadres from a set of zones instead of States.

The officers of the three services are currently allocated a cadre State or a set of

States/III comprises Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam-Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland.

Zone-II will have Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Under the new policy, candidates will only select one State/cadre from a zone as their first choice. Their second, third, fourth and fifth choices have to be from the different zones. Usually candidates choose their home State as their first choice and neigh-

boring States as their subsequent preference.

The new policy will seek to ensure that officers from Bihar, for instance, will get to work in southern and north-eastern States, which may not be their preferred cadres, a personnel ministry official said.

"This policy will ensure national integration of the bureaucracy as officers will get a chance to work in a State which is not their place of domicile," the official said.

Candidates appearing for the Civil Services Examination – conducted annually by the Union Public Service Commission – will have to first give their choices in a descending order of preference from among the various zones, as per the new policy. - PTI





## MESSAGE FOR TODAY

*If the wind will not serve, take to the oars.*

— LATIN PROVERB

**The Assam Tribune****Landmark judgement**

The striking down of triple talaq, a 1400-year-old practice followed by Sunni Muslims, by the Supreme Court of India, is not merely a momentous step in securing justice for Muslim women, but also for the empowerment of women as a whole. Even to the non-judicial mind the very fact that a man can divorce a woman simply by pronouncing the word 'talaq' three times, even over the phone or text messaging, appears to militate against the concept of justice within any civilized society. While the Apex Court was mulling over the issue, certain elements of the Muslim community had tried to justify the practice as a part of the Sharia Law and sanctioned by the Quran. They pointed out to the debatable fact that despite the existence of triple talaq, divorce rates amongst Muslims in India were lower than those of Hindus. Clearly, the learned judges had deferred passing a final pronouncement because they had wanted to closely scrutinize the legal ramifications, but the argument of the majority bench is nothing short of brilliant. They have pointed out that rather than support such a practice, the Quran actually attributes sanctity and permanence to the state of matrimony. The holy book, no doubt, permits divorce, but it also recognizes the need for an attempt at reconciliation, thereby making such an attempt an essential step that triple talaq does not admit.

Thus, triple talaq, by closing the door against reconciliation, violates the basic dictates of Quran and consequently those of the Sharai! The Islamic holy book being the 'first source of law', this nullifies any stipulations which might be made by other sources. Triple talaq is 'instant and irrevocable', leaves no scope for arbitration by two members of the family to save the marital tie and hence is not in sync with the Quran. At another level triple talaq also violates the Indian Constitution because it goes against the fundamental rights of Muslim women contained under Article 14 which confers the right to equality. It may be recalled that in a judgement reaching back to 2002 in the Shalim Ara case, the Apex Court had already held that triple talaq 'lacked legal sanctity'. In the latest verdict, the minority judgement of the two justices of the five-judge bench did not rebut the argument of the majority of the judges, but had wanted the Legislature to enact a law to ban triple talaq rather than have the Judiciary do the job for them. However, apparently, given the politically sensitive nature of the issue, there had been no attempt by political parties to attempt framing such a law. By opting to tread into a territory that politicians had shunned, the Judiciary has shown once again its progressive side, one that has earned it the trust of enlightened segment of Indians.

**Railway connectivity**

The snapping of railway connectivity between the North-east and the rest of the country during the recent devastating floods has hit the region hard. While railway links within the region has been restored, rail services continue to be disrupted with the rest of the country due to breaches on rail tracks in the Kathbar division of the NF Railway. The prolonged disruption in railway services is giving commuters a harrowing time besides adversely affecting the flow of essential goods into the region. With prices of foodstuff already soaring due to the flood ravages, the situation can worsen in the event of a prolonged disruption in rail services because a major portion of the region's imports comes through railways. The situation also warrants streamlining the movement of goods on roadways. Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has done well to take up the matter of rail link restoration with Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu in the urgency it deserves. The Union Minister of State for Railways, Rajen Gohain who is a representative from Assam, should also exhibit some alacrity so that railway links are restored as early as possible. The continued disruption in rail links has also triggered an abnormal hike in air fares connecting the region and the situation warrants intervention from the Union Aviation Ministry.

Of late, railway connectivity in the region is witnessing expansion even though we still have miles to go before we can catch up with the national average of railway availability. While we need more trains linking the region with the metros outside, it is equally imperative to connect all the State headquarters of the North-east through railway. Boosting railway connectivity will also be critical in view of the region's strategic location sharing several international borders as also to bridge the geographical isolation between the region and the rest of India. Railway tracks apart, the floods have caused extensive damage to the State's road network including the National Highways. However, floods alone are not responsible for the sorry state of our roads. Bad road conditions stemming largely from lack of periodical maintenance and compromise in quality during construction are effectively negating the utility of our roads. While a road project is sanctioned, it usually has a component concerning periodical maintenance but this is generally ignored, making it a complicated process involving time and cost overruns when taken up later. Given the prolonged rainy season and the recurring floods, ensuring strict quality control in road construction is a must. Large-scale corruption in road projects is another disturbing trend, which explains to a great extent the poor quality of roads. The Government needs to be firm in checking malpractices during road construction and should evolve a stringent monitoring mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability. Contractors and officials found to be violating norms in road quality should be booked and punished. Irritants like absence of coordination among various government departments causing uncancelled delays should be done away with.

**Naga peace process: long road to reconstruction**
**ROUGH  
& TUMBLE**  
By Patricia Mukhim

**W**hat happens after the Framework Agreement inked in August, 2015 to see what they can wrest out of it. That the NSCN (IM) under Th Muivah and late Isaac Chisi Swu has taken a consistent lead in guiding the Naga political discourse is also an undeniable fact. But even the NSCN (IM) must realize that while talking with a so-called adversary of many decades, both sides have to concede space so that the talks move forward. Intrigue around issues that might in the long run not add value to the future of Naga political, social and economic resurgence might be a greater disaster.

