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LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES

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The earliest recorded use of copperware in India has been around 3000 B.C.

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The New Year Resolutions

None has perhaps missed to notice the jubilations and large scale celebrations associated with the New Year's Day of 2018. For us Indians, irrespective of our state and community identities, 14th April is almost commonly recognised as the New Year's Day. The linguistic nomenclature of the day may be different but the spirit is same. What is sad about our own New Year's Day is that, we seldom see the spontaneity and the celebration like atmosphere on this fateful day. It appears as if we have either forgotten our own culture and tradition and have opted to adopt the imported culture of the west, which we consider more superior than our own. Many of us may not even know that Julius Caesar first instituted January 1 as the first day of the year, partly to honor the month's namesake: Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future. In medieval Europe the Christians had differences in their opinions about the date of beginning of the New Year. However, Pope Gregory XIII re-established January 1 as the first day of the year. This civil New Year remained in effect throughout the Roman Empire, east and west, during its lifetime and well after. From this it is quite evident that in terms of antiquity our traditional date of commencement of the New Year is much older than the Gregorian calendar. But who cares. The west is always the best and deserves to be followed.

"Time and tide waits for none" - is a universally acknowledged proverb which can never be contested. This is because both these phenomena follow the rules of nature. Nature never stands still; it is always on the move forward, never backward. Years come and go, leaving behind memories, some sweet, some sour but it also leaves behind memories of epoch making individuals and traditions that defies time.

The Gregorian year 2017 is now in past. The memories left behind by 2018 will however linger for quite some time, but ultimately the

developments of 2018 will overcome and overpower them. The most relevant quotation that comes to mind belongs to Edith Lovejoy Pierce who said that "We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day."

It will not be perhaps inappropriate to move away from the 1st January, the New Year's Day, and concentrate on the relevance of the memorable occasions falling in this month which are appropriate to our own culture and traditions and deserves to be remembered. The first occasion that we Indians should never forget is that of the birth day of the patriot saint Swami Vivekananda falling on 12th January, who not only redeemed our pride in being Indian but also established mother India as the mother of the entire world. The next occasion that we cannot forget even if we try is the Bhogali Bihu, which normally falls on 14th January, a less religious but more culturally oriented occasion very dear to the hearts of everyone who consider Assam as their motherland. The pan Indian name of the occasion is Makar Sankranti, a very sacred day as per Hindu religious calendar. The third occasion and the most important is our Republic Day which falls on 26th January. On this fateful day we truly got rid the shackles of thousand years of subjugation and became citizens of a democratic country.

The occasions mentioned above are a miniscule part our many memorable occasions, which we should never forget for they only can inspire us to protect our own rich tradition and heritage. Now, since we have adopted the English New Year as one of our own, we should also make some New Year Resolutions as they do, ensuring that these resolutions are based on the firm belief of one undiluted unity despite different culture, languages, religions, caste and creed. May the Christian New Year bless us the secular Indians and believers of Sanatan Dharma.

Editor

Resonance of New Year: Eco of the North East

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

Birds are singing with new hopes
Butterflies are whispering with new aspirations
Flowers emitting the sense of smell
Showering purity and divinity
Smiling faces, unpolluted mind, unique customs'
That's' north east
Colds engulfing
Clouds playing hide and seek
Unaware itself
Nestling in the home of cloud
'Meghalaya', sun sets' reappear again
The next day, it must, as the land
Of rising sun 'Arunachal': that's' north east.

Times go away very silently, rapidly, leaving certain impression of positivity, of course, negative discourse. There is always a consistent attempt to conceal negativity into faded memory and marched ahead. Every dark night promises a bright sun light in the next day. Every New Year brings certain new promises, hopes, aspirations of fulfilling positive desires, transforming unfulfilled dreams into reality, delightful and dignified life, glory, peace and prosperity. Inspiration of positivity is nurtured in our nature's beckons. The land of Red River and blue hills, land of rising sun, house of clouds; etymologically, reveals the intricacy of this divine soil, is blessed explicitly by nature. The undulating hill, plains, forests emitting rays of eye pleasing green through its' floral variety, ear sensing sound of water flows in the river valleys, lake, rivulet, waterfalls, large vegetation wild and for domestic consumption, existence of sacred forest, diverse flower varieties, orchids, scenic narratives emerging out of paddy field at different context; footways in wet paddy cultivation, steps of the terrace field, jhum cultivation site, soul catching beauty of colourful ethnic dresses, indigenous practices,

rituals, folk songs and dance, vibrant festivals associated with the cycle of agricultural operations as well as the commiseration of the new year providing glimpse of geo-cultural settings are happen to be its' strength. There are various problems, be it socio-economical, socio-cultural and socio-political ranging from poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, flood, and erosion, and displacement, crime to insurgency, ethnicity and separatist movement. Initiatives have also been taken place though it is still far away to yield desire result, yet, a situation of peace and harmony, seems to be returned back over the last decades as echoed in many voices, which is encouraging for the people of region who belief in tranquillity and maintaining a relation of amity and brotherhood. Hopefully, this New Year will be remarkable to address the various vex issues through full-proof strategy, plans, policies and meaningful people oriented political dialogue. The rapid advent of modernization, materialism, consumerism, has inclined a tendency to retract humanity, yet, this part of the land, always and admirer of the concept of humanity, as a greatest religion. Regarding humanity, Prem Rawat, the

peace ambassador recently said 'humanity is the greatest religion which every person living on this earth should follow, irrespective of one's beliefs and to encourage humanity, we should be at peace from inside, the peace we are seeking is within us and it is important for us to know it and recognize it for making this earth a better place to live in, peace will be humanity's greatest achievement. Peace in this world is only possible when each one of us feels peace and contentment within ourselves'. We believe unity in diversity, there is always a bond of cohesion among us. No doubt, there are disturbing factors and forces, emerging within, to realize certain vested interest, yet, we are empowered enough to feel the ground reality, and hence, never lose the momentum, whatever, situation, might be.

Our strength is rich socio-cultural fabric expressed through vibrant practices and traditions. As an agrarian economy, the people has its own unique way to greet and welcome a new year, as reflected in various festivals held in different phases of a year. The beliefs, practices, joy is seen in the form of songs and dances, feasting and merrymaking, to relish the fruit of hard work and praying for betterment in the future. The beating of hundred drums, in wangala, by the Garos, a matrilineal tribe, in Meghalaya; at the end of the year, has been a tradition across the generations; the rhythmic dancing, in the tune of folk songs; shows the real sense of aesthetic beauty. Post-harvest period, is indeed a real time for enjoyment. Look around Assam; whether rural or urban context; Assamese people are gearing up for celebrating magh bihu or bhogali bihu; discussion has already started for the menu of uruka nite. Process of erecting meji (a conical structure made of bamboo, thatch, hay) or bhela ghar (a temporary makeshift with bamboo, dried plantain leaf, thatch, hay) for burning in the early morning of magh bihu, to offer ritualistic prayer to agnidevata (fire god) has already initiated. The sound of dhenki (a wooden mortar and pestle operated by leg) or khunduna (mortar and pestle) will come to years within a couple of days from rural courtyard, offering chances to taste the delicious food items, different varieties of cakes (pithas) and balls (coconut, sesame). The urbanites have got the

chance to procure readymade items of indigenous delicacies seasonally organized in various urban centres of Assam. No doubt Assamese New Year calendar start during mid-April, starting from Bohag, a time to celebrate the prime festival, bohag bihu or rangali bihu, singing and dancing being the key component, yet, the bihu ahead, just in the second week of January, is a real time to celebrate through feasting. Like, Assamese people, the various other groups, within Assam and in other states; the eco of celebration is quite often. The bagrumba dance, has been a part of baisagu festival among the Bodos. The Mishings celebrate ali-ai-ligang: ali denotes root, ai stands for fruit and ligang means sowing. Besides considering as a harvest festival, it marks onset of New Year where they perform gumrag dance. Apart from Assam, there are various indigenous festivals as reported from other groups of north east, has close nexus with New Year celebration. Losar among the Buddhist tribes, Monpa, Shertukpens, Memba, Khamba and Nah of Arunachal Pradesh, to welcome the Tibetan New Year during second week of February; Losoong, the Sikkimese New Year during December; Sajibu Cheiraoba, in Manipur and Aoling festival of Konyak Naga during April, reveals lots of significance pertaining to the territory and the groups.

Literally, the entire area is a paradise for natural and ethnic assemblages as reflected in scenic beauty and colourful festivals. Festivals provide some kind of extra energy to move ahead, whatever may be socio-cultural context. People of the region, though culturally and economically self-sufficient, but still lagging behind from the rest in terms of development. Problems are manifold and diverse in this part of the globe. Still people have tremendous faith on their culture and tradition, on their supreme being to sort out their entire hardship and problems. Their need and aspirations are limited and possess a positive outlook. The concerned authorities need to look into certain innovative ways to sort out problems, needs, aspirations not only to bring holistic development rather, to retain 'the concept of humanity in tact' for the manifestation of meaningful and wonderful celebration in the context. ■

Humanity must come First

It is really very sad that even when someone amongst us dies, we fight over his faith, caste and religion. No person can practice religion or become spiritual, until and unless he or she becomes a good human being because humanity comes first, then religion.

