

Asom Barta

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Millitants surrender

P3

Initiative by the Home Minister the Assam Government has resulted in Adivasi militants coming to mainsrtream.



Assam ranks first

P10

Assam is a leader when it comes to people repaying their debt of gratitude to their schools under Vidyanjali 2.0.



Unique Puja

P12

A Durga Puja pandal in Puranigodam is an attraction for visitors for its unique wooden idols that have a history of their own.

Road map for Assam 2026



Senior bureaucrats(top) and ministers part of a session in Chintan Shivir

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

It was almost three weeks ago that an Indian Administrative Service officer received a letter from the Chief Minister's Office/General Administration Department detailing the organisation of a *chintan shivir* in Kaziranga by bringing ministers and senior officers on a single platform to chart out a vision for 2026. It is the year when the present dispensation in Dispur completes five years of its service to the people of Assam. The underlying message of the note was that strategy and steps may be detailed out by all departments to achieve this vision. There was also an admission in the circular that there were procedural and other roadblocks which needed a planned approach to overcome them.

"I was happy at the opportunity presented before us. We formed teams after a week-and-a-half of receiving the circular. We tried to coordinate with each other to see the progress in our individual departments over the last five years. We benchmarked ourselves on certain key performance indicators to know where we stand compared to the last five years against top five States in the country and all India average, and where we want to get by 2026," he told *Asom Barta* on the excitement that the preparation of the *shivir* had created in various departments.

Spread over three days from September 24 to 26, the *shivir* was curated in a way that allowed spirituality, bonhomie, brainstorming to converge. There were spiritual gurus like



Jaggi Vasudev (also known as Sadguru), Sri Sri Ravi Shankar to becalm the tumult going through the hearts and minds of these officers public representatives, including the ministers as well as the Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma himself. No wonder, most ministers in the Cabinet were all praises for the idea.

If spirituality was a part of it, there were serious businesses being conducted as well. Top bureaucrats from Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and technocrats from the PMO, including Bibek Debroy, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Chairman had sessions for officers and policy makers, sharing best practices to aid Assam in becoming what the State Chief Minister has set out to: Making Assam among the top five States within the country. These sessions received rave reviews from bureaucrats who shared their experiences with this newsletter.

"The Shivir was a good experience to spend time together with other officers, and ministers, and reflect on issues which require collective and inter-departmental effort and coordination," another senior bureaucrat told *Asom Barta*. He said that there were clear goal setting and priorities of the Government were laid out. "The resources required, constraints, etc., were also discussed thereby making the exercise an action plan of sorts than merely making it an academic one," he added.

An officer also suggested that the schedule was too tight for a gathering like this and could be revisited with family components added to it, besides informal meetings with ministers as well as the Chief Minister, whom they get very little time to meet and know.



P2 Musings of a Chief Minister

P11 Assam Millet Mission in mission mode

P13 Weaving success



Musings of a Chief Minister



As I write this, we have just got through an initiative that I believe will herald a change in the way we manage policy and its implementation. We organised a *chintan shivir* in Kaziranga involving bureaucrats representing all departments to formulate policy prescriptions and their implementation roadmap up to 2026 when our Government completes its term in office. It is a general tendency of governments all over that we end up promising more and delivering less. At times, there are genuine reasons for this while most times, we just lose track of what needs to be done and the time frame to do it. This brainstorming by our Government will go a long way in implementing promises made and on time and, of course, the course correction required. The vibes of this exercise is already being felt in Dispur. A follow-up mechanism has already been put in place, and it is at work.

One of the major promises that we made before the polls was that we will create 1 lakh jobs in the Government sector alone. Having made a rapid stride in the month of May when we had appointed some 27,000 people in various departments in a free, fair and transparent manner, we took a step forward by handing over appointment letters to more than 11,000 successful candidates in September. They will now be part of the Government machinery which will deliver to the people of Assam an efficient regime. I am hopeful that they will drive forward a governance of quality to make life better for the masses and implement policies at the ground.

As I had stated in the past in the same column, there is a limit to what governments can do in terms of employment. However, it is the private sector that must drive the development trajectory anywhere, especially in Assam, while the Government can only act as a facilitator. It is this role that we choose for ourselves when we signed two MoUs with CGTMSE and SIDBI to boost the MSMEs and Start-up ecosystem in the State. I have already commented that the role of MSMEs in the State is second to none when it comes to their contribution to GSDP and employment creation. What I want to emphasise here is that the start-up scene in Assam is getting better and bigger through a curious mix of private and Government participation. Yet, I would like to inform the stakeholders that we will always be outside of it and not meddle into a system that is already vibrant and energetic. I am hopeful that next generation entrepreneurs will drive the State forward in the decades to come. I reiterate that our Government is committed to promote a culture of entrepreneurship and convert jobseekers into job-creators for the even bigger objective of transforming the State into a major industrial hub.

If Assam is to develop, it is incumbent on successive governments to maintain cordiality with our neighbours since they, too, are stakeholders in our progress. Ever since I assumed responsibility as a Chief Minister, it has been my constant endeavour to solve the long-disputed border issues with our neighbouring States. We have made significant progress with Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh already. I have never been shy of admitting that these issues take time but can be solved on a give and take basis. This has emboldened us to extend our arms and hearts to our Mizo brothers and sisters. I met my Mizoram counterpart Pu Zoramthanga at the Assam House in New Delhi and reviewed the ministerial-level talks held at Aizawl in the month of August. As a first step, we have decided to form a regional committee to discuss & resolve the issue.

In the same vein, only when peace is there in the State can prosperity follow. Based on our back-channel manoeuvring, and a steely resolve, we could persuade hundreds of Adivasi youths, who had taken up arms earlier to claim their right to a better life, to come to the mainstream and work with us to achieve the desired objective. I am deeply indebted to Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his personal initiative and the guidance of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while thanking our Adivasis youths for understanding the futility of an arms struggle.

A milestone that we all can be proud of is that the Assam Citizen Centric Service Delivery Project that enables citizens to apply ARTPS-notified services online crossed the figure of four million applications last month. I am grateful to the people for reposing their trust in our citizen-centric governance initiatives.

Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

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Adivasi ultras joins mainstream



Home Minister Amit Shah greeting surrendered militants during their meeting in New Delhi.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

In a historic moment for Assam, five Adivasi militant outfits & three splinter groups signed a peace pact with the Government of India and the State Government on September 15. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was quick to give the credit where it was due when he thanked the Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his initiatives while thanking the Prime Minister for his guidance. He termed the deal as yet another milestone the State has achieved in recent years.

The five Adivasi outfits who were part of the peace accord are: Birs Commando Force (BCF), Adivasi People's Army (APA), All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), Adivasi

Cobra Military of Assam (ACMA) and Santhal Tiger Force (STF). The three splinter groups are of BCF, AANLA and ACMA.

"Cadres of these outfits have been living in designated camps since 2016 when their 1,182 cadres laid down arms & returned to mainstream. I'm sure today's historic pact that promises adequate rehabilitation of the once misguided youth will usher in a new era of peace in Assam," Dr Sarma tweeted.

