

Demand for revival of Tezpur (old) rly station

SPL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, July 20: The Railway Ministry has confirmed having received a number of petitions demanding revival of the Tezpur (old) Railway Station under NF Railway in Assam.

In a Lok Sabha reply to a question by RP Sharma, Minister of State for Railways, Rajen Gohain said that a few representations have been received including a reference from Chief Minister, Assam on the revival of Tezpur (old) station. Dekargaon railway station is located at a distance of about seven kilometres from Tezpur town.

Dekargaon-Tezpur town, part of the metre gauge track, was not converted to broad gauge at the request of the then Assam Government. Reconnection of Tezpur town to Dekargaon has been mooted subsequently, Gohain said.

Yoga camp at Hailakandi

CORRESPONDENT

HAILAKANDI, July 20: On the occasion of the completion of one year of Patanjali Yoga Samiti, a day-long yoga camp for the age group of 8 to 80 years, was organised at Sanskrit Vidyapeeth here.

It was inaugurated by veteran music teacher of Hailakandi, Harendra Chandra Nath. A large number of people from different parts of the district participated in the camp. The inaugural meeting was presided over by Sukomal Paul and was addressed by Ajit Chakraborty, Chanchal Paul, Sankar Choudhury and Vijaylakshmi Sinha of Mahila Patanjali Yoga Samiti, among others. Yoga instructor Amit Paul conducted the camp. All the speakers highlighted the benefits of performing yoga in day-to-day life.

Seminar on tourism

GUWAHATI, July 20: North East Vision, a Nagaon-based NGO, in association with Eastern Iconic Tours and Travels, Guwahati, organised a seminar on 'Potential of tourism as a career option for students' recently at the North East Vision office premises here, stated a press release.

Around 40 students from different educational institutions of Nagaon attended the seminar. The key speakers in the seminar were Dr Sachindra Barthakur, senior advocate and secretary of North East Vision and Udit Bhanu Barthakur, Director of Eastern Iconic Tours and Travels, Guwahati, among others.

One electrocuted

DHEMAJI, July 20: One 40-year-old Anidhar Saikia of Goroimari village was electrocuted at Balijan village near Naruathan in West Dhemaji when he came into contact with an electric wire that was hanging loosely near the Magurmari RCC Bridge to Balijan. The incident occurred on July 17. – Correspondent

Meet on issues of border areas

CORRESPONDENT

DHUBRI, July 20: To raise awareness among the people living in the bordering districts of western Assam, Seemanta Chetana Manch, Purvottar, will organise its State annual convention in the District Library here.

The organisation, that raises awareness about the issues of the border areas of the region, stated in a press release that they are organising the programme in a massive way in the town on July 29-30.

The convention will be attended by 700 participants from across the State, the release added. The convention will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowar and will be attended by other political and apolitical dignitaries from all over North-east.

NEEPCO denies releasing flood water from power project

AJIT PATOWARY

GUWAHATI, July 20: On July 9 this year, the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) allegedly released about 10,000 mm (that is – 10 metres in height) of water from its 450-MW Ranganadi Hydroelectric Power Project (RHEP) dam within a very short span of time and this resulted in the two breaches in the Ranganadi embankments causing havoc in a vast Lakhimpur district area, said highly placed sources in the State's Water Resources Department (WRD) here.

However, sources in the NEEPCO have maintained that under no

circumstances the NEEPCO had released floodwater from the RHEP that attained a height of ten metres that day.

It needs mention here that the WRD authorities were in the process of strengthening the Ranganadi embankments under an estimated Rs 36-crore Flood Management Programme (FMP). The State Government had a share of 30 per cent in this scheme.

WRD sources maintain that in 2008 also flood created havoc in North Lakhimpur town and other areas adjacent to this district headquarters town, when the NEEPCO authorities released around

5,000 mm (five metres in height) of water from the RHEP dam in a short span of time.

This time, the NEEPCO authorities released water which was two times larger in volume than that of the 2008. But due to the partial

Breaches in Ranganadi embankments

strengthening of the Ranganadi embankments, the flood could not create havoc similar to that of the 2008, WRD sources claimed.

NEEPCO sources, on the other hand, claimed that the RHEP is a run-of-the-river scheme with a very small pondage. The full reservoir

level of the project is EL 567 metre. This project generates highest amount of hydel power and contributes the highest amount of power to Assam, compared to other NE States. But it was not designed for flood moderation, they said.

Due to the incessant torrential rainfall in the catchment areas of the Ranganadi since June 30, 2017, the inflow of water in the river increased substantially and achieved the maximum to the tune of around 1511 Cubic Metres Per Second (cumec) at 3pm of July 9, 2017. Af-

ter utilising the water required for power generation, excess water was spilled over through the gates of the dam in a controlled manner, duly maintaining the full reservoir level.