Members of indigenous faith in the state of Meghalaya will soon get a place for cremating their dead, thanks to the intervention of the Meghalaya High Court. Members of indigenous faith (Seng Khasi) had approached the High Court after some members of the Christian community dismantled their cremation site. They submitted before the court that till date they have not been able to construct a crematorium and at times are forced to bury their dead or are compelled to take the dead bodies to a faraway place for cremation. They informed the Hon'ble Court that "The village authorities and the village people did not allow cremation to take place and the dead bodies had to be taken to some other place at a considerable distance to complete the last rites." The further informed the court that "Right to dispose the dead bodies in a particular manner with particular rites in consecrated place is part and parcel of a religion and is protected in the penumbra of the right to profess and practice of one's religion."

During the course of proceedings before the High Court bench presided over by Justice Sri S.R. Sen, the Deputy Commissioner, East Khasi Hills District, Shillong, reported that the matter has been settled between the parties amicably and a suitable site was provided for use as cremation ground.

But one clause in the above settlement agreement that the crematorium shall be used for the purpose of cremation of only the deceased members of the Seng Khasi Myllem, attracted attention of the court, which disagreed with it and observed thus: "Anybody belonging to the indigenous faith and from any locality who needs to use the crematorium, can use it."

The court also directed the Deputy Commissioner to fence the area allotted for the purpose of cremation

and take other necessary steps to develop and make it properly functional within five months. "Superintendent of Police, East Khasi Hills District, is also further directed to see that nobody disturbs the petitioner in the village and to extend assistance and help as and whenever requested. It is further directed that both the parties should maintain peace and tranquillity in the locality," the court said.

The Court also imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on some of the members of the Christian community arrayed as respondents for disrespecting the Constitution of India. The judge also expressed his anguish observing that even after death, people are fighting over faith, caste and religion.....He asked them to be humans first.

"I am pained that even after so many years of independence, now in this 21st Century, people are not aware of the Constitution of the country where they live in and violates the Constitution...In my considered view, until and unless a person is aware of his or her duty, he or she cannot claim to enjoy the fundamental rights," Justice Sen observed.

The judge further observed: I would like to ask today through my small judgment and order; "If the water that we drink does not ask about our faith, caste and religion; if the air that we breathe do not ask about our faith, caste and religion; and if the land where we all live do not ask about our faith, caste and religion; if the cosmos do not ask about our faith, caste and religion, then who are we to ask about others faith, caste and religion. Therefore, let the dead rest in peace."...

The Judge further remarked: "It is really very sad that even after death, we are fighting over our faith, caste and religion. Do the people of this country want to say that after death, somebody will go to heaven or somebody will go to hell; nobody knows that. My humble belief is that there are not two or three Gods, God is only one. Another example I would like to put forward is that: "if the blood of a Khasi, Bengali and Nepali or any other person is mixed together, no

(Contd. to Page 14)

Indigenous Affairs receives a boost

Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP) recently organised the Indigenous Faith Day Celebrations at Itanagar, which was attended by Sri Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh.

The CM lauded the efforts of IFCSAP for preservation, propagation and protection of the indigenous faith movement and to uphold the local customs & beliefs as well as preserving the ethnicity of the tribes and the culture of Arunachal Pradesh. The CM used his Twitter account to express his feelings while attending the function in Itanagar.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister also greeted the people of Arunachal Pradesh on the occasion. He reiterated that "Ours is a distinct state with several tribes and communities residing side by side for ages and maintaining their own unique indigenous culture and traditions. Despite our varied diversity, we as Arunachalees are united and take pride in our indigenous cultural heritage. This cultural mosaic has to be maintained, preserved and propagated at all costs while keeping intact our unity in diversity".

While participating in the Indigenous Faith Day Celebrations at Itanagar the Chief Minister announced that his Government has made a budget provision of Rs 20 crore for the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) and appointed a Secretary to run and manage the Department.

Addressing the people assembled to participate in the Indigenous Faith Day celebrations at Nyikum Niya ground, Nirjuli on Friday the 8th December, 2017, the Chief Minister announced that the Chairman and the members of the Committee attached to the Department will also be appointed soon. Underscoring the need for preserving and safeguarding the culture and traditions of the Arunachalees, he urged the younger generations to uphold and maintain it for the generations to come. He laid special stress on preservation of local

languages and urged the parents and the elders to teach their children to speak in their own mother tongue. Speaking about religious harmony he said that he is against forceful conversion but it is also equally important to maintain religious tolerance since everyone has the freedom to practice religion of his/her own choice. He concluded his speech by recalling Golgi Bote and Talom Rukbo's contribution to the indigenous faith movement in the state.

Agriculture Minister Wangki Lowang stressed the need for documentation and preservation of the indigenous culture. Dr. Joram Begi, the Chief Information Commissioner, IFSCAP President Sri Ligu Tacho, Secretary Sri Bai Taba and members from Nyishi Elite Society (NES) and Arunachal Indigenous Tribes Forum (AITF) attended the celebration. Observance of the Indigenous Faith Day was not limited to the capital city only and was also simultaneously in various parts of the state with religious fervour and gaiety.

Attending the celebration at Tezu, Art and Culture Minister Dr. Mohesh Chai re-affirmed to the people of the State that the ruling State Government is determined to uphold the cultural integrity of different tribes of the State. He stated that "The State Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Sri Pema Khandu is determined to uphold the cultural integrity of different tribes of our State. And, I being the Minister for Art and Culture have the responsibility towards promotion and preservation of our indigenous culture and traditions, including faith and belief. Emphasizing the need for preservation of one's own culture and traditions, Dr. Chai said: "We should embrace modernity but we should not let it overshadow our identity." Dr. Chai also stated that he was worried by the UNESCO listing of many local languages and dialects in the list of endangered languages; he urged that every Arunachalee should realize their responsibility and sincerely devote themselves to safeguard their linguistic diversity. Reminding about the legacy of the people of Arunachal he

concluded that “It is our individual responsibility to uphold the age-old culture and traditions passed down by multiple generations.”

Lohit District Deputy Commissioner Sri Karma Leki said that change and modification are inevitable with time, but it should not change or disrupt the true essence of our traditions and culture. He called for peace and communal harmony among all tribes in the district.

In his speech in the course of the programme organised by the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh, Tezu Unit, Sri Soni Muri, Acting President of IFCSAP, Tezu Unit paid homage to Golgi Bote and Talom Rukbo and highlighted the aims, objectives and the importance of Indigenous Faith Day celebration in the State. Dr. Tasi Taloh, Principal Indira Gandhi Government College, Tezu also emphasized the need for preservation, protection and promotion of indigenous faith and culture.

Hundreds of believers representing various Kargu Gamgis and representatives from various communities attended the Indigenous Faith cum Donyi Polo Day celebration at Gumin Kiin. Sri Moji Bagra, who chaired the day-long programme, said that our identities are established by the faith and culture we exhibit and it is important to imbibe our cultural values and promote peace and harmony. Sri Doi Ado, Chief Advisor, Mogi Ori, President Donyi Polo Dere Trust Committee and Central Donyi Polo Kargu Gamgi Council Secretary Sri Doi Kamduk and Vice President Sri Jumda Lendo elaborated the concept of Donyi Poloism and indigenous faith and called upon all believers to take pride in it and make all out effort to preserve and propagate it.

At Yazali, Nyishi Elite Society (NES) President Sri Bengia Tolum exhorted the people gathered there to preserve and protect the Identity of indigenous community, stating that “Loss of culture is loss of identity.” He stressed that “Wearing traditional attire, speaking your own mother tongue is preservation of culture; but to preserve your identity, you have to preserve your faith and beliefs.” The Medical Officer (Yazali) Dr. Tao Tassar

highlighted the importance of celebrating the Indigenous Faith and Culture Day.

Sri Nabam Chada, Jt. Secretary NIFCS, Lower Subansiri briefed on Indigenous Faith Day and appealed to everyone to protect, preserve and promote indigenous faith and culture. The programme was attended by NIFCS, Chairman, Nyedar Namlo, Yazali, public and students of Yazali circle.

Attending the Indigenous Faith Day celebration at Raga, local MLA and Parliamentary Secretary, Animal Husbandry & Dairy Development Department, Sri Tamar Murtem appealed to the people to maintain their age-old culture and traditions to protect their identity. Responding to a memorandum submitted by Nyedar Namlo, NIFCS, Chairman of Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society, Raga unit for construction of a building for research and documentation of Nyishi culture and tradition, the Parliamentary Secretary assured to take up the matter with the government with priority.

Along with rest of state, Tirap Indigenous People Society (TIPS) celebrated the Indigenous Faith Day enthusiastically at Nehru Stadium, Khonsa. Believers of Indigenous faith from Lapnan, Chasa, Tupi, Noksa, Thinsa and Khonsa village, teachers and students from various government schools attended the celebration. Addressing the gathering, ADC Sri Techu Aran urged the parents to help their children learn mother tongue and encourage them to speak it at home. By learning and speaking our own languages, he said, we can preserve our culture and traditions. He also appealed to community members to maintain peace and harmony.