Let us look at the present situation in Nagaland. There is a general feeling of distrust and despair among the people when they see the degeneration of political values. The roads tell a story of decadence. They are eroded because of poor workmanship and sleaze; the culture of corruption exacerbated by the complete lack of accountability in the political leadership and the bureaucracy makes people transfer their agogies to the Framework Agreement. They believe that the pact is the salve to these human-induced circumstances. But will the agreement be able to correct or even reconstruct the perversions of a system debased by pathetic and selfish political, bureaucratic and business class?

Then we come to semantics which the Naga people are stuck with. The word, 'Honourable Solution' has been drummed into the collective psyche of Nagas, young and old, so it is part of their daily vocabulary. I am tempted to ask what is that honourable solution that Nagas want which is also the most intractable part of their demand? Will that honourable

Framework Agreement? We must be naive to even expect that. So if 'Honourable Settlement' only includes extraneous symbols such as a separate flag or even a separate passport (?) and reconstructing state borders, will it go to adding anything to the holistic human development of the Naga people?

I have long been intrigued by the meaning and scope of the word 'interlocutor'. Who and what is an interlocutor? This made me pore over several literatures on peace building, but the book, *Peace-building and Local Ownership: Post-Conflict Consensus Building* by Timothy Donohue was intuitive. The interlocutor has to get into the historical background, the community conversations, the

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the government-appointed competent authorities.

Amrit Abhiyan in various States of India, some of the successful ones being the Vajpayee Arogyashri launched in Karnataka and the Dr YSR Seva Health Insurance Scheme. However, both of them cover only the BPL people.

In conclusion, one food for thought could be that the scheme card which will be distributed to the people, going forward, could take the avatar of a 'Smart Card' wherein the patients entire medical records can be electronically stored and accessible at all times. This can be the next level of implementation wherein we have the complete e-health records of individuals enabling and empowering doctors/hospitals to provide a better care delivery by regular monitoring and timely interventions as and when required leading to better clinical outcomes for patients.

Let us from the medical fraternity welcome this ambitious initiative and participate wholeheartedly to make it a success. The success of the programme will ensure a healthy Assam with healthy people. Healthy people mean productive people leading to a healthy economy, progress and overall growth and development of the entire State.

**Atal Amrit Abhiyan: a step in right direction**
**■ Dr Subhash Khanna**

**I**t was the perfect Christmas as well as New Year gift for the people of Assam when on the morning of December 25, 2016, the State woke up to the wonderful news of the launch of the ambitious Atal Amrit Abhiyan (AAA) by the Government of Assam.

The AAA in a short is a state-provided health insurance scheme which will cover several critical illnesses. Launched to mark the 92nd birthday of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpeyi, the scheme will offer coverage against 437 illnesses in six disease groups, namely, cardiovascular, cancer, kidney, neonatal, neurological conditions and burns. Many more diseases will surely come under its ambit as we move forward.

Nevertheless, to provide coverage for 437 illnesses by itself is a no mean feat by any measure since there will be some kind of pressure on the state treasury and the purist and conservative economists will cry foul if prudence being not maintained wherein the state is at the same time reeling under the popular wrath and scourge of the

devastating floods.

The AAA has been designed beautifully to benefit not just the rural poor but also the urban poor and so both the Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) families, with annual income below Rs 5 lakh, are eligible for getting healthcare coverage under the scheme. It is estimated that 85%-90% of the population will come under the ambit of the scheme, which even as a statistic, is truly commendable and a remarkable achievement.

As per reports and initial government directives, the entire scheme will be implemented in a phase-wise manner. People will be required to register themselves in specially created kiosks and booths in their village that would be set up by a third party service provider. Proof of residence, identification and economic status along with self-biometric identification (fingerprint) will be required to be provided to these government-assigned competent authorities. AAA cards will then be provided to people after checking of the submitted credentials by

the government-appointed competent authorities.

The coverage that will be provided under the scheme is an amount of Rs 2 lakh per person which will be by far large to be an individual. However, as a super specialty healthcare service provider and as a surgeon, one has realized that while undertaking complex surgical cases, the costs goes up significantly. Experience says that at times, even otherwise well-to-do patients struggle to meet the increasing costs of medical care and procedures unless they are covered with some kind of medical insurance along with the benefits that can be availed under a TPA (third-party administrator). The hope here is that such kind of initiatives will also give a boost to people to take up healthcare insurance for self/and/or family to meet any kind of medical emergency with no worries whatsoever financially.

Although this initiative of the Government of Assam is a unique and path-breaking one for the State, yet it is not the first of its kind across the nation. There have been ongoing precursors to the Atal

Amrit Abhiyan in various States of India, some of the successful ones being the Vajpayee Arogyashri launched in Karnataka and the Dr YSR Seva Health Insurance Scheme. However, both of them cover only the BPL people.

The Government of Assam must ensure that the Atal Amrit Abhiyan runs its entire course in a smooth manner all throughout and that the people coming under the coverage are genuinely benefited. This is very important and more so in the light of what happened in Karnataka and in Andhra Pradesh, where initially both the schemes started on a right note, however, soon there were allegations of massive fund misutilization, corruption and nepotism in fund allocation, collusion between government officials and private hospitals/doctors for fund misappropriation and many more unethical practices leading to widespread misuse of the programme by hospitals, particularly in Andhra Pradesh.

