

# ASA Newsletter

News & events of the Assamese people living around the world

---

<i>Editorial</i> .....	1
CICs and Vision 2006!!! .....	1
<i>Patent Granted to an Assamese NRA: An Interview</i> .....	2
<i>Kaziranga Calling You</i> .....	4
<i>Internet Radio Show in Assamese</i> .....	5
<i>Information Technology Professionals in Assam and from Assam</i> .....	6
<i>The Indian Attitude: Unwelcome questions on a stray subject</i> .....	6
<i>Assimilation of Tai language to Assamese</i> .....	7
<i>From the Land of the Rising Sun</i> .....	8
<i>Career</i> .....	10
International Scholarship .....	10
<i>Kids Section</i> .....	10
The Real True Alien.....	10
<i>Community News</i> .....	11
North East Month Meeting Minutes .....	11
<i>INDIA COMMUNITY CENTER CELEBRATES NORTH EAST INDIA MONTH</i> .....	11



## Editorial

### CICs and Vision 2006!!!

After much hard work, in 2001, the Governments of India and Assam had crafted uplifting, forward-looking and exemplary visions for each and every district in the state. I have visited the well-maintained Web sites of several of the 22 districts in Assam where the vision documents are published for perusal by the citizens of the districts and the world at large. The vision documents embody a collection of many excellent ideas that are achievable through good government and dedicated work over many years. Each document is the result of extensive thoughts and deliberations, and thus very impressive.

Recently I re-read the “**VISION DOCUMENT 2006**” for Dibrugarh district (<http://dibrugarh.nic.in/report.htm>). It states the standards and the yardstick by which the district administration will be applauded for success or criticized for failure to achieve the goals it has set for itself. Among other matters the document promises empowerment of women; gainful employment; self-sufficiency; environmental protection; making the government simple, transparent, accountable and responsive; and ensuring for its people a strong voice in the governance of the state. It is clear that this document does not represent the vision of some particular politicians or some particular political party. It is the vision of a government, and it is reasonable to presume that all government machineries are working harmoniously to achieve these goals.

In 2004, we are already midway towards 2006. As of today, it is however not clear whether the district is moving in the right direction with appropriate speed as per the vision document from 2001. The vision Web sites maintained by the National Informatics Center (NIC) office in

Dibrugarh and other district headquarters have not given much information in this regard. Certainly, the NIC district offices have played a leading and visionary role in being the harbinger of information revolution to district administrations in Assam and elsewhere in India by providing learning and familiarization opportunities to high-level bureaucrats, by computerizing administrative data for achieving efficiencies and disseminating information to citizens as well as the outside world alike. Recently, almost all 200 or so administrative Blocks in Assam, and about 400 in all of the Northeast have been connected to the central network through NIC using the auspices of the Community Information Centers (CICs) located in rural colleges, higher secondary schools and Block offices. All CICs are equipped with modern technology and are manned with highly skilled local manpower. We hope to see the CICs play an active and effective role monitoring all the development activities in the Block or village level. We expect the CICs to collect realistic data and provide them on their Web sites as a public service. We understand that CICs are government supported, but it would be a great exercise in transparent and responsible governance to have a watchdog organization within the government with access to technology that is able to publish its findings on the Internet for citizenry as well as others .

*Vavani Sarmah, Secane, Pennsylvania*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

## **Patent Granted to an Assamese NRA: An Interview**

The United States Patent and Trademark Office has granted Patent Number 6,668,412 to Dr. Mantu C Baishya on December 30, 2003. The title of the patent is "Continuous Prestressed Concrete Bridge Deck Subpanel System". Dr Baishya had done this work when he was at University of Nebraska, Lincoln. First time Dr Baishya had applied for this patent was in 1998. It has taken 5 years to grant him the patent. The patent is on a unique bridge system, which can be used for bridge replacement in heavy traffic areas, e.g., in New Jersey, New York, and California. The system is both continuous in longitudinal and in transverse direction. Currently, there are two demonstration projects under construction in Nebraska. Below is an excerpt from a Question and Answer session that I had with him.

