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NEWS CAPSULE

Pak protest

NEW DELHI, March 20: Pakistan today summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner JP Singh to protest the alleged ceasefire violation on the Line of Control. "JP Singh told Pakistan that India did not violate the ceasefire and only responded to the unprovoked firing from the Pakistani side," sources said. – IANS

Railway Bills

NEW DELHI, March 20: The Lok Sabha today passed the Railway Appropriation Bills and supplementary demands for grants for this year, with the total proposed outlay for 2017-18 pegged at Rs. 1,23,100 crore. The Demands for Excess Grants 2013-14 and the Supplementary Demand for Grant 2016-17 were also passed. – PTI

Clerics return

NEW DELHI, March 20: The head priest of Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah Syed Asif Nizami and his Sufi cleric nephew Nazim Ali Nizami returned to the capital today, days after they went missing in Pakistan. They later called on External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj who had taken up their case with Islamabad. – PTI

Migrant workers

NEW DELHI, March 20: The Centre has issued on migrant workers, including those who migrated from the northeastern region. Minister of State for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatreya said in a Lok Sabha reply to a question by Ram Prasad Sharma. – SPT Correspondent

Belgium envoy

GUWAHATI, March 20: Belgium Ambassador to India Jan Luykx met Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today and discussed a gamut of issues pertaining to the cooperation between Assam and Belgium in the fields of bilateral trade and investment. – Staff Reporter

Mishap claims 2

GUWAHATI, March 20: Two persons were killed on the spot, in an accident on the Jagorhat-Morigaon road at Kumoi under Jagorhat police station around 5 pm today. Those dead have been identified as Zahid Ahmed of Morigaon and Fazal Ali of Jagorhat, police said. – Correspondent

The Assam Tribune on Internet
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Preparations going on for the five-day Namami Brahmaputra Festival that will be held from March 31, on the river bank in Guwahati on Monday. – UB Photos

Buddhist meet India invite to Dalai Lama irks China

BEIJING, March 20: China today warned India not to go against its "core concerns" to avoid disruption in bilateral ties after New Delhi invited the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama to an international Buddhist seminar in Bihar.

"In recent days, the Indian side, in total disregard of China's stern representation and strong opposition, insisted on inviting the 14th Dalai Lama to attend the international conference on Buddhism held by the Indian government," Foreign

Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters here.

"China is strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposed to it," she said.

"We urge the Indian side to clearly see the anti-China splitist nature of the Dalai group and honour its commitment on Tibet and related questions, respect China's core concerns and avoid China-India relations from being further disrupted and undermined," she said.

The 81-year-old Dalai Lama inaugurated an international seminar on Buddhism on

(See page 4)

Opp seeks rollback of bank withdrawal charges

NEW DELHI, March 20: Anurag Thakur BJP member in the Lok Sabha, today demanded a rollback of withdrawal charges proposed by certain banks and the three per cent tax levied by financial institutions on credit card payments, a demand which was raised by the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha.

Participating in a debate on supplementary demands for grants (general) and the appropriations Bills, Thakur said the decision to charge the customers for withdrawal of money does not augur well.

"Also, why should a three

per cent tax be levied on credit card payments. This is not a good idea," he said.

He also listed out the achievements of the Modi government and said that over one crore people have so far downloaded the BHIM app, the Aadhaar-based e-payment application. The demand to scrap the decision to penalise non-maintenance of minimum balance of 5,000 by the State Bank of India (SBI) was also made by the CPI(M) in the Upper House today, which was supported by the entire opposition.

India's leading private banks,

like HDFC, ICICI and Axis charge a minimum of Rs 150 for cash deposits and withdrawals at bank branches after four free transactions each month.

SBI, the country's largest public sector bank, has also announced charging Rs 10 rupees (excluding service tax) beyond five ATM withdrawals for its customers.

CPI(M) member KK Ragesh said in Rajya Sabha that the SBI has raised the monthly average balance to be maintained in saving bank accounts to Rs 5,000 from Rs 500 and will levy penalty for not adhering to it. – PTI

(See page 4)

Bid on Majuli as Heritage Site hits roadblock

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, March 20: In what could mean a serious setback to Assam Government's initiative to have Majuli river island declared as a UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site, the Union Tourism and Culture Ministry has said that there is no concept of declaring any island as a Heritage Site.

In a Lok Sabha reply to a question by Ramen Deka, Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism, Dr Mahesh Sharma said that there is no concept of declaring any island as a Heritage Site under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

The minister's response came at a time when the State Government led by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal had announced its commitment to have Majuli island being declared as a World Heritage Site.

As reported by this news-

paper, the UNESCO Country Office in New Delhi has taken up the issue of World Heritage Site (WHS) status for the Majuli island and it is eager to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Assam Government to prepare a flawless nomination dossier.

The Country Office of the UN agency has decided to engage UNESCO technical experts to examine the draft dossier for the island before giving it a final shape.

The dossiers for the WHS nomination were submitted to the World Heritage Centre (WHC) of the UNESCO on February 3. It will be scrutinised in June by the WHC.

Since 2013, the UNESCO Country Office has so far made three communications with the State Government for signing an MoU for preparing the nomination dossier of Majuli.

In 2012, the nomination dossier of the Majuli river island

(See page 4)

India, Pak hold talks on Indus Water

ISLAMABAD, March 20: Officials from India and Pakistan discussed problems relating to Indus Basin at the two-day Indus Water Commission meeting, which began here today after a gap of nearly two years.

The 10-member Indian delegation, led by Indus Water Commissioner PK Saxena, held a close door meeting with the Pakistani side which was headed by Mirza Asif Saeed.

During the meeting, Pakistan was expected to highlight concerns about the two Indian hydro projects being built on the rivers flowing to Pakistan.

They are 1,000 MW Pakul Dul on Chenab, 120 MW Miyar, located across Miyan Nalla which is a right bank main tributary of River Chenab, and the 43 MW Lower Kalnai hydro project on Lower Kalnai Nalla, a tributary of river Chenab. – PTI

Cabinet clears GST draft Bills

NEW DELHI, March 20: The Cabinet today cleared four legislations for implementing GST as the government sprints to meet the July 1 schedule to rollout the indirect tax reform which can add up to 2 per cent to India's economic growth.

The Bills on compensating states for loss of revenue from GST rollout in first five years as well as those enabling levy of the new tax on intra/inter-state movement of goods and services will be introduced in Parliament this week.

The approval of Parliament, coupled with a separate one by all State Assemblies, will complete the legislative process for the roll out of one-nation-one-tax regime by merging Central taxes like excise duty and service tax as well as state levies like VAT.

The GST Council has already approved four-tier tax slabs of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent plus an additional cess on

(See page 4)

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90 days paid leave for sexual harassment victims

NEW DELHI, March 20: The women central government employees, who have filed complaint of sexual harassment at the work place, will get 90 days paid leave during the pendency of the inquiry.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has recently amended the service rules in this regard.

Special leave up to a period of 90 days may be granted to an aggrieved woman government servant during the pendency of inquiry under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, the new rules said.

The leave granted to the

aggrieved woman employee "shall not be debited against the leave account," it said.

These leaves will be in addition to those already given to the central government employees.

The special leaves in this case will be given on the recommendation of the internal committee or the local committee, formed to look into such charges, the rules said.

The DoPT has issued Central Civil Services (Leave) Amendment Rules, 2017 to allow the new provision.