This is where the Government of Assam must ensure that all checks and balances are in place by plugging all loopholes, if any, so that its kind across the nation. There have been ongoing precursors to the

**Clear case of arrogance in Govt functioning**
**Letters  
to the  
EDITOR**

**S**ir, — The sheer arrogance and perhaps a political vendetta are apparent in many ways the State Government is functioning. This Government was voted to power by the people of Assam on certain specific issues that have for long been plaguing the State. However, the Government after being voted to power seems to be pursuing a different agenda which is not aligned with the greater interest of the Assamese people. The decision of the Government to name 22 colleges after Deendayal Upadhyaya defies all logic and demonstrates the high-handed approach, especially when it is subjected to criticism. Why can't these colleges be named after renowned educationist, writers, sportspersons, etc., who were contributors to the Assamese society? Moreover, in a democracy, the consensus of the people must be respected and upheld. In this case, the Government should withhold its decision,

take a step back to accommodate greater consensus from the people and then make a decision. If the Government can make teachers accountable by publicly reprimanding them, then they should also remember that 'what you give comes back to you'. Yours etc., ANIRBAN LAHIRI, Pimpazar, Guwahati.

**'Niskama karma'**

**S**ir, — I approach the discussion on 'Niskama karma' (AT, August 20, 21), I would like to opine that the *Gita* has an extremely sophisticated dialogic structure which requires careful contemplation and a great deal of critical examination before coming to any settled conclusion. It is true that the modern reader is apt to interpret the *Gita* quite literally in the manner of an ordinary text which may not be altogether an incorrect approach to adopt. However, there are several nuances, and the internalization of some of these nuances is crucial to imbibing the true message of the *Gita*. The translations that are given in English often do not aid in this kind

of a deep understanding. One example that may be given is the definition of the word 'karma'. Scores of modern translations simply translate it as 'work' or 'action' but this is not the way in which this key term was traditionally understood. According to Sankaradeva, it does not mean mere action but rather stands specifically for a set of prescribed Vedic stipulations. He calls it 'vidhi kinkara karma'. So, is the central message of the *Gita* then to do (disinterestedly) this *vidhi kinkara karma*? It is for the critical reader to decide. Yours etc., ARUNAWA GUPTA, Rukminigarh, Dispur

**Wind of change**

**S**ir, — The public life of Nagaland has totally been paralysed by nepotism and rampant corruption. The pathetic conditions of all the highways in the State bear testimony to that. The resentment among the right-thinking Nagas can be explicitly felt everywhere but they never had a much organized protest against their corrupt regime on genuine issues. Even the church bodies

are visibly numb. A civil society organization named Against Corruption and Unabated Taxation (ACAUT) has unearthed many financial anomalies in Nagaland in recent times. It is slowly becoming the voice of the people. On August 25 next, ACOUT is organizing a public rally in Dimapur against corruption. It is the first of its kind in the history of Nagaland. We also express our concern regarding the misappropriation of funds in the name of 'vidhi kinkara karma'. So, is the central message of the *Gita* then to do (disinterestedly) this *vidhi kinkara karma*? It is for the critical reader to decide. Yours etc., ARUNAWA GUPTA, Rukminigarh, Dispur

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**PM's advice**

**S**ir, — The Prime Minister has rightly pointed out some ministers misusing public sector undertakings (PSUs) under their ministries when he cautioned them against the malpractice. It is also learnt that some ministers use funds from the PSUs to be spent on their residential or official accommodation after their own spending limits from the ministry or government departments are exhausted. Practically all such misuse of the PSUs cannot be prevented. The best way is to make the PSUs follow normal government rules for all types of expenditures rather than having own sets of rules or discretionary powers vested with their senior officers. Yours etc., SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.

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









**CAPSULE****New Rs 200 notes**

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Finance Ministry today formally announced the launch of the new Rs 200 note. "The Central Government hereby specifies the denomination of bank notes of the value of 200 rupees," a Gazette notification said. Earlier, Minister of State for Finance Subhash Gargavalli of JANS (the Rs 200 notes, printing of which had begun, would be in circulation soon. —IANS

**GST Council meet**

HYDERABAD, Aug 23: The next GST Council meeting will be held here on September 9, a senior official in Telangana government said today. This will be the third meeting of the Council since the launch of the goods and services tax (GST) on July 1 and the 21st since it was set up in September last year. —PTI

**Uber cashless bid**

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Riding on the 'go cashless' bandwagon, cab-hailing app Uber today launched a comprehensive Unified Payments Interface (UPI) integration in partnership with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Axis Bank and HDFC Bank. The company has partnered Axis bank to launch UPI integration for riders and HDFC bank to facilitate access to BHIM for driver partners. —PTI

**JioPhone booking**

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The pre-booking of JioPhone will start for Re 500 across its retail stores, the website and Jio App from 5 pm tomorrow, according to a message sent out by Reliance Jio. "India ka smartphone is finally here! Pre-booking for JioPhone starts tomorrow Aug 24 at 5 pm," an SMS sent to a Jio customer read. —PTI

**Bisleri labels**

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Mineral water brand Bisleri today said it will soon be available with regional language labels with the first phase rolling out in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, parts of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. The move is aimed at connecting with local people in different markets and help them identify and relate to the brand in languages they understand, Bisleri said in a statement. —PTI

**Jet Airways move**

MUMBAI, Aug 23: Private carrier Jet Airways has taken on board California-based home-share booking site Airbnb to offer a range of global hospitality choices to its guests from India. The partnership with Airbnb, the first by an Indian carrier, will help Jet Airways strengthen its portfolio of choices for stay that it currently offers its guests, a release said. —PTI

**MakeMyTrip pact**

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Online travel firm MakeMyTrip has inked a strategic alliance with Travelport's distributor for India, InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ), for the use of the UK-headquartered firm's travel commerce platform. Under the terms of the agreement, MakeMyTrip can expand the use of Travelport's technology, from the Ibtbo group to its other primary distribution channels, the companies said. —PTI

# Cabinet gives in-principle nod to bank mergers

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: In the context of massive accumulation of bad loans by state-run banks, the Union Cabinet today gave an "in principle" approval for their consolidation by merging some of the public sector lenders, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced.