**Q1:** What is your patent for?

**A:** Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and several other states provide a thin solid precast prestressed panel of 3 to 4 in. to function as a form for the cast-in-place topping and also to house the positive moment reinforcement. The precast panels are butted against each other without any continuity between them. This system has several drawbacks, which include the need to form overhangs and to install a relatively large number of precast panels. Also, the discontinuity of both prestressing strands over the girder lines and between adjacent precast panels can be a disadvantage. We (Dr. Maher K Tadros, Dr. Sameh Badie and I) developed a continuous stay-in-place (SIP) system that eliminates all the disadvantages of the current system. The new system is proven to have the following advantages: (1) it eliminates field forming of deck overhangs; (2) for rehabilitation of bridge decks, it saves the time and labor needed to rearrange the shear connectors, this is due to the optimized spacing between the reinforcement in the gaps; (3) it saves time and labor because the SIP panel covers the entire width of the bridge. Therefore, there is no need to handle a large number of pieces, as in the case of conventional SIP precast panels. Besides those mentioned, this system has several other advantages.

**Q2:** How long did it take to go through the patent process? How did you even know how to go about getting one?

**A:** Initially, we applied for this patent in 1998. The patent was awarded to us on December 30, 2003. The information about how to go about getting a patent is on the United States Patent and Trademark Office website (<http://www.uspto.gov/>). Besides, there are different private offices around the country that help achieve one's objective. One must get representation from an Intellectual Property Rights lawyer to apply for a patent from the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

**Q3:** Why do you want a patent?

**A:** The three main aspects one tries to establish through getting a patent are (1) intellectual ability and vision, (2) monetary gain and (3) to make this world a better place in which to live. However, in our case, it is mostly the first and the third reasons, more than the monetary gain. We applied for our patent through the Regents of University of Nebraska-Lincoln, so the University is the monetary beneficiary of this patent.

**Q4:** Why is this bridge design any different than a regular bridge?

**A:** See response to Q1.

**Q5:** When did you have the time to come up with a new bridge design and what circumstances made a new design needed?

**A:** The fundamental vision of doing research is to enhance knowledge and eliminate disadvantage or, in other words, create convenience. Researchers encounter disadvantages of a system or a product by studying literature, by talking to users' groups and by one's intellectual ability and vision. Once parameters are established, it is the researchers' duty to eliminate these disadvantages. During this elimination process one can come up with an idea or product that is unique. In our case, we tried to eliminate the drawbacks of the current system cited in the response to Q1. All of a sudden, we developed a product, which is diverse and unique from the current system.

**Q6:** What are the benefits of this new design?

**A:** Eliminate inconvenience and ease of use. Also see response to Q1

**Q7:** Now you have a patent! What's next? How will this design be used in the real world?

**A:** This research was performed under the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) titled "Rapid Replacement of Bridge Decks". This work was documented in NCHRP Report 407, "Rapid Replacement of Bridge Decks." The NCHRP has its own marketing tools to market their research products. We are trying to make this system popular through writing articles in Journals, Trade Magazines, delivering speeches, and talking to Department of Transportation personnel.

**Q8:** Has anything happened since you got the patent? A ceremony? Notoriety in the engineering world? Articles in publications, etc.

**A:** We have received congratulatory messages from several sources. The kind words I received from my colleagues and bosses, here at KM, are very overwhelming. Also, it was a very good end to a difficult 2003 for me. Besides, nothing major happened immediately after we received the patent. However, we have published an article titled "Innovative Bridge Panel System a Success", in Concrete International, in June 1999. This article was rated as best published article in 1999

and based on that, we received American Concrete Institute's Structural Engineering Award in 2000.

*Mantu C Baishya obtained his PhD from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is a civil engineer residing in Omaha, Nebraska with wife Silpi and daughters Monalisa & Shikha.*

*Contributed by Satyam K Bhuyan, Ames, Iowa.*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

## Kaziranga Calling You...

Do you have a plan to visit Assam soon? If so, if you time well, may be you can plan to enjoy a cruise on the MV Charaidew! You will enjoy the land of one-horned rhinos in Kaziranga and an extra ordinary trip on the mighty Brahmaputra. Yes, Assam tourism in the new year is touching new heights! The Elephant Festival in Kaziranga coincided with the inauguration of the country's first long distance luxury river cruiser MV Charaidew gives. It's a fresh breath in the North East tourism industry.



