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ASA Newsletter

News & Events of the Assamese People Living Around the World

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Assamese Get-Together 2006

Dear Raiz,

The Assamese community of San Francisco (Bay area), California, is hosting a fun-filled celebration---Assamese Get-Together 2006 on the 4th of July'06 weekend. With that goal in mind, we would like to eagerly invite all the Assamese people in North America and Canada to join us for this event.

With immense enthusiasm, the community is leaving it in your hands, to make it a successful event by your participation and support.

As you all know California is known as the "Golden State", you will be enthralled by

the beauty that the land has in store for you. The site selection committee is currently looking at the best venue for your accommodation and hospitality. Will keep you posted as we march our search, in our follow up letter.

We would like to mention here, that we are not affiliated to any organization. To host this event is to renew our friendship and also share the cultural heritage of--- Land of the Blue Hills. We are in the process of contacting all Assamese organizations to join us for this get-together.

We will be publishing a souvenir during the event to commemorate Assamese Get-To-

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gether 2006. We would welcome and cherish any articles, stories, poems, paintings, and sketches. Please contact Monima Baruah at baruah_m2001@yahoo.com and Saswatee Kashyap at saswatee@hotmail.com for your contribution.

We sincerely hope that you will join us for this event. Your participation would give us an opportunity to reinforce in our younger generation, the value of community places on friendship and cultural heritage.

In celebration of the unique beauty and wisdom we each possess of Assam, we eagerly invite you again to come and celebrate the Assamese Get-Together 2006 in California.

Thank you,

Azreena Ahmed

(On behalf of the PR Committee, Assamese Get-Together 2006)



Golden Bridge, California.

Photo by Frank Michael (www.frank-michael.de) used with permission.

Community Kids Forum Annual Event 2005

The Community Kids Forum celebrated their 2nd Annual event on July 23, 2005 at the JFK Library in Piscataway with great enthusiasm and fanfare. The attendees were treated to a rich show of the cultural heritage of Assam and India by the youngest members of the Assamese community in the North East of USA.

The program was ably hosted by our very own Deesha Sarma, who did an excellent job of keeping the audience's interest alive in the show. The show got off to a flying start with the kids performing the Hindi, English and Assamese versions of the popular song "We shall overcome". Anjali, Ajay, Amit, Arunabh, Deisha, Devika, Pongkhi, Meghna, Rishov treated the audience to several group items like the entralling Bihu dance, the very cute Bollywood dance "Yeh tara woh

tara" and their unique take on a famous tale from Panchatantra. The drama based on the popular tale of the smart rabbit outwitting the lion got a rousing round of applause from the audience. With all the cast members in the guise of various jungle animals, the kids had as much fun doing the play as the audience had watching them.

There were several individual items like guitar, Assamese, Hindi, English songs and piano performed by these kids. Vick Choudhury performed on the piano and Deesha entranced with her flute performance. Rick and Nick Bhuyan presented songs in their beautiful voices. Simran came all the way from Washington to render an Assamese song and stole our hearts. Priya gave an excellent presentation on her painting skills. Aabir and Jay hosted a well participated Assam trivia for the kids.

On this occasion, the Community Kids Forum launched the first issue of the kids magazine "Expression". The magazine is available at the website www.community-kids.org. Follow the link for Arts and Culture. You can also get other information on the activities of the forum at the website.

It was a proud moment for all the people involved in the Kids forum to see their kids perform so well. The cultural show was followed by a picnic at a nearby park. All the families had pitched in with lots of food.

All in all, it was a great day for the kids and their parents. Everyone had a great time!!

We look forward to seeing greater participation from the community members in this very active group of parents and kids, who take pride in teaching something of our heritage to the kids.

Thanks,

Shravani Sarma

On behalf of Community Kids Forum

Annual Meeting of Asam Sahitya Sabha UK

The annual meet of Asam Sahitya Sabha UK (ASSUK) took place on July 23 at Moat Community College auditorium, Leicester City where literature and culture loving people of various nationalities from all over the UK, Canada, Hong Kong and Assam took part.