The Cabinet approved the constitution of an alternate mechanism that will oversee proposals with regard to consolidation of banks, which will come from the PSBs (public sector banks). Jaitley told reporters here following the Cabinet meeting.

"As of today, there are 20 PSBs plus the State

Bank of India (SBI)," he said, adding that the SBI had recently concluded the merger with its associate banks and become a larger consolidated entity. "If any other PSB board gives a consolidation proposal, to oversee that proposal an alternative mechanism will be in place to give in-principle approval for the proposal of the banks for a scheme of amalgamation," Jaitley said.

Explaining that such an alternative mechanism "enables quick facilitation of decisions," Jaitley said the constitution of the committee would be made by the Prime Minister.

"The decision regarding creating strong and

competitive banks will be solely based on commercial considerations," he said.

"Our experience of consolidation has been positive. It increases the entity's commercial strength, the ability to absorb market shocks," he added.

The Cabinet approval comes in the face of banking operations across the country being hit on Tuesday as over 10 lakh bank employees in more than 13,000 branches pan-India struck work protesting against reforms in the banking sector, including proposals of merger of state-run banks. —IANS



SJ Ha (R), Executive Director - Sales and Marketing, and Rakesh Srivastava, Director - Sales and Marketing, Hyundai Motor India, during the launch of the next generation Verna, in Bengaluru on Wednesday. —UNI

## RBI mulling Ombudsman for NBFCs: RBI Dy Governor

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is considering an "Ombudsman" scheme for redressal of customer grievances with the non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) even as the Central bank is not in favour of the NBFCs taking deposits from public, Deputy Governor NS Vishwanathan said today.

"We are thinking of an Ombudsman scheme for the NBFCs so that people will feel they have a Central bank-regulated mechanism (for redressal). This would only strengthen customer confidence in

the NBFCs," Vishwanathan said here while inaugurating an Non-banking Finance Companies 2017 conference organised by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham).

"The RBI is also moving in the direction of harmonisation of regulatory framework for different types of NBFCs," he said.

Referring to yet another key measure being planned by the RBI, Vishwanathan said: "We are moving in (for) harmonisation of different type of regulators for the NBFCs."

He said there are several unid-

ing models which would keep evolving and "they would keep changing".

However, the RBI is not in favour of the NBFCs taking deposits from the public, he said.

The financial firms have recorded much higher annualised growth of about 14 per cent in credit against much lower by the banks. Even the asset quality of the NBFCs is far better than those of the banks.

"The NBFCs are an important part of the financial inclusion and the RBI will continue to support them," Vishwanathan added. —IANS

## Air India chief Lohani to head Railway Board

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Air India chief Ashwani Lohani was today named Chairman of the Railway Board to succeed AR Mittal, who stepped down in the wake of reported train accidents.

An official statement here said the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved Lohani's appointment.

Lohani belongs to the Indian Railways Service of Mechanical Engineers of the 1980 batch. Mittal's resignation has been

accepted, a Railway Ministry spokesman told IANS earlier.

Lohani's appointment came hours after Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and offered to quit after a second train derailed in Uttar Pradesh four days, injuring 74 people. Prabhu said Modi had asked him to "wait".

Lohani, 58, who has been touted as the "turnaround specialist" for the public sector enterprises, joined Air India in late 2015. He

was currently engaged in giving shape to Air India's global expansion plans, at a time when the government had decided for a strategic divestment in the airline.

He had told IANS in an interview here on August 6 that the "painful decision" of divestment would "open doors to a better future for the airline and its employees".

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## NHIDCL a white elephant – myth or reality?

PARtha PRATEEM DUTTA

National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL), a fully-owned company under the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways, Govt of India, was formed with the noble purpose of upgrading the road network in the parts of the country which share international boundary, to boost economic activities. Since its inception in 2015, it has undertaken over twelve projects in Assam. However, some sections in the State are not quite happy with the progress of its work. In July last, RP Sharma, MP from Assam, met Union Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari and requested his intervention as regards maintenance of the National Highways and slow pace of four-laning work of NHIDCL. He alleged that the NHIDCL has become a "white elephant" in Assam. According to him, except for a few piers erected in the new Kalibhumora bridge in river Brahmaputra, no remarkable change has been noticed in any of the projects. He further said least development has been reported on NH-37 in upper Assam, where the physical progress of work is less than 2 per cent in all the projects even though more than half the contract period has elapsed.

It is worth mentioning that these projects were initially entrusted upon the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) which had made three attempts (between 2008 and 2013) to execute the projects in BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer) mode, but had failed. Later, the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways took over the projects and decided to carry out the same in the EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) mode. Now the questions that arise are – why big boulders fall in Assam whether it is a project of NHA or NHIDCL? Are there any authorities responsible for the slow pace? Is there any loophole in the policy-making or contract design?

Construction of roads in Assam cannot be compared with those in other parts of the country. The reason for the same may be a very short span of working period (maximum 5 to 6 months). The authorities should not generalise the contract, rather it should be designed in such a way that maximum output can be extracted. Recently, a project on Dibrugarh-to-Jamuguri section, amounting Rs 474 crore, was awarded for which the construction period was fixed for four years. An approximate quantities of 10 lakh cum of boulder and 40 lakh

cum of earth are needed for the project. Simple arithmetic and past construction experience tell us that executing such vast quantities of material in four working seasons is not practical at all. The result will be the same – after 20-30 per cent work, the contractor will focus more on arbitration rather than completing the project on time. More emphasis should be given by the authorities on awarding projects at the start of a working season to enable completion of a substantial amount of work in the first season rather than wasting valuable time of contract period in the monsoons. Moreover, though four-lane execution has been carried out in Assam for almost 15 years, contractors fail to gain experience and follow the proper construction programme, which leads to miserable failure in efficient project execution.