Adding to a new chapter in water tourism, tourists from all over the world are coming to Kaziranga in the luxury vessel, originally built in 1973 and newly remodeled to provide modern facilities and comforts. Going to the Elephants Festival in the Charaidew vessel is a wonderful experience. "Nature at its best!" said Bobby, a British tourist who came to enjoy festival and who didn't give his last name.

Kahara and Bagari teams are lined up to play a game of soccer. Rahul and Joan are the star athletes. Excitement is electric just like during the World Cup Soccer game between Brazil and Germany! But the players are not even human! Teams of elephants playing soccer was the most attractive part of the second Elephant Festival in Kaziranga. Sandra Dias of Hong Kong told us so.

More than fifty elephants took part in the inaugural procession. Babu, an elephant from Guwahati led the procession where Bihu and Karbi dances were performed by the local people. With the local people, thirty tourist from different parts of the world also took part in the procession. During this festival, tourists discovered a new festive mood at Kaziranga. After giving bananas to Rahul and Joan in the inaugural speech, Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi declared that next time the festival will be organized in much bigger way.

Starting from January 30, along with the cultural program some serious discussions regarding the problem of the big animal were also held during the three day long festival. Sri Markchan, noted elephant specialist led the discussion.

The tourists were also attracted to the traditional clothes exhibitions, organized by self-help groups. The Karpu-Pule Group sold more merchandize worth more than 25 thousand rupees, which is far better than previous year as told by manager of the groups.

In addition to the festival, the trip on MV Charadew is a unique adventure for tourists coming to the region. The air-conditioned vessel can carry more than a hundred tourists. Bamboo decorations in the cabin and traditional food served by the professional staff are also interesting parts of the cruiser.

A result of a novel venture between Assam Inland Water Transport (IWT) and Assam Bengal Navigation Company, the vessel that was lying unused from 1997 was remodeled and given a complete new shape. ABN is an Indo-British joint venture with offices in Guwahati and London. ABN has so far made five trips each 14 days long, almost all with foreign tourists.

“We started our season late from mid-November, 03 and will continue till the national parks remain open till the end of April. “During the remaining tourist season approximately 150 more tourists are likely to avail the cruise” said N.C. Das, Director of IWT Assam. It costs Rs. 3750 per room per night during tourist season and Rs. 2750 per day during the off-season. During the cruise on the mighty Brahmaputra, the tourists visit not only Kaziranga, but also can enjoy Manas National Park, and the small towns of Sulakuchi and Hajo and other villages and towns up to Goalpara in Lower Assam. Because of the lack of maintenance of the water ways, night navigation is not possible yet. For more information about Kaziranga, <http://www.assamtourism.org/wildlife.htm>

*Contributed by Paranjoy Bordoloi, Anandanagar, Guwahati - 21, Assam, India*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

## **Internet Radio Show in Assamese**

If you would like to listen to a regularly scheduled Assamese show on the Internet, please tune to <http://radio.uccs.edu> every Friday (Mountain Standard Time, USA) from 10:30 AM till noon. To listen, please click on the “..Windows Stream” or “..Unix/Mac Stream” on the top left index of the Web page. The show is hosted by Jugal Kalita, an Associate Professor in Computer Science at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. He is the founder and Faculty Advisor for the radio station at UCCS, a campus with more than 8000 students, and one of the four campuses of the University of Colorado System. The radio station has been broadcasting 24/7 starting the Fall Semester of 2003. The show is called Beyond Borders. On the show, he plays music from little known parts of the world. The initial focus is to play music from a region of the world where India, Bhutan, Tibet, China, Bangladesh, Burma and Thailand merge: a region called Assam. As time goes on, he will play music from other such regions that defy national borders. The following is the list of music recently played.

