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P O S O O W A

News & Events of the Assamese People Living Around the World
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Mr. Mahesh Baishya of Dublin, California, recently visited Europe, including France in December 2006. Mr. Baishya is an avid artist and spent bulk of his time sketching, painting and taking photographs. Here is a color painting of the Louvre in Paris. A sketch of the same scene and a photograph are inside this issue of Posoowa.



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Jugal Kalita Wins Another NSF Grant

During the Fall of 2006, Jugal Kalita, an Associate Professor at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, was awarded a grant of half of a million dollars by the National Science Foundation, for a period of five years. Jugal is also the Principal Investigator of a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a total of \$400,000 awarded in late August 2004, for a period of four years. The purpose of the grants is to foster the development of well-qualified US manpower in the areas of Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics (CSEM). This is done by awarding scholarships to deserving students so they may:



- spend less time working
- continue to excel in college by focusing on studies
- develop learning, communication, and related skills to become better potential employees, employers, and leaders, and
- develop inter-personal and communication skills by mentoring their peers.

The latest award demographics are as follows:

One of the objectives of Jugal's team is to build a cohesive core community of scholarship recipients so that other students in the mostly commuter college can coalesce around it, co-constructing formal and informal communities of practice to enhance the overall social and learning environment. To meet this objective, Jugal as the PI, along with the Director of Student Support of the College,

meet the students as a group in a monthly meeting to which they invite local industry, community, and academic leaders who give motivational presentations. Scholarship recipients also engage in competitive activities such as design and business plan contests. Each student also takes a leadership post in one of the more than a dozen student organizations in the College. The students also report on their mentoring, coaching, and community activities. The NSF scholarships have been in place at the EAS College for 22 months as of December, 2006. Assuming we have 40 recipients on an average at any time, the total number of hours the scholars have volunteered is at least 11,310 hours.

Year	No of Recipients	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	Asian	White (%)	Female (%)	Average Financial Need
2004-5	40	14	21%	10	50	42	\$8951
2005-6	41	7.3	24.4%	7.3	61	29	\$7,764
2006-7	38	7.9	21%	7.9	60.5	23.7	\$9,140

Over the past three years (2004-2006), the NSF scholarships at UCCS have supported 65 CSEM students, impacting their lives academically, socially, and professionally. Among the scholarship recipients, the retention plus graduation rate is 93.4%. This is considerably higher than the 61% retention rate for the college.

The Director of Student Support at the college and Jugal have found internships for many scholarship recipients, and those who have graduated have secured positions in such companies as Intel, Agilent, MITRE, and Verizon. The purpose of the NSF grants that we have been awarded is to increase the number of technical graduates in the US so that this country remain the technology leader in the face of significant global competition. Jugal relishes his role in this thrust for continued technical supremacy for the US.

By Babul Gogoi, New Delhi

ASAF Gains IRS Advance Ruling

Members of Assam Society of America (ASA) had always felt the need for a federally recognized non-profit organization to facilitate and invigorate the charitable activities that its members take. ASA itself was registered as a New Jersey non-profit a few years ago, by its then President Dr. Sanjib Bhuyan. However, since members of ASA are located nationwide, it was still felt necessary to obtain Federal non-profit recognition. In addition, ASA wanted to keep its options open regarding the kinds of activities in which it can potentially participate in the future.



Nomal C Dutta

Assam Society of America Foundation, Inc., was founded in 2004 in New Jersey under the leadership of Mukul Chowdhary and Nomal Dutta, and help from a lot of others. Mr. Chowdhary and Mr. Dutta worked hard for two years to obtain exempt

status from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code.

It is customary for IRS to place new organizations under an Advanced Ruling or probationary period. The Advanced Ruling period for ASAF, Inc., will end on December 31, 2008. During this period, the organization is required to fully articulate its standards, procedures, or other means for carrying out its charitable activities. It is also required to describe in greater detail its sources of funds and the nature of its contemplated expenses. Hence, in a recent letter, Mr. Nomal Dutta, cautioned that the "next two years are very crucial for us." He continued, "Each of us must accept this as an honorable shared responsibility and a challenge to keep ASAF in good shape."



