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Profile of the Month

Dr. Robindra Nath Khaund

Dr. Robindra Nath Khaund, a prominent and long time member of the North American Assamese community, is one of the forerunners, who arrived in the USA long before a majority of present members in the diaspora. In a world of rapid jet age travel, it may seem strange to think that almost half a century ago, it was not unusual for an Indian student aspiring higher education in the USA to spend several weeks on a boat to reach its shining shore. But that's exactly how, Dr. Robin Khaund, born and brought up on the banks of Bhogdoi river in Jorhat, Assam, came for post-graduate studies in Biochemistry at Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas in 1960.

An Ex-Cottonian, Dr. Khaund completed his MS degree in Biochemistry and returned to Assam in 1963 to join the Veterinary Department of Government of Assam as a Nutrition Officer. A year later, he joined the Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Jorhat as a researcher. He got married in 1964 and then returned to the USA with his wife Gouri Khaund to pursue a Ph.D program in Biochemistry at Texas A&M University. After obtaining his Ph.D. degree, he had a brief stint as a post-doctoral fellow in the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. In 1972, he joined the Methodist

with full responsibility for all laboratory work related to In Vitro Fertilization (IVF).

Dr. Khaund together with wife, Gouri (now deceased), raised two very successful sons. The older, Dr. Razib Khaund, MD is a recognized physician in sports medicine and



Dr. Robindra Nath Khaund (second from left) with family members at son Sanzib's Wharton graduation ceremony

Hospital in Brooklyn, NY, where he worked a number of years in the Department of Pathology, moving up to become the Laboratory Director of Immunology & Endocrinology. In 1990 he joined Brooklyn Fertility Center & Bio-Tech Laboratory as Director and continued in that position until 1998 when he joined Manhattan Diagnostic Laboratory as its Director. He is currently continuing in that position. Additionally, Dr. Khaund is associated with New Hope Fertility Center in Manhattan

orthopedics in Rhode Island (cited by a medical journal as the best in his subject in Rhode Island state) and serves as Assistant Professor in Sports Medicine on the faculty of Brown University. His younger son, Sanzib Khaund, is an electrical engineering graduate from Cornell University and has a Wharton MBA in Finance & Marketing. Sanzib currently works in Microsoft management in the capacity of a Director in Redmond, Washington in charge of Engineering and Marketing groups. Recently, Sanzib had a rare opportunity to meet and make a personal presentation to Bill Gates.

Dr. Robin Khaund is an ex-president of the Assam Society of America (formerly "ASOM SANGHA") and wishes it well.



The IVF laboratory at the New Hope Fertility Center in Manhattan, New York. Photo source: newhopefertility.com

By Umesh C. Tahbilar, West Windsor, New Jersey

A Loving Tribute to Mahendra Borthakur

And you know what to do once recording is over, right? Deuta would inevitably ask me that same question every time he dropped me at the All India Radio station building in Chandmari where I performed as a child artist in several Assamese radio plays between the ages of nine and twelve. I would roll my eyes at him and say I



know, as I would skip up the long flight of stairs to the recording studio. Of course I knew what to do when recording was over. I was to sit in Borthakur Uncle's room till Deuta came to pick me up again. I always looked forward to the days when I had a recording. Not only would I get to miss a whole afternoon of school, but also once recording was over I would get to have my most favorite treat- a 'labanga' and a bottle of Gold Spot at the radio station canteen. For that is where Uncle would take me while we waited for Deuta to come pick me up.

I remember Borthakur Uncle from even

before that, when he and his wife, three sons and Aita, his mother lived just a block away from our house in Chandmari. He and Deuta have been friends for ever, so the two families socialized on a regular basis. But my favorite memories are of the times after I was accepted as a child artist by All India Radio.

By then we had moved to the Gauhati University campus and were no longer neighbors. So it was always good to see Uncle. Deuta too looked forward to catching up on some social time with his old friend while dropping and picking me up.

During my visit to India last summer, it was with great hesitance that Deuta could bring himself to tell me that Borthakur Uncle was battling throat cancer. Deuta wanted to spare me the pain of the news during my short visit, but knowing how fond I was of Uncle, he knew that if I wanted to go see him, I had to do it then. I will never forget the big smile that lit up

Uncle's face as he realized who had come to see him. "Majoni, tumi ketiya ahila?" All of a sudden I was ten years old again, swinging my legs as I sat on a table in his office, waiting for him to sign all those 'silly files' so that we could go to the canteen.