The move comes as there have been complaints of accused trying to influence or threaten victims of sexual harassment in a few cases. -PTI

Bring Mamata under CBI probe: CPM

KOLKATA, March 20: The CPI(M) today demanded that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee be brought under the purview of CBI investigations into Narada and Saradha scams.

The party also demanded that the Trinamool Congress leaders, allegedly involved in Narada scam, be arrested immediately.

CPI(M) state secretary Surya Kanta Mishra voiced

their own statements. It should immediately arrest the TMC leaders involved in Narada and Saradha scam. The Chief Minister should also be brought under the purview of the investigations as it is her

should be more proactive. It

Trinamool extending help"

to the BJP's form government in Manipur was a glaring example of a "covert pact" between the two parties.

"We hope the political match-fixing between Didibhai (Mamata) and Modibhai will not have an impact on the CBI investigation and the probe agency will be allowed to work freely," he said.

The Calcutta High Court had last week ordered a preliminary inquiry by the CBI into the Narada sting operation in which several Trinamool Congress leaders were purportedly seen accepting money. -PTI

party leaders and state cabinet ministers who are found to be involved in it," Mishra said at the rally.

He said, "Now, the TMC is

saying it was donation to the party fund. But when the (Narada) tapes first came out, it had said the tapes are fake and fabricated. That means

they are now contradicting

"We demand that the CBI

not ministers who are found to be involved in it," Mishra said at the rally.

He said, "Now, the TMC is

saying it was donation to the party fund. But when the (Narada) tapes first came out, it had said the tapes are fake and fabricated. That means

they are now contradicting

"We demand that the CBI



Union Minister for Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar releasing a book at the World Urdu Conference, in New Delhi on Sunday. -UNI



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Rawat in cleanliness event

DEHRADUN, March 20: Aiming to spread the 'Swachha Bharat' message, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat today participated in a cleanliness drive on the banks of river Ganga in Haridwar while his ministerial colleagues took part in similar events across the state.

Rawat, who along with cabinet minister Madai Kaushik participated in the drive at 'Har ki Pauri' ghat, said here that the purpose was to send a message of cleanliness and inspire people to associate with the Swachh Bharat campaign and 'Namami Gange' mission. Rawat is the national convener of the Namami Gange mission which aims to clean the river Ganga.

Senior minister Satpal Maharaj participated in an event in Satiuli, Prakash Pant in Doiwala, Harak Singh Rath in Swargashram, Yashpal Arya in Roorkee, Arvind Pandey in Kotdwara, Subodh Upadhyay in Rishikesh, Rekha Arya in Vikasnagar and Dhansingh Rawat in Mussoorie.

At har ki Pauri, Rawat took a vow to keep his locality, his town, his school and his office clean and also administered the pledge to the people who had gathered there.

The Chief Minister also visited 'Gokarn Dham' to seek the blessings of the saints and seers. - PTI

Showcasing legacies of all PMs at NMML mulled

NEW DELHI, March 20: The Centre is considering building a museum to showcase the lives and legacies of all prime ministers at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), lok Sabha was informed today.

Located in the majestic Teen Murti House, which was the official residence of the first prime minister, it has four major constituents which include, a Memorial Museum, a Library on modern India and Nehru Planetarium. -PTI

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Process of filling vacancies of HC judges on war footing: SC

NEW DELHI, March 20: The Supreme Court today said the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) for appointments to the higher judiciary has been cleared and the process of filling the vacancies in the high courts was proceeding on a 'war footing'.

A bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar, while disposing of PILs seeking filling of vacancies for reducing the huge pendency of cases, said progress has been made and the number of posts of judges in high courts would be increased by 25 per cent.

In the first stage, we will look into the filling up of vacancies of high court judges and then we will look into increasing the number of high court judges," the bench, also comprising Justices DY Chandrachud, said.

The bench said a committee of senior apex court judges has been formed for suggesting ways for reducing the pendency of cases up to three years.

It also gave liberty to Delhi High Court spokesperson and advocate Ashwini Upadhyaya to approach the apex court if he wanted to include the contentious clause

pending transfers with detailed reasons in three weeks.

The apex court had said confirmation of such judges in the high court gave rise to "speculation and misgivings". It had asked the Centre to return the recommendations to the collegium for reconsideration instead of "sitting over" those.

The apex court had on November 10, last year said it had not accepted the Centre's stand of rejecting the 43 names recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium for appointment as judges of the various high courts and most of the names have been sent back for reconsideration.

The Centre had told the court that it had cleared 34 names out of the 77 recommended by the collegium.

The court had at an earlier hearing said it would not tolerate "legitim in judges' appointment" and intervene to "fasten accountability as the justice delivery system is collapsing".

The bench had said if the government had reservation about any name, it could always come back to the collegium. - PTI

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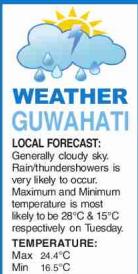
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**WEATHER GUWAHATI**

LOCAL FORECAST:
Cloudy with heavy sky.
Rainfall chances are very likely to occur.
Maximum and Minimum temperature is most likely to be 28°C & 15°C respectively on Tuesday.

TEMPERATURE:
Max 24.4°C
Min 16.5°C

USTM award today

GUWAHATI, March 20: On the occasion of World Social Work Day, the Department of Social Work, University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM) is going to present the Social Work Excellence Award 2017 tomorrow to Mrinalini Devi, an eminent social activist, author, poet, who has not only contributed for development of society, but also in the fields of Assamese culture and literature, and to Sister Bertha G Dikhar, the principal of Jyoti Srot School for the Visually Impaired, Shillong.

Sister Bertha has invented the Braille code in Khasi and was awarded the Padma Shri. — Staff Reporter

2-day Rongali Bihu programme

GUWAHATI, March 20: The Brihat Rukmini Nagal Rongali Bihu Sammelan will be celebrating the ensuing Bihu festival on April 15 and 16 with an elaborate programme.

The proceedings will begin with the hoisting of 34 flags by 34 senior citizens, marking the 34th year of the Samelan. Noted litterateur Eli Ahmed will release the souvenir. The evening will feature cultural programmes including Husori, Jeng Bihu and Bihu Rani contests, besides items by invited artists. — Staff Reporter

World Sparrow Day celebrated

**STAFF REPORTER**

GUWAHATI, March 20: Help Earth, in association with the Kamrup (Metro) district administration celebrated World Sparrow Day today.

On the occasion, the need for conserving urban biodiversity was highlighted with emphasis on birds.

With rapid deforestation, birds are fast losing their home, and with RCC buildings replacing traditional Assam-type houses, sparrows and other birds are losing those nooks and corners provided by Assam-type houses.

Help Earth, as part of its initiative to install bird boxes in different parts of the city, installed a number of bird boxes in the Dighalipukhuri area to draw public attention, especially youths towards the cause.

The initiative was formally inaugurated by Dr M Angamuthu, Deputy Commissioner,

er, Kamrup (Metro).

In his address, Dr Angamuthu stressed the need for conservation of urban biodiversity and encouraged the citizens to take steps to protect and conserve plants and animals around them.

Jayaditya Purkayasha, general secretary of Help Earth said that Guwahati has the potential to become a model city for India in terms of urban biodiversity conservation with its wide range of habitat types along with its geographic position, and that people's involvement and awareness holds the key to attaining that feat.