Tirap ZPC Sri Sontung Bangsia urged the gathering to learn to love the cultural heritage passed down through generations. TIPS President Sri Sephua Wangsu highlighted the importance of Indigenous Faith Day and the danger posed to indigenous languages. He said that of the nearly 70,000 language in the world, one language dies in every two weeks. ■

Freedom Waves: The Unsung Heroes of Mishmi Hills

Razzeko Dele

(Continued from the previous issue....)

Subsequently a blockade was imposed on the Mishmis of Dibang region and an amount of Rs. 2000 was declared as cash reward. The blockade however was revoked in 1909 as the British Government found it ineffective and alternatively a punitive expedition to Elope was proposed vide File no. 95 Foreign Political August 1909. Responding to the proposal for Punitive expedition put forward by Assistant Political Officer Noel Williamson, the Secretary to the Government of East Bengal and Assam while writing to the Commissioner of Assam Districts vide letter no. 3884G, dated Shillong, the 24th July 1909 observes;-

The blockade against the Mishmis appears to have failed in its object, in as much as Pongon (Ponge Dele) the perpetrator of the Dikrang outrage in 1905, is at large, and no impression appears to have been made by the blockade on offending tribe. You accordingly recommend the withdrawal of the blockade and the despatch of a punitive expedition to Elapoin (Elope) in accordance with proposals made by Mr. Williamson in his letter no. 13G., dated 2nd April 1907, to address of the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur. You also urge that if no further steps be taken to punish the offenders in this case Government prestige on the frontier is likely to suffer, and further outrages of a more serious nature may take place”.

The British troop under Captain Dundas and Captain Nevil undertook a military expedition to Elope in March 1914. The Expedition turned out futile as no one could be arrested. The troop after reaching the village burnt the houses, destroyed agricultural fields, bamboos and whatever destruction they could do. The troops stayed in village for many days carrying out destructions and returned back.

The next turn of event occurred in December 1917 when Taji Dele was arrested while coming to Sadiya for trade. In a hasty manner he was tried and hanged at Tezpur Jail on 29th January 1918.

The three Mishmis of Elope Ekhome Dele, Roshia Dele, and Bapo Dele in order to avenge the martyrdom of Taji Dele attacked the Nizamghat Military outpost in 24th November 1918. One sepoy was killed and several others injured. Thereafter, the British Government planned to undertake one more military expedition against the Mishmis of Elope. While sending the proposals for an expedition to punish the Mishmis of Elope, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Nicholas D. Beatson-Bell gave the history of confrontation as follows:-

“2. The murder of the rifleman appears to have been but another step in a long series of blood feuds. In the month of July 1905, as reported in paragraph 13 of the Report on the Frontier Tribes of Eastern Bengal and Assam for the year 1905-1906, three British subjects were murdered by Bebejiyas near the Dikrang block-house. This outrage seems to have been committed in retaliation for the detention in jail of a man named Pongon, during the Mishmi Expedition of 1900. ... After hanging of Taji Mideren at Tezpur Jail on the 29th January 1918, in his Report on the Frontier Tribes for the year 1917-18 Mr. Dundas, Political Officer of the Sadiya Frontier ‘Tract, anticipating the revenge attack wrote;

In his letter of the 30th November 1918, of which a copy was submitted to the Government of India with my letter No.9652-P., dated the 6th December 1918, Mr. Dundas reported that he had received information that the persons responsible for the murder of the rifleman at Nizamghat were Ekhome Mideren, Bapo Mideren and Kosa Mideren of Elapoin, and it seems certain that the murder of the rifleman at Nizamghat was the work of Pongon and his confederates in retaliation for the hanging of Taji Mideren.”

The British Government of India was, however, averse to any sort of “military commitments” and they asked that the operations should be deferred.

But in December 1919, the Chief Commissioner

reopened the matter, pointed out how they were supposed to be exercising “loose political control” in these areas as approved in Despatch No. 105, dated the 21st September 1911 and Secretary of State’s orders dated the 8th November 1911, and undertook that the operations would entail no risk of any situation arising which could not be controlled by local forces. The Government of India agreed on the 31st December 1919, but owing to the lateness of the season the expedition had to be postponed. It took place under Mr. O’Callaghan who had succeeded Mr. Dundas, in December 1920. The troops commanded by Captain R. P. Abigail (lent from the 3rd A.R.) and Lieut. J. Murray Grant, with Mr. O’Callaghan as Political Officer reached Elope on the 9th December. This time people of Elope which consisted of 40 houses decided to directly confront the British Forces. The

Mishmis of Elope were pushed back forcing them to retreat as their machetes and arrows were no match for the British guns and artilleries. Ponge Dele died fighting. Colonel W. Shakespeare in his book ***History of the Assam Rifles*** (1929) reports the confrontation thus:

“The force moved out from Nizamghat in October up the left bank of the Dibong river, the precipitous nature of the country making the progress of men and transport coolies most difficult. Before reaching Elapoin (Elope) the Mishmis held a stockaded position well sited, which brought about a sharp little fight before it was taken. Here the clan lost a number of men, amongst them being Pangoo (Ponge Dele), the leader of the trouble, who was shot dead. Elapoin (Elope) was duly destroyed, and two posts were left for a few months in that part of the country till all all fines were paid up”

Similarly, Sir Rober Reid, the Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942 wrote in his book ***History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*** (1942) as below:-

“They reached Elapoin on the 9th December. An ambush was laid for our troops and one Mishmi was shot who very fortunately turned out to be Pongon Mideren himself, the leader and instigator of the whole previous trouble and a consistent

nuisance for some 25 years. There was no further difficulty and the troops returned to Sadiya by 27th January 1921. Punishment was inflicted where required arid many outstanding disputes settled. ‘The Chief Commissioner was satisfied that the result of the expedition had “gone far to re-establish the authority of Government after the enforced non-intervention of the last few years”

Conclusion

The British belief after 1st Bebejiya Mishmi Expedition that the ‘Bebejiyas have learnt the strength of British power’ and therefore never strike them again proved wrong. The constant struggle by a small tribal group also manifests the undying spirit to fight for the tribal right and pride which is inherent in the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. However, the historical phenomenon which had impacted and plagued British government for nearly a quarter of century is today only in the domain of dusty archival files and have become subject of few lines in the books written by Indian historians. Nearly all the historians of North East like H.K Barpujari (Problem of the Hill Tribes of North East Frontier, 1873-1962) and M.L Bose (History of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997) have just quoted few lines of British officers which are highly derogatory as well as onesided & prejudiced view. One can find elaborate writings on the subject in Robert Reid (*History of Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*, [1942]) and L. W Shakespear (*History of the Assam Rifles* [1929])

The local lore of the struggle still echoes in Mishmi Hills. The tribe still revere the people who died fighting the British anti the tribal oppressive policies. They fought for the tribal ethos, struggled for the freedom to live the life by holding their heads high in their own land.

Academic writings have appeared on the history of Ponge Dele and Taji Dele. The Union Public Service Commission Civil Service Exam Main paper 2009 had a question on Taji Dele (Taji Mederen). Similarly a brief write up and report was published in ***Eastern Panorama***, August 2009. In the same spirit, *Times of India* (electronic version) carried historical research writing on September 18, 2012 written by Amaresh Misra titled, *Assam: The very idea of India under*

attack – Part III, links the incessant struggle of Ponge Dele and Taji Dele to the larger freedom movement of Assam.

With the proclamation of Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India to recognise the tribal peoples who have fought against the British as freedom fighters, the Idu Mishmi cultural and Literary Society submitted a memorandum to the chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Shri Pema Khandu on 8th January 2017.

The same appeal was made to Shri Kiren Rijju, Hon'ble MOS Home on 22nd July 2017.

Glossary of Misspelt English Names and Actual Idu Mishmi Names

English Misspelt Name	Actual Idu Mishmi Name
Chullikatta Mishmis	Idu Mishmis those who spoke Midu dialect especially residing in the foothills of Roing region.
Bebejiya Mishmis	Idu Mishmis of Ithu Valley especially those who speak Mithu dialect.
Pongon Midere	Ponge Dele (Earlier traditionally it was Midele clan, now they are known by as Dele).
Elanpu	Elope

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Krishna Kanta Handiqui National Award presented

The prestigious Krishna Kanta Handiqui National Award, 2017, which carries Rs 5 lakhs, a citation and a memento, was presented to Sri Hari Shankar Brahma, the former Chief Election Commissioner of India on 11 December, 2017 by Prof Jagdish Mukhi, the Hon'ble Governor of Assam in a function organised at Pragjyoti Cultural Complex, Guwahati. In the same function the Krishna Kanta Handiqui National Fellowship which offers Rs six lakh to each of the recipients for a span of two years, a citation and a memento each, was also presented to Mountaineer Anshu Jamsenpa and writer Sharmistha Pritam.