It was not an easy visit- the most difficult part for me was to see how the gentle, familiar voice I loved so much had become harsh and raspy, a clear indication of the disease that slowly consuming him.

As I waited for the long distance call to go though to his house in Ambikagiri Nagar this morning, the day of his Adhya Sradha, to talk to Aunty, I remembered how when Deuta and I left their house last year, something had made me go back from the gate to the doorway where Uncle was standing, and touch his feet. And how Uncle had hugged me and said "Majoni tumi imaan daangor hoi gola?". I had held back my tears and made my voice extra firm as I promised him that I would come see him first thing on my next visit to India. As Aunty's voice came over the line saying, "Nandini, we tried our best to save him, but couldn't" I came back to the present with a jolt. Her loss is so much bigger compared to the rest of us. The Telegraph has described Uncle as the 'Titan of Assamese drama'. It's funny that this time I cannot even remember all his numerous achievements and contribution to the field of Assamese drama and literature. To me he will always be the gentle and loving person who was Deuta's best friend and my favorite Uncle. All I can remember right now are little things like how he would always come into the studio towards the end of recording, even if I were in a play that he was not directing or performing in. How he would talk to my director, play back some of my scenes and make sure that I had pronounced all the words right. How he would pretend to take me seriously as I would suggest he should sign all his files without reading them so that we could get to the canteen earlier.... Those are things that will always remain fresh in my memory as will the taste of the warm juicy 'labanga' in the little canteen behind the radio station.

On this day of his Adhya Sradha, I join Uncle's family, friends and thousands of his fans in praying for the eternal peace of his soul.

*By Nandini Borah Das, Centennial, Colorado
December 20, 2005*

Birth: September 1, 1935, Mohkhuti Tea Garden, Sibsagar

Death: December 9, 2005, Guwahati

Wrote more than 70 plays in Assamese. These plays have been broadcast by All India Radio, Guwahati, by mobile theater groups and on stage in hundreds of places in Assam.

Published Novels: udaxi xondhya, begom para, beliful, brihonolla, najma adi bohutO, dikhOi nOir bali, etc.

Short Story Collections: mo~khuti sidingot rati puwabolOi, khel, etc.

Children's Books: poniya xOnor dex, etc.

Plays: jonmo, aho~tgurir notun bat, xipa, boliya hati, mukhyomontri, majnixar sio~r

Source: Santanu Kaushik Barua, *xahityor year book, Journal Emporium, Nalbari, 2003*

America's Rick & Nick

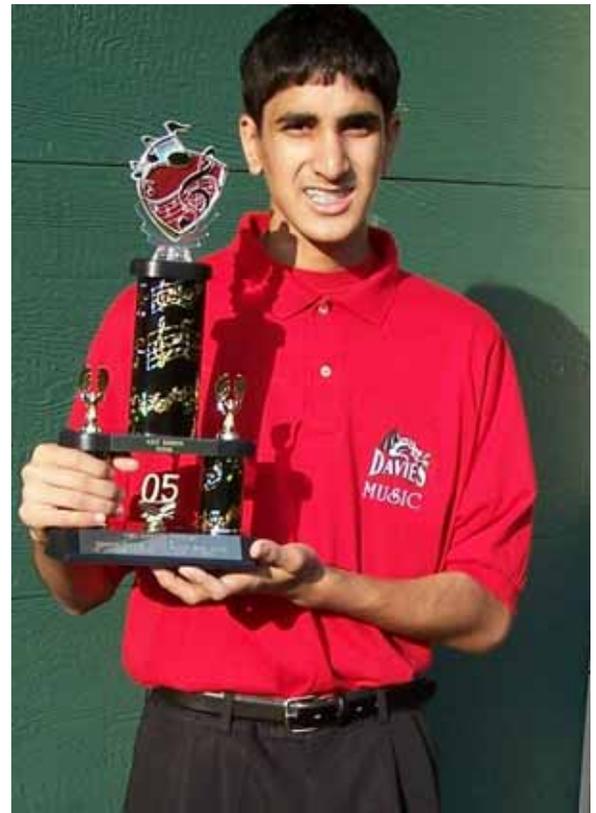
Fifteen year-old American-born Assamese twins Rupak (Rick) and Neepak (Nick) Bhuyan of Atlantic City, New Jersey, have produced their third audio CD. Unlike the first two which were renditions of well-known Assamese songs, this CD is entirely composed of songs in English. Rick and Nick sing every song exceptionally well with their melodious voices.