The Sabha flag was hoisted by its vice-president Lahori Barthakur. The Sahitya session started with Chiro Senehi Mor Bhasa Janani sung in chorus. President Gagon Hazarika welcomed the distinguished gathering.

The appointed speaker, Prof Rahman of Halifax University, Nova Scotia, Canada delivered an interesting lecture entitled Mathematics as a universal language and its relation to literature.

Kamal Hazarika, the cultural adviser appraised the gathering that there was a controversy in Assam regarding O Mor Aponar Desh the Assamese national anthem composed by the Sahityarathi. People were questioning whether the stanza with Bisari Janamtu Nupuwa Korileyo Pat as adopted by Asam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) or Bisari Nupuwa Janamtu Korileyo Pat believed to be the original composition of Sahityarathi should be the right

version to be used. ASS fraternity should clarify the situation.

In her speech Lahori Barthakur passionately appealed to the audience that Assamese language, literature and culture and tradition were unique and had a distinct identity and everybody must preserve it at any cost wherever we were.

Manjira Chowdhury, the secretary and Protim Choudhury the cultural secretary submitted a report each about the activities of ASSUK in the past year.

A general quiz relating to literature-culture of Assam was conducted by Dwijen Baruah and Manjira Chowdhury which resulted in a draw. There was a session on story telling where story of Lady Godaiva and Beula & Tezimala were demonstrated by Pru Porretta and Kusumika Chatterjee respectively.

The cultural programme began with a Rava sangeet sung in chorus by Samyami Chowdhury, Surovi Lahon, Puspa Hazarika, Nabamallika Chowdhury, Shahida Haque, Manjira Chowdhury, Tarun Chowdhury,

Nilmoni Sikdar, Manoj Baruah, Bilal Hussain, Basab Miri and Dwijen Baruah followed by a solo dance by Rhianne Mahanta, self composed modern songs by Samyami Chowdhury, Jhumur dance by Lorna Miri and Chalisa Kaur, songs by Surovi Lahon, Group Dance (Bihu) by Samyami Chowdhury, Oiki Cheung, Bilal Hussain and Manoj Baruah, Rabha sangeet, Jyoti sangeet and modern song by guest artiste Chandana Deka and then the floor was taken by the invited guest artiste Samar Hazarika who mesmerised the audience by singing Jyoti sangeet, songs by Bhupenda and Jayanta Hazarika and Bihugeet when the audience joined in to dance in addition to his own songs. Samar Hazarika was accompanied by Mitam Barooah (keyboard), Rishi Chowdhury (tabla) and Ranjan Laskar (guitar).

Gagon Hazarika informed the gathering, that the authority of the State Library of Coochbehar had agreed to supply a microfilmed copy of the original manuscripts by Sri Sankardev, Sri Madhavdev, Ananta Kandali, Govinda Misra and other Assamese writers preserved by them, in response to a request by Asam Sahitya Sabha soon.

Pratim Choudhury, conducted and compered the cultural function. Votes of thanks were offered by Manjira Chowdhury

- Rishiraj Hazarika, UK

For Gardeners..

Chandan Mahanta, St. Louis

I am a part-time khetiyok (gardener), among other things :-).

I am pleased to announce that I created a hybrid tita kerela, by cross breeding a variety of semi-wild kerela that I collected seeds of from a vine from the highlands of Jamaica in 2003 with the long Assamese variety. This Jamaican variety kerela (momordica--bitter gourd) fruit is really tiny, about 1" in diameter and about 2" to 2.5" long, with dainty (about 3" diameter) leaves. The fruits are so small that they are not useful for eating. The seeds are black, about 1/4" long X 1/8" wide. I was told by someone that it is seen in Florida also, growing wild.

Just out of curiosity, I pollinated an Assamese kerela female flower with a male Jamaican pollen, and vice versa. One did not work, but the other did; except I was not careful about recording which hybrid fruited, and don't know the exact mix.