Of the 1511 cumec of water, 200 cumec was utilised as power draft and retained within the reservoir, thus controlling the downstream discharges. The natural flood occurring in the upstream of the project cannot be absorbed by the reservoir. Had the Ranganadi dam not been there, the downstream situation could have been worse, NEEPCO sources said.

They also maintained that numbers of tributaries have joined the

Ranganadi in the downstream of the RHEP dam, which also carry sufficient water from their respective catchment areas to the Ranganadi.

In the wake of the 2008 havoc, several committees visited the affected areas and the RHEP as well. They maintained that the RHEP could not be linked with the catastrophe, said the NEEPCO sources.

Meanwhile, sources in the Brahmaputra Board maintained that the Ranganadi havoc could have been avoided, had the RHEP reservoir operated scientifically, by installing a network of designed rain gauge and pre-emptying the reservoir before the floodwater impinging on it.



A scene of devastation caused by the Rongnadi flood waters at Putabeel of Nowboisa, in Lakhimpur district on Wednesday. – UB Photos

Anti-superstition activists to approach new President

SANJOY RAY

GUWAHATI, July 20: With the country all set to get its 14th President by Thursday, anti-superstition activists awaiting nod for 'The Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015' for over a year now, has decided to approach the new constitutional head of the country seeking intervention, as incidents of branding women and men as 'witches' continue to get reported at regular intervals from across the State.

Nearly 100 cases of 'witch-hunting' were reported across

Assam in the last five years or so, while the conviction rate continues to be abysmally low in the State.

Activist Birubala Rabha, who is scheduled to deliver a speech on the issue in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in September, too, is miffed at the pace things are moving, and opined that the dilly-dallying on the part of the government is not helping the cause of the vulnerable population.

Rabha, who is spearheading the anti-superstition campaign in the State, told *The Assam*

Tribune that the war against superstition needs a strict law and its effective implementation at the earliest.

Home department sources said that the Bill is currently with the human rights section of the Ministry of Home Affairs and there is no word on the approval as yet.

Convenor of the Coordination Committee against Superstition, an umbrella body of anti-superstition organisations in the State, Dr Natyabar Das, said that the committee will move the new Presi-

Bill on witch-hunting

dent of the country to take necessary action once he or she takes the oath of office.

"We are drafting a letter for the new President of India seeking his/her intervention in the matter. The letter will be dispatched within the next couple of weeks," Dr Das said.

"The ministry had sought clarifications on a few points which were clarified by the State government more than a year back. But despite all these, we are awaiting the nod as the delay has been discouraging the people working on the ground," Dr Das added.

Progress of SBM (G) schemes in Jonai block reviewed

ANN Service

JONAI, July 20: Dhemaji Deputy Commissioner Roshni Apranji Korati, who reviewed the progress of ongoing Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) schemes in Murkongselek Tribal Development (Jonai) block, has urged the implementing agency to expedite the works to achieve set targets.

Attending a block-level meeting with Swachhgrahi and officials of Public Health Engineering (PHE) department at Jonai SDO's office on Tuesday, the DC verified physical achievements of the ongoing sanitary latrine construction in 15 gram panchayats under Jonai block. The DC was satisfied with cent per cent achievement in Dekapam and Simenchapori, while she appreciated the efforts of achieving above 90 per cent works

in Rayang-Bijoypur, Misamara and Somkong panchayats.

The scheme, run under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan incorporated to Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), is being implemented by the Dhemaji division of PHE. The implementing agency has a target to construct as many as 75,127 individual household sanitary latrines/toilets out of which 11,209 are allotted to Jonai block. As such, the district so far has completed construction of 41,543 sanitary latrines since the fiscal year 2014-15.

The DC said that district administration was making all-out efforts to implement the SBM (G) scheme with success. She strictly directed the Swachhagrahi and monitoring PHE officials to ensure remarkable progress in the block within next two months.

"Construction of sanitary toilets is not only a hygienic

practice, but it also an initiative of the Central Government to promote safety, dignity and health security of the women," said the DC while adding that she is planning to make short movies in local (tribal) languages in order to motivate the rural people on the necessity of sanitary latrine/toilet.

Jonai SDO(C) Jadav Pegu in his address urged the Swachhagrahi to work as "messenger" of SBM schemes and motivate the community people to adopt hygienic practices such as use of sanitary toilets, safe drinking water and safe waste disposals.

On the occasion, the project consultant made an overview of panchayat-wise targets and physical achievements of sanitary latrine works of the block through power-point presentation. According to him, Jonai block has achieved an average

of 70 per cent progress in the scheme and Simechapori GP under the block has been conferred prestigious Nirmal Gram Panchayat Award for the year 2010-11.