To keep their Assamese parents happy, Rick and Nick will produce an Assamese CD in the near future. They have already recorded seven Assamese songs for the upcoming CD. The CD will be released during Rongali Bihu, 2006. I have a preview copy of the CD and I am sure that it will gain as much acclaim as the previous CDs.

Let me join the Assamese community in wishing a big success to Rick and Nick.

A final request from Rick and Nick. In case you have written one or more Assamese songs, but have not recorded them yet, please feel free to send the lyrics to Rick & Nick at Ricknick789@yahoo.com. Rick & Nick will really appreciate that.

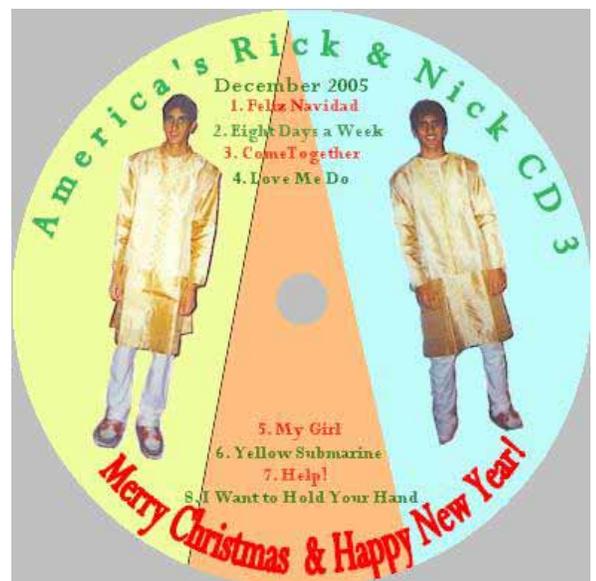
By Jugal Kalita, Colorado Springs, Colorado



Nick displaying Best Vocalist of the Year 2005 Award at a Regional Meet in New Jersey



Rick is receiving the highest music award, Musician of the Year 2005 at a Regional Meet



Latest album release:
America's Rick & Nick CD 3

Anup Kumar Das

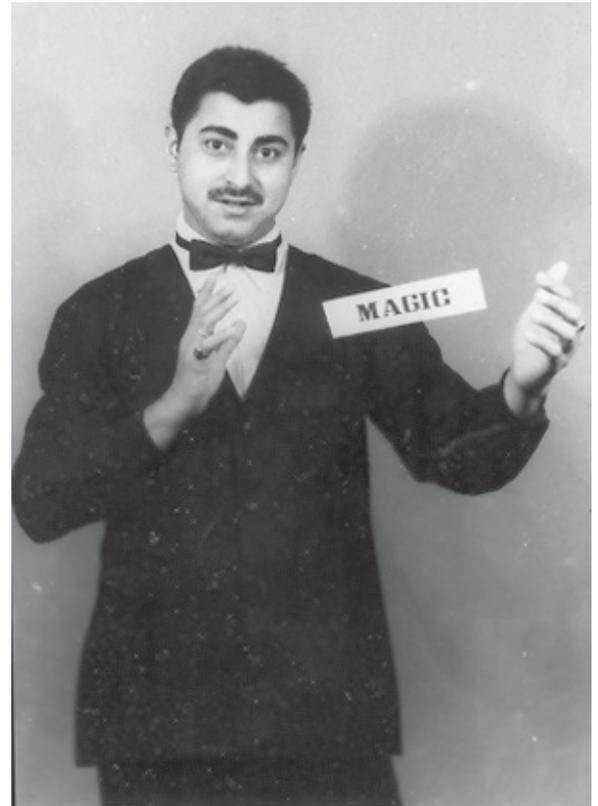
A magician in the making

He is a freelance journalist by profession, yet a magician by life's passion. Anup Kumar Das of Guwahati has been interested in magic for quite some time. Sri Das has performed magic shows on various stages including commercial stage shows, birthdays, promotional shows, trade shows and performed close-up magic. He has even performed magic on Doordarshan Kendra, Guwahati, PPC Northeast and broadcasted a talk on magic on All India Radio, Guwahati. Sri Das is a member of International Brotherhood of Magicians (USA), Goodwill Magic Club (Lucknow), Academy of Magical Sciences (Thiruvananthapuram) and founder president of The Academy of Magical Arts (Assam) which happens to be the first government registered magic academy in Northeast. In addition, he has published a book *Zador Prithibi*, under NL Publication and pro-

posed publications like *Xomai Xafolya Aru Zeeban* (Assam Book Hive) and *Zado Xiko Aha* (Banlata).