Sri Hari Shankar Brahma, a successful 1975-batch IAS officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre, was the Chief Election Commissioner of India (CEC) from January 16, 2015 to April 19, 2015. Prior to that he was one of the Election Commissioner from August 2010. He has overseen two Lok Sabha elections and at least one round of Assembly election in every state.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Mukhi heaped praise on the role of open education in transforming lives and promoting a feeling of inclusiveness. He said that "Through this award and fellowship programme, the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University has shown a very good example of its commitment towards society. Other programmes of the educational institution, like its more than 300 study centres across the State and its initiative to facilitate education opportunities to the jail inmates, are also laudable."

In his acceptance speech, Brahma said that the future of the State depended on human resources and education will play a very important role in it. "All the problems linked to us are mostly due to poor education, be it health and hygiene, high infant and maternal mortality rate, low life expectancy or unemployment. He further added that "Moreover, in today's highly competitive world, we have to be

better educated technically and academically to survive."

Ms. Anshu Jamsenpa, who holds the world record of double ascent of Mount Everest in a span of five days and a recipient of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui National Fellowship, in her speech urged the Centre to come up with a well-defined policy for promoting mountaineering and adventure sports. The other recipient of the fellowship, Ms. Sharmistha Pritam, is a well-known writer who is suffering from Spinal Muscular Atrophy disease since her childhood.



While speaking about herself she said that "I've had hardships in my life and challenges of all sorts. However, I believe that the more challenges we have, the better we understand life." She further added that that no issues inflicting the human race can be solved without learning to love the people and Nature.

Earlier, Dr. Hitesh Deka, Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University spoke on the vision and achievements of the varsity. He informed that five female candidates, namely Ms. Yashodhara Das, Ms. Bipasa Kalita, Ms. Soma Roy, Ms. Namrata Barua and Ms. Shamma Parwin, who are preparing to appear for the UPSC (Mains), were given scholarships of Rs 1 lakh each.

Success

Shindhu Kashyap Borpuzari

In the hustle and bustle of the city life everyone is just running after their dreams, goals and whatever one might say, but how many are actually on the right track to achieve their most coveted aspiration. Most of the time many are just trying to outdo the other without realizing about their actual goals. There is a lot of competition in almost all the fields, but sometimes the competition is so fierce that people become busier in overtaking others forgetting about their own goals. The key is to focus on your own goals and work with utmost sincerity, dedication and assiduousness towards achieving it. Also, it is important to learn from the mistakes we commit. No one is perfect and each one of us is bound to make mistakes, but it's important that we don't repeat them. Motivation also plays a vital role here. Some people have their role models who inspire them and keep them going, they try to imbibe the qualities of their role models and it's indeed a very logical and positive thing to do. On the other hand, we also have to accept the fact that there are such super successful people who don't have any idols or role models, they are self-motivated and develop an inner strength or force that drive them. What is success? Can it be calculated in terms of money you have or the power you possess to influence others? I feel success cannot be quantified or calculated in monetary terms. For instance if a beggar gets a sum of 20 thousand rupees it would be a complete profusion for him, if a middle class man gets it then it would be just good enough

for him, but if it goes to someone like Lakshmi Mittal then it would be only peanuts for the billionaire industrialist. So, success can't be quantified in terms of money or for that matter in any materialistic measure, it is the progress in life, one's continuous augmentation in life. What you are today, 10 years down the line you should be in a much better position in life that will be your growth, your success. How important is education for success and in reaching the ultimate goal in life? We all know that Dhirubhai Ambani was by no means an educated person but was a real genius who changed the dynamics of the business world. We have another example Sri N.R Narayan Murthy, an engineer who started Infosys with few of his engineer friends contributing their savings and we all know where Infosys is today. Infosys became super successful because of their collective intelligence, attitude, meticulousness, pragmatism and the ability to judge a situation, which is the key. Education is important but judgment is of greater importance. Education can hone your intelligence and instincts to judge a situation better. Life's experience also teaches us a lot, greater the experience, better you learn. However how quickly you learn is of greater importance. How you adapt to different conditions and utilize the available resources to your maximum advantage will determine your success or failure. I will conclude by saying that to achieve real success one must focus on his dreams and work positively to achieve it. ■

(Contd. from Page 7)

Humanity must come First

science has established any methodology to distinguish the blood whether it belongs to a Khasi, a Bengali or a Nepali and it is an undisputed fact that the blood of all human beings is red, no matter what faith, caste or religion he or she belongs to, so why so much difference." I think it is high time that society should wake up and educate the people of India and

it is also my appeal to the society that the time has come to make the people aware about their fundamental duties, specifically, Article 51A which speaks about humanity. I further mention that no person can practice religion or become spiritual, until and unless he or she becomes a good human being because humanity comes first, then religion". ■



Nongkrem Dance Festival, Meghalaya

रुडयार्ड किपलिंग ने
उन्हें अपनी कल्पनाओं
में बसाया और अब हम
उन्हें बसा रहे हैं,
एक नए परिवेश में।



“ओएनजीसी बारासिंघा (ईस्टर्न स्वैम्प डीअर) संरक्षण परियोजना”
एक दुर्लभ प्रजाति को विलुप्त होने से बचाने के लिए
ओएनजीसी की सीएसआर पहल।

असम में पाये जाने वाले बारासिंघा या ईस्टर्न स्वैम्प डीअर (*Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhi*) आज विलुप्त होने की कगार पर है। प्रसिद्ध लेखक रुडयार्ड किपलिंग ने जिस से मंत्रमुग्ध हो कर उसकी सुन्दरता को अपनी दूसरी किताब 'द सेकंड जंगल बुक' में कैद किया हो, उस जीव के लिये यह काफी दुखद स्थिति है।

ओएनजीसी ने इस प्रजाति को विलुप्त होने से बचाने के लिये अपने कदम बढ़ाये, और वो भी बिल्कुल सही समय पर।

इसके पहले चरण के अन्तर्गत इनकी अनुमानित आबादी, अनुकूल पर्यावरण, पशु-चिकित्सा अंतःक्षेप एवं सामान्य अध्ययन और जागरूकता अभियान किया गया। इनके स्थानांतरण के लिये मानस राष्ट्रीय उद्यान को चुना गया, जो इनके रहने के लिये बिल्कुल उपयुक्त स्थान था।

काजीरंगा राष्ट्रीय उद्यान से 19 बारासिंघो को मानस में स्थानांतरित करना बहुत ही कठिन काम था। योजना के इस अत्यंत कठिन दूसरे चरण को दक्षिण अफ्रीका से बुलाये गये वन्यजीव विशेषज्ञों ने बहुत खास तरीके से अंजाम दिया। 19 बारासिंघो का स्थानांतरण खास तंबुओ में किया गया, जिनको अन्दर से उनके प्राकृतिक आवास जैसा ही बनाया गया था। कुछ ही महीनों में 6 नवजात बारासिंघो ने झुण्ड में जुड़कर, स्थानांतरण की खुशी को दुगना कर दिया।

इस योजना के विस्तार के तीसरे चरण के अन्तर्गत 20 अतिरिक्त बारासिंघो का स्थानांतरण किया जा रहा है।

यह परियोजना संतुलित पर्यावरण की ओर ओएनजीसी की एक शुरुआत है। लुप्तप्राय प्रजातियों का संरक्षण करने के लिये प्रेरित, हमारा संगठन प्रकृति की असली सुंदरता को बनाये रखने के लिये प्रतिबद्ध है।



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‘ঐতিহ্য বার্তা’ৰ বাবে প্ৰবন্ধ-পাতি আহ্বান

সদাশয় ওতাকাংকী লেখক-লেখিকাসকল,

আন্তৰিক শ্ৰদ্ধা আৰু ওলগ জ্ঞাপন কৰিলোঁ। প্ৰতিমাহৰ পহিলা তাৰিখত নিয়মিত ৰূপত প্ৰকাশ পাবলগীয়া নতুন অসমীয়া বাৰ্তালোচনী ‘ঐতিহ্য বার্তা’ত প্ৰকাশ কৰিবৰ বাবে আপোনাৰ পৰা লেখা-মেলা আহ্বান কৰা হ’ল। অসম তথা উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ গৰিমাময় ঐতিহ্য, সমাজ-সংস্কৃতি, সমসাময়িক চিন্তা-প্ৰবাহৰ সৈতে সংগতি থকা তথ্য-সমৃদ্ধ, চিন্তা-প্ৰসূত, ভিন্নসূৰী প্ৰবন্ধ-পাতিৰে সজাবলৈ মানস কৰা ‘ঐতিহ্য বার্তা’ত আপোনাৰ সেৱামূলক সহায়-সহযোগিতা বিশেষভাবে কামনা কৰা হ’ল। ‘ঐতিহ্য বার্তা’ৰ বিভিন্ন শিতানত প্ৰকাশৰ বাবে আপোনাৰ দ্বাৰা লিখিত, সংগৃহীত, অনুদিত প্ৰবন্ধ-পাতি, বা-বাতৰি যিকোনো মাহৰ পহিলা সপ্তাহৰ ভিতৰত পাব পৰাকৈ নিম্নোল্লিখিত ঠিকনাত প্ৰেৰণ কৰিবলৈ অনুৰোধ জনোৱা হ’ল।

আপোনাৰ লেখা-মেলা, চিঠি-পত্ৰ এই ঠিকনাত পঠাব-
সম্পাদক, ‘ঐতিহ্য বার্তা’

গৃহ নং ৩০, হেৰিটেজ ফাউণ্ডেচন, এফ.চি. ৰোড,
উজানবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী- ৭৮১০০১

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Kumbh Mela receives UNESCO recognition

The recent recognition of Kumbh Mela as the “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” by the UNESCO is a matter of great pride and elation for Indians.