Home Minister Amit Shah said that the agreement was yet another step towards the Prime Minister's vision of a peaceful North East India by 2025 and to end the decades-old crisis of Adivasis and tea garden workers in Assam.

The agreement also provides for

rehabilitation and re-settlement of armed cadres and measures for the welfare of tea garden workers.

A special development package of ₹ 1,000 crore (₹ 500 crore each by Government of India and Government of Assam) will be provided over a period of five years for development of infrastructure in Adivasi inhabited villages/ areas.

The agreement provides for setting up of an Adivasi Welfare and Development Council by the Government of Assam with the objective of fulfilling the political, economic and educational aspirations; protecting, preserving and promoting social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities.

Border talks gain momentum



Assam Chief Minister with his Arunachal counterpart Pema Khandu in New Delhi.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Keeping in tune with Home Minister Amit Shah's consistent effort of facilitating the solution of the boundary dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the chief ministers of both the States met the Home Minister in New Delhi on September 15 (Photo on left) to build on the progress made in the dispute. The meeting was convened by the Union Home Ministry.

The Home Minister is believed to have suggested a road map to both the chief ministers to solve the row in a defined time frame.

Even before the meeting started, the Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has taken it upon himself to work towards its solution, committed himself to amicably resolve the long-standing row once and for all in his tweet. The Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu also expressed a similar sentiment in his tweet.

The meeting was billed as a follow up of the Namsai Declaration signed in July.

Earlier Dr Sarma reviewed the progress made by the regional committees constituted for the purpose.

It is worth mentioning that the Namsai Declaration had called for reduction in the number of disputed villages 123 to 86. Dr Sarma and his Arunachali counterpart met in January, and April and constituted 12 regional committees, each covering the 12 districts of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam respectively, for joint verification of 123 villages. These committees were mandated to make recommendations based on the historical perspective, administrative convenience, contiguity, and people's will to delineate the interstate boundary.

As if to drive home his persistence in solving these disputes, the Assam Chief Minister also met his Mizoram counterpart Dr Zoramthanga at Assam Bhawan in New Delhi to initiate a dialogue on similar lines.

Big boosts to judicial infra



Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju with legal luminaries during the inauguration of the Gauhati High Court Museum

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Topeswar Das, a professional advocate, been practicing law in a court which fulfils the bare minimum requirement of space but not the infrastructure that he can be proud of. Like most lower judiciary infrastructure in other parts of the country, most of the lower courts in Assam, including the one in Nalbari where Das practices, have dilapidated structures making it difficult, if not impossible, to effectively perform their functions.

It is a known fact the lower judiciary's infrastructure has not kept pace with the increasing number of litigations instituted every year in most of the lower courts in the State. The e-Court Integrated Mission Mode Project, which was launched in 2007 with the objective of improving access to justice using technology is yet to gain ground in the State.

"We have space constraints in the court. At present, both Executive and Judiciary have been functioning from the same building in Nalbari town. The district Posco Court has been conducting its functions from a rented house. Even basic facilities like photocopier machines are not where we want them to be," he said. Though the Government has allocated land for permanent structure of the district court, construction is yet to be completed," added Das. He is one among the thousands of lawyers in Assam who are joyous at the recent announcement by the Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma that ₹ 300 crore will be allotted to rev up judicial infrastructure in the State.

"A good video conferencing facility at the CJM Court in Nalbari is a must. There is limited space for *malkhana* in the Police Inspection Court. Now that funds have been sanctioned by both the Central and State governments, the lower judiciary in the State will get proper attention from agencies of the State Government," he pointed out.

Das added that the lack of digital infrastructures in Nalbari Court proved to be a big hurdle for advocates during the Covid-19 pandemic when courts were forced to go virtual.

Sewali Gogoi Dutta, secretary of Jorhat Bar



₹ 9K CR TO REV UP JUDICIAL INFRA: RIJIJU

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju while inaugurating the diamond jubilee celebration of Bar Council of five North Eastern States of Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim.

He said that in consultation with the Supreme Court Collegium, the Central Government will solve the issue of vacancy of judges in various high courts. "Appointment of High Court judges is a collaborative process between the executive and judiciary and involves approval from various constitutional authorities at the State- and the Central-level," he said.

With the number of pending cases nearing the 5-crore mark, Rijiju said that the speed of new cases filed outlasts the disposal speed of cases.

The Union Law Minister said that Centre has recently sanctioned ₹ 9,000 crores for improvement in judicial infrastructure in the country.

Association seconds the opinion of Das.

"We do not have e-library facility in the district court. Space problem is always there in the court building. Most of the advocates cannot even sit properly. We have 450 registered advocates in Jorhat District Court but sitting capacity is only 250," she told *Asom Barta* while welcoming the announcement regarding the proposed investment in judicial infrastructure in the State.

"Number of pending cases is also on the rise. Vacancy needs to be filled up and cases need to be disposed of. Even the MACT Court is not functioning due to limited manpower," she says.

The Chief Minister had said in an official programme in Guwahati that his Government would provide ₹ 300 crore to go with an equivalent amount provided by the Central Government to improve judicial infrastructure in the State.

He said that 100 recruitments would be made in the lower judiciary as one of the mechanisms of faster dispensing of justice in the State. He said this while addressing the diamond jubilee celebration of the Bar Council of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim in Guwahati on September 10.

Dr Sarma stated that the State Government was contemplating various welfare schemes for those who have retired from active practice.

Addressing those present, which included the Union Minister of Law & Justice Kiren Rijiju; Judges of the Supreme Court, Justice Surya Kant, Justice Hrishikesh Roy, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, and the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court Justice RM Chhaya, the Chief Minister congratulated the Bar Council for having successfully completed 60 years of its existence.

Chief Justice of the High Court of Chhattisgarh Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, Chief Justice of the High Court of Telangana Justice Ujjal Kumar Bhuyan, judges and former judges of various high courts, Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, Chairman of the Bar Council of India Manan Kumar Mishra, and chairman of the Bar Council of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim G N Sahewala were among those present on the occasion.

"Most lower courts in Assam have space problems. Even the Bar does not have enough space for its members to sit. Lower judiciary should get good infrastructure for proper functioning," Sahewala said.

On the same day, Dr Sarma attended the inaugural ceremony of the Gauhati High Court Museum, built at the old block on the High Court premises. Items such as a handwritten copy of the Constitution of India, robes, wigs of retired and past judges, litho machine, etc., are on display in the museum.

World Bank 3k cr projects in pipeline



The World Bank team in the office of the Assam Inland Water Transport Project.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Assam is warming up to the World Bank, the multilateral lending institution revered by States and countries the world over.

Building on the history of the State's ties with the institution, Martin Raiser, Regional Vice President, South Asia of the Bank accompanied by Auguste Tano Kouame, Country Director-India and a team of officials visited Assam to explore strategic State partnership and consolidate the existing engagement.

The World Bank has had a long relationship with the Government of Assam over the last two decades. Its total ongoing funding for Assam State-specific projects is approximately \$349 million in agriculture, transportation, public finance management and delivery of citizen-centric public services.