Anyway, I grew a new hybrid plant this spring from the harvested seeds. At first, the resulting plant did not indicate any conspicuous characteristic. But soon I began to notice that it is an amazingly prolific plant,

growing like crazy. You can almost see it growing :-). Soon a very robust and wildly growing vine took over the trellis and spread all over nearby ground, tomato plants and overhead trellis that I built for 'laos' (gourds) producing lots and lots of mid-sized (1.5" dia X 3" to 4" long), pale green (more white than green) hybrid fruits. In fact we have so many fruits, I stopped picking them, and they are ripening and cracking up like blood red flowers with yellow petals.

The taste is not extremely bitter, like some of our Assamese little kerela varieties. You can say it is of medium bitterness.

My guess is that it MIGHT become a good garden vegetable for amateur urban gardeners as well as rural khetiyoks in Assam, because the plant is so robust and prolific. It can also become a beautiful screening/landscaping plant at verandas as well as against ugly, blank compound walls, because it grows so fast. The flowers are mildly fragrant, like all kerela plants. But since there are so many flowers, the pleasant aroma could be smelled from a slight distance. That makes me think, it could be a fine urban landscape plant in warm humid areas.



If anyone wants seeds to try let me know. I will be pleased to share some.

Iti bineet,

Sondon kerela-seed mohonto :-)
(With apologies to Johnny Appleseed)

A Request

Shrodheyo Raiz,

I am Sumon Baruah from Guwahati, Assam. Well, i have heard a lot about your continued sincere effort for the uplift of Assam and its cultural, linguistic heritage etc. Living far distanced America, u have really played the role of a great son of Assam's soil for which, we must be proud of you. Please don't take this mail as a flattery one as truth is always truth u know.



Well, like we are also very much interested in the restoration and development of great Sankardev's Satriya culture in the every corner of the world from our limited best. As a part of this effort, we have launched a website <http://www.srimantafoundation.org>

Therefore, I need your timely advice, help and suggestion to fulfill our goodwill more

in future. If u don't mind you can contact me in this telephone number: 9864138160.

Thanking you,

Sumon Baruah, Guwahati

Tarun Gogoi
Chief Minister
Assam.



Dispur
22-6-2005

MESSAGE

I am elated to know that Assam 2005, a community get-together of Assamese people residing in North America will be held at Disney World, Orlando, Florida, USA from July 1-4, 2005.

The holding of such events provide an excellent opportunity for the Assamese people living far off from their native land to exchange pleasantries and views and opinions on various issues vis-à-vis socio-economic, political and cultural firmament with those visiting from Assam. Such interactions go a long way for the Assamese people living abroad to keep abreast with what's happening on the home front.

I am happy to know that cultural events are being organised on the rich heritage and culture of Assam. This will provide an opportunity for the Assamese community living abroad not only to showcase their latent talents but also to put in proper perspective the State's colourful and resplendent cultural mosaic to the people of the States.

I appreciate the efforts of the members of the organising committee for organising such an event to bring together the scattered Assamese community in North America to give them a real taste and fragrance of the soil of Assam. The bonhomie and camaraderie generate by such events help to cement the bond of unity and amity and make us feel proud that we belong to a great country and a land blessed by Mother Nature and inhabited by beautiful people full of warmth and hospitality.

I convey my best wishes for resounding success of the mega event.

(TARUN GOGOI)

Shri Sunil B. Nath
Chairperson,
Organising Committee, Assam 2005
3312 Charleston Road
Tallahassee, FL, 32309, USA

Assam Institute of Management: The Vision that Continues to be Distant Dream

Shantikam Hazarika, Director, AIM



The Assam Institute of Management (AIM) was born out of a felt-need for a professional development institute in the North-eastern region of India. By the end of the nineteen

seventies, the Development process had stalled in the region and a dearth of local talent was felt in every aspect of development, especially in the different functional disciplines of management. In 1983, a few bureaucrats of the State Government envisaged setting up an institute of management in the region. However, it was only in January 1988, that the institute got a concrete shape and was inaugurated on 21 st January that year.