The Intergovernmental Committee for safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage under the UN body inscribed Kumbh Mela on the “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” at its 12th session in Jeju, South Korea. The meeting, which opened on December 4 and ended on December 9 this year. Indian Prime Minister described the achievement as “A matter of immense joy and pride for India,”

Kumbh Mela, considered the world’s largest congregation of religious pilgrims, joins new elements from Botswana, Colombia, Venezuela, Mongolia, Morocco, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates on the list.

The inscription of elements on the list helps countries which are a part of UNESCO’s convention for safeguarding cultural heritage to mobilise international cooperation and assistance for ensuring

that communities continue to practise and transmit such aspects of their heritage.

The Kumbh Mela, held in Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik, represents a syncretic set of rituals related to worship and cleansing in holy rivers.

The inscription of Kumbh Mela was recommended by the expert body which examines in detail nominations submitted by Member countries.

Traditionally, four fairs are widely recognized as the Kumbh Mela: the Haridwar Kumbh Mela, the Allahabad Kumbh Mela, the Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Simhastha, and Ujjain Simhastha. These four fairs are held periodically at one of the following places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad (Prayag), Nashik district (Nashik and Trimbak), and Ujjain. The main festival site is located on the banks of a river: the Ganges (Ganga) at Haridwar; the confluence (Sangam) of the Ganges and the Yamuna and the invisible Sarasvati at Allahabad; the Godavari at Nashik; and the Shipra at Ujjain. Bathing in these rivers is thought to cleanse a person of all sins. ■

Mizo Award, 2017 presented

Mizo Award, the most prestigious award instituted by Mizoram’s largest vernacular daily ‘Vanglaini’ was recently presented to Ms. Joy L. Pachuau, a professor in the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, in recognition of her excellent contribution in the field of academics. Ms. Joy L. Pachuau is the third recipient of this prestigious award. Former Chief Minister Brig Sailo and social worker Mr. Sangthankima, Father of TNT Centre, a Home for orphans, drug addicts and mentally-challenged persons, were the former recipients of the award.

While speaking about the award, Mr. K. Sapdanga, the Editor of the daily stated that the ‘Mizo Award’ is given to exemplary people in different fields - politics, social work, academics, etc. This year, the Award Board selected Ms. Joy L Pachuau to receive the award to recognise her unparalleled contribution as well as achievements in her chosen field of academics.

In the course of the award ceremony at

Berawtlang Tourist Centre on Saturday the 9th December, 2018, the former recipient of the award, Father Sangthankima handed over the award to Ms. Pachuau. The award carries Rs 2.00 lakhs in cash and a citation.

Prof. Ms. Pachuau, an alumna of the University of Oxford, is the author of ‘Being Mizo’ the first detailed ethnographic work on the Mizos in post-independence India, focuses on the contemporary issues such as perceptions and identity formation in the context of North East. The book has been awarded Sneh Mahajan Prize for the Best Book (2012-14) on Modern Indian History by the Indian History Congress.

Prof. Ms. Pachuau, with Ms. Tanika Sarkar and Mr. Pius Malekandathil, has co-authored ‘Christianity in India: Issues of Culture, Power and Knowledge’, and ‘The Camera as Witness – A Social History of Mizoram’ with Mr. Willem van Schendel. She has also to her credit, a good number of articles published in the national and international journals of repute. ■

Dazzling Nongkrem Dance

On 11th December, 2017 the annual dance of the Khasis better known as the Nongkrem dance or 'Ka Pomblang', was performed at the traditional venue, the palace Iling Sad of the Syiem of Hima Khyriem at Smit with thousands of people attending the ceremony. Normally, this traditional dance is celebrated in the month of December in all splendour and gaiety.

The ceremonial dance was performed in the courtyard of the Iling Sad (thatched House) with unmarried girls, attired in dazzling traditional



finery, danced in tiny steps to the tune of traditional music of the duhalia (the traditional musicians) while the men, dressed in traditional accouter holding a white yak hair whisk in one hand and a sword in one hand, surround the women.

The purpose of Nongkrem Dance is to seek blessings of Goddess 'Ka Blei Synshar' for an abundant agricultural yield and welfare of the people. The festival is also called 'Ka Pomblang' meaning decapitation of goats since they are sacrificed and offerings made to the ancestors.

An important part of this festival is 'Ka Pomblang' Ceremony, at which goats offered by subjects to the 'Syiem' of Hima Khyriem, are sacrificed and offerings are made to the ancestors of the ruling clan and the deity of Shillong peak (U-Lei Shillong).

In the words of Balajied Sing Syiem, the Syiem of Hima Khyriem, "These dances and rituals are a continuation of the legacy bestowed upon us since the ancient days by our ancestors and there has not been any changes since then and this festival is a testimony of our gratitude to God."

The Syiem further said that since many of the dancers are school-going students, "We also took this into consideration and hence we are organizing this festival of the Khasis in December as most of the students are getting their winter break from school. Braving the winter cold, clouded sky and light drizzle, the Nongkrem dance was performed by more than 100 plus girls and boys.

He said that prayers for peace in the society and for good agricultural yield have been the centre of the rituals performed. The five-day long religious festival of the Khasis, is performed to appease 'Ka Blei Synshar' and seek his blessings for a bounty-full harvest. In the evening, after the Nongkrem dance concludes, the Syiem along with the high priest perform the 'Pomblang' ceremony, the sacrifice of goats which is an important part of the ritual. ■

Forced Conversion in Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh witnessed a very sad incident of religious conversion in which a Catholic priest was arrested on charges of forced religious conversion. In the melee that followed the vehicle of a Catholic priest was set on fire, allegedly by the activists of Bajrang Dal. As an aftermath of the incident several members of the Christian minority community were allegedly assaulted by the activists the right-wing Hindu group at a police station in Satna, police said on Friday.

The Satna Police sources confirmed the arrest of Father George Mangalapilly, but they denied allegations that the members of the clergy were assaulted at the police station. Incidentally, Father Mangalapilly is a professor at St Ephrem's Theological College in Satna.

The Christians were allegedly intercepted and accused by Bajrang Dal activists of converting people with lure and force during a Carol-singing programme in Jawahar Nagar Bhumkhar village near Satna, about 485 km from state capital Bhopal. The arrest was made on the basis of a complaint lodged by one Sri

Dharmendra Kumar Dohar, who said he was lured with money to convert to Christianity. The Catholic Church of Madhya Pradesh denied the allegations of forcible conversion and accused police of siding with the Hindu activists. Eight other clergymen were allegedly detained when they went to the Civil Lines police station to enquire about the arrested people.

Religious conversion is a sensitive issue in India with Hindu groups often accusing Christian missionaries of luring poor villagers - through cash and kind - to convert to their faith. Madhya Pradesh, a BJP-ruled state, has an estimated 2.1 lakh Christian population, as per the 2011 census.

Father Leo Cornelio, the Archbishop of Bhopal diocese, described the incident as "repeated shameful acts of the fundamentalists to rise above the law in attacking the Christian brothers who are spreading love, peace and brotherhood". In a statement Father Leo Cornelio claimed that "It is an attempt to divide the society with false accusations on conversion to bring down the development and

(Contd. to Page 25)

Shared brotherhood of Manipur & Japan

The relations between Japan and Manipur are as old as Second World War. Hundreds of Japanese warriors laid down their lives here in Manipur. History is replete with the sad stories of bravery and sacrifice.

Recently a team of Japanese delegates came to Manipur on a 3-day visit to pay their respectful tributes and to reiterate their solidarity with their fallen heroes who had sacrificed their lives during World War II. The present visit was partly in response to the invitation extended by the Hon'ble Governor in the course of the Sangai Festival Business Summit held in Manipur. The delegation was welcomed by Smt. Najma Heptulla, the Hon'ble Governor of Manipur at the Raj Bhawan. In the informal meeting that followed, strengthening of Indo-Japanese relations took precedence over other issues. She reiterated

that culturally there is a close connection between India and Japan because India also follows all the three religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism which are widely accepted in South East Asia. She concluded that not only in terms of cultural relations, a never ending relationship was built up between Japan and Manipur ever since the Second World War that was fought between 1939 and 1945. In her speech for the benefit of the Japanese delegates she said that "Japan should help build roads in Manipur for promoting connectivity with the entire South East Asian countries for which she is also pursuing the matter with the Government of India to construct good road connections that reach the entire South East Asian countries." Showing her keen interest in warm relationship between India and

(Contd. to Page 24)

Liromoba Sports Carnival 2017

On December 11, 2017 the 10-day-long Liromoba Sports Carnival 2017 featuring wide range of games and sports including water rafting, football, volleyball, marathon, yoga, aerobic etc. came to its conclusion at the local football ground of Kamba.