Mukul Chowdhary

The first Board Meeting for ASAF was held on November 17, 2006 in Manalapan, New Jersey. It was a productive meeting. The attendees were Mukul Chowdhary, Jayanta Thakuria, Utpal Brahma, and Nomal Dutta. Three board of directors Mahesh Baishya, Jugal Kalita and Mantu Baishya were contacted via telephone. Nomal Dutta

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*A Community Get-together of Assamese Abroad
in
Ramada Inn, Laurel, Maryland, USA
June 29th, 30th & July 1, 2007*

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of Organizing Committee**
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Dear Axomiya Raiz,

On behalf of the organizing committee for Assam 2007, it gives us great pleasure to invite you to spend some fun filled and quality time this summer with your family and friends. Assam 2007 will be held over the June 30th weekend: June 29th, June 30th and July 1st in Laurel, Maryland. This community organized event will be held at the Ramada Inn, Laurel, MD; which is only ½ hour drive from Washington D.C.

Assam 2007 is part of an on-going effort to bring together the scattered Assamese community in North America for a celebration of our heritage and culture. In addition to showcasing the creative talents of the Assamese artists in North America, there will be sparkling performances by a few renowned artists from North America and Assam. We are confident that your presence and participation will add to the exuberance of the greater Assamese Diaspora!

Please plan for extra couple days so that you can make it a true vacation for the summer by visiting Washington D.C. and Baltimore Inner Harbor also ½ hour. There are many attractions to enjoy in these two places including the National aquarium.

More details to follow and we are looking forward to seeing you in Laurel, MD.

Sincerely,

Niranjan Brahma/ Prabin Dutta
Chairperson/Co-Chairperson
Organizing Committee, *Assam 2007*

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was nominated and unanimously re-elected as the President of the corporation. The names of the following additional office bearers were also nominated and unanimously elected: Jugal Kalita, Vice-President (Colorado), Utpal Brahma, Treasurer/Secretary (New Jersey), Jayanta Thakuria, Board of Director (New Jersey), Mahesh Baishya, Board of Director (California) and Mantu Baishya, Board of Director (Nebraska).

The membership in the organization was divided into four categories: regular member (\$50.00 annual fee), life member (\$1,000.00 fee, payable in five yearly installments of \$200.00),

student member (\$25.00 annual fee), patron member for life (\$2,500.00 one time lump sum payment). Several committees were also formed for fund-raising, membership drive, constitutional affairs and election supervision.

ASAF is open for business. Please contact Nomal C. Dutta or Utpal Brahma for any comments, suggestions or if you wish to participate in the charitable activities that ASAF has already started to organize. The mailing address is P.O. Box 175, Englishtown, New Jersey, 07726 USA.

By Jugal Kalita, Colorado Springs

Diasporic Indian, Assamese Diaspora and Networking

Wahid Saleh, The Netherlands

Wahid Saleh is a social worker and retired IT professional. He lives in the Netherlands. He was recently awarded the Pravasi Community Award 2007 for his services to the Indian diaspora and Indian causes.



In the November 2006 issue of Posoowa, Mr. Saleh gave a brief history of the India diaspora from pre-historic times to the present. He also introduced us to the nature of the Assamese diaspora and the responsibilities they have toward Assam.

What has Assam to offer?

For example in the Internet site of Department of Industries and Commerce I came across a well outlined paper with the Title Vision 2020 <http://industryassam.nic.in/vision2020.html>

Assam ...

- Will have one of the best infrastructure in Asia to facilitate the largest volume of trade between India, China, Bangladesh and the ASEAN countries
- Capital Guwahati will be the hub of all trade and commercial activities in South East Asia
- Will be the model for development of the states in India as well as the neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh
- Will contribute significantly to India's exports and will be one of her principal foreign exchange earners
- Will receive more tourists than Singapore

This vision may be construed as Utopia but when it is envisioned in a rapidly integrating global economic system, the fantasy assumes the shape of an imminent reality.