- March 12, 2004: Zubeen Garg's music in honor of his departed sister Zonkee (CD: Xixu, Songs of Life, N.K. Production, 2002) and Jayanta Hazarika's music (CD: Private collection)
- March 5, 2004: Bishnu Rabha's music (CD: Xoonor Xoraai, Xoonor Xooleng, Regional Music Center, 2001) and Zubeen Garg's music in honor of his departed sister Zonkee (CD: Xixu, Songs of Life, N.K. Production, 2002)
- February 27, 2004: Jyotiprasad Agarwala's music and Bishnu Rabha's music (both from the CD: Xoonor Xoraai, Xoonor Xooleng, Regional Music Center, 2001)
- February 20, 2004: Jyotiprasad Agarwala's music (CD: Jyoti Xongeet, Moor Xopoonore Kothaa, Vee Gee Audio, 2002)
- February 13, 2004: Bhupen Hazarika's music (CD: Private collection)
- January 30, 2004: New Year's music: Bihu songs (CDs: Xoon Toraamaai, Vee Gee Enterprises, 2000 & Moinaajaan, Vee Gee Enterprises, 2001).

*Reported by Babul Gogoi, Guwahati*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

## An Electronic Group

### Information Technology Professionals in Assam and from Assam

In February of 2004, an electronic group called [ITAssam@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ITAssam@yahoogroups.com) was formed by Dibyajyoti Dutta, District Information Officer, Lakhimpur., Assam, and Jugal Kalita, Associate Professor of Computer Science and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. It is a group seeking to encourage discussion on the development of high technology industry in Assam and Northeast India. The main objective is to seek the development of a culture of high technology in Assam and the Northeast. In other words, this group seeks to make people in Assam aware of the opportunities high technology provides to an individual. A secondary objective is to foster the development of a high technology industry in Assam and the Northeast. If you are in Assam or the Northeast and are interested in computers and management, please join this group. If you are originally from Assam or the Northeast and are a computer professional anywhere in the world, please join this group: Computer professionals in Assam would like to know about your experience and learn from you. As of March 14, 2004, there are 216 members in this group.

*Reported by Saraswati Kashyap, Community Information Center (CIC), Pakhioria, Nagaon*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

### The Indian Attitude: Unwelcome questions on a stray subject

This has become even more apparent in the recent past and some people on both sides of the fence (and on the fence) have spoken about it. But obviously the concept is deep and extends far beyond cursory comments, into the general public, the media and the government.

It is increasingly common to see many Indian middle-class people with a "bugged-with-life-and-hell-breaking-loose" attitude! Are there any justifications for this apparent pessimism?

- Is this just a way to vent their frustration?
- Are they crumbling under competition leading to stress?
- Is there past trauma which has had an irreversible effect?
- Is it down right laziness and lack of initiative?
- Is it indirect denial? ...leading to the blame game?
- Is it poor grooming and nurture?
- Is it due to a stagnant social systems leading to economic rigidity?
- Is it utter lack of confidence in the governance and society as a whole?
- Or is it just the-rotten-apples with the good ones being less conspicuous?

There are a billion other articles talking about other aspects where this effect manifests itself. But the fundamental issue lies here, in the "attitude."

India, right now, is on the path to improvement and as an oft-repeated advert proclaims, "India is shining". A kind of feel-good atmosphere permeates Government media and rightly so. There is a high GDP growth rate of 6.7% along with an upswing in agriculture and the swelling of the buffer stock of food grains. Assisting the same are the foreign exchange reserves of 102 billion dollars and a low inflation rate of 6%, a definite improvement from the past. But even then why is the general outlook of Indians so dismal?

One reason might be the common Indian is trying to measure up to the wrong standards. The standards which apply to America and other developed countries do not apply to India. Whenever we talk of development in India, we have to do so keeping in mind its history, political turmoil, and

the social atmosphere from which India is emerging. The only standard India has to measure up to is the standard that it has set for itself through its past. India has its own personality. It, like every other country, is unique in its own way.

Still the question remains: Can we question the attitudes of common Indians? Are we looking at the world through Jaundice eyes?

*Contributed by Shyamanta Saikia, Kansas, is an undergraduate majoring in Computer Science and Aerospace Engineering.*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

## **Assimilation of Tai language to Assamese**

Tai is a dominant migrant ethnic group in South-East and adjoining South Asia and Tai-Ahoms are the largest Tai community in the Assam. The assimilation of Tais into Assamese society has been a gradual process. Language, religious and political assimilation took place in phased manner. In this article we are looking into the aspects of Tai language assimilation in to Assamese.