Presenting the 'sanitation profile' along with economic status of the targeted families, the consultant divulged that there were 39,233 households in the block as per 2012 baseline survey. The survey recorded 6,286 families belong to APL and it placed 32,947 families in BPL category. Thus, the number of families use sanitary latrine/toilet was recorded 23,044 while 13,552 families found to adopt open defecation.

Among others, Jonai Assistant Commissioner Sujata Gogoi, Circle Officer M Payeng, BDO of Jonai (MSTD) block D Pathak and PHE executive Engineer Nabajyoti Neog also attended the meeting.

Honour for Assamese doctor in Denmark

GUWAHATI, July 20: Dr Arindam Bharadwaz, a senior consultant of the Aarhus University Hospital, Denmark has been unanimously selected as the president of the Danish Society of Interventional Radiology (DFIR – *Dansk Forening for Interventionel Radiologi*), Denmark during the annual general meeting and conference held recently. This was stated in a press release.

This is the first time that an Indian has been elected to the post of a president of a Danish as well as Scandinavian medical society. He has been working in the Interventional Radiology division of Aarhus University Hospital since 2008. He was also selected as the Chief Coordinator of the Nor-



Dr Arindam Bharadwaz

dic (Scandinavian) societies of Interventional Radiology comprising of societies from Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland in 2016, the first ever Indian to hold that post. In 2013, he became the first (and

probably the only) Assamese to have acquired the degree of European Board of Interventional Radiology (EBIR).

Dr Arindam Bharadwaz is currently scientific committee member of European Society of Radiology (ESR) as well as of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe (CIRSE), again probably the first and only doctor from Assam to hold the posts. He passed MBBS and MD (Radiology) from Guwahati Medical College in 1994 and 1999 respectively.

He is the second son of Dr Prabin Chandra Sarma, ex-MP from Guwahati and Geeta Sarma, a pioneer of Goalpariya Lokageet and a retired school teacher.



Army personnel belonging to the Jat Regiment sweeping a road, as a part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan programme, in Baksa district on Wednesday. – UB Photos

Families of Cachar, Nagaon Paper Mill employees on verge of starvation

CORRESPONDENT

SILCHAR, July 20: The closure of the Cachar and Nagaon Paper Mill, units of the State-owned Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited (HPCL) since 2015, has increased the woes of the family members of the mill employees.

In the words of Debodeepa Dhar, daughter of Jyotindra Dhar, an employee of Cachar Paper Mill at Panchgram and a resident of Sonai Road Silchar, "Our life has been badly hit because of the closure of the mill. My father is having no salary since

the mill was put under lock and key and now he has stopped my tuition and art classes because he cannot bear the expenses any more. We are being haunted with the bleak future of the mill."

According to sources, so far as many as 15 employees have died (11 from the Cachar Paper Mill and four others at the Nagaon Paper Mill at Jagiroad), while one employee allegedly committed suicide for the need of money for medical treatment. The Cachar Paper Mill has 680 employees.

"We are on the threshold of star-

vation. Our husbands are not getting salaries for the past 10 months despite the mill being a unit of the Government of India. We are deeply worried as we might have to sell our homes to pay the dues of Income Tax, LIC etc.," said Sarbajaya Biswas and Dolly Dey, wives of the employees of Cachar Paper Mill.

Kamal Chakraborty, a former employee of the Cachar Paper Mill, has blamed the apathy of the HPCL management for such a situation. "Around 75,000 tonnes of bamboo is lying rotten in the mill campus

and there has been no production. We were assured by the government of a certain resumption of production, but nothing has materialised so far dragging the lives of so many people into the mercy of the Almighty."

On the other hand, the family members and children of the mill employees staged a protest demonstration at the pedestal of Khudiram Bose on Wednesday. Besides the family members, State BJP spokesperson Rajdeep Roy, former president of Cachar district BJP Kaushik Rai, front-

line leader of INTUC Kishore Bhattacharjee, Deepan Dewanji and leader of CITU Supriyo Bhattacharjee extended support to their demands.

Kaushik Rai read out the assurances sent by the government for the release of the salaries. Also, questions were raised on the performance of former Union Minister for Heavy Industries Santosh Mohan Dey vis-a-vis the pathetic status of the mill.

Later, the family members of the employees sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Un-

ion Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises through the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar with copies of the same to Chief Minister in which they demanded immediate release of their salaries, resumption of production in the mill and a CBI probe into the reasons behind the sick status of the mill.

It may be mentioned that in 2015, the government, in reply to a question raised by Silchar MP Susmita Dev, had made it clear that the Centre has no plan to modernise the Cachar Paper Mill.