Assam has been endowed with:

- Rich mineral resources, many of which have not been exploited
- Abundant forest resources with many ethnic products which are unique to the region
- The largest perennial water system in India in the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, with immense potential in the areas of energy, irrigation and transportation
- One of the most fertile stretches of land in India along the Brahmaputra valley, which is suitable for the cultivation of

a wide variety of cash and food crops on a commercial basis

- Attractive tourism potential in the area of nature tourism as well as cultural heritage
- Easy access to skilled labour at a reasonable cost

I did download the 23MB pdf file but I could not find the action plan – how Assam is going to realise the above? What are the checks and balances? How long it is going to take? What is the budget? If the action plan is already included then there should be an easy reference to it. It was not there. This is a generic problem in Assam. Government ministers and officials very often make vision statements that are totally unrealistic which one can only believe if you smoke something illegal. This has to stop. Ministers and officials have to be held accountable for what they say. For this you don't need to interact with the NRA's. If and when the roadmap 2020 is known then an advisory council could be formed where the NRA with the required qualifications and experience could participate.

There should be consistent, reliable easy to find information about Assam on the net. There are three different websites of Government of Assam:

- www.assam.gov.in - The Official Website of the Government of Assam
- <http://assamgov.org> - The Official Website of the Government of Assam
- <http://assam.nic.in> - Dynamic Portal from NIC Assam State

Some of the links within the web-site do not function. Is somebody held accountable for this? Certainly not! This is Assam - our beloved Assam of today.

My personal experience with government organisations from Assam is very negative. If you contact the government offices you don't get any reply or the promised information never arrives. On top of that sometimes the contact telephone numbers are outdated or the e-mail accounts do not function correctly.

A few years back, to promote Assamese culture, I made arrangements with well-known organisations in the Netherlands to invite Assamese Satriya and Bihu dance groups to the Netherlands. In my discussion at Guwahati lots of promises were made. But when I went back to the Netherlands, in spite of repeated request I did not get a single reply from them.

The same is the case with promotion of tourism to Assam. The private sector is very alert and takes pride in their work and does their best to promote Assam. I wish I could say the same about the government organisations. I am happy to be able to come in contact with people like Mr. Ashish Phookan of Jungle Travels. Last November a well-known travel-writer from the Netherlands visited the North East. After arriving Kolkata, he realised that the promised permits to Nagaland and Manipur were not ready. He phoned to me requesting if I could help him to visit Assam. I contacted Mr Ashish Phookan of Jungle Travels and Brahmaputra Navigation Company. Although he was not in Assam, within a day he chalked

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Chemistry

Nagendranarayan Choudhury

Translated from Assamese by Jukti Kalita

Jukti Kalita, a marketing professional with a Ph.D. from Columbia university has translated several Assamese stories to English. Here, we continue with his translation of the story called "Roxayon".



Upon hearing the charges, Dr. Phukan led the inspector into his laboratory, and showed the boy (old man) who was lying prostrate strapped to a bed with eyes protectively covered by a pair of thick goggles. The boy was receiving a new treatment of ultraviolet rays. The doctor vehemently but very politely disputed all the charges. He tried to enlighten the inspector on the scientific nature of his experiment and how he achieved the unachievable and managed to reverse the effect of aging beyond anybody's wildest imaginations. The inspector saw that the laboratory had several human skeletons and bones of monkeys. In addition, he saw a variety of equipment for making drugs. There were also vials, jars and bottles full of drugs, chemicals, leafs and barks of plants, animal tissues and body parts, as well as other ingredients that go into making them. There were also many scissors, knives and surgical instruments. The inspector did not spend much time at the laboratory, but asked Dr. Phukan to report at the *thana* in the afternoon.

The patient and Ahbagiri were brought to the *thana* immediately by the *sipahis* who had accompanied the inspector. Both were questioned at length. The inspector was incensed when the patient seemed to completely corroborate the unbelievable story of the doctor. The boy, the officer thought, was coaxed and coached by the doctor to lie. So he asked a subordinate of his, a police constable to punish the boy hoping that such a treatment will scare him sufficiently to tell the truth and thus implicate the doctor. The boy started crying loudly and did not change the story despite the harsh slaps that landed on his face again and again. There was no compliant against the monk, but the inspector confiscated the hundred rupees that he found on him, the money that the doctor had given him in return for the age old Ayurveda *puthi*. Not happy with his responses either, the officer kept him in jail for 24 hours.

