

Eleven injured in road accident

Rangpo, Mar 19: Eleven persons including two women were injured when the taxi vehicle they were travelling in met with an accident at Kumrek near Rangpo today.

The taxi which was heading to Gangtok from Rongli fell into a gorge, approximately 300 feet below the road level. The injured were rescued by locals and sent to Rangpo PHC for treatment.

Police have registered a case against the driver of the vehicle.



Follow up meeting of Friday field visit held



Namchi, Mar 19: A follow up coordination meeting was conducted as a part of Friday's field visit by the DC (S) to Manglay-Sinchuthang Junior High School, Ben Namprik GPU under Temi BAC and Manglay Bazaar today.

The meeting was attended by BDO Temi BAC, AEO, BAC, HRDD, SMC, local guardians, teachers and students.

The meeting deliberated on several issues such as the beautification of Manglay-Sinchuthang JHS, fencing of the school premises sanctioned

through DLRC during the Friday field visit by the DC to be executed by the SMC and Gram Panchayats, redressal of drinking water shortage in the area etc.

A special Gramsabha was also conducted at Manglay Bazar as directed by the DC (South) during the Friday field visit. The Gramsabha was attended by BDO Temi BAC, Gram Panchayats, local businessmen, police and local public.

Several decisions were taken during the sabha such as beautification of Manglay Bazaar to be taken up by

constituting a Manglay Bazaar committee which would conduct a cleanliness drive in the bazaar area with the help of the police out post. Similarly, dustbins to be installed at various locations within the bazaar area as a part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The dustbins are to be provided by the BDO, BAC Temi, RMDD.

It was also agreed during the meeting that a petition would be submitted to the Chief Minister for declaring Mangalay as a notified bazaar area.

REPORTERS CONTACT
HIMALAYAN MIRROR
7864080308 - 7797183679

FCAS observes World Consumer Rights Day

Melli, Mar 19: The Federation of Consumers Association of Sikkim observed World Consumer Rights Day at Melli, South Sikkim today.

The daylong programme had the presence of Ganesh Kr. Rai, Chairman SICUN as the Chief Guest along with Furbanti Tamang Zilla Panchayat, Melli GPU, Panchayat President D.B. Pradhan, Mohan Sharma Ex MLA, BDO Sumbuk Dinesh Pradhan and SHO, Melli Bikash Rai as the



Guest of Honours. The programme was also attended by a large gathering of general public, Panchayat members of the nearby GPUs, members of various NGOs,

Self Help Groups, principals, teachers and students of the surrounding schools etc. Wilson Williams, AGM, Reserve Bank of India; Keshav Subba, Joint

Commissioner, Commercial Tax Dept.; Mahesh Sharma, Dy. Controller of Consumer Affairs Dept. and K.N. Sharma, Ex Secretary, Senior Citizen Foundation were the resource persons of the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief guest Ganesh Kr. Rai appreciated the federation for observing World Consumer Rights Day in Melli Bazar and urged the general public to be aware of their rights and to utilize it when necessary.

India is a truly secular nation: Dalai Lama

Rajgir, Mar 19: Buddhist spiritual leader the Dalai Lama called India a truly secular country where every religious group lives in peace without fear. He said India should take the lead for global peace and harmony. While inaugurating the three-day International Buddhist Conclave (IBC) with Union minister of state for tourism and culture Dr Mahesh Sharma at Rajgir's international convention centre on Friday, the Dalai Lama called himself the 'son of India'.

"India preached non-violence for over 2,000 years and it is the only country where people of all

faiths live in harmony and without fear," he said and added, "I have been living in this country for the past 58 years and call myself the son of India". On his association with Nalanda, he said, "All my knowledge comes from the Nalanda thoughts, The Tripitaka-Pali Canon, physically and mentally."

On intercaste or inter-faith conflicts, he said, "Despite philosophical differences, all religions preach peace and harmony, but the modern day education, which is based on consumerism, has made people devoid of love, affection, friendship and

trust. The solution lies in controlling surge of emotion taught in great Indian traditional system of education which teaches tolerance, forgiveness and contentment."

The exiled Tibetan spiritual leader said when he was in Tibet, his thoughts were confined to Tibet only. But, during his stay in India, his thoughts got broadened or globalized.

"Buddha cannot remove sufferings or the cause of sufferings. He only shows the path to control destructive emotions through meditation — Vipassana," he said and added, "Buddha Dharma is relevant in the field of science. So, we say, Buddhism is relevant in the 21st century."

The Union minister, who is also chancellor of Nav Nalanda Mahavihara (NNM), the co-sponsor of



the event, praised the Dalai Lama not only for promoting Buddhist values but also for his contribution to world peace. He also assured the NNM to extend every possible cooperation it required for its growth and development.

NNM vice-chancellor M L Srivastava said, "Buddhism mitigated the cause of conflicts and promote interfaith harmony, globally." He said

the NNM was founded for the promotion of Pali which contributed a lot in understanding Buddhism since its inception in 1961.

Union secretary of culture department, N K Sinha, welcomed the guests and scholars from 30 countries.

The Dalai Lama also unveiled the new version of Tripitaka or Pali Canon and declared open the Buddhist Science department at NNM.

1.04 cr hit by arsenic contamination in Bengal

Kolkata, Mar 19: Following a recent report tabled in the Lok Sabha stating that West Bengal has the highest number of arsenic-affected people in the country, State Minister of Public Health Engineering (PHE) Subrata Mukherjee told The Hindu that there was "a lot left to be done" by the State government.