"Thus, until we voluntarily provide living space to our feathered neighbours, their stay in our locality would be very short-lived. Thus, Help Earth came out with the innovative idea of installing bird boxes in different parts of the city," he said.

The initiative was formally inaugurated by Dr M Angamuthu, Deputy Commissioner,

Workshop on Bhupenda's songs

GUWAHATI, March 20: The Sudhakanta Dr Bhupen Hazarika Society for Harmony (Sudhakanta Dr Bhupen Hazarika Society for Harmony) is organising a workshop on the music maestro's songs titled Sudhakanta Geetor Akhara Sibir at the Swami Nyas Bhawan on April 1 and 2.

Noted artist Rasminda Goswami will conduct the event, which will be held from 2 pm to 6 pm on April 1 and from 10 am to 2 pm on April 2. — Staff Reporter

Blood donation camp held

GUWAHATI, March 20: Guwahati Gateway Round Table 240 organised a blood donation camp at the Mawari Hospital and Research Centre, Bokil Bank, Altargon here on Sunday. A total of 52 units of blood were donated by club members, relatives and well-wishers for the noble cause. — Staff Reporter

Reshuffle in police deptt

GUWAHATI, March 20: The home department today effected a major reshuffle in the police machinery, transferring and giving new posting to ten SP rank officers.

Gaurav Upadhyay will be the new SP of Karimganj, while PR Kar will replace him as SP Vigilance and Anti Corruption (II). 9th APBn Commandant V Sivaprasad Ganjala has been posted as SP Keri Anglong in place of Debjit Deuri, who has been posted as Commandant, 24th AP (IR) Bn.

DCP (Admin) Arbinda Kalita has been transferred as SP, SB (G) in place of Diganta Choudhury, who will take over as the new SP of Biswanath. Birendra Singh has been posted as DCP (Admin). Prasanta Saikia has been posted as SP CM Security, while Subashini Sankaran has been posted as SP SB (Security) in place of Bir Bikram Gogoi, who has been transferred as Commandant of 23rd AP(R) Bn. — Staff Reporter

Interim bail granted

GUWAHATI, March 20: Well-known ayurvedic practitioner Prabakar Pathak was today granted pre-arrest interim bail by the Gauhati High Court.

The police had asked Pathak to appear before them after his wife lodged a case against him with the Sonapur Police Station alleging harassment.

The Court of Justice Runu Kumar Phukan, after considering the submissions made by defence lawyer Bijon Kumar Majhaj, granted the interim pre-arrest bail with some riders.

The State government's counsel Tapash Mishra had opposed granting of bail to the accused. The next date of hearing has been fixed on April 4 when the matter is expected to be disposed of. — Staff Reporter

State Govt to support farmers in developing beekeeping

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, March 20: A two-day State level seminar on the theme 'Awareness, motivation and technology Transfer in Beekeeping', commenced in the auditorium of the College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara here today.

The event is being organised jointly by the Department of Horticulture and Food Processing and the Akhil Bharatiya Vikas Sansthan, in collaboration with the National Bee Board under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture.

The seminar was inaugurated by KK Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Department and Agricultural Production Commissioner of the Government of Assam.

In his address, Mittal said that the State government would extend all possible support to the farmers concerned for expansion of beekeeping.

He appealed to the farmers of Assam to come forward and take up beekeeping for doubling their income.



Mowsam Hazarika, Assistant Director of Agriculture conducted the open session. Hazarika said that there are around 25,000 bee species in the world.

"Bees provide important natural products and services. They pollinate flowers and therefore play an important part in food production. Most plants are totally dependent on certain types of bees for reproduction. It is also for this reason that com-

mercial pollination has begun to take shape in the larger agricultural industry," he said.

He added that of all the bee species, the honeybee is the most economically valuable as it is able to focus on particular plants at a time.

"It does not pollinate randomly because it targets particular plant species in every outing. A single honeybee can pollinate thousands of flowers daily. The bee as a pollinator, supports

a number of ecosystem services including food chain development without which a lot of plants would off."

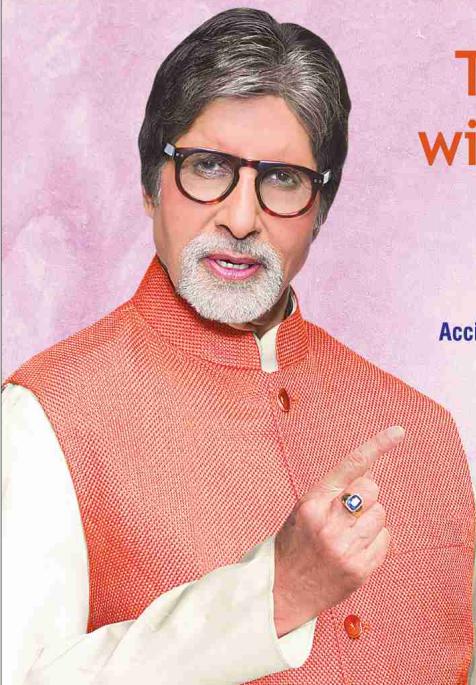
Hazarika said.

Several dignitaries including Prabin Hazarika, Director of Horticulture and Food Processing; Manjot Talukdar, Joint Director of Agriculture and Chief Executive Officer of Assam Small Farmers Agri Business Consortium; Dr Sarat Saikia, Chief Scientist of the Horticultural Research Station; Arun Mitra, progressive beekeeper; Lila Dutta, progressive beekeeper; Bakul Chandra Saikia, Senior ADO and Bipul Das, Senior ADO, attended the seminar and threw light on different aspects of beekeeping.

Various topics including beekeeping industry, scientific beekeeping, bee product, cropping pattern for beekeeping, methodology of beekeeping, economics of beekeeping, schematic support to beekeeper, among other issues, were covered in the seminar.

About 250 participants from different districts of Assam attended the event.

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MESSAGE FOR TODAY

A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at.

— BRUCE LEE

The Assam Tribune

Manipur impasse

Just five days into office, the BJP-led coalition Government in Manipur has achieved a significant breakthrough by ending the four-month-long economic blockade on the Imphal-Dimapur and Imphal-Silchar highways. The prolonged impasse that crippled life in Manipur was broken when the new Government managed to convince the agitating United Naga Council (UNC) that its grievances would be addressed. The tripartite meet involved the State Government, the UNC and the Centre, and the agreement acknowledged that the creation of the four new districts by the former Congress Government was done without consulting the stakeholders even though the MoUs concerned were specific about that. With the suspension of the economic blockade, the gridlock that had Manipur paralysed should ease. Prolonged blockades have been a most disturbing trend in the State, with the common people invariably bearing its brunt. Prices of essential commodities skyrocketed, as stocks of essential commodities including food-stuff and life-saving drugs dried up during the impasse. The task before the State Government and the Centre is to take this beginning of normalcy to a logical conclusion by inspiring confidence among the warring tribal factions – something that has been holding the entire population to ransom. Both the Centre and the Manipur Government's handling of the situation has been shoddy over the years, with a long-term strategy to quell the agitations and put the remote State on the fast track growth remaining conspicuous by absence. Irrespective of the merits of the grievances of the agitators, any protest that chokes the lifelines of the State and brings people's lives to a grinding halt is totally unacceptable.