Assam has also received funding from wider World Bank-supported Central and multi-State projects, including agricultural higher education, rural livelihoods, power system improvement, and hydrology.

Assam is one of five States with which the World Bank has a strategic State partnership framework.

The Bank was keen to support the proactive initiative of the present dispensation in Dispur led by Dr. Himanata Biswa Sarma.

"The visit reflected the Bank's interest in deepening the recent State Partnership framework, with particular focus on knowledge on how the Bank can help Assam to unlock growth, support its development vision, and strengthen disaster resilience and Assam's role in promoting regional cooperation," read an official note.

At present, there are four ongoing projects under implementation and five are pipeline projects under the assistance of the World Bank in Assam across critical sectors such as, transport, agriculture, infrastructure and connectivity, health, river basin management, financial reforms, citizens' services, institutional reforms, etc.

"Under the Scheme, basin management of tributaries of Brahmaputra and Barak rivers like Beki, Burhi Dihing, Jiyadhoh, Bhogdoi, Singla, Jatinga, Gainodi, Jiyabharali has been taken up. A successful implementation of the project will help Assam overcome the problems of erosion and floods in the coming years," said a senior official of FREEMA.

Ankur Jain the Project Director of Assam Inland Water Transport Project told *Asom Barta* that the team studied the flow of the water of the Brahmaputra, and the challenges posed by it. "The team explored the possibility of ease in transportation courtesy a development in the inland water transportation, besides potential of river tourism in the State," he said.

During the two-day visit to Assam, Raiser and Kouamé received a

first-hand view of the impact of the ongoing WB-financed projects in the State. They visited Rangia in Kamrup district where they met members of the farmer producer organization of the WB-supported Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART). Through the APART project, the Government of Assam is keen to double farmers' income in the State. The Bank is helping agricultural producers access new technologies, markets, and finance, while also facilitating private investment in the sector. The duo interacted with private investors in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) being supported under the same project.

Nishat Hussain of Dong Valley while talking to *Asom Barta* said, "The World Bank team coming to our premise is a big thing for us. They inquired about the support that we have received from the Assam Agri Business Growth Lab under APART. They were very happy at our success."



Assam is one of five States with which the World Bank has a strategic State partnership framework.

In the meeting with the Chief Minister, the WB VP discussed pipeline projects, worth nearly \$1 billion, which it seeks to support in Assam's growth trajectory. This pipeline projects are in response to the Government of Assam and the Ministry of Finance, Government of India's request for support to unlock the State's growth potential, strengthen its water infrastructure and improve its health systems. These proposed projects have the objective to increase trade and investment, build resilience to increasingly frequent and severe climate-related shocks, and spur the development of the agriculture, tourism, and logistics sectors to boost growth and employment.

Raiser told the Assam Chief Minister that projects worth \$450 million are likely to be presented to the Bank's Board of Executive Directors by June 2023. It also expressed commitment to continue to support sustainable flood management measures in the Brahmaputra basin and enhancement of the iconic river's economic potential – through augmentation of waterways trade and transport systems.

Dr Sarma launched the State Public Procurement Portal (SPPP) developed under the ASPIRe project assisted by the multilateral lending institution during his meeting. Assam is the second State in the country to be launching an SPPP and fourth State to have Procurement Act of its own. The SPPP of Assam will be a single source of truth for all departments, bidders, and public. This single centralized platform will be accessible to public to enable them to know about the activities of public procurement of goods, works and services by all departments of the State Government or any State Public Sector Enterprise ensuring transparency, accountability, and value for money. This one stop shop developed in collaboration with NIC will also feature a grievance redressal system and feedback mechanism.

Riverfront project gathers pace

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

A walk around the Brahmaputra River is set to become an enriching experience in the coming years based on the initiative undertaken by the Guwahati Smart City Limited (GSCL).

A major beautification project along the Brahmaputra riverfront, mooted by GSCL, has been given a go-ahead by the Chief Minister following his meeting with its board of directors. Once implemented, the riverfront will have a walkway for people for recreational purposes with sitting arrangement, night illumination, and facility for cycling and leisurely sightseeing. (See Box)

The Chief Minister directed officials to accord top priority to complete different components of the projects expeditiously after approving the 1.3 km Brahmaputra riverfront development project with a financial outlay of ₹ 370 crore.

Guwahati was selected among the first 20 cities of the country to be developed as a Smart City by the Smart City Mission programme of the Government of India. Accordingly, the Assam Government had constituted a special purpose vehicle (SPV) -GSCL to plan, design, implement, coordinate and monitor the smart city projects in Guwahati.

ITD Cementation Pvt Ltd is working on the project targeted to be completed on March 17, 2025.

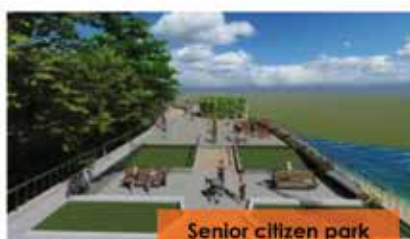
Assam Housing & Urban Affairs Minister Ashok Singhal told *Asom Barta* that work is in full swing to meet the deadline, despite initial hiccups.

"Though the idea for this project was mooted a few years back, it never gathered pace. With the Chief Minister's initiative, it has got a new lease of life. Construction is in full swing. We are hopeful that we will be able to meet the deadline," Singhal said.

The Minister added that the project, apart from Guwahati's beautification, would boost tourism in the State.

SALIENT FEATURES

- 15m wide walkway proposed at a level of 51.5m
- The promenade will be functional throughout the year irrespective of the water level



POCSO a priority; CM leads from the front



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

It was May 14, 2021 when a youth lured a 14-year-old girl to an isolated location and raped her. He also threatened her with severe consequences if she was to disclose the incident to anyone. On May 15, the family members of the girl lodged an FIR at the Jagiroad Police Station under the Pocso Act 2012. The Morigaon Police swung into action and arrested the youth and started their investigation into the case. On June 23, barely a month after the incident, the police deposited the case diary in the court. Almost a year after the trial began, the court of Additional Session Judge and Special Judge (POCSO) gave a verdict on June 18, 2022 which sentenced the accused to imprisonment for a period of 20 years and a fine of ₹ 20,000.

Coincidentally, Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma had days earlier, prior to the incident, asked the Home Department to be extra vigilant on the safety of women and children.

The Morigaon incident was followed by a gruesome incident in Kokrajhar on June 13, 2021 where two minor girls were raped and hanged by a tree. The incident happened barely a month after he had assumed office in Dispur. The Chief Minister personally travelled

to the place of the incident and directed the police to do the needful to bring the culprits to book. Based on all evidence and the case dairy submitted by the police, the session court in Kokrajhar awarded capital punishment to the three culprits.

The seriousness of the Chief Minister's statement was on display again when he made a personal visit to the residence of yet another rape victim, this time in Bhuragaon in Morigaon, and met her family members while directing the police to speed up the investigation.