In the beginning, AIM concentrated on management training and consultancy and organizing professional training in Management Accountancy and Company Secretaryship. The response was overwhelming and AIM was able to organise some highly relevant management development programmes involving leading institutes of India like the IIM Calcutta, XLRI Jamshedpur, NITIE Bombay etc. It also assisted the State Government in revival studies for sick public sector undertakings and in taking consultancy works.

Assam Institute of Management was a unique concept; it was probably the only state government sponsored autonomous management institute in the country. Many other state governments desired to emulate its model and the institute was invited by many Central Government departments and organisations to provide inputs in various studies and discussions of national concern.

In the early Nineteen Nineties, two things happened. The original set of bureaucrats, who were instrumental in providing the initial impetus to AIM got dispersed in their career movements and an 'indifferent' breed of bureaucrats got involved with AIM ad-



ministratively. Secondly, the State Government also came under severe financial strain which precluded it from sustaining AIM's developmental endeavours. The Institute took a long time to recover.

The Institute at that stage made some administrative alterations and the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam became the Chairman of AIM Governing body. Simultaneously AIM obtained approval of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), which is the statutory body to regulate professional education in India, to start two-year full-time and three-year part-time Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management (PGDBM) courses. Now these courses have become the mainstay of the institute. In 1997, the institute also became a Chapter of the Indian Institute of Travel and Tourism Management (IITTM), a na-

tional level institute promoted by the Government of India. AIM now also conducts a highly popular one-year PG Diploma in Tourism Management.

Since its inception, AIM has endeavoured to be different and provide something meaningful to society. An institute of Management normally has four-fold tasks: management education, training, research and consultancy. AIM is endeavouring to ensure that it carries these four activities in an effective and relevant manner.

In management education, PGDBM graduates of AIM have been well-accepted by industry. Last year it had multinational corporate houses like Hindustan Lever, ITC, Nestle, Coca-Cola, Pearson etc. coming for campus placement. Today AIM graduates are found virtually in the entire A to Z of Indian corporate sector. Since placement is regarded as an indicator of the success of any management education programme, AIM can say that its efforts in this direction have been satisfactory.

AIM graduates have been trained in organizational activities and sensitized to meet social needs. They have been associated in organizing highly relevant seminars etc.

AIM's Management Education programme is tailored to the needs of the youths of NE region. Almost thirty percent of the efforts are for the self-development of the participants, where AIM develops their communication abilities, assertiveness and self-confidence. The courses are repeatedly updated and redesigned and AIM takes help of its contacts in Institutes in India and abroad for the same.

In training, AIM has so far conducted more than two hundred management development programmes. Apart from various state and central undertakings, AIM has provided in-house programmes for organizations as diverse as Tata Tea, Controller of Defence Accounts, Assam Gas Company etc. We have also conducted in-house programmes for GeoEnpro in Arunachal Pradesh, BRPL in Dhaligaon, State Governments in Kohima, Itanagar and Aizwal. AIM has net worked with almost all leading institutes of

contd. to pg. 6..

Bhaona at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

A bhaona (traditional Assamese play) Rama Vijaya, the great one act play composed by the great apostle Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva was enacted by the students (6-12 years old) of Asom Jatiyo Vidyalaya, Lakhimpur, Assam at the K C Open Air Theatre at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The play is written in the Brajawali language, the lingua of the 15th century literature. The day also coincided with the "tithi"- death anniversary of Mahapurush Madhabadeva, the great disciple of Sankaradeva. The team is in Delhi to take part in the All India Patriotic Songs competition being held at Talkatora Indoor Stadium on 24-25 August.

Inaugurating the bhaona, Dr. Arun Kr. Sarma, Member of Parliament welcomed the group and informed the audience about the great Satriya traditions of Assam and the religious harmony that prevailed there. Noted artist Col. J N Hazarika spoke about the contributions of Mahapurush Madhabadeva and the religious tolerance of Assamese community as a result of the Vaishnavite movement propounded in the 15th century.

