## IN BRIEF

### Gun 'that ended Van Gogh's life' sold

PARIS

The revolver with which Vincent van Gogh is believed to have shot himself sold for €162,500 at a Paris auction on Wednesday — nearly three times the estimate. Billed as "the most famous weapon in the history of art", the rusty 7 mm Lefaucheux revolver was bought by a private collector with a telephone bid. The troubled Dutch painter died in July 1890. AFP

### Cat-fox of Corsica may be a new species

In the forest of northern Corsica, two wildlife rangers have revealed a striped, tawny-coated animal, one of 16 felines known as "cat-foxes" and thought to be a new species. "We believe that it's a wild natural species which was known but not scientifically identified because it's an extremely inconspicuous animal with nocturnal habits," they said. AFP

### Thailand temple has altar featuring David Beckham

BANGKOK

Soccer legend David Beckham has such a global appeal and fan base that a Buddhist temple in Thailand has a gold-painted statue of the footballer on an altar. The Pariwat temple has turned it into a surprising tourist attraction. REUTERS

# Cancer cell detection 'dots' developed from coal

## CQDs are futuristic materials whose demand is on the rise

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Binoy K. Saikia, second from right, in the lab with coal and carbon quantum dots (inset). ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A team of scientists in Assam has developed a chemical process that turns 'dirty' coal into a biomedical 'dot' to help detect cancer cells.

The team, led by Binoy Kumar Saikia and Tonkeswar Das, has applied for a patent for their chemical method of producing carbon quantum dots (CQDs) from cheap, abundant, low-quality and high-sulphur coals.

CQDs are carbon-based nanomaterials whose size is less than 10 nm, or nanometre.

"Carbon-based nanomaterials are used as diagnostic tools for bio-imaging, especially in detecting cancer cells, for chemical sensing and in opto-electronics. A few chemical companies in the U.S. and Japan have been manufacturing CQDs. What we have done is develop fluorescent carbon nanomaterials at one-twentieth the cost of imported CQDs," Mr. Saikia told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

He is a scientist in the polymer petroleum and coal chemistry group of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research-North East Institute of Science and Technology (CSIR-NEIST) in Assam's Jorhat.

The CQDs that the CSIR-NEIST team developed emit a bluish colour with "high-stability, good-conductivity, low-toxicity, environmental friendliness, and good optical properties". The study was published in the *Journal of Photochemistry and Photobiology*.

"Our source material is abundant, low-quality Indian coal not directly suitable for thermal electricity production. Even if the selling price is twice our cost of production of ₹50 per ml, it will be much cheaper than the imported CQDs with market price of up to ₹2,000 per ml," he said.

Scientists said CQDs are futuristic materials whose demand in India has been increasing leading to a considerable volume of import.

# Entrapped turtles rescued in Goa

## The ghost nets are hazardous to marine life

PRAKASH KAMAT
PANAJI

The sea turtles entrapped in a net and washed ashore on three beaches in Goa last week have been released back into the ocean.

Earlier this week, Drishti lifeguards spotted sea turtles in a fishing net and washed up on the shore in Betalbatim, Cavelossim, and Rajbag Canacona, South Goa.

The incidents were reported to the Forest department immediately. Drishti is a lifeguard agency contracted by Goa Tourism department to guard its coastline, for the safety of tourists and others.

The turtles were freed from the net and examined. As medical intervention was not required, the turtles were released back into the ocean. Marine Wildlife Stranding Network, Ocean Watch – Goa, expressed strong concern over the incident. The nets in which the marine mammals get entangled are commonly called ghost nets. These are fishing nets that have been lost or discarded by fishermen in the ocean. The nets are hazardous to turtles and other marine life

Once caught, the weight of net may not allow them to surface.