Similarly, in August this year, his office had asked the Home Department to suspend Darrang SP, an ASP and the Officer In-charge of Dhula Police Station for 'dereliction of duty' in a case related to rape and murder of a teenager in Dhula, Dhekiajuli. Dr. Sarma with his Cabinet colleague Ashok Singhal went to the residence of the victim to express their empathy and promise speedy justice.

After assuming charge of the Government last year, the Chief Minister directed the then Assam DGP to focus specifically on cases related to Pocso and its sensitisation.

An NGO, Utsah, working on the issue of child rights has been assisting the Assam Police. Miguel Das, founder of Utsah, says, "It

is unfortunate that even minors as young as two and three are becoming victims. We are working hard to sensitise these victims and get them and their family justice. We assist the police personnel on Pocso laws through their project called Shishu Mitra." He informs *Asom Barta* that societal considerations have forced many families to cover up such incidents. "Adding to the misery is the low level of awareness of Pocso Act 2012."

According to data published by the National Crime Record Bureau for 2020, there were 1496 FIRs filed in Assam under Pocso. The numbers increased to 1926 in 2021.

Among the districts that are working actively on the case is Bongaigaon. Out of the 20 cases registered, 13 have been disposed of. Bongaigaon Superintendent of Police (SP) Swapnil Deka says that his team focuses on speedy and flawless investigation, safety and security of the victims and their family, and compensation for the victims. "The moment we receive a complaint, our team ensures the safety of the victim, and her rehabilitation. Among the procedural things that we do are health examination of the victim, visit to the crime scene for fair investigation, etc. Once the perpetrator of the crime is arrested, we file a chargesheet under the stringent Pocso Act."

Miguel says that under the Pocso Act, if there is no goof up in the investigation, the victim is assured of justice. He, however, insists that awareness at the societal and at the level of all stakeholders must go a notch higher than what exists today. "I am, however, thankful to the Assam Chief Minister and the DGP for taking personal initiative on this," he says.

Morigaon SP Aparna Natrajan lists out some of the to dos under the Act. "We can term the Pocso Act as a friend of children. Under the Act, there are special steps that the police need to practice from taking the victim's version of the incident to the investigation of the case. All these to ensure that the mental and emotional health of the victim or the child is never compromised." She says, "In our district, we have trained members of an NGO called Mahila Mehfil through psychologists and psychiatrists. These women, in turn, embalm the scarred psyche of the victims. There are times when additional and vital information can be had from these victims who confide in these women."

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act

The Act is a comprehensive law that protects children's interests by including child-friendly systems for reporting, recording evidence, investigating, and fast adjudication of offences in designated Special Courts.

The Act is gender-neutral and prioritises the child's (Anyone under the age of 18) best interests and well-being to ensure the child's healthy physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development.

It differentiates between many sorts of sexual abuse, such as penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.

The Act imposes heavy penalties that are graded based on the seriousness of the offence, with a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

Questions

1. How is the Government's attitude towards the overall development of constituencies in the State?



Utpal Bora, MLA, 78 Gohpur LAC

Ans 1: The initiatives taken by this popular Government of ours in Dispur is aimed at the overall improvement in the lives of the masses. Be it scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, or for that matter the tea tribes, Goriya and Moriya, policy measures on education, land pattas, and spiritual issues and health have all been important steps.

Ans 2: So far, we have built and improved 200 odd-roads under various schemes of the PWD (Roads) Department in Gohpur constituency. Under a signature project, work on a stadium in Ghaiya Village with an investment of ₹ 10 crore is in progress. In Borangabari, a nursing college is coming up. Under Assam Darshan, infrastructure improvement of over 175 nam ghars, bathou temples and churches is on. The historical Sri Sri Maa Kalyani Devalaya is being promoted as a spiritual tourist destination with an investment of ₹ 4 crore. We are

2. Can you brief us on the development in road construction, infrastructure, Assam Darshan, sports, etc., in your constituency?

3. Which of the schemes of the present Government you single out to be people-centric?

spending ₹ 15 crore to uplift the infrastructure of Chaiduar College and Kalabari College. The historical Gohpur Borpukhuri is getting a facelift. Besides, the Gohpur Thana where Kanaklata Barua and Mukunda Kakati were martyred by the British is being converted into a tourist destination. On September 20, a 100-bed hospital was inaugurated by the Chief Minister

Ans 3: The State Government is bringing various insurgent groups into the mainstream. We appreciate the all-out offensive against drugs in Assam. Mission Basundhara, improvement in the health sector, the establishment of model schools in tea estates, microfinance loan waiver, Arunodoy, monthly scholarship to divyang students, clean and transparent employment mechanism in the Government, Gunotsav, Mission Bhumiputra, Mission Sambhavna, and the crackdown on corruption and graft are some of the areas where the State Government deserve a lot of credit.



Jitu Goswami, MLA, 87 Barhampur LAC

Ans 1: The Assam Government led by Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma is guiding all MLAs irrespective of party lines on a positive trajectory. An overall picture is being envisioned by the Government when it comes to development in Education, Health, Roads, Infrastructure. etc. All constituencies are getting equal importance. Each of them are getting funds for development of ten or more Anganwadi centres.

Ans 2: In Barhampur, we are working on 12 anganwadi centres. A ₹ 10 crore fund meant for newly elected MLAs has helped us to work on the road project from Gamotha Village to Sapanola. It is on the verge of completion. Work on rural roads is also in progress. This will help develop infrastructure in rural areas. The important point here is that the Chief Minister has approved the construction of more than

50 km of pucca roads under various projects. Under Asom Darshan, grants have been given to 60 namghars so far. A sum of ₹ 2 crore has been sanctioned to the Maha Mritunjoy Temple. The Assam Cricket Association has been allotted 25 bighas of land for a cricket academy while a stadium is being constructed under a signature project. The Kampur Higher Secondary School will be upgraded to a MLA's Model School. A model school is also coming up in Kandali Tea Estate, while work on the Nagaon Medical College is in full swing.

Ans 3: Arunodoy has made life better for the people of Assam. Atal Amrit Abhiyan has provided relief to patients and family members. The rightful use of the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Work in the health sector and a transparent appointment process has helped the Government win the trust of the people. I must say that all the schemes of the Government are people-friendly and that the Chief Minister has been able to take it to the people.

Department Snapshots

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Here is a brief round-up of the activities of various departments:

Industries & commerce and Public Enterprises

Ambassador of Thailand to India Pattarat Hontong met Assam Industry Minister Bimal Borah in Guwahati and discussed issues of trade and business. The Ambassador was accompanied by Chayanin Sriviseth First Secretary (Economic), Thanchanok Uthaiwan Second Secretary (Political), Vipavee Rangsimaporn and representatives of the Thai business community. Secretary Industries Dr. S Lakshmanan, Commissioner Oinam Saran Sing, and entrepreneur Abhijit Baruah were also present in the meeting.

Health Department

Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated a 100-bed Gohpur Subdivisional Civil Hospital in Biswanath district. Also present on the occasion were Health Minister Keshab Mahanta, P&RD Minister Ranjit Kumar Dass, Lok Tezpur Sabha MP Pallab Lochan Das, Gohpur MLA Utpal Bora, et al.