Land acquisition and utility shifting have always been bottleneck in road construction projects. Unlike projects in other parts of India, we have failed to see a single project in Assam which has been handed over hinders-free. EPC projects have a rule of clearance of 90 per cent land by the authorities till when the contractor is not bound to take the appointment date for execution. In the Rangagora-to-Kalabor section of NH-37, which was awarded one and a half years

back, the selected contractor is reluctant to start execution as it is not 90 per cent free, resulting in more delay in work. Moreover, NHIDCL has spent a huge amount of money in maintaining the existing road of the said project which was initially a part of the main contract. Delay in getting permission for extraction of construction materials also seems to be a big hurdle in execution. A perforation in communication between NHIDCL and government authorities is clear from the instances. Without a fast-track system by NHIDCL, more delay in project work is anticipated.

Land acquisition and utility shifting have

been a major issue in Assam. The only

## 20 lakh businesses paid GST so far, more to follow: GSTN chief

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Maiden tax collections under the GST regime have seen over 20 lakh businesses paying tax online so far and about 30 lakh more are expected to do so before the deadline ends on October 1, a top official said.

GST Network – the company managing the tax filing apparatus – has geared up the IT network to handle the rush, its Chairman Navin Kumar said.

A last-minute rush had led to GST portal crashing last week, forcing the government to postpone the tax filing deadline by five days to August 25.

"About 48 lakh taxpayers have saved the sales data on the portal. Of this, 20 lakh have filed returns and paid taxes so far," Kumar told PTI.

Till August 21, as much as Rs 42,000 crore had come in as taxes from 10 lakh businesses. The taxes submitted include Central GST, State GST and Integrated GST as also cess on luxury and demerit goods like cars and tobacco.

The collection figure would go up substantially with the number

of taxpayers doubling to 20 lakh as of today. Kumar did not give the tax collection numbers but said the remaining 28 lakh taxpayers will file taxes in the next two days.

"The GST-3B process include uploading of data, payment of taxes and preparation of cash ledger. Uploading of data takes some time. Since another 28 lakh have already uploaded data, we expect them to pay taxes," he said.

Asked how prepared the GST Network system is to handle the pressure of returns filing as the deadline nears, Kumar said 48 lakh have already come onto the portal and hence it is unlikely that there would be a rush.

The government had on August 19 extended the due date for filing of GST returns and payment of taxes to August 25 from August 20 earlier, after businesses complained of a snag in the GST portal.

"There was a minor technical glitch for an hour on the day with problem of delayed log-in. Still, 2.7 lakh returns were filed on August 19," Kumar said. —PTI

## Govt clarifies on GST rates for newspaper advt space sale

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Space selling for advertisement in print media will attract 18 per cent GST if an agency does so as an agent of a newspaper on commission basis, the government said today.

A GST rate of 5 per cent will be levied if the advertisement agency works on principal-to-principal basis – buys space from the newspaper and sells such space for advertisement to clients on its own account, a Finance Ministry statement said.

As an illustration, if a newspaper sells a unit of space worth Rs 100 to an advertisement agency for Rs 85 (after a trade discount of Rs 15) and the agency sells the space to client at Rs 100, the newspaper would pay 5 per cent GST on Rs 85 and the advertisement agency a similar amount of tax on Rs 100.

However, if the advertisement agency sells space for advertisement as an agent of the newspaper on commission basis, 18 per cent GST would be levied on the sale commission it gets.

The newspaper would have to pay 5 per cent GST on the revenue earned from space selling but can avail of input tax credit for the tax paid by the advertisement agency on commission received.

"However, if the advertisement agency supplies any service other than selling of space for advertisement, such as designing or drafting the advertisement, and such supply is not a part of composite supply, the same would be liable to tax at the rate of 18 per cent," the statement said.

If such supplies are part of composite supply, the rate applicable for the principal supply shall apply.

"Therefore, everything depends on the terms of the contract between the newspaper, advertisement agency and the client," it added. —PTI

## SIAM seeks cess exemption for bigger ambulances

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Auto industry body SIAM has asked the government to exempt bigger ambulances with capacity of up to 13 persons from 15 per cent cess and charge only 2 per cent tax under GST.

In the pre-GST era, all ambulances enjoyed concession in excise duty rate but after GST implementation, the Finance Ministry has exempted compensation cess only on ambulances that can carry up to nine persons.

Ambulances with capacity of 10-13 persons, including driver, now

attract with 15 per cent cess.

"Cess on 10-13-seater ambulances has not been withdrawn under the GST. It is an anomaly and the government should exempt bigger ambulances as well from 15 per cent cess as has been done in the case of units which can carry up to 9 persons," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) Deputy Director General Sugato Sen told PTI.

A bigger ambulance can have all the required medical provisions built into it which help in taking better care of the patient, he added. —PTI

fall prey to brokers in the capital. The Spanish firm Corsan Coviam, which was awarded two projects worth Rs 950 crore in the Jorhat-to-Denow section of NH-37, has created a complicated situation by allowing brokers to fix their cut. Corsan Coviam bagged the project in October 2014 and could execute only 0.76 per cent of work till March 2017. Thus they have been thrown out of the Jorhat-to-Jhanavi package and also have been served termination notice for the other packages. But the question remains unanswered as to why NHIDCL took a two and a half years to judge the intention of the foreign firm. The only sufferers are the people of Assam who will again have to wait for another three years for a four-lane road in that particular stretch. Until and unless the authorities design contracts which encourage eligible local contractors who understand the climate and demography of the area, delay in project execution is inevitable.