"Despite the State government's efforts to curb the Arsenic menace there is still a lot to be done," said Mr. Mukherjee. There are 83 blocks in eight districts — Bardhaman, Malda, Hooghly, Howrah, Murshidabad, Nadia, North and South 24 Paraganas — where ground water is affected by arsenic contamination.

According to the report tabled in the Lok Sabha by Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation Mahendra Singh Tomar, Bengal topped the list with more than 1.04 crore arsenic-affected persons as on March 4, 2017. Bihar comes second with 16.88 lakh persons, with Assam in third spot with 14.48 lakh victims. The total number of arsenic-affected people in the country is about 1.48 crore.

According to the WHO's guidelines for drinking water quality (2011), the permissible limit of Arsenic in groundwater is .01 mg per litre. However, in India the permissible limit in drinking water has recently been revised from .05 mg per litre to .01 mg per litre. Mr. Mukherjee pointed out that the State government had recently initiated a project in order to provide safe drinking water to more than six lakh people in the arsenic-affected Rajarhat and Haroa block in North 24 Paraganas district and Bhangar II blocks in South 24 Paraganas district.

"The water treatment plant in New Town [on the Eastern fringes of the city] will be used to provide safe drinking water to these areas through pipelines," the Minister said.

He claimed that the State has been able to provide safe drinking water to "52% of the arsenic-affected areas in Bengal."

The chairman of the State's Arsenic Task Force, K.J. Nath, also admitted that

progress in setting up water treatment plants has been slow. Speaking to The Hindu he said since the "technology for removal of arsenic is rather new and expensive, the progress has been slow."

The ruling Trinamool Congress had claimed in its 2016 election manifesto that 91% of the population of arsenic-affected areas in the State have been provided with clean drinking water. The website of the PHE department also claims that arsenic contamination is "getting under control" and Bengal is expected to be "arsenic free" in another couple of years.

Kolkata: Tension in govt hospital after kin of deceased patient attack junior doctors

Kolkata, Mar 19: Tension prevailed at the government-owned Chittaranjan National Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on Saturday after the relatives of a patient, who died during treatment, attacked junior doctors. Following this, the doctors allegedly refused to hand over the body to the family members, demanding that action be taken against them.

The relatives of deceased, Papri Mukherjee (33), who was brought to the hospital with breathing problems on Friday, also claimed that the doctors had locked three members of the family into a room. The

three were reportedly released only after the police intervened and took them away, said sources.

"A junior doctor was slapped and beaten up by the relatives... another doctor who tried to intervene was also attacked. Following this, junior doctors did not allow three relatives of the patient to leave a room," said an intern doctor.

S Mukherjee, Papri's husband, said: "She died around 3.30 am on Saturday. When we asked the doctors what went wrong, they did not give us a proper reply. Some people might have lost patience and indulged in a fight... I am not aware of it. But when I went to take

the body, the doctors refused to hand it over. Around 12.30 pm, we finally got the body."

The hospital authorities, however, denied the allegations. "The allegations are not correct. There was some delay in issuing the death certificate. In fact, after we released the body, the family refused to take it and started protesting. They were demanding that the three people who had beaten up junior doctors be released by the police who had taken them away," said hospital superintendent Pit Baran Chakraborty. Police said cross FIRs have been lodged at Beniyapur police station.

Metro starts razing illegal shanties on Noapara-Jessore Road stretch

Kolkata, Mar 19: Work has finally started to clear the 573 encroachments on railways land between Noapara and Jessore Road. These encroachments had held up extension of the Metro network up to the airport for the last five years. Now that the demolition work has started, officials are hopeful of extending services up to Jessore Road by June 2018.

"We hope to commission a 23-km route by June 2018. These include the Noapara-Jessore Road, Noapara-Dakshineswar, Kavi Subhash-Hemendra Mukherjee (Ruby Hospital crossing) and Salt Lake Sector V-Phoolbagan (East-West corridor) stretches. We were unable to do anything about the 573 encroachers between Noapara and Jessore Road, but now we have the entire stretch free and work will progress unhindered till Jessore Road. We have to thank the state for this," Metro Railway general manager M C Chauhan told TOI.

were upon a 700-800m stretch along tracks between the Dum Dum Cantonment level crossing gate and Bagjola Canal Bridge No. 3. According to Metro Railway CPRO Indrani Banerjee, the transport department and South Dum Dum Municipality assisted with relocating the encroachers.

"Chief minister Mamata Banerjee allotted funds for a five-acre plot close to Belgharia Expressway where the South Dum Dum Municipality has built accommodation for the encroachers. In February, a lottery was held in the presence of civic officials and local leaders to ensure fair allocation. We are now waiting with men and machines and as soon as the demolition is complete — in about a week — we shall start piling work," Banerjee said.

While services between Kavi Subhash and Jessore Road will start by June next year, it will take a few more months for the link to reach Kolkata airport. This is because the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has sought

time till this October to relocate an electric substation and water treatment plant along the route. Officials believe that they would be able to run trains between Kavi Subhash and the airport by the end of 2018. It will take more time to construct the final stretch from Jessore Road as the airport station will be underground.

"The only hurdle is due to the 200-odd encroachers between Baranagar and Dakshineswar. As soon as these encroachments are cleared, we will be able to complete the stretch up to Dakshineswar. People should realise that these projects will benefit them and desist from obstructing progress. Phase-I of the East-West corridor will be commissioned only till Phoolbagan in June 2018 as space will be required at Sealdah for the tunnel boring machine (TBM) that will start work from Esplanade. The platforms at Sealdah can only be constructed after the TBM completes work," Chouhan said.

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