Disturbingly, the situation in Manipur remains one of perpetual turmoil, thanks to warring tribal groups and ineffective governments. With violent agitations becoming a routine, the resultant impasse – apart from its huge economic cost – is widening the ethnic divide between the Manipuris in the valley and the Nagas living in the hilly areas of the State. A way out would be possible only when the sadder elements within the groups recognize the need for peaceful coexistence and hammer out a solution that is mutually acceptable. Persisting with adamant stances would only serve to worsen the situation in which the cause of the State and its people would be the biggest casualty. While any alteration of the State's existing boundaries – a long-standing demand of the NSCN (IM) – would never be acceptable for the Manipuris, and justifiably so, the demand for autonomy in the Naga-inhabited areas also merits consideration. A multi-ethnic region like the North-east can prosper only when there is room for all its constituents to uphold their identity. It has also to be ensured that any aggressive assertion on the part of one does not result in denial for another. The interests of a pluralistic society like the North-east would be best served by avoiding any exclusivist agenda.

Temporary reprieve

The nation can heave a sigh of relief at the suspension of agitation by the All India Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti, in particular its call to the community to march to Delhi and gherao Parliament on March 20. It may be recalled that in February last year, agitating Jats had created an almost war-like situation, particularly in Haryana, through resorting to large-scale arson and violence. Houses, malls and public and private vehicles were torched by rampaging mobs, more than 25 Haryana Roadways buses were burnt and railway stations, a police station and several government buildings were thoroughly gutted. Road communication was cut off with States like Punjab and Himachal Pradesh; agitators were reported to have used firearms against the forces of law and order, with 35 of them being killed in violent clashes. Very few protests in free India had witnessed such widespread destruction of public property, and curfew had to be clamped down on a number of cities. No wonder that, when the Sangharsh Samiti announced its renewed agitation, there was great concern not only in Haryana, but also in neighbouring States such as Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. To its credit the Haryana Government, which had shown total paralysis during the last round of agitation, was better prepared this time. It had imposed Section 144, banned the plying of tractor-trolleys, suspended internet services and even called in the Army.

Sensibly, the Manohar Lal Khattar State Government, while displaying the stick, also held out a carrot in the shape of concessions. The Chief Minister, who had been keeping up a dialogue with the Jat leaders since the renewal of the agitation in late January, has agreed to introduce reservation for the community in education and government after ongoing legal disputes were settled, as also to look favourably at demands such as the release of those arrested in last year's protests. Other factors too, of course, had ensured that the political leverage wielded this time by the agitation leaders was less than it had been on the previous occasion. For instance, Jats in the recently-concluded UP elections had voted overwhelmingly for the BJP, thereby revealing that fissures were developing within the community, and there was enormous pressure on the Haryana leaders not to embark on a path of confrontation with the BJP State Government. However, it is not clear whether the concessions offered by the Government include settlement of the Jat demand that they be included in the Other Backward Castes category. This demand has been at the focal point of legal questions as to whether a reasonably prosperous community like the Jat is constitutionally entitled to the OBC tag. If judicial scrutiny deems otherwise, it is most whether the agitation leaders will settle for anything less, in which case the current suspension might be merely a temporary reprieve.

Gender in trans-boundary water governance

■ Arundhati Deka, Vishaka Gulati, Anamika Barua

The Yarlung-Tsango-Brahmaputra-Jamuna river system is a major branch of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna Basin in South Asia. It is a huge source of economic growth, owing to its vast hydropower potential and livelihood resources and is a location of abundant biodiversity. The trans-boundary river, the Brahmaputra, is considered to be critical, given the regional geopolitical difference among the riparian nations of China, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The Brahmaputra is the only river in India with a male identity, probably because the vastness of the river identifies with the still persisting patriarchy in our nation. Despite possessing a rich heritage and being one of the frontier rivers of the region, it has never attained official respect, while still being suffused with diverse challenges within the basin.

In case of trans-boundary water management (TWM), there is a dearth of incorporation of gender issues at both formal and informal levels. Sometime it is attributed to the ideology of patriarchy for women still being excluded from participating in the management of the water resources. The deliberations organized are mostly 'closed discussions' involving only the technical, economic and political elite. Within the technical delegates, the number of women representatives is relatively low as his-toric ally this sector has been considered to be masculine. The local communities, especially women, are exonerated from such discourses because of which there is an under-representation of their concerns and issues. It has been observed that in any trans-boundary-related dialogue or

discussion, emphasis is laid on the number of women represented in the discussions, rather than empowering them to be vocal about their opinion. It is not possible to change the rules of the game by merely allowing women or marginalized communities to be a part of the decision-making process. It is important to first enhance their capacity by familiarizing them about the various laws, policies, agreements and strategies that exist at the national and international level but never get implemented at the local level. Although there is a growing recognition of the importance of incorporation of gender issues, crucial international laws are still silent on their incorporation in TWM. So it can be expected that the institutions established on these principles will follow the suit and be impervious to gender concerns.

For multi-stakeholders, including women, to share their concerns related to the river will require a common platform among the riparian regions. Keeping this in mind, the South Asia Consortium for Interdisciplinary Water Resources Studies (SaciWATERs) along with its partners in 2013 initiated the 'Transnational Policy Dialogue for Improved Water Governance of the Brahmaputra River'. Efforts have been made to clearly strategize the ways to involve multi-stakeholders (like academics, CSOs, NGOs, bureaucrats, media) into this process. One of the major objectives of this phase is to build the capacity of the

local communities of the Brahmaputra basin, through sharing of knowledge and information, especially women groups, to participate in the discussions and the decision-making processes effectively. Also, to comprehend the existing gender roles, narratives will be documented from the women of the region to acknowledge their perspective on the river. Though gender doesn't just imply women, they have been put on the forefront as their concerns tend to

correspondingly, the policies also tend to have a diverse impact, depending on the socio-cultural, geographical, economic and political settings. Gender conventions and values tend to be defined on the basis of the use, interests, access to and control of natural resources, as women and men usually benefit varyingly and therefore also make decisions differently.

Gender conventions and values tend to be defined on the basis of the use, interests, access to, and control of natural resources, as women and men usually benefit varyingly and therefore also make decisions differently.

training courses or other events on gender sensitivity are organized for all levels of staff in relevant line agencies. National Mekong Committees and the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS).

The NBI through advocacy, research, documentation and dissemination of information has made headway in the integration of gender issues into its development programmes and projects. Subsidiary Action Programmes (SAPs) under the NBI recognized and developed investment projects for the basin countries by taking into consideration the gender issues along with other concerns. These projects are scrutinized according to the gender guidelines and action plans. Instead of having 'women specific' activities, they blend the women issues with in these investment projects. For example, in case of the Kagera watershed management project, it is being ensured that the women are given equal opportunities in decision making process and the interventions being devised are addressing the gender concerns.

Adoption of gender sensitive policies will ensure sustainable development of the river basin. Learning from the existing policies can aid in constructing a gender inclusive policy framework for the Brahmaputra river. Since the river does not have a basin level institution yet, the opportunity still persists to construct a cooperative and strong institute which incorporates a gender strategic framework, and also addresses the other existing gaps within the basin. This will lead to an optimum integrated development of water and related resources, and enhance the quality of life among the riparian populace.