The patient saw his nephew in the *thana* and asked for help with bail if arrested. However, the nephew who did not believe a wee bit of the rejuvenation 'gimmick' called his uncle a cheat. He complained to the police officer: "Sir, look at this impostor. He is a cheat and wants to swindle my uncle's estate. He is trying to act his way to prosperity." The inspector rebuked the young boy and ordered him to shut up. Around this time doctor Phukan arrived at the police station. The changed condition of the patient immediately caught his attention. He felt encouraged and amazed at seeing that within only two hours since he was brought to the thana for interrogation, the patient seemed to have grown older by several years.

"What is the reason behind this reversal?"- the doctor mused. "Is it the treatment of the last few days that's bearing its fruit somewhat belatedly? Or, is it the fear of the police that has brought about this reversal? The boy seems terrified of the po-

lice's questioning and the pounding he has received at the hand of the constable."

Without any substantive proof that the doctor was lying about the effect of his unusual experiment or was engaged in a deliberate deception the trio of the doctor, Ahbagiri and the patient were allowed to leave the *thana*.

The patient now expressed a desire to return to his home in the village. Dr. Phukan saw that the patient's condition had stabilized, he was no longer becoming younger and the natural effects of aging were beginning to take root again. All these pointed to success of his innovative treatment and hence the patient was permitted to go back. Before the patient left, the doctor reminded him of the meeting scheduled for the following week to publicly discuss the results of the rejuvenation and extracted a promise from the patient to be physically present at that meeting.

The patient went back to his village. So did the nephew. The nephew was struck by the absurdity of the incident. "How could this young boy be his septuagenarian uncle?" He concluded that the doctor bribed the police inspector handsomely and managed to get out this mess at the cost of his uncle's life.

Upon arriving at the village the patient went straight to his home without ever anticipating the misfortune that was in store for him. The nephews including the one who had gone to the town did not at all believe in the story of his *Ayurvedic* age reversal and meted out to him a treatment that an impostor would ordinarily be subjected to in any Assamese village. They got a strong chord and tied his hands behind his back. They tied his legs tightly as well. And then they repeatedly slapped his face and kicked all over the rest of his body. They threatened to inform the police and send him to jail. Despite numerous explanations he could not convince them that he, who now looked like a young boy and their aged uncle of a few days ago were the same person. They threw him out of the village and promised further severe punishment if he ever returned. The patient had become homeless being ejected from his own home. Destitute without a *paisa* in his pockets and crying bitterly from the pain inflicted on him, the patient started hiking back to Phukan's clinic in the town.

The patient was extremely tired when he reached Dr. Phukan's nursing home after covering several miles on foot. He was famished having not eaten or drunk anything in many hours. A servant offered him some snacks and then he slept for a few hours. When he woke up the doctor examined him and found that he was 'losing age' again. He had lost all the years that he had gained during the frenetic treatment of the last few days at the nursing home and more. The boy fell onto doctor's feet and started weeping like a young boy. "Sir, what will happen to me now? I have lost my home. These cunning nephews who had been treating me well because they expected my money when I died, threw me out of my own home today. They hit me badly. I have lost my honor. My whole body, my face, cheeks, back, legs and hands are aching excruciatingly. I feel as if my ears are going to fall off my head. Now I am a beggar, a penniless bum having lost all my hard earned wealth. I do not want to remain a child any more. Please return my body to where it was when you started the experiment."

The doctor assured him, "Do not be scared so much. I am sorry that you feel that your nephews have dishonored you. I also understand that you lost all your property, but you are pretty young now and can earn back all that you lost and yet more since you have the energy and vitality to work. Just think of the old age that had befallen you! And take a good look at yourself now.



You are healthy young boy capable of achieving anything in the world. You have an enormous potential waiting in the future.” Though doctor Phukan tried to calm and assuage the patient, he himself was hurt, “Oh my god, what have I done to this man in course of my quest for knowledge?”