Addressing the gathering at the closing ceremony, the chief guest, Deputy Speaker Sri Tumke Bagra said that sports has emerged as one of the biggest industries world over. Heaping praise on the local MLA Sri Nyamar Karbak for conceiving the idea of organizing the carnival to promote healthy competition among all PRI segments of Liromoba constituency, Sri Bagra said that this will go a long way in finding out the sports talents from the far-flung and backward areas of the constituency.

Parliamentary Secretary (Sports and Youth Affairs) and local MLA Sri Nyamar Karbak said that the Sports Carnival was conceived with the motive of identifying rural sports talents and foster spirit of teamwork and oneness among various PRI functionaries of the constituency. He disclosed that the 3rd edition of

Sports Carnival will be held at Liromoba next year to boost the spirit of camaraderie among the PRIs to promote games and sports.

West Siang Deputy Commissioner Ms. Swetika Sachan disclosed that Kamba town is emerging as a hub of important activities and needs a good circuit house to meet up the needs of accommodation.

ADC Yomcha, Sri Rujum Raksap, who was entrusted the additional charge of ADC Kamba for this big event, said that the spirit with which the festival was organised will definitely create awareness on value of games and sports. Speaking on behalf of Kamba Bango Sports Association which has been instrumental in conducting the Sports Carnival, Sri Goge Kato extended gratitude to one and all for making the event a great success.

In the final Football match played on the day, LBKN beat KDPP 3-0 to lift the winner's trophy. The chief guest also gave away prizes to the winners of various competitions conducted during the 10-day-long Liromoba Sports Carnival 2017. ■

Khasi poet Soso Tham remembered

The 77th death anniversary of renowned Khasi poet Soso Tham was observed by the Khasi Student' Union (KSU) Mawlai circle on Monday, the 18th December, 2017 by organizing a debate competition for the youth of Mawlai.

The debate competition was won by Ms. Evanisha Pathaw from Mawlai Kyntonmassar, who was awarded the cash prize of Rs 5,000.00, While Me. Bajanai Warjri from Mawkyroh Umshing came in second, and Mr. Lamboklang Khongwir from Mawlai Nongkwar finished third.

The Prize Giving Ceremony was chaired by KSU Mawlai circle General Secretary Mr. Rapborlang Nongrum.

Speaking on the occasion, former KSU leader and North East Student Organization Chairman Mr. Samuel B Jyrwa recited the poems written by Late Soso Tham and said that the message Late Tham conveyed through his poems still have an impact and relevance today.

Meanwhile, the Seng Kyrswiew Thiah, Sohra also commemorated the death anniversary of U Soso Tham and also remembered the contribution of the former Syiem of Hima Sohra, Late Duwan Sing Syiem.

A panel discussion was also held on the topic "Why we have to respect Syiem Duwan Sing".

Addressing the gathering as Chief Guest, Syiem of Hima Sohra, Mr. Paiem Freeman Sing Syiem said, "Syiem Duwan Sing has been tagged as 'Syiem tap thlong', however I feel that this is all politics of different Himas." He said that some Himas are making such allegations against Hima Sohra just to tarnish the image of Syiem Duwan Sing. The Syiem of Hima Sohra further said that there is a need to remove the tag of "Syiem tap thlong" from Syiem Duwan Sing.

Mr. Freeman Sing Syiem also said he is willing to work together with Seng Kyrswiew Thiah (a local organization) to find ways and means to remove the tag against Syiem Duwan Sing. ■

Sahitya Academy Awards, 2017

A dazzling success for NE litterateurs

Sahitya Akademi announced its annual Sahitya Akademi Awards in 24 languages on 21st December, Thursday. Seven books of novel, five of poetry, five of short stories, five of literary criticism and one of play and essays have won the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2017.

The Awards were recommended by distinguished jury members representing 24 Indian languages and



approved by the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi which met under the chairmanship of Prof Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi.

It is matter of great pride and satisfaction that seven of the awards have gone to litterateurs of Assam and three to the litterateurs from our closest North East neighbours Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Assamese novelist Sri Jayanta Madhab Bora was chosen for the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2017 for his novel 'Moriahola'. The background of the novel is the hamlet Moriahola that got submerged in the Brahmaputra. The author researched on the village and collected materials on the socio-economic and

cultural aspects of the villagers for 25 years from 1985 to 2011. After collating all the data collected, Sri Bora started writing the novel in 2011 and completed it in 2013. About his reaction on the award Sri Bora said that "The award is recognition to my hard toil." About the content of his novel

Sri Jayanta Madhab Bora, who works in the Education Department of Assam Secretariat said that "I have reflected the reality of the village and it signifies the tragic erosion of values among mankind. I've used this aspect as a symbol for positive changes." Bora further warned that "this erosion of values among mankind is a danger signal particularly with respect to language and culture of Assam." He added that if we fail to arrest this erosion of values immediately then the very identity of the Assamese people will be at stake." However in his typical note, Bora finally concluded: "I'm hopeful that such a state will never come." It is necessary to mention here that his novel 'Moriahola' bagged the Syed Abdul Malik award in 2013. Bora has till now scripted eight short story collections, 13 novels and six translations into Assamese, two research projects, five children's literature, edited three books and four magazines. The AIR has broadcast six of his dramas. There are several TV serials of his short stories. He has even scripted for one film. A resident of Panjabari area of Guwahati, he originally hails from Dergaon.

Bodo writer Dr. Rita Boro was chosen for the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2017 for her novel 'Thwisam' which was published by Onsumwi Library, Kokrajhar in 2014. Dr. Boro, is serving as the Assistant Professor in Tangla College, Udalguri was born on August 28, 1975 to Sri Melaram Boro and Smt. Saokhi Boro and hails from Jalukbari village of Tangla in Udalguri district. As of now, she has more than seven books to her credit, besides articles published in different magazines and journals. Her creations include Gongse Okhrangni Singao (Novel-2002), Mwndangthi (Short story-2002), Aijwni Mwnthai Gangse Fora Bijab (Translation-2013), Nwng Jwngni Gamijwng Fwiwbla (Poetry-2013), Gwdan Lathikho (Poetry-2004) and Awama Swbnai



Fwtharao Jwsa Mainao (Translation-2013). About her reaction on receiving the award, Dr. Boro said that she was elated to hear her name for the Sahitya Akademi award and added that it would be a great inspiration for her to continue her creative endeavours. In addition to her literary genius Dr. Boro is also very active in social work field. She held the post of General Secretary of All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) and later became its Vice-President. She is also associated with different social organizations and is dedicated to the ideals of social welfare. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), while lauding Dr. Boro for being selected for the Sahitya Akademi



award hoped that her success would inspire the upcoming writers of this region.

Smt. Mamang Dai of Arunachal Pradesh who normally writes in English has also been chosen for the award in the same category (English) for her novel 'The Black Hill'.

Sri Rajen Toijamba of Manipur has been chosen for the award for for his Manipuri play.

Sri Babul Tamuly of Assam has been among the awardees in the translation category for his Assamese translation of Sri Mulk Raj Anand's classic "Two Leaves and a Bud", titled 'Eti Koli Duti Paat'.

Sri Gobinda Basumatary of Assam has won the award for Bodo translation of "Gaddar" originally authored by Sri Krisan Chander, titled in its original name.



Smt. Ranjita Biswas has been chosen for the award for her book 'Written in Tears' which is English translation of the Assamese collection of selected short stories and novella by Smt. Arupa Patangia Kalita.

Sri Naorem Bidyasagar Singha of Manipur has also been among the awardees for his work 'Manimahesh', which is the Manipuri translation of Sri Umraprasad Mukhopadhyay's Bengali travelogue "Manimahesh".

The Sahitya Akademi Yuva Purashkar awardees include two poets from Assam Sri Pritam Baruah and Sri Bijit Gwra Ramchiary – both for poetry. ■

The glorious Baithak Khana of Gauripur royal estate

It is indeed a very sad story. The historic Baithak Khana-cum-Guest House of the Zamindars of the Gauripur Royal Estate is in a very dilapidated condition. Unless immediate steps are initiated on a priority basis to preserve the heritage Guest House, which is a great example of exquisite craftsmanship, a glorious part of Assam's history will be lost forever. Raja Pratap Chandra Baruah, the Zamindar of Gauripur Estate, shifted his capital to the present Gauripur town from Rangamati, 10 km from Gauripur in 1856. He built his palace, Darbar House, Treasury, Mahamaya Temple, exquisitely decorated Baithak khana in an area covering more than 20 bighas of land and built brick walls around the palace complex.

After his death, his adopted son Prabhat Chandra Baruah became the zamindar of the royal estate. He was the architect of Gauripur town and transformed the capital town into a modern and beautiful place for living, taking into account the model of Coochbehar, the capital of Koch King Naranarayan. Prabhat Chandra Baruah was so popular that his subjects used to call him Raja Bahadur.