Another burning issue in Assam is the pathetic condition of National Highways, especially those under NHIDCL. Dilapidated conditions of road have led to many accidents and deaths. Though NHIDCL is taking all sorts of measures to make the National Highway traffic worthy, the situation still remains the same. In some

cases the EPC contractors do not show interest in maintaining the existing road and in some others, due to incessant rains it becomes very difficult to keep repairing the potholes. In such cases, measures should be taken before the monsoons which could minimise the damage to a large extent. The small contractors involved in maintenance find it very difficult as proper execution of contract is not carried out by NHIDCL.

Union Road and Transport minister Nitin Gadkari, while inaugurating the new Saraihat bridge, proudly declared to invest Rs 15,000 crore to develop 1,253 km of National Highways in Assam. Gadkari said the NHIDCL will spend Rs 8,000 crore over the next two years for developing 143 km of road including a few bridges over river Brahmaputra. But the challenge to NHIDCL lies in converting these figures declared by the Minister into reality. With slight alterations in its policy approach and a broader view with regard to Assam, NHIDCL can scale proper success.

The Additional Chief Secretary of Rural Development, Jharkhand, NN Sinha has been appointed as the new Managing Director of NHIDCL. Now the people of Assam look up to him for faster and better road connectivity in the State.



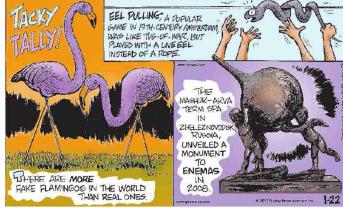








Play... - Believe It or Not!



## Why What?

What was the Spruce Goose?

Led by designer Howard Hughes on its first and only flight on November 2, 1947, Spruce Goose, the Hughes Flying Boat, was the largest aircraft every built. Built with laminated wooden aircraft had a wing span longer than a football field and was designed to carry more than 700 men to battle.

Howard Hughes was a man who founded the Hughes Aircraft Company in 1932. He personally tested company's first aircraft design and in 1937 broke the transcontinental flight-time record. In 1938, he flew across the Atlantic in record three days, 19 hours, and 14 minutes.

Following the U.S entry into World War II in December 1941, Hughes commissioned the Hughes Aircraft Company to build a large flying boat capable of carrying 700 men to battle in Europe. The concept for what would become the Spruce Goose was originally conceived by his metallurgist Henry Kaiser, but Kaiser died before the project was completed. Because of wartime restrictions on steel, Hughes decided to build his aircraft out of wood, laminated with planks and covered with fabric. Although it was constructed mainly of birch, the use of spruce (along with its white-grey colour) would earn the aircraft the nickname Spruce Goose. It had a wingspan of 203 feet and was powered by eight giant propeller engines.



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## My viewpoint

“ Why should we study Moral Science in school? ”



Jayashree Parashar,  
Class-V, Mahrishi Vidya  
Mandir IV, Bansbari,  
Guwahati.

Schools are the lifelines of the society. Parents want that their children get good grades so they can have a bright future. But the values of education are so much more important than that. So, Moral Science is an absolute, essential part of the school curriculum. Otherwise, even though we become wealth and vindictive, and society will be degraded.



Eric Bharali, Class-X,  
Delta Public School,  
Nagaon.

Moral values refer to virtues like honesty, truthfulness, love, hard work, helpfulness, etc. Students are the future of our country. If the students depend on the moral values imparted to them during their school days, then moral values is an important duty of the teachers. If a child observes others with good qualities, then he will imbibe some of them. Moral Science is an important subject where a student realises which deeds and behaviour are good and which are bad. He has to correct them through activities like debates, discussions, role playing, etc. Inculcating moral values can guarantee a successful life ahead.



Archita Dutta, Class-X,  
St. Joseph's High  
School, Morehbari.

Moral Science is the most important subject taught in school. This school plays an important role in moulding the students into responsible members of the community and here Moral Science plays a crucial role. It helps in the formation of our character and personality. We learn about the world without moral values. It is useless if we are highly educated but lack moral values. It is more important than anything else. In our Moral Science textbooks, there are some beautiful chapters based on real-life experiences that teach us, teenagers, to differentiate right from wrong. So, I think Moral Science is a useful subject in building our personality, along with our careers.



Pratishtha Bharadwaj,  
Class-X, Kendriya Vidyalaya,  
Dibrugarh.

Education is not all about formulas and equations; it is about the way it moulds our souls and minds. Ethics, soft skills and values are also an integral part of the curriculum, from the very beginning. That's why I think Moral Science is an important part of the school curriculum, since it shapes the way we look towards our everyday life. Whether or not we follow the rules of the society are influenced by ethics and moral behaviour, and not how well we follow the tables. Moral Science indicates values in the character of a child. So, we study Moral Science in school.

The Assam Tribune

# PLANET YOUNG

GUWAHATI, THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2017

## Commando comics

CRPF forces are the pride of the comic world! The para-military forces turned many of its big battle into a comic book series titled *Shaurya Gathastin*. With the release of *Dheer Dharmendra* and *Bahadur Biresh* on its 78th Raising Day last week, the CRPF now has 10 comic books in its series, which are available online. A CRPF official informs, "These books are distributed free of cost at Kendriya Vidyalayas and CRPF libraries." The comic books are available in both print and digital form and are currently only in Hindi.



## Children need to goof off!

Today's kids and teens have become busier than ever. But neurologists and psychologists say that play is important for them to be mentally healthy and creative, even during summer vacation, is not good for them. Helping children succeed and thrive is one of the issues paediatrician Lee Vining has been thinking for decades. In her book *Play Strength Switch*, she suggests that parents focus on building up their child's strengths rather than fixing their weaknesses.

Waters says machines need to reboot and kids need to goof off. "What I mean by goofing off is really allowing kids to have some downtime, where they are not focused on any specific task, something that they choose to do like shooting baskets, or doing a

creative project, or cooking," she said.

Gooling off doesn't mean the brain becomes inactive. "It goes into this default work mode and uses that time to process information. It's like during the day, when you integrate the new information," she said.