The patient had reverted back to childhood in psyche as well. His behavior had become indistinguishable from that of any normal boy of the age he had reverted back to. He loathed to sit patiently in one place for more than a few minutes- he frolicked and danced around like a young child. To doctor’s consternation whenever he expended energy through such tiring activities, he lost a few days or months in biological age. Thus the doctor forbid him from playing or romping around and instructed his assistants accordingly. Whenever the patient was left alone in his room he cried inconsolably and shouted like any young boy in despair and fear, “Oh my mom! Oh my dad! I do not want to be alone.” Sometimes he sang incomplete songs like young boys often do. When he is angry he threw things at those who approached him. He played with dust and sand.

Dr. Phukan was beginning to lose confidence in his experiment. With monk Abhagiri gone he had no one to consult. So he met with two well-known physicians of the town: one of them was the retired civil surgeon of the district, and the other was the sitting civil surgeon. Dr. Phukan laid out the chronology of events leading to the initial success in rejuvenation of the patient that took place at an unexpectedly rapid clip, and the succeeding attempts at arresting the furious speed at which the patient was becoming younger and physically smaller. To turn the tide against age-reversal that threatened to turn the patient into a baby, firstly the patient was injected with extraction from the glands of a large monkey. Secondly, he was subjected to strong dosages of ultraviolet rays. Thirdly, the inspector took him to the *thana* under the suspicion that he was a party to a massive deception and threatened to put him in jail for many years. Thus they started discussing, albeit inconclusively: (1) Did any of three events alone cause the biological age to increase? Or, (2) Were more than one of these events instrumental? And, (3) What caused the rejuvenation that had lost steam to commence again?

The doctors discussed a few other weighty issues. One of those pertained to the observable and unobservable effects of

intake of sizable amounts of vitamins, proteins, minerals and powered food items. Certain energies would always be expended in carrying out daily activities like household chores, seeing, speaking, hearing; the rest of the energies derived from such rich diets will eventually increase the weight and bulk of the patient. All the energies consumed through vitamins and foods can not be spent, so the physical growth of the body can not be stopped absolutely. Conversely all the energy consumed can not be preserved to increase the weight of the human body. Even if one relaxes entire days and sits without any strenuous physical work-activities like vision, speech, eating, drinking, digesting and pumping of heart and lungs would require some energies to be spent.

Doctor Phukan thought that the patient should again be given rich diet and generous dosages of vitamins, proteins and minerals. But such a treatment had not worked as expected in the past. He wanted to inject the patient with extraction from glands on monkeys as well restart the treatment with ultraviolet rays. The sitting civil surgeon concurred with Phukan on those counts but opined that in addition to all of the above, sufficient quantities of oxygen should be supplied for speedy metabolism. The retired civil surgeon just said, “You may try all of those and left.”

A native *holou* monkey that looked somewhat similar to a chimpanzee and that Phukan had prepared injections from in the past could not be located this time around. So he bought another large monkey belonging to a different species, prepared injections from the monkey’s endocrine glands and as before, injected those into the patient. Also as before, the patient was subjected to a strong bout of ultraviolet rays. But this time around, as per suggestion of the civil surgeon, to aid in metabolism he was given oxygen as well. A constant stream of oxygen from a pressured tank was released with a pipe into his nasal openings. This seemingly bizarre treatment continued for a few days but had only a minor effect on the patient. Nevertheless, the civil surgeon was encouraged, but Phukan harbored no such illusions any more for he had seen the seesaw battle between the forces of rejuvenation and the process of aging already.

The retired civil surgeon took the daily records that doctor Phukan had kept on the patient to his home and studied



A sketch and a photograph of the Louvre by Mahesh Baisyha

those carefully. He also examined the pictures of the patient that documented the changes on a daily basis.

The very next day the retired civil surgeon came to doctor Phukan's home and suggested, "Let's take him to the temple of the *kesaikhaiti* goddess, the deity that according to mythology loves to drink raw human blood, and behead him at her alter. Let's sacrifice his blood to the goddess." After saying those words, this surgeon immediately held the boy by one of his hands, dragged him to his own car and proceeded towards *kesaikhaiti* goddesses temple which was about seven miles away from the town in a forest. He also asked doctor Phukan to soon come to the temple.