Maternity Benefit Act 2016: the exclusions

■ Dr Joanna Mahjebeen

Since Independence, the Indian state had introduced a number of laws and policies which have attempted to bring changes in the status and position of women to establish gender equality. While some of these have been transformative, a vast majority of the laws further entrench patriarchy and institutionalize the traditional gender roles. In a similar effort to realize gender equality in reconciling work and child care, the Indian Parliament recently passed the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2016. The most significant changes brought by the amendment are extension of maternity leave for women in the organized sector from 12 weeks to 26 weeks excluding commissioning mothers and adoptive mothers who can avail only 12 weeks leave, mandatory crèche facilities for every establishment with more than 50 employees, nursing breaks between work and provision of working from home facilities for a new mother. While the new initiatives have brought respite to many working women, certain provisions in the Act raise concern and demand a closer scrutiny. This is necessary to analyse the actual intent and purpose of the Act.

The second point of concern is that the Act has made absolutely no

provision for paternity leave. The virtually 'women only' applicability of the leave is very essentialist and is elitist in nature. The benefits under it are available only to about 5% of women engaged in the organized sector. The vast majority of the Indian women employed in the unorganized sector as farmers, contractual workers, casual workers, daily wage earners, self-employed women and domestic workers who are also poor, illiterate and the most exploited are excluded. Moreover, liberalization and the subsequent internalization and feminization of labour within the organized sectors in the past two decades has left many educated, capable women in sectors like banking, education and health without the coverage of social security measures. There is nothing under the Act which would ensure benefits like fair remuneration, safe work environment or job security to working mothers in these situations. If the majority stands excluded in the Act, there is hardly any reason to cheer its passage because even its full implementation cannot be said to be ensuring equal opportunity at work or creating gender-friendly workplaces for women.

Thirdly, the Act contributes to making workplaces more unsuitable for women. With the new provisions in place, the employers would find more reasons to hire lesser women for fear of losing more work days. Similar leave provisions not being applicable for men also means weakening of the argument of equal pay for equal work. The cumulative impact of such negligence is upon the women, who, unable to deal with the work-life balance, are forced to take a break from work or quit work altogether. A contrast here is seen in countries with more flexible and generous parental leave policies like Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Iceland, Norway and Estonia where they not only have maternity and paternity leave but also split parental leave for both parents who take turns in caring for their children.

The fourth area of concern is that

while determining eligibility for leave, the Act distinguishes between a biological mother and an adoptive or commissioning mother where the latter are entitled to leave only for a period of 12 weeks from the date the child is handed over to them.

Do adopted babies or babies born through a surrogate mother require less bonding time and care? Parents under these circumstances, being under an emotional stress already, need more time to adjust to the new changes in their lives. Moreover, if nursing the new born is the sole criterion for granting leave, then how does one account for situations where a biological mother chooses not to nurse the child or for various medical reasons is unable to do so. Further, although small powers are preferable, it is not justified to deny benefits to women with a third child. The framers have to be conscious of the fact that in India, where patri-

archy prevails, factors like son preference, low contraception use, low level of education are more important than a woman's decision in determining family size.

Coupling to the infrastructural aspects, though the mandatory provision of creche facilities has been incorporated, the Act is silent on the minimum standard of these creches or the budgetary allocation for the establishment and maintenance of the same. A majority of the existing creches in most of the institutions does not maintain the basic standards of nutrition, hygiene, safety and security or trained personnel for proper child care. Many mothers would shy away from keeping their children in such 'hazardous' care centres. Other important issues relating to pregnancy like antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care, hospitalization care or coverage of medical expenses do not find place in the Act.

If the goal of maternity leave is to promote the health of the mother and child, facilitate parent-child bonding and provide economic security, then the Act in its present form is grossly inadequate. Provision for paternity leave, maternal benefits to women in the informal sectors and to commissioning and adoptive mothers, adequate infrastructure and budgetary component must be included.

Letters to the EDITOR

Online employment exchange registration

examination for the post of Assistant Engineer under the PHE Department. The Commission had uploaded the answer keys on its website on March 27, 2017, inviting objections, if any, and the Commission has received a number of objections from many aspiring candidates. All such objections will be sent to the paper setters for their comments. Once the Commission receives the response from the paper setters, the same will be uploaded in the APSC's website which will be treated as the final answer keys.

This is the procedure which is scrupulously followed by the APSC. Nevertheless, the APSC will make its utmost endeavour to avoid such mistakes in future. Yours etc., PRO TO APSCL, Guwahati

Delayed result

Sir, — Through the column of your esteemed daily, I want to bring to the notice of the authority concerned that an interview was conducted for the post of junior assistant on February 26, 2016 in the office of the Assam Minorities Development Board. It has been more than a year, but the result has not been declared yet. I, therefore,

would like to request the authority concerned Board to declare the result of the interview at the earliest. Yours etc., MANIN HAZARIKA, Guwahati

Tocklai field trials

Sir, — Tocklai, under the Tea Research Association (TRA), made NPK recommendation for the entire NE India tea areas sometime in the early part of the 1990s after carrying out region specific field trials for 2-3 pruning cycles. It is now about 30 years that the same recommendations are in vogue. A lot of soil and climatic changes have taken place since then to date.

Therefore, it is high time (though belated) to initiate again the NPK field trials on regional basis including sulphur and other major and minor nutrients. These trials will take another about 10 years to complete for the new recommendation to come out. It means the new recommendation will be available to the tea industry after 40 years of the earlier recommendation. I, therefore, request the authorities concerned to look into the matter seriously for the benefit of the industry. Yours etc., KK GOHAIN, Jorhat.

Police signboards

Sir, — I would like to bring to the notice of the Director General of Assam Police as well as the State Home Department, regarding the

signboards displayed in the police stations and other offices of the Police Department. It has been observed that a small part in the middle of the signboard contains the name of the police station/office, whereas both the sides are covered with advertisements of private companies such as cement, mobile, etc. It is not clear whether the Police Department has done this due to paucity of fund to display a signboard on its own or it has been done as a revenue collection initiative. However, it is not desired that the Police Department shows these sponsorship because it may lead to the apprehension in the mind of the public that in case of any wrongdoing by any of the sponsoring company, the Police Department might not be able to act in an unbiased manner. I urge upon the Police Department to look into the matter and avoid installing signboards with sponsorships and uphold the true image of a law-enforcing authority. Yours etc., A CONCERNED CITIZEN.

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



Congress candidate for Dhemaji by-election Babul Sonowal with supporters, at Dhemaji on Sunday - UB Photos

Main gate of Joypur rain forest opened

ANN Service

NAMRUP, March 20: At a time when the Government is keen to make an effort to strengthen the tea industry, labour absenteeism has emerged as a major hurdle affecting tea productivity in south Assam.

'Labour absenteeism hitting tea industry in Barak Valley'

CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, March 20: At a time when the Government is keen to make an effort to strengthen the tea industry, labour absenteeism has emerged as a major hurdle affecting tea productivity in south Assam.

"Weekend labour absenteeism has touched around 50 per cent at present while mid-week absenteeism averages around 20 per cent," said Ishwar Bhui Ubhadrabhai, chairman of Surma Valley branch of the Indian Tea Association (ITA).

In his address at the 116th annual general meeting of the SVBITA, Ubhadrabhai said that all calculations and efforts for obtaining better prices of tea are almost at a dead end since most tea gardens here have reported lack of manpower for skiving. In his words, the upper

levels of price obtained for Barak Valley has improved by at least 30 per cent in the past few years. But he was quick to mention that production in 2016 has seen a reversal. "Harvesting leaf on a seven to nine day round is hindered mainly by labour absenteeism. However, every manager in Barak Valley and even in Tripura has tried his best to improve the quality as far as possible by the market with the hope of obtaining better prices," the chairman mentioned.