The bhaona was enacted by 19 students between age group 9-12. The audience largely from the JNU and Delhi students community and intellectual fraternity appreciated the show and had a glimpse to the rich cultural heritage of Assam. It's after about 10 years such a show of bhaona by school children was organized by Assam Association, Delhi.

The show ended with the rendering of patriotic song "Agni Yugor Firingoti Moi" composed by great folk artist Bishnu Rabha.

- Manoj Kumar Das, New Delhi



contd. from pg. 5..

the country in arranging resource persons for these programmes.

Research is a continuous activity in AIM. Dr. (Ms) Rinalini Kakoty got the best Young Researcher award a few years ago at the IIM Bangalore when Shri Azim Premji gave her the award. She now has a AICTE Fellowship to conduct research on Indian capital Market, one of five such projects awarded on all India basis. Other faculty members like Dr. NN Sarma, Mukulesh Baruah, Gauranga Sarma have regularly presented academic papers in various international conferences held in India.

Consultancy has been the forte of the institute. A landmark project the institute did was the Monitoring and evaluation of the World Bank aided Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agriculture Services Project (ARIASP). Recently AIM prepared a Socio-economic Infrastructure Development Action-plan for the newly formed Bodoland Territory Area

Districts (BTAD). Amongst some of the recent clients have been the Gauhati Stock Exchange, Gauhati High Court, B Barooah Cancer Institute, AMTRON etc.

AIM has always been resource starved. It has continued to be effective within its limited purview, but has not grown like it should have been. It does not have a campus of its own for reasons which are very common in Assam. It has not been able to garner resources from other sources too. However, it has a plot of land given to it by the state government and a project report entailing an expenditure of Rs 35 Crores for a full-fledged campus. When the same would materialize, we are not sure.

It would be unkind if it is not mentioned that as an Institute, the AIM enjoys goodwill that is tremendous, from all quarters. Many of the Assam netters have been very kind to it. For example, Sanjib Bordoloi has sea-mailed more than two hundred books to the institute and every time he is in India, he makes a point to interact with the faculty on course content and updating. Jukti Kalita has made financial contributions which have been matched by his employer. So did Gulab Sarma of Sun Microsystems. These contributions were very fortuitous and helped in upgrading

AIM's computer laboratory. Ranjiv Lahkar took special pains to conduct a four-hour self-development workshop for the AIM students even when he was neck-deep in making arrangements for his own wedding. Himangshu Paul of AIT Bangkok has visited the institute often and has helped to sign an MOU between the two institutes. A large number of netters have visited the institute and nothing gives the institute greater pleasure than to interact with them.

AIM's full potential may not yet been realized and its mission remains unfulfilled. However, its staff and faculty are highly committed and dedicated and within the constraints, they strive to deliver the utmost. That has been the sustaining force behind the institute. With goodwill of its stakeholders and well-wishers, the institute expects to continue to serve society in its humble way for a long time.

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IMDT Repeal – Supreme Court Ruling – The Next

Umesh Sharma, Washington

In a very welcome move the Supreme Court of India has declared the IMDT Act as unconstitutional. It is said that this Act was impeding the identification of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into Assam. Also that all major political parties and student groups such as Asom Gana Parishad, BJP and All Assam Student Union (AASU) had been agitating and demanding its repeal. There had been fears that if illegal immigrants from the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh continued to swamp Assam and other parts of North Eastern India then there is very high possibility of a demand for another partition of India. The next partition could carve out muslim majority areas in the region - containing muslims mostly from Bangladesh. Reports had shown that these illegal immigrants had been settling all along the Indo-Bangla border.