Panchayat & Rural Development

Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the one-time financial assistance programme under the Indira Miri Universal Widow Pension Scheme (IMUWPS) on September 20. Under this scheme, one-time financial assistance of ₹ 25,000 has been provided to 12,000-odd widows in the State aged between 18 and 45 years. This one-time



financial assistance is an additional amount in addition to the regular monthly pension. The event was attended by ministers Ranjit Kumar Dass, Ashok Singhal, Keshav Mahanta, et al.

Industry bodies hail MoUs with SIDBI, CGTMSE



The MoU signing ceremony between SIDBI and the Government of Assam.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

The State Government's signing of MoUs with the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) and SIDBI Venture Capital respectively for facilitating finance access to micro and small enterprises and start ups has been welcomed by industry bodies and industrialists in the State.

The MoUs were signed in an MSME conclave in Guwahati on September 19.

President of the Federation of Industry & Commerce of North Eastern Region (FINER), Bajrang Lohia said that the agreement with SIDBI and CGTMSE will create a conducive atmosphere for the MSME sector in the days to come. He said that collateral free advance to 'MSME and start ups' is one of the most important prerequisites for developing a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"The availability of funds under the scheme shall go a long way to assuage the needs of industry," said Lohia.

The size of the SIDBI Venture Capital Fund is ₹ 200 crore. A sum of ₹ 100 crore will be contributed by the State Government, ₹ 50 crore by SIDBI and the remaining ₹ 50 crore will come from other sources.

Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma termed the day as a red-letter day for the industry sector of Assam and hoped that it would lead to rapid industrialisation in the State.

Dr. Sarma said that the collaboration with CGTMSE aims at providing additional guarantee coverage for the loans given by lending institutions to micro and small units in Assam. He said that 80% of the guarantee coverage of loan will be provided by CGTMSE, and the balance 20% would be covered by the State Government. Referring to SIDBI's estimate, he informed the gathering that a corpus support of ₹ 100 crore will lead to a portfolio creation of ₹ 5,000 crore while the yearly fund requirement from the State Government would be around ₹ 22 crore to ₹ 26 crore in the next three years.

He said that SIDBI Venture Capital Fund (SVCL) intends to work as investment manager for the proposed Assam Start-up Venture Capital Fund. The MoU will facilitate flowering of start-ups, including MSMEs, in the State.

Dr. Sarma said that there are more than 66,000 industrial units in the State which contribute 29% to the Gross State Domestic Product. Out of these industrial units, 88% are micro, 11.5% are small and medium industries. He said that between 2016 to 2021, 32,770 MSMEs were established in Assam, out of which 13,440 enterprises are in the production sector where 1,30,294 youths have got employment.

R S Joshi, a former chairman of FINER, said that availability of bank credit without the hassles of collaterals and third party guarantees will be a major source of support to first generation entrepreneurs to realise their dream of setting up a unit of their own.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma termed the day as a red-letter day for the industry sector of Assam and hoped that it would lead to rapid industrialisation in the State.

"The move to make funds available for budding entrepreneurs addresses a major concern of MSE entrepreneurs," he said.

Joshi appealed to the Assam Government to constantly monitor the implementation of the agreements. "The agreement with SIDBI should be implemented in letter and spirit. It will create a ground for the next level of industrialisation in the State. But monitoring, too, should be carried out on a timely basis," said Joshi.

Stressing the importance of speedy disbursal, Banamali Sharma, an industrialist, said that the Government should monitor the implementation of both the agreements. "A budding entrepreneur always needs credit to start his venture. If the spirit of these MoUs is respected in practice, you will find many more entrepreneurs coming forward to avail the scheme. This will have a direct impact on the economy," said Sarma.

The Chief Minister also ceremoniously launched Assam Logistics and Warehousing Policy 2022 at the conclave held at the Assam Administrative Staff College. He said that the policy is an initiative in making Assam a regional logistics hub to augment economic development of the State.

Industry and Commerce Minister Bimal Bora, CMD SIDBI S. Ramann, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Samir Kumar Sinha were among those present on the occasion.

Vidyanjali 2.0: Assam is No.1 in the country



Glimpses of volunteers donating to various educational institutions under Vidyanjali 2.0

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Vidyanjali 2.0 is turning out to be a successful model of linking alumni with their schools in more ways than one. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, whose humble beginning was through a portal inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 7, 2021 and has found ready acceptance in Assam. The idea of the portal is to enable past students, former teachers, well-wishers, professionals, private organisations, NGOs and corporates, former and present employees to contribute meaningfully to their alma mater or an educational institution in which they are a stakeholder in any way.

“The scheme has found a very favourable response in Assam. People from all walks of life have come forward to register their name on this portal to contribute to upgrading the education and infrastructure standards of the school of their choice. Assam is number one on the list

in the country on this score,” says Sumi Borthakur, State Programming Officer, Sarba Siksha Mission, Assam. (See Box)

Under the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) code, educational institutions can register themselves with the portal. Once these institutions are registered, volunteers can contribute and directly connect to Government schools or Government-assisted ones of their choice for various types of activities ranging from service or taking classes to donating books for libraries and upgrading infrastructure, including donation of furniture.

Hemanta Koch, a teacher of Chengelimora Government Girls Lower Primary School in Sonitpur district, has donated a ceiling fan through the portal. “Classrooms in my school had no fans until I donated one. This led to loss of concentration on classes by most students during the summers. Even before we came to know about the portal, teachers at our school had discussed the idea of donating fans in all the classrooms. Now that the school is registered under the Vidyanjali 2.0 portal, villagers are also keen to donate something or the other to the school. They had previously contributed materials to construct boundaries around the institution,” Koch informs *Asom Barta*.

It is worth mentioning that the 1987 batch students of the Sibsagar Government High Secondary Multi Purpose School donated 100 tables and chairs in total for the teachers’ restroom under the scheme. Similarly, the 1985 batch students of Rajdhar Bora Higher Secondary School donated books and furniture to upgrade the standard of library in their alma mater.

A teacher at a private school in the same district, Jonali Jhora, registered herself in the portal. She has donated a ceiling fan to her school – Lutheran High School. “I am keen to contribute to society. Whenever I get a chance, I try to do whatever I can. Through Vidyanjali 2.0, I got an opportunity to do something for my school. Many of my family members were students in this school. I had always dreamt of contributing something to this institution. I appreciate the idea of the portal. Even those who are far and away can contribute meaningfully to an institution of their choice,” she says.