Nayantara Paul Choudhury, additional vice-chairperson of ITA at Kolkata said that production of tea in Assam has been in line with an all-india increase at 1239 million kg in 2016. She mentioned the steep challenge posed by demonetisation of the high currency notes which had restricted withdrawals for disbursing wages of the labourers. "We thank the Chief Min-

Namami Brahmaputra festival at Dhubri

CORRESPONDENT

GAURIPUR, March 20: The Namami Brahmaputra festival will be held in the historic PC Barun playground and Joga-mayaghat at Dhubri with a five-day colourful programme from March 31.

On March 31, the programme will start with a cultural procession and will be followed by a chorus. The festival, to be held for the first time at Dhubri, will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. *Brahmaputra*, the sownam will be released by Dhruv Choudhury. Deputy Commissioner on April 1 besides a chorus competition among the college students, an exhibition on ethnic clothes, food items, folk art materials, printing will also be held. An attractive boat race has also been arranged. On April 2, traditional sports will be held and a symposium and lecture programme have also been fixed. An interesting boat journey from Chandraghat to Dhubri is also scheduled to be held on the occasion.

On April 3, traditional sports, literary

programme, floating of lamps and a cultural function have also been arranged. On the last day of the festival, *thiyu naum*, song on *Padma Puran* and a cultural evening with varieties of cultural items will be held.

Hanuman Jayanti silver jubilee: The Hanuman Jayanti Mahotsav Samiti, Gauripur will celebrate the silver jubilee celebration of Hanuman Jayanti with a two-day colourful programme from April 10 next.

In a press release, the Mahotsav Samiti informed that on April 10 puja rituals will be performed on the premises of Narasingha temple and will be followed by uninterrupted reading of the *Ramayana* and songs based on the *Sundarkar*. The songs of the *Ramayana* will be sung by famous singer Akash Daghis and in the evening Bhajan-Kirtan will be performed by Parichay Daghis of Jharkhand.

On April 11, the closing ceremony of reading of the *Ramayana* will be held and thereafter, *Puja* and *homayana* will also be performed. *Mahabandara* will start from 12 noon. An attractive cultural pro-

cession will also be brought out with a chariot where live 'Ram-Sita' and 'Hanuman' will move throughout the streets of the town sitting on the chariot followed by band parties and deities.

Awareness programme: Under the auspices of Field Publicity Deptt, Govt of India, a day-long programme was organised on the premises of Sanchardev Sishu Niketan, Gauripur recently on the subject of child health and mother care. On the occasion, a big rally was brought out where students, teachers, Asha workers and general public took part.

In the afternoon, an awareness meeting was held which was presided over by Ambu Nath Sharma, a senior citizen of the area. Sarangapani Bora, Field publicity officer explained the purpose of the meeting. Ashok Chakrabarty, retired principal, PC Institution, Gauripur was the chief guest while Prasanta Kr Dutta, Media Expert NHM Baksa, Rubul Das, Media Expert NHM, Dhubri and Dipika Das Sarkar, 'Mukhlyika Sevika', Agomoni Block took part as resource persons.

Early repair of KR, Mekenzzi roads in Kalaigaon demanded

CORRESPONDENT

KALAIAGON, March 20: The Kalaigaon-Ranganmati road (old Mekenzzi road), which was the oldest PWD road in undivided Darrang district was built by British nearly 150 years ago in 1860.

The road links Kalaigaon town from Kalaigaon police station point to the National Highway 15 at Aoulachouka near Mangaldai. A decade back, the road was divided in two parts.

The portion from Ranganmati Ghat to Kalaigaon was repaired by PWD while the remaining part remained as Mekenzzi Road. It may be mentioned here that the road was surveyed and constructed by British engineer Mekenzzi.

The present Mekenzzi road links Kalaigaon town with Paneri, Bengbari, Hatigarh and most of the tea gardens situated in northern parts of Udalguri district. The present KR

Road once was the only link from Ranganmati ghat near Brahmaputra river to tea gardens situated in northern area of the present day Udalguri district. Although under the supervision of State PWD, the condition of both the Mekenzzi and KR roads are now pathetic that people hardly walk on it, not to speak of plying of vehicular traffic.

The Mekenzzi road, with a distance of 17 km from Kalaigaon town to Bengbari, has not been repaired for 12 years. In 2004, the PWD repaired the road with World Bank funding. But the repair was of very poor standard and hence, easily eroded by floodwaters the same year. Since then not even a single piece of stone has been thrown on this road. The road is a lifeline to the villagers of nearly 80 villages. But the poor road condition has posed a lot of problems for the farmers to send their products to markets.

Moreover, the dilapidated state of the KR Road in the heart of Kalaigaon town is beyond description. Huge potholes on the road from Kalaigaon police station point to Samalabari LP School make vehicular traffic nearly impossible. Encroachment on the pavements have added woes to the traveller. Besides, the residents have blocked all the water outlets while constructing new houses. The matter has not been taken seriously by the PWD or the civil administration of Udalguri district. People of Kalaigaon have been demanding early repair of the road. But their demand has not been taken seriously by the authority concerned. Neither the Assam Government nor the BTC authority has the time to take any initiative. Various organisations of Kalaigaon have requested the BTC authority for the immediate repair of KR Road and Mekenzzi Road.



A workshop on creative literature in progress among students in International Book Fair, Literary Festival and trade fair held at Bijni, in Chirang district on Sunday - UB Photos

Debendra Nath Das: a tribute



My most beloved and respectable *Bordaite*, Debendra Nath Das left us for his heavenly abode on March 11, leaving behind three daughters and two sons at the age of 87 at Shillong, Rupjyoti. His wife Late Parul Das predeceased him.

Born to Late Kanta Ram Das and Kusum Das of Roha, Nagaon, he was the second son of a well-known Forest Range Officer on 28/09/1928. After successfully completing his education, he joined the Civil Service in 1949. He served both the Government of Assam and the NEFA. A distinguished Administrative Officer, he worked a lot for the uplift of the people of NEFA and was actively associated with its freedom struggle in 1962 and later ex-

tended his co-operation in the war of Bangladesh and India and also acted as a peace negotiator.

For his excellency in the field of Gold Medal by the Governor of Assam Vishnu Sahay in 1967.

Not only in the field of administration, Debendra was also a distinguished educationist who had actively worked for the uplift of the people of Assam, and published a number of articles and books. He was a regular writer of the magazine of the Shillong Assamese Ladies Welfare Club. He was also a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and actively participated in the India's Freedom Movement at a very tender age.

A prominent social worker, he was associated with different social organisations

PMAY scheme performance reviewed in Lakhimpur

CORRESPONDENT

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, March 20: MGVK Bhuyan, the Additional Chief Secretary of Assam held talks with Lakhimpur Deputy Commissioner Barun Bhuyan and his Sub Inspector and Charadeep commissioners from Matmomati and the Brahmaputra in Dhalukhambra subdivision on Saturday.

The Additional Chief Secretary, who also holds the charge of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of Assam discussed matters related to rural development, particularly the PMAY housing schemes in various rural developmental blocks of the state.