Tai-Ahoms entered Assam from Mounq Mao Kingdom in South China through the Shan states of Burma in the early part of the thirteenth century. Tai-Ahoms established their kingdom in north-eastern part of present-day India by conquering small rulers of Morans, Borahis, Chutiya, Kacharis and Bhuyan Chiefs. They ultimately made Kamrup a part of their kingdom. With the enlargement of their kingdom, the proportion of Tais within their kingdom became small and also they came into extensive contact with Hindu culture and the Assamese language.

Though Tai was the initial language of the kingdom, Assamese language started playing a bigger role primarily for administration. Influence of Hinduism encouraged the ruling Tais to use more Sanskrit-based words which later on became part of the Assamese language. Moreover civil wars also led to weakening of the influence Tai language in Assam, though the language did not almost disappear until the nineteenth century. It was kept alive by the deodhai and bailung pandits. Over time, Ahoms had to use Assamese language for their day to day administrative work and Tai for the religious activities mainly based on Buddhism.

Even the names of Ahom kings themselves bear the testimony of assimilation of Tai language and Assamese over time. The first twelve kings of Ahom dynasty only had their Tai-Ahom names. The thirteenth king, Siu-Tam-La was given Assamese name 'Swargadeo Jayadhwaj Singha'. He was also known as 'Bhogoniya Roja' because of his flight from capital after defeated by Mir Jumla. However, it was the ascension of Siu-Dang-Pha also known as 'Bamuni Kunwar' as he was raised a Brahmin family, marks the first major contact of the Ahoms with the Assamese mass. After the Burmese war and annexation of the Ahom kingdom by the British, the two last kings, Purondar Singha and Jogeswar Singha, had only Assamese names. Historical documentations also showed that there were many nick names such as Bhogonia Roja, Noria Roja, Lora Roja, Burha Roja, Khura Roja for the Ahom kings. The Assamese naming of the kings were the result of a natural process due to increasing number of Assamese subjects during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. By now it is a hard fact that almost all Tai-Ahoms speak Assamese language.

The Tai language had faced many problems of survival. During the British rule and even before that, the Tais were cut off from their origin in South China and sister clans in Burma. The assimilation was completed during the British rule as in 1931 the administration deliberately dropped the name 'Ahom' from the official census list and since then they were termed as Assamese. The trouble continued with three language formula after India's independence. They had to learn Assamese, Hindi and English and there were no schools to teach Tai at the primary

level. The religious pundits had to learn Pali as most of them were Buddhist. This had made things more complicated.

Efforts are being made to keep the Tai language alive in Assam. The work of Ban-Pub-Lik-Moung-Tai, an organization Upper Assam is commendable in this direction. The question still persists: Will the Tai-Ahoms would be able preserve their language?

*Contributed by Mrs. Dipti Kalita. Mrs Kalita has done Masters of Science. She is a freelance writer based in Jorhat, Assam, India.*

||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| ||| |||

## From the Land of the Rising Sun

Greetings to all...from *the Land of the Rising Sun*. I think I am lucky to be always in or around the land where the sun rises. There is Arunachal, bordering my native Assam where the Sun rises majestically to bring a new day in 'Bharat-borxo' by blessing its blue mountains with the first rays of sunshine. And here it is Nippon, the 'Land of the Rising Sun' and my present abode. Yeah, I am talking about the land of 'Samurai, Sashimi and Sushi', the land of 'Kimono'. At least that was all I knew about Japan and the Japanese before I came to this country. This is a country famous for its Toyota, Honda, Sony or Panasonic world over. But many of us are still unaware of its rich and interesting culture. By economy, Japan was nowhere when it surrendered to United States and the Allied powers in 1945 after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but, within three decades, it became the second biggest economy in the world even threatening the No. 1 position of the US economy during '80s.