Waters hopes parents understand that children don't have to be busy constantly and, instead, should be given permission to goof off every now and then.

[Source: Voice of America (VOA)]

Photo: Lovita Moran

Lovita Moran is a professional filmmaker, artiste, writer and poet. She is a Karmaveer Chakra awardee.



## I, ME MYSELF

Lovita Moran is a professional filmmaker, artiste, writer and poet. She is a Karmaveer Chakra awardee.

► People who have influenced me the most. I am a self-made person. But certain people have influenced me a lot. I especially like Indian writer Svetlana Alexei Malakhovskaya.

► Turning point of my life... Discovering the Indian independence movement. Early to the Green Chorus and the subsequent book were great experience, and so was featuring in a BBC film on the royal massacre.

► Happiest moments of my life... Occur when I see people unite, in spite of their differences, and there is goodness among strangers.

► Greatest I would like to see in the society... Minds free of pollution. All humans must respect the society we live in. We must be ready to do our best for the progress and welfare of mankind.

► Message for today's youth... Be the rock of Gibraltar. Be happy and healthy and believe in positive thinking.

## Preserve Nature for a better future

Aishwarya Bararia, Class-V, Garmoni School, Digboi.

I use the last day of my annual examinations and excitements know no bounds. After the exam, when I attend the interview, my father informed me that we were going to my grandparent's place in Silchar. On hearing this, I was shocked.

On the way, I kept thinking about my grandfather, who did not speak English for months. Silchar, as I heard out of the car window, I realised that the scenario around the road had completely changed. I asked my father whether we were on the wrong road. He laughed and told me that we were on the right track. He also informed me that the government had cleared the roads so all the trees near the road had been cleared.

I was shocked.

We crossed a bridge and the river flowing under the bridge was dirty. I saw

the water flowing in the river.

Later, I came to know from my father that the main cause of pollution in this river are

the industrial wastes.

These wastes pollute the water and

releases all its toxic wastes into the river.

He also told me that once upon a time, there was a small village near the river. The people of that village used to go to the river for bathing, but now they are no longer

suitable for consumption.

Friends, we reached our grandparents' house. That night, I dreamt of a dark future that was waiting for us if we continued polluting the earth in this way. In my dream, I realised that the scenario around the road had completely changed. I asked my father whether we were on the wrong road. He laughed and told me that we were on the right track. He also informed me that the

government had cleared the roads so all the trees near the road had been cleared.

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time, there was a small village near the river. The people of that village used to go to the river for bathing, but now they are no longer

suitable for consumption.

Friends, we reached our grandparents'

house. That night, I dreamt of a dark

future that was waiting for us if we continued

polluting the earth in this way. We have even started using cycles and walking instead of driving our private vehicles to go to school.

Friends, we must remember that the earth will not wait for us, but we can be

written in.

## SKETCH OF THE WEEK

Chinnay Maheena, Maligaon.

CONTRIBUTOR OF THE WEEK

Aishwarya Bararia, Digboi.

POEM OF THE WEEK

Prapti Bhuyan, Gauhati.

SKETCH OF THE WEEK

Chinnay Maheena, Maligaon.



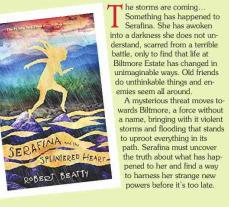
**Wordwatch**

1	Resource a) Protection b) Urgent claim c) Beginning or origin d) Available supply
2	Matriarch – A woman who a) Has many children b) Rules a family c) Is of noble birth
3	Amity a) Wealth b) Good will c) A sharing
4	Catholic a) Local b) Energetic c) Devout d) Universal
5	Familial – Relating to a) Fame b) Comfort c) Food shortages d) Family

## BOOK NOOK

### Serafina And The Splintered Heart

By Robert Beatty



The summer has happened to Serafina. She has awoken into a darkness she does not understand, scared from a terrible dream. Her best friend, Biltmore Estee has changed in unimaginable ways. Old friends do strange things and enemies seem all around.

A mysterious thief has come to visit Serafina's home without a name, bringing with it violent storms, lightning and a path. Serafina must uncover the truth about what has happened to her best friend and find a way to harness her strange new powers before it's too late.

## PLANET YOUNG

our destination. We had a reservation in a hotel in Central Bangkok. That night, we went for local sightseeing and shopping.

The next day, we went to the Marine Park, and the Underwater World. We did a Jungle Safari, walked inside the largest aquarium, saw rare birds and animals, and enjoyed the popular shows like dolphin show, cow boy show and orangutan show.

The following day, we went to one of the last remaining temples in the world, the Wat Phra Kaew. We enjoyed various rides like the giant drop, wave pool, astro-fighter, super roller coaster, and the bumper cars. The gardens were also quite nice.

After returning, we went to the World Gems Gallery. My mom purchased two diamond and crystal lockets for herself and me. The gemstone gallery is huge, fascinating and wonderful.

We even enjoyed their New Year's Fair – "The Songkran Festival". The festival was a memorable one for me. The natural beauty of the place is fabulous. The country is a must-visit for everyone.

## The Land of White Elephants

Rituparna Banerji, Class VIII,  
Faculty H.S. School, Guwahati



reached Pattaya.

Pattaya is a beautiful and exciting place. There are visited mainly tourists. We had lots of fun and enjoyed a lot. We also went to the Sriracha Tiger Zoo, where we saw different species of animals and clicked lots of photos. Royal Palace, which is about 85 kms. away from Bangkok. A taxi came from the resort to pick us up at the airport and within two hours, we

reached Pattaya.

Pattaya is a

reached Pattaya.