Breakup of Registered volunteers: 30,866			
Individual	Organisation	NRI	NGO
30,739	98	6	17

Status report of Vidyanjali 2.0 as on September 26, 2022	
Activity	Numbers
Total Govt. Schools	44,585
Number of registered/onboarded schools	42,415 (95.13%)
Remaining Schools	2,170 (4.87%)
Number of Volunteers Registered	30,866
Service/activities contributed by volunteer	432
Equipment/asset contributed by volunteer	9,863



Millet Mission in mission mode

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

To give an impetus to the State’s agricultural production, the Assam Government has initiated the Assam Millets Mission (AMM) with a seven year mandate starting fiscal 2022-23. It is pertinent to mention that the United Nations General Assembly adopted an India-sponsored resolution to mark 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The Government of India is committed to promoting millets and their cultivation. Accordingly, the Assam Government is also going to observe 2023 as the year of millets in true spirit

Roshni Korati, State Project Director (SPD) of ARIAS Society which conceptualised the AMM said that the activities under the Mission are being promoted in a value chain mode covering production, post-harvest, processing, value addition and market linkage aspects.

“One of the key focus areas of the Mission is to address nutritional needs of the population, particularly pregnant women, and lactating mothers and children as millets are high in nutritional value and impart many health benefits”, she said.

According to the SPD, millets can address some important global issues in unison- poor diet (malnutrition to obesity); environmental issues (climate change & environmental degradation); and rural poverty. (See Box for Mission’s mandate).

Under the Mission, millet-based products will be supplied in schools through the PM Poshan scheme (earlier mid day meal scheme) under the Axom Samagra Siksha Abhiyan. Plans are afoot to supply these products in Anganwadis and to lactating and expecting women through the Poshan Abhiyan.

As part of the Government’s initiative under the National Food Security Act, State governments have been advised to procure millets at minimum support price and distribute them under the Public Distribution

- Contribute to crop diversification and increasing cropping intensity in the State
- Climate smart production, particularly in resource poor, marginal and dryland areas
- Increase household consumption of millets to enhance household nutrition security & to create demand for millets with focus on women and children
- Promoting millet processing enterprises to capture markets for various value-added products of millets
- Improving productivity of millet-based cropping systems and making them profitable
- Inclusion of millets in State nutrition programmes, public distribution system & other schemes
- Increasing penetration of millets consumption in urban diets.
- Contributing to doubling farmers’ income and enhancing agriculture’s share in GSDP.



System (PDS). Dr. Pranab Kumar Mahanta, Agri Adviser, APART said that Assam climatic condition is suited for growing a number of millet crops, particularly in the foothills. The major millets grown in the State are finger millet, fox tail millet and proso millet.

Millets are also referred to as smart food or nutri cereals, which are good for the consumers, the planet, and the farmers. “Finger millet has three times the amount of calcium as in milk, and most millets have very high levels of iron and zinc, low glycemic index, good levels of protein and fibre, and are gluten-free,” he informed this reporter.

Mahanta said that millets have a low carbon footprint and can survive and grow in warm climates with very little water. “They

are climate-smart and hence constitute a good risk management strategy for farmers compared to rice and wheat crops, which require higher quantities of water and fertilizer supplements,” he added.

Under the Mission, finger millet crop demonstrations have already been set up in 15 districts. Various committees and bodies for effective implementation of the Mission activities have been notified.

Technical support of reputed organizations like International Crops Research Institute for the Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad and Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad is also being sought to ensure achievement of the desired objectives.

It is a unique convergence



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

One of the most awaited festivals in the composite life of the people of Assam is Durga Puja. The advent of autumn brings in festivities in the air for the people across the country: Durga Puja being the most important in Eastern India. From the historic and religious Shakti shrine of Kamakhya to the furthest corners in Sadiya, Dhubri and Cachar, the puja festivities take a universal phenomenon during this time of the year.

Artistes or sculptors with a rich legacy shape Goddess Durga's idols in more ways than one. It is among the most awaited surprises for devotees. However, one idol in central Assam's Nagaon district stands apart from the rest in its make and composition, but is devoid of any surprise. Whereas idols across the country are made of clay and hay, this idol in Puranigodam in the district is made of wood. Again, whereas idols are made and immersed in water on Dushhera each year, this idol in question has stood the test of time since 1901 when it was made by a legendary carver Leshadhar Sarma also known as Lerela Khanikar (Lerela, the

Sculptor). This puja and the place have now turned into an attraction for its uniqueness.

Legend has it that the sculptor was in the business of making idols. Once in the year 1900, he made an idol and asked his brother Durga Sarma to sell it to the locals at a princely sum of ₹ 10 while he embarked on a visit to Amolapatty in Nagaon, then under British rule, to conduct a puja there. Upon his return after four days, he found the idol at his workshop. His brother informed him that because of paucity of funds, the locals could not afford to purchase it. It was then Lerela realised the futility of his work which has gone unsold. Others, however, have a different tale to tell. They say that the sculptor would always be at pains during the immersion because all his creations would be consigned to water with no trace of his creativity left beyond an ephemeral time frame. It was then that he decided that there can be a permanent idol which need not be immersed and can outlive a maker's life.

In the same year, he started working on making idols of Goddesses Durga, Saraswati, Laxmi and that of Kartik and Ganesh (sons of God Shiva) using special wood from the stone apple tree. "My father told me that we had a garden in the backyard where there were huge stone apple trees. Because the wood of this tree has a special quality, my great grandfather decided to use them while making these idols," says Jogendra Sarma, a fourth-generation member of the Sarma household. "I think he was right. Even after 101 years, nothing has happened to these idols. But to make the idol of Mahisashur, the demon, he used a piece of wood which he found floating in the river Kolong next to the temple, which, many say, he dreamt of the previous night," adds Jogendra.

In 2001, when the special idol completed a centenary, writer and litterateur Mamoni Roysom Goswami came to the temple and wrote of her experience thus: "I am overwhelmed to see these idols carved out of wood. This is surreal. I bow my head in deference to the carver. This will be a memory

of a different kind in my life."

The preservation of the idols, also, has a history of its own. Immediately after the puja is over, the Sarma household would use a special paste made of firefly mud which would then be rubbed on a cloth to cover these idols. They would then be kept in their house till the time of the next puja. They would then be uncovered, freshly painted and draped with new clothes donated by devotees.

"This puja has given us a unique place in the cultural and spiritual firmament of Assam. During the days of the puja, Puranigodam becomes a rendezvous of culture and faith. People of all faiths come here and donate liberally. We generally do not collect donation to organise this puja," says Pulin Hazarika, a senior citizen and retired headmaster of a school.

To tap its growing importance, the puja organisers encouraged hosting of a children book fair near the temple beginning 1996. It is being credited as the first ever children book fair held anywhere in Assam. "It has been organised continuously since 1996. Even during the Covid years, it was held on an online basis, although the scale was much smaller. As far as I know, this is the first ever children's book fair in Assam," says Dulal Bora, a children literature enthusiast. "We want parents to give books to their children instead of toys and toy pistols. This fair has created an amalgam of literature, culture, and spirituality in this place."

Some are, however, worried that unless a scientific preservation method is used, this happy story may have an anti-climax. "Even though we keep these idols after the puja in a room inside the temple. Yet, we live in a constant fear of it being stolen or being damaged due to natural or any other reason. We want the Government of Assam to assist us. We have applied for a grant under the Asom Darshan Scheme. We are hopeful," says Mintu Sarma, president of the puja committee.