Despite its economic and technological achievements, and influence of Western cultures, Japan is preserving its culture like no other country. The Japanese take pride in their own culture, but at the same time like to experience and absorb the best of others' cultures and ways of life, be it in food or fashion, or, music to mansions. But, always after giving a Japanese touch to it. When I think about influence of Indian culture in Japan, the first thing that comes to my mind is curry. Though the main concept is from India, they have modified it to plenty of varieties that are easy to cook (in powder form, mainly for the gravy) and fit the taste of a Japanese tongue. Food, in fact, is a part and parcel of Japanese life. More than 50% of the Japanese television programs are directly or indirectly related to food, be it food making, food tasting or searching for a nice restaurant of certain delicacy. Again, in most of the usual restaurants, you can find at least one type of food that is actually not Japanese, but 'Japanized'. One can easily see this 'Japanese versions' looking at a menu of Domino's Pizza or Pizza hut, or ordering a burger at McDonalds, a popular place among Japanese youngsters in their teens. You can order a pizza with toppings such as Kimchi (a hot Korean delicacy) or eggplant. Sounds strange?? But they really taste good!! Ever heard of squid-ice cream or an octopus-ice-cream? You can find them in Japan alongside the usual flavors. The ability of the Japanese to adopt, adapt and improve on good customs, practices and styles from other countries has already won them success globally in cars, electronics and fashion. And now it seems they are into using their 'Japanese craftsmanship' to food and beverages that once belonged to the West, by producing some of the finest chocolates, ice-creams, beers and wines. These are now commodities usual in an average Japanese's life and the companies that make them are trying their best to produce brands that are successful in their homeland before venturing abroad.

A language barrier often discourages potential tourists to Japan. Visiting places far from big cities, such as Tokyo or Osaka is often difficult for those who do not understand Japanese as most of the road sign are written in Kanji (Chinese character) or in a mix of the Kanji with Hiragana and Katakana, the two other alphabets used in Japanese. There are also few locals that can speak or

understand English. However, in big cities like Tokyo or while traveling through the highways, one is not much in trouble as signs or station names are also displayed in English and, in case you get lost, there is a good chance that you will find someone nearby who can also help you with your directions in English. The Japanese are often very helpful and kind to foreigners and you can feel it once you ask for help. But, they are often shy to talk to strangers (yeah, even the adults), especially when you ask something in English and the person is not proficient in it. Younger generations are much eager and enthusiastic about learning English which is easily visible from numerous English schools almost everywhere in Japan. In fact, English education is a big business in Japan and native speakers are in very high demand. Another discouraging factor for tourists has been the high living expenses in Japanese cities along with high travel costs. However, after decades of flocking in millions to other countries of the world and spending their yen, Japanese tourism is now gearing to attract more visitors from abroad than ever using promotional discounts in shops and travel along with new facilities for visitors.

While the capital of Japan, Tokyo, with an estimated population of 25 million is highly dense, most of Japan is sparsely populated with a mountain range running through the middle of the country. Tokyo is one of the cleanest and safest cities in the world consisting of several smaller cities that are efficiently connected through its huge subway and overland train systems which are very efficient and punctual to the minute. The heart of Tokyo is linked with almost all major areas in Japan by the world-famous bullet-train (called Shinkansen) system debuted in 1964, with trains running at over 250 km/h (upto 300 km/h) in half-hourly or hourly intervals. Yamanote-sen, the train line that circles the central Tokyo touches stations like Shibuya, the teen mecca, where Japan's trendy school girls' fashions, not the fashion designers, decide what the teens of rest of Japan or East/South-east Asia will adore and wear in the near future. The Yamanote-line touches the historic and beautiful Tokyo Station, from where the Imperial Palace, residence to the present (125<sup>th</sup>) Emperor Akihito and his family, stands graciously within minutes' walk. It also touches Shinjuku, the busiest station in Japan serving 6 railway lines and 4 million passengers per day. Around the Shinjuku station are the biggest entertainment, shopping and business areas of Tokyo. If bored and tired with the Tokyo above-ground and whole lot of Tokyo that lies underground, one can climb up to the Tokyo Tower, completed in 1958 as a symbol for Japan's rebirth as a major economic power. It stands tall at 333m, 13 m higher than Eiffel tower, and provides a bird's eye view of the endless sea of buildings and bridges. You can also smell the cool breeze coming from grand Mount Fuji! Need to feel wealthy? Head to Ginza. With the world's costliest real estate, it is popular among the older generations and the wealthy with shops of the costliest brands in the world, and where you can find the infamous \$10 a cup coffee. If you have a liking for futuristic cities and entertainment, then take a fully computerized, pilot-less monorail to Odaiba, a new futuristic shopping and entertainment district on one of the many manmade islands of Tokyo Bay. Amazing, futuristic buildings, theme parks await you there, and from its seaside park with numerous restaurants one can enjoy a spectacular view of the beautiful Rainbow Bridge, Tokyo Tower, the Tokyo Port and its skyline. For more ardent nature-lovers, not far from Tokyo by train lies the tranquil place of peace and harmony, the international tourist resort of Hakone with magnificent gardens, historic spots and excellent amusement facilities.