He said that the three blocks in Lakhimpur district - Bihupur, Telai and Boognath had been faring very poorly in implementing the PMAY housing schemes in the year 2012-13 and 2014-15. The Additional Secretary, Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of Assam, Kargeswar Pegu was also present in that meeting. Pegu announced that 7000 houses were yet to be completed under the PMAY scheme in Lakhimpur district and asked the concerned BDOs to complete the works by March 31.

Speaking at the meeting, the Additional Chief Secretary Bhuyan urged the BDOs to work with sincerity or fact action for non-performance. He asked them not to enlist any D-Voter persons as the beneficiaries of

the PMAY scheme in rural development blocks. The meeting was also attended by SIRD Director Zakir Hussain, Bipul Kumar Das, Project Director, DRDA, Lakhimpur, SDG, Dhalukhambra Devisahib Baijishi, EAC, Dhalukhambra David Borah and CEM, Lakhimpur ZPC Pradeep Doley.

Teachers found absent: The Lakhimpur Deputy Commissioner Barun Bhuyan conducted a surprise visit to a school on Saturday and found it to be closed as its teachers were absent. The DC visited Lathow MV School in Nowbocha, Lakhimpur on that day at 12 noon and found the school was closed. He learnt from the local public that there were only ten to twelve students enrolled in that school and attendance of teachers were not regular. On hearing of the visit by the Deputy Commissioner, three-four teachers came back to the school and told him that the school was closed early that day in order to bring text books from the Block Elementary Education Officer (BEEO)'s office in Nowbocha.

The Deputy Commissioner's verification of the register of the school found that only eight students were enrolled in the Roll Book from Class I to Class VII though it was an Middle Vernacular (MV) school. Bhuyan also found that the school has eight teachers in the Teachers' Attendance Register but the local public reported that only some teachers were

Nareswar Baruah



My bhinder, Nareswar Baruah, a freedom fighter and social worker passed away on March 11 at the GNRC Hospital, Silmule due to old age ailments.

Born at Jamani village under Behali mouza of Biswanath district in 1928, he joined the freedom movement at a very early age for which he had to sacrifice two years of his school life. Later, he completed his matriculation in 1950 from

Chait High School, the only high school during those days from Jamuguri to Howajgan. Then he got admitted to Berry White Medical School at Dibrugarh from where he obtained Diploma in Pharmacology.

After serving for a few years at Dibrugarh, he joined Halem Tea Garden in 1961. He was actively associated with socio-cultural activities of the area. He served as the secretary of Halem ME School and Shahid Mukunda Kakoti High School. He was a member of the central

committee of Assam Chah Karmachari Sangha of East Buru Circle and the president of its Halem unit.

After retirement from service, he settled at Madhupur village of Biswanath Chariali and was associated with various social activities. He was always disciplined, punctual and of amiable disposition. He left behind his wife, one son, five daughters, five son-in-laws, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

- Dr Siba Prasad Bora

The BEEO also had the information from the public, whose versions were video taped, that two teachers namely Tikendrajit Baruah and Chandraprova Phukan regularly remain absent from school. The absent teachers used to sign their attendance through manipulation, the DC found in that visit to Lathow MV School. On that day both the teachers were found absent from their regular school duties as evident from the Teachers' Attendance Register.

The BEEO, Nowbocha, Arup Jyoti Bhuyan told the DC that due to the irregularity and indiscipline of these teachers, guardians of the locality had been refusing to send their children to Lathow MV School. The BEEO also told him that the matter had already been reported to the District Elementary Education Officer (DEEO), Lakhimpur for necessary action. After that, considering the seriousness of the matter and criminal negligence of the school teachers towards the education of the students of a Government, MV School, DC Barun Bhuyan asked the DEEO to suspend immediately the two teachers, namely Tikendrajit Baruah and Chandraprova Phukan who were reportedly found not attending the school regularly. Moreover, the DC also directed the DEEO to adjust the surplus teachers of Lathow MV School to some other schools where there is dearth of teachers.

Strikes pound east Damascus after rebel assault

BEIRUT, March 20: Syrian warplanes hammered opposition-held neighbourhoods of Damascus today after regime forces pushed back a surprise assault that saw rebels try to fight their way into the city centre.

Rebels and allied jihadists, led by former Al-Qaeda affiliate Feth al-Sham Front, launched an attack early yesterday on government positions in east Damascus, initially scoring key gains.

But forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad drove them back by nightfall and began a fierce bombing campaign this morning.

"There have been intense strikes since dawn on opposition-held positions in Jobar from which the offensive was launched," said Rami Abdileh Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"The government and allied forces have retaken the initiative and are striking the groups that launched yesterday's assault," he added.

Abdel Rahman said it was unclear whether regime forces or their Russian allies were carrying out Monday's raids on Jobar.

Control of Jobar – which has been a battleground for more than two years – is divided between rebels and allied jihadists on one side, and government forces on the other. Yesterday, opposition fighters seized several buildings in Jobar before advancing into the neighbouring Abbasid Square area – the first time in two years that the opposition had advanced so close to the capital's centre.

The clashes left dead at least 26 regime forces and 21 rebels and jihadists, Abdel Rahman said, but he did not have an immediate toll for Monday morning's air strikes. Sniper fire and air strikes were heard across the city on Sunday as civilians crowded inside their homes and schools announced they would close because of the violence. – AFP

20 students die in freak tree mishap

ACCRA, March 20: Twenty students have died after trees fell on them while swimming in a river during a storm in Ghana, emergency officials said.

Ghana National Fire Service spokesman Prince Billy Anaglate said the "unusual incident" happened yesterday afternoon, when a group of high school students were swimming at the Kintampo waterfalls, a popular tourist destination in the Brong-Ahafo region.

Anaglate told AFP that a brewing storm caused trees to topple and fall on the teenagers while they were in the water.

"They were swimming in the river where there was a storm, a windy atmosphere that had uprooted some of the trees and they had fallen on some of them – those who were apparently swimming," Anaglate said.

18 students died at the scene while two others died in hospital, Anaglate said, adding that 11 more were receiving treatment, including one of the school administrators in charge of the trip.

"We extend our condolences to the families of the dead and pray for the injured," said the country's tourism minister Catherine Abelemeh Afeiku in a statement.

Accidents ranging from deaths caused by mass flooding to petrol tanker explosions happen sporadically in Ghana because of lax regulations and disregard for rules. – AFP

Catholic priest of Indian origin stabbed in Aus

MELBOURNE, March 20: In an apparent racist attack, a Catholic priest of Indian heritage was stabbed in the neck at a church in Melbourne by a man who called him unqualified to say mass as he was an Indian.

A man armed with a knife approached Tony Kalathoor Matthew, 48, in the church foyer moments before the Indian-language mass at St Matthew's Parish in Fawkner yesterday.

It's believed that the offender told the priest that because he was Indian, he must be a Hindu or a Muslim and therefore unqualified to say mass, local media reported.

"There was some shouting and a lot of movement at the back of the church and then I saw Father Tommy coming to approach me. He waved me over and asked me if I could look at his neck because he said 'I've just been stabbed,'" said Melina, one of the parishioners.

A 72-year-old man from Fawkner was arrested and charged with intentionally and recklessly causing injury.

He was bailed to appear in Broadmeadows Magistrates' Court on June 13. – AFP

China warns US over arms sales to Taiwan

BEIJING, March 20: China today reiterated its firm opposition to US arm sales to Taiwan, amid reports that Donald Trump's administration is preparing a large shipment of advanced weaponry for the self-ruling island.