In 2004, at a "Maya Mayam" convention held in Hyderabad, he received the second best National Award on writing on a magic-based topic. The topic was titled "Magic and its Presentation". Sri Das has been learning magic from Edward Authur Morris of San Francisco who was the past International President of IBM. Currently, he is also learning it from Ted Winkel, a professional magician from Holland.

Sri Das holds a BA degree in English Literature and Post Graduate Diploma



in English Language Teaching, both from Guwahati University.

We wish him A Happy Magical Life!

By Satyam Bhuyan, Ames, Iowa

Jahnu Barua

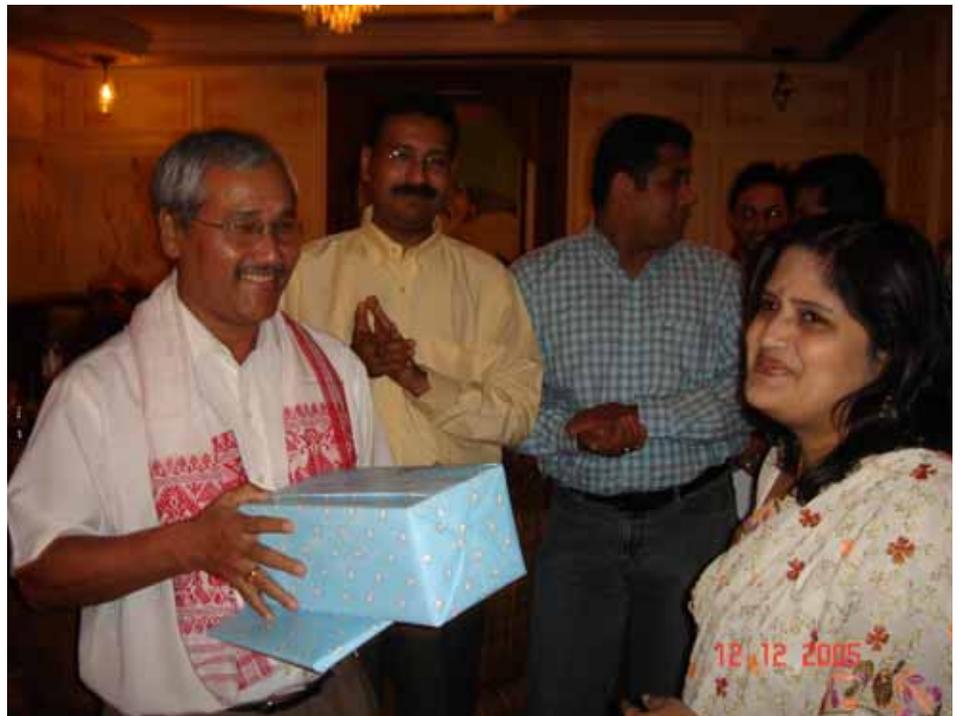
Felicitated by

Asom Somaj

Dubai

Mr Jahnu Barua, prize-winning film director of Assam has been felicitated by Asom Somaj, Dubai on 12 December 2005. The felicitation program was attended by about 35 Assamese people living in Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi. Mr Barua was visiting Dubai to attend the inaugural ceremony of Asom Somaj. Mr Barua was visiting Dubai in connection with screening of his film *Maine Gandhi Ko Nahi Mara* at the 2nd Dubai International Film Festival.

By D K Borah, Asom Somaj, Dubai



Looking Back at Infocom 2005

Just came back from Kolkata where I had the opportunity to attend "Infocom 2005", the country's largest information technology show organized by Nasscom and Business World, an ABP publication. If I had known before that I have to submit a report, I would have jotted down everything as best as a shorthand typist can do. Now looking back, these are the main topics that held my imagination.