All in all, Japan and its capital Tokyo is a place worth visiting. Japan truly is a 'world in itself'. In any country, the most interesting aspect to know is about its people and their way of life, for people make a country. My account today is like describing the beauty of a pretty woman's skin but not what lies underneath. A nice skin looks always great, but going deep under it makes one see the real world... often fascinating and sometimes ugly!!! I hope someday I will have the chance to write about it too.

*Contributed by Pranab J. Baruah, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan*



## Career

### International Scholarship

I was going through an excellent book written by a girl who studied BA (English) at Stanford – *Wanna Study in the US* – Rupa Books – recently launched with a foreword by billionaire Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, also an alumni of Stanford (MBA).

She lists Indian sources for international educational funding --upto Rs.25 lacs, she claims! Perhaps if all listed sources award full scholarships, only then maybe it will add to Rs.25 lacs!! Only the Tatas give, for a top US school, a scholarship award of Rs.1,00,000/- or \$2,000/-. So do the Birlas – not more than Rs.1,00,000/ or \$2,000/-. Some give only Rs.2,000/- or \$40/-. It is not even peanuts since I need \$1,00,000/- for a 2 year MEd program or \$1,50,000/- plus ---for a 4-7 year DEd or PhD program!!

The following link shows what scholarship funds are available for international students who want to go for masters or doctoral degrees in the USA:

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~finaid/intlsourcefunding.html>

by Umesh Sarma



## Kids Section

### The Real True Alien

One day a boy named Jack came home from school and went to his room to do his homework. Jack sighed and said “Boy, this homework is hard, if only I could be an alien, it would have been better!”

Jack started to do his homework, and after a few minute something strange happened and Jack’s room began to spin. When Jack got off from the floor where he’d fallen down when the room spun.

Jack was wondering why the room was spinning. He looked out the window and saw the earth really far away from his house!!!!

Jack looked at his hand and jumped back, they were green!!! Jack looked away from his hand and looked back at them, one had three fingers with suction cups and the other one didn’t have any fingers.

Jack wondered and slowly said “ My wish about being an alien has come true!!”

He looked at his table, it was floating around and it didn’t have homework on it. He looked in the mirror and jumped back. His face was green & blue and his arms were red and black.

Jack was very very surprised to have skin like that and so he went down stairs to ask his mom “why he was an alien!!”





When Jack got downstairs he was too scared to go to his Mom and Dad because they were huge!!!

He ran upstairs and shut the door. He was trying to find his hamster in his room, but he could not find it and because of that he used "Heat-Vision" that he didn't know that he had, and with that he melted the door with heat!!!!

Jack was scared....he could melt down things. He had wished he could fly before and now he could!!!!!!!

He was having lots of fun flying and flew out the door, but then he remembered something he couldn't hide from his alien parents forever, so he wished everybody were human again and he went in his house back. The house started to spin and after a little while he and his parents were human and back on earth.

He saw all his homework laying in his room.

Then Jack whispered to himself and said, "I'll always believe in aliens!!!!!"

*Niribili (Niky) Sarmah. Niribili is in Grade-III in Amosland Elementary School, 549 Amosland Road, Morton, PA-19070. She hopes children age 6-8 will love to read this story.*



## Community News

### North East Month Meeting Minutes

*The California Jonaki Group is taking initiatives to organize North East Month during Rangali Bihu this year in San Francisco bay area. This is the first of this kind here in USA. Below is a flyer from California.*



## INDIA COMMUNITY CENTER CELEBRATES NORTH EAST INDIA MONTH



- Where do you find the largest River Island in the world?
- Which Indian city is often referred to as "Scotland of the East"?
- What is "Sagol-Kangjei" and where was it originated?