Sculptor Jogendra Sarma with the 121-year-old wooden idols.





AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

It was an evening in the 1970s. Monobala Buragohain was winding the thread at the courtyard of her home in Mezenga in Sivasagar district. A young Pabitra was playing with a ball when he jumped atop the loom to get back his ball. An unfazed Monobala asked Pabitra to bow down before the loom to respect it after he had resuscitated his ball. An obedient Pabitra did as told. That was his first direct relationship with the loom, the thread, and the process of weaving, a relationship that he has taken to a new high by weaving success stories around it. He was probably too young then to even imagine that in the decades to come, this thread will connect him to the loom to reach an industrial scale.

His humble beginning was shaped by his father, a teacher of Mezenga High School, where Pabitra passed his matriculation from. A Commerce graduate, Pabitra did his MBA from Gauhati University and worked for four years. "I was not too keen to continue working for someone else. I wanted to venture out on my own but had no idea what to do. One day, I accompanied an acquaintance to a factory. The loom episode weaved itself in front of my eyes. It was a Eureka moment for me," the soft-spoken entrepreneur tells *Asom Barta*.

His initial impression of villagers in his district handling yarn, their thickness and absence of it, and even colours of inferior quality yarn made him realise what he wanted to do. That is how the idea of Orient Processors Pvt Ltd came in 2001 with imported machinery and products catering to BIS (British Standard Institution) norms.

"It is a post-spinning and processing unit to produce fast colour cotton dyed yarn. The idea came to me after I realised these problems and the growth of my own entrepreneurial instincts coupled with the fact that I wanted to contribute something to this region," he says.

"Handloom and textile is not just an economic activity for the people of the region. It is ingrained in their cultural ethos. It has an artistic value because our weavers are not ordinary workers. They are artists"



In 2009, he imported machines from Italy, Germany and the US to colour and reel off yarns. The result was a brand called Ramdhenu.

Such is his insistence on quality that despite having a state-of-the-art laboratory at his premise, his samples are regularly sent for assessment to South India Textile Research Association's (SITRA) laboratory, which is considered among the best in the country.

Maintaining the highest standard of quality check, Orient Processor has never looked back since. "Quality has been our hallmark," says Buragohain. No wonder, he has managed to make his company grow and keep all stakeholders happy. One among them being Nirala Bodo. "The environment here is

friendly. We have been care for by the management. In fact, we get bonuses twice in a year: Bihu and Durga Puja," she informs this reporter. Buragohain says that her company has employed weavers from the North East to supply woven materials of various tribes across India and overseas.

"Handloom and textile is not just an economic activity for the people of the region. It is ingrained in their cultural ethos. It has an artistic value because our weavers are not ordinary workers. They are artists," he says. "It is extremely important that the next generation comes forward to take it as a mission to strengthen the economic development of the region."

His products or materials made by others using his products are catering not only to the Indian market but also abroad. Upholstery using his factory's yarns have been exported to Europe by a firm based in Arunachal Pradesh. Similarly, hand towels, which have Orient cottons, have made their way from Meghalaya to Germany. "These stories keep us motivated and going," he says.

"One of the reasons why we are growing on a regular basis is the use of technology," says Pankaj Sarma, a marketing executive employed with the firm. "Our yarns are Azo-free. It means that they are very friendly for your body and the skin," Buragohain, the three times president of Federation of Industries of North Eastern Region informs this reporter.

After a quiet start with Orient Processors Private Limited in 1999 to Orient Spun Silk and Processing Mills in 2017 and then Orient Knit Fab Private Limited, which exports garments with the brand name Orfab in 2020, the entrepreneur has come a long way by having all related elements of a textile value chain in one single campus, a no mean feat. It began with a thread, but has now many threads entangled to create a value chain, something which the entire region is proud of.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receiving a copy of the Braille version of Hemkosh, which was among the earliest Assamese dictionaries dating back to the 19th century.



Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurating Lokmanthan 2022 in Guwahati.



Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomes his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga in Assam Bhawan, New Delhi. The leaders discussed ways of settling the border row between the two States.



State Cabinet Minister UG Brahma inaugurating an Amrit Sarovar project in Baksa.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurating the flyover at Arya Nagar in Guwahati.



IAF's Surya Kiran aerobatic team performing in their Hawk Mk 132s over Lachit Ghat in Guwahati on September 27.



Members of the Kolkata Assamese Cultural Association and Asam Sahitya Sabha paying their tributes to Dr Bhupen Hazarika at Assam Bhawan in Kolkata on his 96th birthday.




An artist remembers singer Jayanta Hazarika on the occasion of his 79th birthday.

Higher secondary level students of language-subjects in Government and Provincialised schools and colleges are not having their language classes in the State, in general, and in Bengali language in Barak Valley districts, in particular. This is because of posts lying vacant. In Barak Valley, most of the schools don't have Bengali language teachers at the Higher Secondary level and colleges for years together. In Silchar, in most higher secondary schools, including the Government ones, there is no subject-teacher in Bengali. For instance, institutions like Narsing Higher Secondary School, DNNK Girls' Higher Secondary School, Government. Boys' Higher Secondary School, are sans teachers in Bengali language. Some schools don't even have teachers in English.

We understand that permanent appointments are made out of TET passed candidates having postgraduate degrees and professional qualifications like B.Ed. If such TET pass candidates are not available, why are students being made to suffer?

Part-timers with Master degree and B. Ed. may be engaged in language and other subjects, particularly in Bengali till TET qualified candidates are recruited. Curtailment of academic rights of learners in Government and Provincialised Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges is not only undesirable, but also unethical. If there are institutions and subjects there should be teachers, either full-time or part-time, no matter what.

Prof. Dilip Kumar Dey,
General Secretary, Proactive Senior Citizens' Forum, Silchar



Helpline numbers are helping us in many ways. Most importantly, the Government helpline numbers are aiding us in lodging a complaint with relevant departments. This cartoon of mine is my gratitude to the Government.

Dip Sarma
Guwahati

I would like to appeal to the Chief Minister of Assam to set up a Igaushala in every district or block of Assam for the overall economic development of the State. The gaushalas will help in production of bio gas, bio-fertiliser, and other eco-friendly products. It will help in managing stray cattles as well.

Sanjeev Seal

I am very happy to see *Asom Barta* Newsletter. It reflects news from the ground. Such reporting will encourage the masses. They are also reflective of the efforts of the Government of Assam.

Mukundray Raval
Gujarat

Write to us with your opinion and suggestions at bartaasom@gmail.com

Jobs hard earned



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

A photograph is worth a thousand words. The one above is of Ramprasad Hazarika, a home guard with the Assam Police, his wife, and his son Pallab, who was handed a letter of appointment as a Sub-inspector with the Assam Police recently by the Government of Assam. The smile reflects a gift of the hard work that Pallab had put in leading up to the day when he appeared in the examination and cracked it. "This is my day. The Department in which I am working as a home guard is where my son will work as Sub-Inspector now. His recruitment was fair. I thank the Chief Minister," said Ramprasad, hailing from Raha in Nagaon district.