This is the participation age

"IT Everyday for Everyone" was the theme of the first day events wherein all the speakers were of the same mind in emphasizing that the present age is the "participation age". Yester-years were the technology and infrastructure age described as the "Information Age", but now that all have been put into place, it is for the people to participate. Unless society as a whole comes forward to participate in the IT advantages, bridging the digital divide would be impossible. The example that was cited in this context was the fishermen class. They can benefit by getting the weather information from the information kiosk before venturing out into the sea. So participation age is all about access.

Intel Developing Community PC to suit Indian Villages

The global chip giant Intel is coming up with a low-cost and low-energy community PC to suit India's villages. Even though the business perspective is to target the rural markets, yet this will help greatly in diminishing the gap between the urban population and the rural population as regards information technology. The community PC is expected to cost less than ten thousand rupees in the Indian rural market. Besides the regular features, the PC will also have wireless Internet access in rural and remote areas and is designed to run at 80 volts instead of the conventional 240 volts. Also its platform can work both in AC or DC line.

Sun Microsystems making source code open

Sun Microsystems is giving away their software technologies for free. It started a decade

ago with Java, a software platform where developers can write their own application, which would run in any Java, enabled device. The result- a community of Java programmers evolved. There are more than 4.5 million Java developers, 2.5 billion Java devices and millions of Java powered personal computers and mobile phones. Sun also gave the away the source code of its prized operating system the "Solaris" to the community for open sourcing. Surprisingly since making it open, Sun has registered more than 2.5 million downloads. Sun a firm believer of "sharing creates communities and communities create markets" has gained significantly by this move. But business tactics do differ, while sun has gained by open sourcing, SAP has gained by strictly adhering to licensing.

Convergence is finally happening

Convergence is the merging of personal computing, telecommunications and television into a single technology platform. The market for PDA's (personal digital assistants) for which there was a great demand in the late nineties, started vanishing as one can get similar functions in a cell phone often with a camera thrown in. In fact, cell phones are leading the convergence push by incorporating digital cameras, web browsers, TV or radio receivers. This is just one example of convergence. A year ago, convergence finally started to take place and digitalization began creating products that could be best categorized as MFDs (Multi-Functional Devices) or to put in one word "all in one". Wouldn't it be wonderful, if on receiving an e-mail, we clicked on one button in the screen and actually got connected to the sender by phone. Convergence has produced the biggest explosion in innovation since the dawn of Internet and we are likely to witness a new digital world emerging.

WiMAX is the hot wireless solution

WiMAX is the abbreviation for "Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access", a standards based wireless technology that provides high throughput broadband connections over long distances. It can be loosely termed as "wireless braoadband". WiMAX is a wireless metropolitan area network technology (MAN) with which you can create a network of your

own. Services like the emergency service "911" of the United States could be possible in India using this technology. Wouldn't it be nice to call this type of service to report a heart attack and immediately have paramedics with an ambulance at your door. WiMAX can also be used for high-speed enterprise connectivity for business.

"No disruption should be allowed in IT" says West Bengal Chief Minister

West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee reiterated several times that he would not allow agitation-inflicted disruptions in the IT sector. The chief minister's firm promise to protect the IT sector of West Bengal drew wide applause. He also notified that the government of West Bengal has acquired around 750 acres of land for the IT industry and that technology parks will be set up. He also told the gathering that about one-lakh seventy five thousand IT professionals will be required as a result. So "get into IT" is what one would say to the students.

KPO is the order of the day

Business Process Outsourcing is a thing of the past, now it is Knowledge Process Outsourcing. In fact, business process outsourcing has led to knowledge processing outsourcing. Knowledge intensive business process requires outsourcing of the knowledge workers. A knowledge worker is the order of the day. India is all set to emerge as the knowledge process-outsourcing destination. When foreign companies outsourced most of their process to be developed in India due to low cost, Indian software designers were not only making the software but also gaining knowledge from the business process so much so that India has been able to earn a lot from off-shore knowledge process outsourcing. KPO would become a 12 billion dollars sector in India by 2010.

Conclusion

These are my reflections of "INFOCOM 2005". Other than these. I must say that Hyatt Regency truly rose to the occasion in hosting the conference. Also, the exhibition at salt lake stadium grounds was of a very high standard where hardware and software giants participated in it. My personal view of Kolkata-while marketing is fun in Kolkata, the smog in the city is too much for us to bear. I like our salubrious township.