This is North Eastern India, the land of Blue Mountains, Green Valleys and Red Rivers. In the **month of April 2004**, you will be able to experience the culture, history and life style of the people from one of the most beautiful Eco-Tourism destination in South Asia, here in Silicon Valley.

Nestled in the Eastern Himalayas this region is abundant in natural Beauty, Wild life, Flora & Fauna and its colorful people. A blend of which makes it one of the top most tourist



destinations in India. The land of majestic mountains, crowned with peaks of sapphire blue the North-East happens to be the region where the sun rises first in the entire country. The first rays of the sun in every fresh morning in India incidentally fall on Dong, a pristine small village in the easternmost corner of the North-East. The North-East is a heaven for tourist, beckoning one who needs to relax *and* unwind. For those who yearn for adventure and excitement, there are mystique and romance in exploring wild life in its true forms and natural habitat, experiencing gushing streams, waterfalls and picturesque mountain ranges all fostered by Mother Nature. It is a perfect holiday destination straight into the lap of Nature.



The simplicity of the people this region is reflected in their celebration. Region being a land of composite culture reflects a chain of festivals of different tribes throughout the year. Typical indigenous musical instruments are used in almost all of the folk dances. This region is also represented by a few classical dance forms. If Bihu from Assam is widely known and popular folk dance then Manipuri dance, also known as Ras Leela Dance, is one of the premier classical dance form in India. In addition to being tourist paradise, this region has industrial growth around tea, timber and mining, saw mills and plywood factories, oil and natural gas. The economy of the region is still primarily agrarian but its full potential is yet to be exploited.



In order to promote Indian culture and values by providing social, cultural, recreational and community programs, thereby uniting the Indian community, and raising awareness about various Indian culture in the local community, the **India Community Center (ICC), Milpitas** is celebrating the month of **April, 2004** as **North East India** month. During this month long event there will be exhibition of paintings, arts and handicrafts, audio-visual programs, ethnic dresses, musical instruments and replica of picturesque North Eastern villages. You will also view some of the breathtaking photographs from beautiful North Eastern India. A special **cultural program**, on the **18<sup>th</sup> of April**, will provide you an insight into some of the most colorful and dynamic ethnic song and dance programs from this region in India. Through out the day you will get a chance to interact with people from North Eastern India living here in USA.



So, mark your calendar, visit ICC, Milpitas in the month of **April 2004** and experience this unique **North East India Month** celebration. For more information, contact **India Community Center, 555 Los Coches St., Milpitas, CA 95035** or visit their web site at <http://www.indiaCC.org>.

*Photo credit to Tony Howard & Di Taylor of NOMADS, UK and Dave Cummins of BANK CREATIVE CONSULTANCY, UK. Information credit to <http://northeastindiadiary.com/index.html>*

/// /// /// /// /// /// /// /// /// /// ///

ASA Newsletter is a monthly email newsletter, posted during the first week of every month. We invite contributors from all over the world. Your valuable feedback, comments & suggestions; and of course news from your part of the world for inclusion in the coming editions are highly appreciated. Mantu Baishya of Omaha, NE, on behalf of Assam Society of America, is the publisher of this issue of the ASA newsletter. Assam Foundation of North America (AFNA) also sponsors the newsletter. The editors are Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa), Ganesh Bora Manhattan, Kansas), Babul Gogoi (Guwahati, Assam), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado), Shymanta Saikia (Wichita, Kansas), Santonu Goswami (El Paso, Texas) and Vavani Sarmah (Secane, Pennsylvania). We are seeking a few additional members to sit on the Editorial Board. The responsibilities include writing occasionally, editing submissions, collecting contributions and disseminating the newsletter to a wider audience. If interested, please contact email: [asanewsletter@assam.org](mailto:asanewsletter@assam.org) or [asanewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:asanewsletter@yahoo.com).

This newsletter can also be read online at <http://www.assam.org/newsletter>. If you want a printed copy of this newsletter, please contact us at the email address given above.