"China firmly opposes US arms sales to Taiwan, which is consistent and clear-cut," foreign ministry spokesman Hua Chunying told a regular press briefing.

"We hope the US side fully recognises the high sensitivity and serious

harmfulness of its sales to Taiwan."

She called on Washington to abide by the One-China policy and "cease Taiwan arm sales" in order to preserve Sino-US relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

The comments, which came one day after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson ended a visit to Beijing, followed reports in US media that Trump's government was preparing a large-scale arms package for Taiwan.

China sees Taiwan as part of its

territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary.

The United States is the democratically-ruled island's most powerful ally and its main arms supplier; even though the two sides do not have official diplomatic ties after Washington officially recognised Beijing in 1979.

There have been concerns Taiwan will become a bargaining chip between the US and China since Trump angered Beijing with a pro-taiwan-busting telephone conversation

with the island's President Tsai Ing-wen following his election victory.

Trump and China's President Xi Jinping subsequently smoothed over the dispute in a phone call in which the US leader reiterated Washington's adherence to the One China policy, which nominally acknowledges Beijing's claim without recognising it.

Taiwan unveiled a major defence report last week and confirmed publicly for the first time that it was capable of launching missiles at China. – AFP

Taiwan unveiled a major defence report last week and confirmed publicly for the first time that it was capable of launching missiles at China

Lanka, China discuss ways to boost military cooperation

COLOMBO, March 20:

President Maithripala Sirisena today thanked China for its support for Sri Lanka's independence and national security

in a meeting with Chinese Defence Minister as they discussed ways to bolster bilateral defence ties.

General Chang Wanquan, who is in Sri Lanka on his first official visit, met Sirisena at his residence and discussed ways to expand bilateral defence ties.

Sirisena recalled the long term relationship between both the countries and thanked

for the support given by China for the independence and national security of Sri Lanka.

He also extended thanks to the Chinese government for the training opportunities which are being provided to Sri Lankan security forces for a long time. He thanked China for its assistance during the crucial period of war in Sri Lanka, apparently referring to the country's nearly three-decade long civil war with LTTE which was ended in 2009.

Sirisena said the two coun-

tries will come into several agreements which will not be doing any harm to the pride,

independence and national security of Sri Lanka, the president's office said in a statement.

At the invitation of Sri Lanka's Defence Ministry, Chang arrived here last night with a 21-member delegation. After wrapping up his visit to Sri Lanka, Chang will visit Nepal.

The Chinese Defence Ministry has said that the purpose of his visit is to strengthen military ties with Colombo.

The top Chinese official's visit, according to analysts, holds importance in view of Sri Lanka's proposal to tie up with China in the southern port of Hambantota, in addition to the ongoing work in the Colombo port city project, which is a major Chinese investment project.

China had developed a close relation with Sri Lanka during the regime of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa whose nearly a decade-long tenure was ended by Sirisena in 2015. – PTI



Gen Chang Wanquan and Maithripala Sirisena.

ESA's Jupiter mission set to launch in 2022

LONDON, March 20: ESA is scheduled to launch its Jupiter exploring space-craft in 2022 on a mission to examine the giant planet's turbulent atmosphere, enormous magnetosphere, its set of numerous dark rings and satellites.

With arrival in the Jovian system in 2029, the Jupiter I Moons Explorer – Juice – will spend three-and-a-half years examining Jupiter, the European Space Agency (ESA) said.

It will study the large icy moons Ganymede, Europa and Callisto, which are thought to have oceans of liquid water beneath their icy crusts - perhaps even harbouring habitable environments.

The mission will culminate in a dedicated, eight-month tour around Ganymede, the first time

any moon beyond our own has been orbited by a spacecraft.

"The space-craft design has been extensively and positively reviewed, and confirmed to address the many critical mission requirements," said Giuseppe Sarri, Juice project manager.

"So far we are on schedule, and are delighted to begin the development stage of this ambitious large-class mission," said Sarri.

Juice will be equipped with 10 state-of-the-art instruments, including cameras, an ice-penetrating radar, an altimeter, radio-science experiments, and sensors to monitor the magnetic fields and charged particles in the Jovian system.

In order to ensure it can address these goals in the challenging Jovian environment, the spacecraft's design has to meet stringent requirements. – PTI



পুতুলা নাচ কর্মশালা

১০-২০ মার্চ, ২০১৭

অসম চৰকাৰৰ সংস্থাতিক সঞ্চালকালয়ৰ উদ্বোগত

আৰু 'অন্তৰ্বৎ'ৰ সহযোগত

১০পৰা ২০ মার্চলৈ আয়োজিত পুতুলা নাচ কৰ্মশালাৰ

সামৰণী অনুষ্ঠান

॥ ১১ মাৰ্চ, ২০১৭ ॥ দিনৰ ১২:৩০ বজাত ॥

ছান : গোবিন্দবৰ্ম কলিতা সৌৰভৰ্মী সুবীৰা সংস্থাতি গৱেষণা আৰু চৰ্চা কেন্দ্ৰ,

দক্ষিণ শ্ৰীলোকা, গুৱাহাটী

বিশ্ব পুতুলা দিৰসৰ লগত সংগতি বাখি আয়োজিত এই অনুষ্ঠানত

শ্ৰী ভৰত বাজখোৰাৰ শিশু উপনাম 'হাৰেল'ৰ আধাৰত বৰ্তত

পুতুলা নাচ 'ৱেলকাম টু কাজিবড়া' প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰা হ'ল।

সমূহ কলাপ্ৰেছী বাইজৰ উপস্থিতি আন্তৰিকতাৰে কামনা কৰা হ'ল।



সৰ্বনন্দ সোণোৱাল

মুখ্য মন্ত্ৰী, অসম



অসম চৰকাৰ

গড়কাঞ্চনী (পথ) বিভাগ, অসম



১। সন্দা চ'কৰ পৰা বৰকুৰা চ'কলৈ (পুৰণা এন. টি. বোড) দৈৰ্ঘ্য ৬.২৩ কিঃ মিৎ পথৰ

সৰলীকৰণ আৰু বহুলীকৰণ কামৰ শুভ আধাৰশিলা স্থাপন। (সময় : পুৰা ১০-৩০ বজাত)

২। নলবাৰী হৰিমন্ডিৰ প্রাঙ্গণত নলবাৰী চহৰৰ বেলগেট নম্বৰ SK-21 ত নিৰ্মাণ কৰিবলগীয়া উৰ্বীয়া সেঁতুৰ শুভ আধাৰশিলা স্থাপন। (সময় : দিনৰ ১২-৩৫ বজাত)

৩। কমলপুৰ মৰোৰা পথৰ উন্নীতকৰণ আৰু সৰলীকৰণ কামৰ (মুঠ দৈৰ্ঘ্য : ১০.৬২ কিঃ মিৎ) শুভ আধাৰশিলা স্থাপন। (সময় : দিনৰ ১২-৪৫ বজাত)

৪। উত্তম চন্দ্ৰ বৰকুৰা পথৰ পাগলাদিয়া নদীৰ ওপৰত থকা কমাৰকুছি ঘাটৰ নৰ-নিৰ্মিত পকী দলঙ্গৰ শুভ উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠান। (সময় : দিনৰ ১-২০ বজাত)

অধীক্ষক অভিযন্তা

গড় কাঞ্চনী (পথ) বিভাগ, নলবাৰী পথ চক্ৰ, নলবাৰী, অসম