*By Roshmi Choudhuy, AM (IT),
Numaligarh Refinery Limited, Assam*

Indian Democracy & Polity

Observations reported in the Dec 23, 2005 issue of the Assam Tribune made by James Michael Lyngdoh, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, on the current state of Indian polity need to be critically analyzed. His assertion that the rot in the polity results from electoral politics of division is indeed a sad reality. However, for anyone to conclude that perhaps democracy itself has done more harm than good to the country would be unwise. More or less harm than good is a subjective quantification that is subject to debate. Distortions and mutilations of democracy- not democracy *per se*-are the root causes of the malaise that Mr. Lyngdoh is rightly concerned about.



Let us not forget that democracy is a form of government *of the people, for the people, and by the people*. If freedom and dignity of human beings are the adhered values of life, democracy as a means of a civil society governance is an ideal concept. Its place is well above anything that has been tried before in history, including monarchy, proletariat dictatorship and right wing dictatorship. The unfortunate fact, however, is that democracy is now abused in India.

The purported linkage between Indian democracy and capitalism to explain the rot in question is also uncalled for. There is no denying the fact that capitalism has its own problems with respect to distribution of wealth. Conversely, it is also true that generally even the poorest do not go hungry in the USA which is the hot bed of capitalism. The rot in the polity in India is independent of its neo-capitalism. There is no such comparable rot in the USA which is an older democracy than India and which is ardently wedded to the concept of capitalism as the system of its economy.

In order to arrest the rot and decline of the polity, clearly, the basic prerequisites for a

successful democracy must be satisfied and firmly cultivated. Otherwise, anything including anarchy or robber capitalism mixed with distorted democracy is possible. Education and enlightenment of the voters, laws to safeguard the integrity of the nation, and resolute implementation of the rule of law must be intact for a healthy democracy.

Democracy can not be an excuse for fractures along linguistic, religious, ethnic lines. Any attempt at such division must be stopped with iron hands lest the democracy and national integrity may not survive. Above all, the role of the nation's intelligentsia in achieving the required mindset can not be overestimated. Unfortunately, the intelligentsia may not have performed as well in post-independent India as they did before. They have the sobering responsibility to uphold the moral scruples of the society and to participate in the democratic process with vigor.

A system and the rule of law is above any single person. Lyngdoh's implication of the late prime minister India Gandhi's coercion of the democratic institutions including the supreme court may be true. One may question though why whatever damage a single person did could not be reversed by successive governments that came and went after her demise.

Perhaps the honest and decent intelligentsia who essentially and implicitly bear the heavy burden of defending the democracy from cracks has become so reticent and apathetic that the unscrupulous leaders in the society without being confronted and checked have usurped the reins of the nation, heading towards a social catastrophe. These leaders will not stop at anything in their lust for money and power by unfair means. It is not unknown that there is a nexus between these political leaders and the businessmen for mutual benefits. The only hope and reprieve is a set of relevant laws and its resolute implementation through the judicial process to stop that trend. However, without having a minimum threshold of honesty and integrity in the society, that too is not expected to work out. It is a difficult call to say whether destiny is moving India as a nation state. Personally, I have no doubt that all of today's troubles will eventually be ironed out. It may not happen in this generation, but it surely will.

By Umesh C. Tahbildar, West Windsor, New Jersey

**Assamese Get-Together 2006
San Francisco, CA**

The Assamese community of San Francisco Bay Area, cordially invites you to Assamese Get-together 2006, a joyous cultural celebration by people with ties to Assam, on July 1st and 2nd, 2006 at the Marriott Hotel, San Mateo, CA.

Let's celebrate the unique cultural heritage of Assam with our active participation and make it a memorable event.

Picturesque Bay Area will provide you endless opportunity to explore the cultural and geographical diversity of the Golden State and make your vacation worth every moment.

**Let's Make
Assamese Get-Together 2006
a Grand Success**



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), Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Co-Editor-In-Chief), Vavani Sarmah (Secane, Pennsylvania), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Umesh Sharma (Cambridge, Massachusetts), Alpana Sarangapani (Co-Editor-In-Chief, Houston, Texas), Nandini Bora Das (Centennial, Colorado) and Ram Sarangapani (Houston, Texas). 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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