During his tenure, the Baithak Khana-cum-Guest House built in front of the palace was a centre for study, research and education. The Guest House had

18 well-furnished rooms. Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruah invited musical troupes from Kolkata and used to arrange 'Jalsa' for his own entertainment as well as his staff members.

After the death of Raja Bahadur, his second son Prakritish Chandra Baruah (Lalji) became the Zamindar and looked after the affairs of the estate. After Lalji's death, the Zamindari estate as well as the family property was divided among the descendants. Consequent upon this division the Baithak Khana came under the control of Late Upen Gogoi, one of the sons-in-law of the royal family, who somehow managed the upkeep of the guest house, but lacked in innovations. As a result of the apathy in part and lack of imagination the Baithak Khana gradually started losing its glory. Today, the Guest House is lying abandoned house and uncared.

It is needless to stress that the unique Baithak Khana-cum-Guest House of the Zaminders of Gauripur is undoubtedly a legacy of the people of Assam and a statement of the past glory of the Assamese rulers. Time and again the people from all sections of the society have urged the State government to take over the Baithak Khana-cum-Guest House and preserve it as a Heritage site without wasting any more time. ■

Mountaineer Anshu bags KK Handiqui National Fellowship award

It is news of great elation and satisfaction that the ace mountaineer from Arunachal Pradesh, Miss Anshu Jamsenpa has bagged the Krishna Kanta Handiqui National Fellowship award recently in recognition of her record-breaking feats in the field. Hon'ble Governor of Assam, Dr Jagdish Mukhi presented the award to Miss Anshu in a function held at Pragjyoti Cultural Complex, Guwahati on Monday, the 11th December, 2017. The award comprises of a citation, trophy and Rs 6 lakh.

In her acceptance speech, MNiss Anshu while extending gratitude to KKHSOU for choosing her for National Fellowship award reiterated that Mountaineering & Adventure Sports Policy is the need of the hour. She also urged the Government of

India to declare the coming new year 2018, as 'Adventure Tourism Year' which, she said will give a "big boost" to general awareness and promotion of sports throughout the country.

While thanking Miss Anshu for accepting the KK Handiqui National Fellowship award the KKHSOU Vice Chancellor Dr Hitesh Deka said that she is a symbol of an empowered woman. The VC informed that a book on her adventurous journey is in the pipeline.

Dr Aroop Jyoti Choudhury, Registrar of KKHSOU appreciated Anshu's grit and determination, which he said the people around the world saw when she broke the Guinness World Record held by Churim Sherpa by climbing Mt Everest twice in five days. ■

Hornbill Festival - The showpiece event of Nagaland

Hornbill Festival, as the name suggests, is named after the Indian Hornbill, the large and colourful forest bird which is displayed in the folklore of most of the tribes of Nagaland. The Hornbill Festival is held at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama which is about 12 km from Kohima. The aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich cultural heritage of Nagaland and display its extravaganza and traditions. The state of Nagaland is home to several tribes, which have their own distinct festivals. The Hornbill Festival provides a colourful mixture of dances, performances, crafts, parades, games, sports, food fairs and religious ceremonies. The festival also exposes the culture and tradition of different tribal communities and reinforces Nagaland's identity as a unique state in India's federal union.

The Hornbill Festival of Nagaland, as is known and perceived today, nationally and internationally, is the culmination of the extraordinary efforts of the Government of Nagaland, who started organizing this festival from the year 2000 with the objective of encouraging inter-tribal interaction and promotion of cultural heritage of Nagaland. The 10-day long festival is normally organized every year in the first week of December, preferably on the 1st day of December coinciding with the Nagaland Statehood Day.

This year, the 10-day Hornbill Festival, which is the annual showpiece event of the state of Nagaland, was inaugurated on December 1 coinciding with its 54th Statehood Day celebrations by Sri Ramnath Kovind, His Excellency the President of India.

The Hornbill Festival of 2017 has reportedly attracted a record 2,43,214 visitors, which is a sharp climb compared to the previous year's figures of 1,12,604 visitors. Mr. Toka E Tuccumi, an officer of the Department of Nagaland Tourism said that a total of 2,43,214 visitors, including 2,401 foreign tourists, 38,700 domestic and 2,02,113 locals had enjoyed the festival which lasted for 10 days.

The entire 10 days of the festival were not only full of fun and frolic but also a display of unique

presentation of traditional dance and cultural presentation.

Members of the Sumi community demonstrated an indigenous game they called 'Apukhu Akikiti' (Sumi for 'leg fighting'). The showcase was for the morning session of a segment 'Culturally Yours.' Similarly, members of the Ao community performed for visitors a dance form depicting battles of yore. The narrative continued in the performances of various other fellow tribes.

Apukhu Akikiti is a traditional game played by Sumi men and is an indigenous martial game of the community. It is usually played between two men. However, an expert if he so challenges, can play against two juniors at a time. This game is also a competition of skills and strength in which players attempt to bring down the opponent by kicking. A player who touches the ground 'even with his finger' loses. However, there is a strict rule that a participant should never be kicked after he is down.

Another highlight to the segment was an Ao cultural group performing 'Arpu Tsungsang' (Ao for 'war dance'). In the past, as tales of antiquities go, when headhunting was practiced by the Naga forefathers, Ao warriors had to fight enemies to protect their people and village. When faced with the enemy in battle, they marched forward with loud war cries.

The Khamniungan presented another traditional dance form of Naga tribes. A cultural group from the community performed 'Elie zuihang' ('victory dance') during the morning session of Culturally Yours. The dance depicted villagers returning to their village after a successful raid. The Elie zuihang dance is performed with vigour and represents a resolve to renew their strength to defend their village. The message here is that unity is the source of strength.

The Pochury community was not far behind: A cultural group performed 'Miirii Kowthring' (folk dance) and song celebrating a successful hunt. In the performance the dancers challenge their friends in counting the numbers of animals they hunted down

during the hunting expedition.

The Yimchungrii tribe also sang for the visitors a song about feasts. In the olden days, a feast is organized to showcase one's credibility, possession, wealth and popularity and to gain higher social status. At the appointed time the host invites his close associates, friends and neighbours, village elders and all the folks in general to the feast. The invitees and guests are offered special rice beer and food followed by merrymaking. The gathering then acknowledges the phenomenal gesture of the host and invokes their blessings upon the host's family

The Chang, another fabled community of Nagaland, also had more thrills for the visitors. A Chang cultural group performed 'Khiing Pupbii' (Chang for a ritual in which foreheads of women are tattooed) during the afternoon session of 'Culturally Yours' at Naga Heritage village, Kisama. In the olden days, Changsang was divided into four clans namely the Ung, the Kangshou, the Lomou and the Hongang. According to traditions, the foreheads of ladies were tattooed as a mark of identification. Initially, this was practiced only by women of the Ung Clan. However, the other clans also followed the practice gradually.

One of the most attractive performance was presented by the Arunachqasese troupes. They presented the Snow lion dance and Yak dance which were unique in themselves.

The massive turnout at the festival provided the visitors ample opportunity to take prized photos and getting a lowdown on some of the Naga cultural dances during the "Unity Dance" performed by the 17 tribes of the state.

The highlight of the festival was the presence of high level politicians, Government and Army executives, persons of eminence and dignitaries from different fields. A brief report on their reactions about the festival is appended below.

Nagaland Governor, P B Acharya said, "Hornbill Festival is designed in such a manner that it coincides with Statehood Day Celebration which gives an opportunity to all the Naga tribes to converge at one location to showcase the best of their tribal costumes, songs and dance."

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Governor of

Odisha S C Jamir, Governor of Arunachal Pradesh Brig (ret'd) B D Mishra, Manipur CM N Biren Singh, Arunachal CM Pema Khandu and the Director General of Assam Rifles Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan were among the several dignitaries gracing the festival.

Nagaland Chief Minister Mr. T R Zeliang said that the festival gained popularity despite the remoteness and lack of proper infrastructure. He informed that this has been possible due to the collective effort of all the stakeholders who were involved in making the festival a grand success.

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh adorned the Chair of Chief Guest while Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sri Pema Khandu graced the ceremonies held on the fifth day at Heritage village in Kisama as the Guest of Honour. While addressing the assemble audience Sri Khandu stressed that Arunachal and Nagaland share several things in common. He said in both states – Hornbill bird has great cultural significance. He also said both the states have great cultural diversity due to which people in both the states have to use common languages to interact with people from their own state.

Lieutenant General Abhay Krishna, General Officer Commandant-in-chief of the Eastern Command attended the Hornbill Festival as the Chief Guest on Dec. 7. He complimented the people of Nagaland on the occasion of the Statehood Day which was achieved on Dec. 1 1963. He expressed joy to be a part of the festival and complimented the people of Nagaland for having transformed the Hornbill Festival into a 'global' event within a short time. Addressing the people Lieutenant General Krishna said, "The cultural heritage, the traditional community living and uniqueness is an example for all of us to learn and imbibe and this must be preserved." He stated that "all should dedicate themselves in shaping a very peaceful progressive and developed Nagaland and in that Assam Rifles and army will be there to assist you in whatsoever manner possible," the updates quoted him as having said during the event.