He was one among the 11,236 appointees of the Government of Assam on September 23 at the Veterinary College Ground in Guwahati. "Since 2016, I managed to pass all examinations conducted by the Assam Police. However, a job was still some distance away. This time I broke the jinx," Pallab told this

reporter. "I have been rewarded for my hard work," he said.

The Assam Government handed over the letters of appointment in 21 of its departments in this phase (Please See Box). The Chief Minister, in his speech, reiterated his commitment to a corruption free Government.

Kanika Chakraborty (left) of Lumding, who received her appointment letter as a lecturer in Karimganj Model College, was finding it hard to hold back her tears after realising her dream of a Government job in a clean and transparent manner. "I was almost becoming sceptical by reading media reports on the absence of jobs in other States of the country. Today, I am relishing the result of my hard work," she informed *Asom Barta*.

Among those present on the occasion were a number of Cabinet ministers.



Department wise total numbers of appointees	
Home & Political	5,335
Higher/Technical Education	927
School Education	3,811
Industries & Public Enterprise	1
Panchayat & Rural Development	277
Health & Family Welfare Development (Including Medical Education)	299
Public Works	304
Tourism	6
Irrigation	137
Environment & Forest	33
Transport	3
DoHUA	1
Women & Child Development	4
Water Resource	3
Public Health Engineering	4
Sports & Youth welfare	13
Handloom & Textiles	6
Transformation & Development	11
Cooperation Department	2
Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship Department	24
Information and Public Relations	1
Information Technology Department(AMTRON)	4
Department of Animal Husbandry and Vateriaary	27
Fishery Department	3
In addition to the already appointed 27,737 candidates	

EDITORIAL

Debt of gratitude

In a small but significant development that may not grab eyeballs across the country, Assam has emerged as the top ranked State under the Scheme Vidyanjali 2.0. The scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Government of India to uplift the standard of education and infrastructure in schools across the country through voluntary contribution primarily from their alma mater and also citizens who have the welfare of the society in mind.

The State, deservingly so, has occupied the first position in the ranking in volunteer registration and asset/materials contribution. Those interested in statistics may take satisfaction from the fact that hitherto 30,866 volunteers have registered to give back something to the institute in which they had studied, or in some cases a school of their choice.

The fact that 27,022 ceiling fans and hundreds of furniture materials have been donated is not important. But what comes to the fore is the giver's mentality. The State can be proud of its citizens on this score alone. What should be kept in mind while trying to understand this phenomenon is that more than 95% of schools in Assam are founded by locals of an area which then take shape in the hands of the Government to become provincialized institutions. Hence, an emotional connection takes shape at a very early age. Most of the teachers who join these schools are not the ones who look for employment, they come because they want to give back to the society.

In an accompanying report in this newsletter, we have highlighted specific cases of individuals, alumni and villages having come forward to give whatever they could to such institutions. Their testimony is also a shining example that they still regard an educational institution dearer to them although their sons and daughters or wards may no longer be part of the same school.

Vidyanjali 2.0 is also a reminder of the duty that teachers have towards their students as well as the responsibility that the State Government has for improving the overall education scenario, especially in the rural areas.

“Opportunities for Youth”

by Dr B Kalyan Chakravarthy

“The main task before India today is to consolidate herself into a well-knit and united power....”

-Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel



It was true then and is more so now. Translating the vision of India along the ideals of the Constitution largely rests, on the rigid radar, of the Steel frame of India. Indian Administrative Service, however, fails to capture in its ranks, the wide regional imbalance and cultural diversity this country embodies. The North East region wherein I have spent most of my life has tremendous growth potential, and is an unmined treasure of talent and creativity.

Anundoram Borooah was the first Assamese to clear the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination in 1870. He was the 5th Indian ICS officer. In the recent past, we have had many Assamese as chief secretaries of the State. However, we may have to wait for a long time to get another from the State as Chief Secretary because the number of Assamese making it to the coveted service has remained poor over time. The reasons are many and it behoves us to dwell on this forthcoming void.

I recall my childhood in Hyderabad and the intense competition that we had in school. The sheer speed of solving problems ensured that the bench in the school remained unchanged into an IIT, an IIM and some in the cohort carried on into the civil services, too. The ecosystem of intense academic rigour right from one's school days is an essential component of success in later day lives.

I realise that IAS is a dream that has to be imbibed at a very young age. To get into this service, one needs to have belief, hard work and some degree of luck. The sheer length of the examination makes parental support, ecosystem of competition, coaching centres, good teachers and vibrant study corners a necessary precondition. I believe that these preconditions are slowly being met in Assam. The need to have cutting edge competition from all students across the country needs seeding in our State. I have witnessed that students who go to Kota or Hyderabad are from all corners of the country and the competition there is truly national and so beneficial. We need to replicate that environment here.

Youth from Assam have good educational standards, enviable communication skills but they invariably fall short in their belief, dedication and guidance to make it to the pinnacle of the civil service examination. States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar have an over-representation of civil servants, but are comparable in all other socio economic parameters to our State.

The examination requires firstly an extensive guided study, constant practice tests, feedback and personality development. Newspapers like *The Hindu* and *Indian Express*, magazines like *Economic and Political Weekly* are required in regular circulation. The importance of study circles which facilitate debate on current affairs cannot be overemphasised. Parental support for such a marathon examination both financially and psychologically is an aspect which needs to be evolved through exposure and dissemination. It may take time for the parents to understand and invest in these exams which have at best uncertain returns. I recall my mother and father asking me to quit all my jobs for writing this examination. I did that, and made it to the IAS.

The reputed colleges and universities, student bodies in Assam currently can build on the atmosphere that moulds a mindset among the students to crack such competitive examinations. Failure will still make the students mature to take up many other professions successfully and so the effort is worth its time.

The manner of presentation wherein the candidate is aware of the number of words in a line and the number of lines in a page and the exact words at which he has to stop writing is an art in itself.

It bears note that a coaching centre can only fine-tune a candidate. It is in no way a vehicle to success.

An all-India-level survey has brought it to light that in the past 70 years, only 53 candidates from Assam have cracked the IAS. From 1951 to 2020, among 5,255 IAS, only 1.1% came from Assam. It is 0.6% for Meghalaya, 0.18% for Arunachal Pradesh, 0.38% for Nagaland and 0.72% for Manipur.

Civil service is not a bed of roses but a crown of thorns and Assam needs civil servants who don't talk of work life balance or of comforts but of strength to face all odds. I believe only when Assam opens its doors to competition, stops asking for special treatment, dominates the culture and science field will its civil servants rise to commanding heights. Those who made it were outliers and not the norm.

There are many who were more talented, more knowledgeable and more sensitive but failed the exams. It is incumbent for those in service to remember this and therefore be humble, be continuous learners and to keep the compass in the right direction. This is the spirit of the Sardar, which will take Assam to the constellation where it truly belongs.

(Views are personal and curated by the Editor. The author is an alumni of IIT (M), IIM(A) besides being a Principal Secretary to the Government of Assam.

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