Initially doctor Phukan was taken aback and did not grasp what was going on. In any case he dressed up to go to the temple. At this time one of his servants gave him a note from the retired civil surgeon. The note said, "It is well known in history that a certain king who was condemned to die the following day developed white hair and beard in just one night. If we threaten the patient with death, he may also start to grow old. Let's test that hypothesis."

Phukan now understood why the surgeon had acted the way he did. He called a taxi and went to the forest in the outskirts of the town. There he first saw the car belonging to the retired surgeon. There was a man waiting to escort him to the temple of the goddess. He got off the taxi and walked a mile into the forest with this man. There he saw the patient and both the surgeons- the retired as well as the sitting surgeon. The patient was wearing

a red *dhoti* made of *paat*, the local brown silk. He had a garland of hibiscus around his neck and a big round white mark of sandal wood paste in his forehead. A bulky man who looked almost like a demon was holding his hands. A large stone that lay nearby was painted with bright red vermilion. There was also smorgasbord of flowers, incense and other things needed for a *puja*. A large machete lay nearby.

When the patient saw doctor Phukan he started shouting, "Doctor, please save me from death." The retired surgeon also addressed the doctor and said, "Doctor, please do not stop us. It is nearly impossible to get a boy for sacrifice these days. Everyone has father or mother or some relatives. But this boy is an orphan. No one wants him. He does not own anything valuable as well. By a stroke of good luck we have found a boy so suitable for sacrifice. On the top of everything the British has banned human sacrifice. *Kesaikhaiti* is extremely hungry for she has not been offered human blood for several years."

Since doctor Phukan was privy to the plan and knew exactly what was going on he acted and asked, "When are you sacrificing him?" "Today, at the stroke of midnight"- replied the retired surgeon.

Dr. Phukan looked at the patient who looked back at Dr. Phukan with a gaze that would have touched his heart at any other time. The patient was weeping, a river of tears was rolling down his cheeks.

to be concluded in the next issue..

Diasporic Indian, Assamese Diaspora and Networking

Continued from page 4..

out a plan to receive the travel-writer at Guwahati as his guest and show him the best part of Assam. Assam still has hope as we have people like Ashish. My e-mail to the government tourism departments were either bounced back or not replied. I can only conclude from this that either they do not care, are not accountable for anything or they do not know how to use email.

Now the question is do we have to forget the past and make fresh start? Yes we do!

It needs two to Tango – the two parties are Government of Assam and the Assamese Diaspora. Question is what has Assam to offer? Where can we find the information? Is there a databank with up-to-date information about the present situation in Assam?

In order to communicate with the Assamese Diaspora the Government of Assam should create a database with the contact details of the Assamese experts living outside India. There should be a NRA cell within the government of Assam.

In this regard may be it is worth mentioning that recently a group of resident and non-resident Assamese formed a Think Tank organisation under the banner-Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS). www.friendsofassam.org

FASS offers a common platform for all friends and well-wishers of Northeast to respond and work for the common good of the peoples of the Northeast and make the Northeast shine in its own glory which is its due. It has contacts well

wishers from different parts of the world. As FASS has an office at Guwahati Organisations like FASS can be approached for further contacts with the NRA's.

Assam society (www.assamsociety.org), Assam Association of North America (www.aanaonline.org), Assamnet (www.assamnet.org), Assamese Society of Dubai (www.assamdubai.org) are some of the other forums for communication with the NRA's. In order to communicate with the expatriates and build a database somebody with IT background should be made responsible and accountable for this work. A web site with easy access possibility should be created for this information bank. This would be an ongoing process.

to be concluded in the next issue..



Photo by UBphotos.com

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The **ASA Newsletter** is published monthly. Dhruba Das, on behalf of Assam Society of America, has published this issue of ASA newsletter. The editors are Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Editor-in-Chief), Nandini Borah Das (Centennial, Colorado), Priyankoo Sarma (Gainesville, Florida), Ram Sarangapani (Houston, Texas), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa), Umesh Sharma (Cambridge, Massachusetts), Vavani Sarmah (Secane, Pennsylvania).
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The ASA Executive Committee is composed of Dhruba Das, President (Coatesville, Pennsylvania), Kabita Sharma (Hillsborough, New Jersey), Vice President, Mukul Chowdhary (Edison, New Jersey), Treasurer, and Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), General Secretary.

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