On 10th December, 2017 the festival concluded at the picturesque Naga Heritage Village, Kisama on Sunday amid mega bonfires and the tunes of Naga war cries and beats of traditional log drums reverberating in the background. ■

Youths must rise above selfish desires

Professor Jagdish Mukhi, His Excellency the Governor of Assam gave a call to the youths to develop a mindset of thinking “Nation first and self last” to make the country more strong. The Hon’ble Governor was speaking as the Chief Guest at the seven-day National Integration Camp of the Bharat Scout and Guides held at the Jorhat Court Field from December 17. It is for the first time that such a camp has been organised in Assam.

The Governor, who is the President of the State unit of Bharat Scout and Guides, Assam reminded the audience present on the occasion that India’s strength lay in the centuries-old tradition of finding unity in diversity, unity among people belonging to various communities, speaking different languages and observing varied rituals.

He said that the diverse cultural and linguistic practices observed by the various communities across India had fostered unity by way of showing respect to other communities.

Praising holding of an event like the present camp, Professor Mukhi said such kind of activities provide an opportunity for cultural exchange and a platform for interaction among young minds. He urged the upcoming generation to imbibe the habit of thinking for the nation first and self last.

The Governor urged the children to think about

the State in second position, district in the third and family in the fourth and finally self in the last position, as this kind of thinking will help in countering the threats posed by certain elements propagating anti-national activities in a few pockets of the country.

Recalling his school days the Hon’ble Governor said that he too was a Scout and had actively participated in the organisation’s activities in his native place which was in Punjab earlier, but now is in Haryana.

Stating that Bharat Scouts and Guides was a mammoth organisation and helps in preparing better-equipped future citizens, the Governor said he hoped the participants in the camp will be able to take back fond memories and valuable experiences with them.

Mt. Absar Ali Hazarika, the Chief State Commissioner of Bharat Scout and Guides, Assam delivered the welcome address while the leader of the camp, i.e., the New Delhi-based Deputy Director of the Scouts’ Boy Programme, Sri Amar Bahadur Chetri presented a brief history of the organisation and activities to be undertaken during the camp. Sri Hazarika said that the camp was originally scheduled to be organised at the river island Majuli, but due to some problems coming up in the final stage, the venue was shifted to Jorhat.

Over 500 persons, including the teachers accompanying the teams attended the camp. ■

(Contd. from Page 17)

Shared brotherhood of Manipur & Japan

Japan in general and Manipur–Japan relationship in particular, she recalled that “I had discussed with the Ambassador of Japan regarding the bilateral relationship between Indo-Japan and Manipur-Japan and cleansing of Loktak Lake in the previous year.” The governor requested the Japanese team to visit the Manipur state museum where several artefacts of the World War II were displayed.

Mr. Gyomyo Nakamaru who led the team of 11 delegates said that the main purpose of their visit was to pray at Japan War Memorial Complex at Maibam Lokpa Ching, for the war victims of the Japanese army,

the Indian army and the civilians who had died in World War II, particularly in Japanese-Imphal-Ladakh war. Mr. Gyomyo Nakamaru requested the Governor to take steps to improve the road connectivity of Manipur so that Japanese tourists can visit the state and help in promoting Manipur tourism.

As a gesture of good-will and token of love, the Japanese delegates’ gifted items to the governor which included a scarf printed with symbol of coming Olympic Games. The governor of Manipur also presented a book about World War II to the Japanese delegates. ■

Rise of PM Modi and roar of subversive forces

Salil Gewali

If your son makes friendship with the difficult and long-time enemies of your own family or clan then how do you describe him and how do you feel about his future? Will it not be like opening the door to countless tragedies? But in India, such thing is now being openly celebrated. For past couple of years or more the political leaders of certain parties have been taking the wrong step forward in having closed-door meetings with the leaders of our enemy countries. What transpires between them is obviously against the present government and the nation's fundamental ethos. Those leaders have often been heard to be sympathetic towards the terrorists or those who "roar against the nation" or against its patriotic values. Yes, those leaders jump forward to defend themselves who wreak havoc with the "peaceful citizens" of our country. Some leaders are apologetic that certain NGOs/media/religious bodies should not be harassed in the name of fighting the terrorists and ISIS. This is how country's leaders defend the dangerous postures of dangerous outfits. Is not it something like inviting greater troubles to the nation in future?

One wonders how these political parties and individuals dare to hobnob with the leaders of the neighbouring enemy countries who are always aggressive and in the combative mood.

Very recently, one senior leader of one of our national parties even scoffed at Prime Minister Modi by calling him a depraved being "Neech". What are the criteria for one being morally low? Has the PM Modi fallen short of any standards of integrity or commitment towards his motherland? We not only know but also see that he works sincerely and is sincerely trying to formulate innovative plans and schemes for the greater good of the nation? Well, has he not been constitutionally elected by the people of this country? Why the media is less aggressive and more defensive for those "transgressors" who wield daggers behind the back.

Whatsoever be the political dispensation at the centre, such open rebellion against the Government does not augur well for the nation and its 1.25 billion citizens. ■

(Contd. from Page 17)

Forced Conversion in Madhya Pradesh

the core foundation of our country. It is painful to notice that the government is insensitive towards the growing intolerance on minorities,"

Sri Rajesh Hingankar, Superintendent of police, Satna however claimed that the police brought all clergymen – said to be about 32 in number to the police station to rescue them from the clutches of the angry villagers. He further informed that except the priest all others were allowed to go home. It is yet to be known as to how the car caught fire," he added.

Talking to Hindustan Times over phone from the police station Fr George said the cultural programme at the village was a routine event held every year ahead of Christmas celebrations. He alleged that on

being brought to the Police station, they were forced to squat in a room at the police station at night in inhuman condition without any warm clothes. Sri Yatendra Pathak, the Bajrang Dal's District Convener said that they came to learn from reliable sources that the missionaries were luring people from the Dalit locality for conversion. He, however, denied attacking the minority community members or had any hand in setting the car afire. In his written complaint, Sri Dharmendra Dohar alleged that Christian community members have been visiting the village for the past two years and luring the poor populace with money to convert to Christianity. He informed that "Because of their threat and lure I have converted to Christianity. They gave us a Bible and Rs 5000 in cash," he said. ■

The Brahmani and the Mongoose

Dev Sharma was a Brahmin who used to live with his wife in a certain town. One day, his wife gave birth to a son and they were very happy.

The Brahmani And The Mongoose - Panchatantra Story Picture On the very same day, a female mongoose gave birth to a baby mongoose very near his house. As destiny would have it, the mother mongoose died soon after the birth.

When they observed this, they took pity on him and the Brahmin's wife adopted the little mongoose and started looking after him as his own son.

The Brahmani And The Mongoose - Panchatantra Story Picture She served her own breast milk to both her own son and the little mongoose, bathed them together and put oil on them together. She was a fond mother for both of them. Both her son and the mongoose were very fond of each other, and spent all the time together.

However, she was not a fool and knowing that the mongoose was an animal in reality, she always kept a guard, "He is a mongoose and will soon develop the animal instincts that he has inherited from his species. Some day, he may harm my own son. I shall always keep a watch on him."

The Brahmani And The Mongoose - Panchatantra Story Picture One day, she had to fetch some water. So, she put her son to bed, and while going outside with the pitcher, asked her husband to keep a watch. She said, "I am going to the well to fetch some water. Please look after our son and make sure the mongoose does not hurt him by mistake."

The Brahmin was careless. Without informing his wife, he got prepared and went to beg for alms leaving the little mongoose and their son alone by themselves.

As it happened, during the very time they were alone, a poisonous snake entered the house through

a hole and started approaching the Brahmin's son.

The Brahmani And The Mongoose - Panchatantra Story Picture When the mongoose saw this, he attacked his natural enemy to defend the child, who was like a brother to him. Although he was small and the snake was strong, he fought with all might and bit the snake into pieces and eventually killed the snake. His mouth and claws were all smeared with the snake's blood.

The little mongoose was very proud of itself; and waited outside the house for the Brahmin's wife. He was eager to show his mother how brave he was.

Knowing her husband's carelessness, the Brahmin's wife was tensed and was returning in a hurry when she saw the little mongoose coming towards her. She noticed that he was covered in blood, and without thinking, jumped to the conclusion that the mongoose must have attacked her son.

The Brahmani And The Mongoose - Panchatantra Story Picture Angered and frustrated, she threw the heavy pitcher - full of water, that she was carrying on the little mongoose. The little mongoose was severely wounded.

She ran inside, and she was amazed to see her son safely sleeping in his cradle. She then saw the snake near the cradle that had been torn into shreds.

At once she realized what had happened. She was heart-broken with the thought of having hurt the little mongoose, who was like a son to her.

Not knowing who to blame, when her husband returned home, she explained, and they were both very sorry for the suffering of their second son.

The wise indeed say:

Think hard and do not do anything in haste.

Indigenous Faith Day Celebrations at Itanagar





Hornbill Festival, Nagaland