

# Centre to study child rights

**SUMIR KARMAKAR**

**Guwahati, March 14:** A centre for child rights was inaugurated here today to conduct research on subjects related to child rights and protection in Assam and the rest of the Northeast.

The centre has been set up at the National Law University, Assam, in partnership with Unicef's Assam field office.

"This was a long-felt need to offer a platform to all stakeholders, be it government agencies, NGOs, community organisations or private ones. It will also try to encourage public-private-partnership projects to ensure the rights of children. We hope to transform it into a knowledge hub where all stakeholders can

share their knowledge and make sure that rights of our children are well protected," said vice-chancellor Vijender Kumar, soon after the centre was inaugurated.

Associate professor Benarji Chakka said the Bangalore-based Centre for Child and Law will assist it in doing research on different subjects related to children and their wellbeing.

Tushar Rane, the chief of Unicef's field office in Assam, said the centre was required as each district in the Northeast has distinct problems and issues related to children, given the diverse language, culture, customary laws, communication bottlenecks and natural disasters.

"This centre will prove fruitful in capacity building of

different stakeholders on how to tackle such issues and make sure that the laws meant for protection and welfare of our children are implemented properly," he said.

The Northeast has serious problems such as children affected by ethnic violence and natural disasters, malnourishment, child marriage, child trafficking, drug abuse among children and child labour, among others.

The frequent ethnic clashes and conflicts between militant groups and security forces have left many children dead, injured and displaced but the states lack proper mechanism to take care of such children.

"We will continuously be a partner with the centre and engage more and more peo-

ple," said Ved Prakash Gautam, the child protection specialist of Unicef, Assam.

The university and Unicef today organised a national conference on Protection of Rights of Children: Issues and Challenges, as a part of their programme to observe the completion of 25 years of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

About 30 papers on child rights, child protection, juvenile justice and protection of children from sexual offences act were presented during the conference.

Kalpana Purushothaman of Centre for Child and Law, Bangalore, Bharti Ali of HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, representatives and students from different universities attended the conference.