Well, the Supreme Court has taken this decision right after the July bombings in London by Islamic militants and immigrants from Pakistan to Britain. In this light it can perhaps be discerned that the Indian intelligentsia has now developed the courage to call spade a spade and tackle the probable birth of another Islamic nation amidst us. However, the ruling Congress party in India and as well within Assam state has been very ambiguous on this issue. It has been asking for an appeal against the court decision. Instead of taking action against the illegal immigrants – who reportedly number in millions even within Delhi: mostly in the slums along the Yamuna river – it is only speaking of some possibility of wrongly targeting of Indian muslims in Assam as Bangladeshis. Why shouldn't the government take up the task of separating the grain from the chaff – the Indian muslim from the illegal Bangladeshi ones? The Indian muslim organizations in Assam have also welcomed the Supreme Court decision.



Recent news-reports from Bangladeshi press also stress that due to poverty in Bangladesh hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi workers are illegally crossing over to India. They further stress that the removal of IMDT would harass these people. I wonder why Bangladesh does not create opportunities for its people. No-one in India had asked the people in the East Bengal (Bangladesh) to leave India and carve out a new nation - Bangladesh. Since they have gone ahead with that – they must take care of their people and keep them within their borders or reconsider the diplomatic possibility of re-joining Indian nation. I wonder whether the now-developing India would ever welcome the possibility of being burdened by another poverty ridden state (Bangladesh) if ever Bangladesh were to make such an offer.

As was recently brought to light

Assam is far behind in distributing Voter Identity Cards. However, in meeting its targets for issuing them care should be taken to ensure that the cards are not distributed blindly to all who ask for them. Prominent members of the Assamese community must come forward (not just the news-media) to monitor the progress in identifying the illegals, jailing them and deporting them. Reports of collusion of Border Security Force guards at the border who take bribes to let illegals in must be examined and appropriate steps be taken to stem the corruption.

The issue must not be allowed to die a natural death since the agitation demanding the repeal of IMDT has achieved its end.



Activists of AASU are rejoicing in Guwahati on 12-07-05 after the Supreme Court's verdict to repeal the IM (DT) Act. The student organization along with other political parties had been staging numbers of demonstration and protest program in Assam in demand of repeal of the Act since long time.

Photo by www.UBPhotos.com used with permission

Abani Hazarika, the unsung hero of Assam's Cricket

I had the opportunity to play cricket against the unsung hero of Assam's cricket world in 1951 & '52. I was then in Cotton College & were playing against the NF Railway. They had all the top cricketers of that time & to name few were: Abanida, Badalda (Badal Thakur), Aswini Rajbanshi, Guha Thakurata. In our team we had too quite a few top players like Girinda (Barua), Nilimoyda (Chowdhury), Dipuda (Chowdhury), Gandu (hardly we knew his real name), Chowdhury (forgot his first name, he was from PanBazar, now may be somewhere in UK). Since then I never forgot Abanida as a very stylish, successful cricketer. Whenever I go to Guwahati I often meet another sport doyen of Assam our beloved Pulinda (Das). His house is very near to my brother-in-law's house in Uzan Bazar, Guwahati. Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to meet Abanida for a long time. Thanks to Rini Kakati for writing about Abanida, the unsung hero of Assam's Cricket World. - Mahesh Baishya



Abani Hazarika

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The ASA Newsletter is published monthly. Sanjib Bhuyan, NJ, on behalf of Assam Society of America, has published this issue of ASA newsletter. The editors are Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa), Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), Prasenjit Chetia (Atlanta, Georgia), Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Editor-In-Chief), Symanta Saikia (Wichita, Kansas), Vavani Sarmah (Secane, Pennsylvania), Ujjal Pathak (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Umesh Sharma (Cambridge, Massachusetts), and Ram Sarangapani (Houston, Texas). Alpana Sarangapani (Houston, Texas) is new Editor-In-Chief, from this issue. The ASA Executive Committee is composed of Sanjib Bhuyan, President (Franklin Park, New Jersey), Utpal Brahma, Vice President (Burlington, New Jersey), Ganesh Bora, General Secretary (Lake Alfred, Florida), Probal Tabhildar (Kendall Park, New Jersey), Mantu Baishya (Omaha, Nebraska), Kedar Bhuyan (Mays Landing, New Jersey), and Sangeeta Duorah (California).

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