### IDIOM OF THE WEEK

#### Whatever floats your boat

Dear Bhaitiya, Bhonti,

I have just discovered that on August 24, 1456, the first edition of the Gutenberg Bible was printed. The advent of printing was a great milestone in the history of mankind. It led to a Renaissance of reading and learning in Europe. For the first time reading was made accessible to the common people, rather than just the clergy and aristocracy. Make reading a part of your life and become a more evolved human being.

With love, as always,

Xakiestew

### masterpieces

Philip Pullman



Philip Pullman is the best-selling author of fantasy books for young readers. His works have enjoyed enormous success and critical acclaim. Some of his books are –

- ▲ His Dark Materials series.
- ▲ The Sally Lockhart Mysteries.
- ▲ The Adventures of The Nowhere Girl Gang.
- ▲ The Butterfly Taboo.
- ▲ The Adventures of John Blake.

### Viking Kids Don't Cry

By Ieda Jónasdóttir Herman



A middle-grade novel that will introduce children to the Vikings through the eyes of growing up. *Viking Kids Don't Cry* chronicles the family choices and challenges of a girl named Diddi as the adventures she has in 1935. Diddi's vivid imagination is central to the story, as well as her joy as she describes a summer trip in which she travels by boat to stay with her grandmother.

The author has provided many characters that propel Diddi's imagination forward. Diddi's mother, Sissi and Lilla Diddi, the most beloved of the characters, is a spunky girl that first appears in the beginning and living soon from family members. She has an adventurous spirit and loves to play in the outdoors. The setting will also bring smiles from the right moments. The setting will also bring joy and fun. It is the backdrop that, more often than not, holds the magic of this story.

### PICTURE CROSSWORD



SOLUTION  
Across:  
1. Dwarves 2. Wishes 3. Shy 4. Chimps 5. Dishes  
6. Riddle 7. Monkeys 8. 2. Waterfalls 9. Tadpoles  
10. Mother 11. Sunsets 12. Waves 13. Butterflies  
14. Butterflies 15. Trees 16. Waves 17. Monkeys  
18. Butterflies 19. Waves 20. Butterflies  
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96. Butterflies 97. Butterflies 98. Butterflies  
99. Butterflies 100. Butterflies

*Sketch of the week*



Chinmoy Mahanta, Class-IX,  
Railway H.S. School, Margon



Neekita Sonowal Kand, Class-III,  
Holy Home Secondary School, Guwahati

*Poem of the Week*

Prapti Bhuyan, Class-IX,  
Maharishi Vidya Mandir, Sripurhuri, Guwahati.

**Unity in diversity**

This is the land of amazing diversity,  
But we are all the same –  
Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians –  
We all are proud of being Indians.  
A peaceful co-existence  
Keeps our relations always good.  
Our country has a rich heritage,  
We have maintained it for many ages.  
In a diverse country like this  
We have to maintain peace.  
Let us work for our progress,  
And work for our country's prosperity.



Bastab Barrah, Class-VI,  
Shrimanta Shankar Academy, Guwahati

**Friends of animals**

I want to talk to you all about our dear animals.  
If you have a pet, you would have noticed  
that many times they feel thirsty and  
hungry, and you feed them. But what about  
stray animals? Don't you think they, too, feel  
thirsty and hungry? If you do, then you just have to  
create a change? Why not feed them? I am  
not asking you to do this, but you just have to  
put within your heart that if you can't give food,  
you can even give them food.  
For the love, make a place where you  
can protect animals from them. A little  
change in our attitude can bring about a lot  
of happiness in their lives.

– Yash Hemelia, Class-X,  
Royal Global School, Gauhati

**My garden**

I have a garden in my house.  
It is full of flowers and trees.  
Every afternoon, some butterflies  
Visit my garden.  
I look at them and I feel very happy.  
My garden is the sweetest place for me.  
And it is very close to my heart.

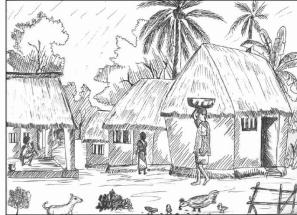
Pranjana Borgohain, Class-VI,  
Mother's Pride School, Chennai



Suvashi Barooah, Class-V,  
New Look Academy, Sivasagar



Ludina Chutia, Class-V,  
Mother's Pride School, Dhemaji



Maltryeve Krishna Handique, Class-VI,  
Delhi Public School, Nazira

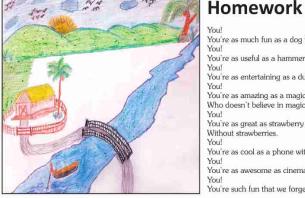
**A prayer**

Thank you, God, for the beautiful world.  
Thank you, God, for the green grass.  
Thank you, God, for the water so blue,  
Thank you, God, for Nature so pretty.  
But, I wonder –  
If the temperature rises  
And the ice melts...  
What will happen?  
God, O God, please shower Your blessings!  
Let the earth remain the same,  
As beautiful as it is...!

Aarohi Kalita, Class-III,  
Brahmaputra Valley English Academy, Borgata.



Jyotishman Sarma, Class-IV,  
Maharishi Vidya Mandir-IV, Barapagi, Guwahati



Krishnika Patowary, Class-III,  
St. Mary's H.S. School, Guwahati



Aadi Hobart Kherainkarpan, Class-IV,  
The British School of Bangkok, Bangkok

**Homework**

You!  
You're as much fun as a dog that doesn't play.  
You!  
You're as useful as a hammer made of tissues.  
You!  
You're as entertaining as a dull book.  
You!  
You're as amazing as a magician.  
Who doesn't believe in magic.  
You!  
You're as great as strawberry juice  
Without strawberries.  
You!  
You're as cool as a phone without WiFi.  
You!  
You're as awesome as cinema without a projector.  
You!  
You're such fun that we forgot to complete you.

Aditi Gogoi, Class-II,  
Maharishi Vidya Mandir-VI, Chandmari, Guwahati