

# Asom Barta

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

TO SUBSCRIBE WHATSAPP  "Assam" @ 8287912158
**Murmugodha Devi graces Gaj Utsav, Assam** **P3**

The First Citizen was involved in a number of programmes during her visit to Assam.


**Assam evaluates health institutions** **P10**

This unique initiative will lead to better health-care services for the masses.


**End of a dispute heralds new beginning** **P12**

Assam &amp; Arunachal Pradesh have signed an MoU to solve the boundary row.

## Assam is becoming an A-One State: PM



(Right) Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the people of Assam from the Sarusajai Stadium. Mr Modi and the Assam Chief Minister on a battery-driven vehicle on the day.

### AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Assam and its people received one of their biggest gifts on Rongali Bihu, which coincides with the Assamese New Year on April 14, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted them development projects worth ₹ 10,900 crore by laying their foundation stones and dedicating them to the nation. He did so from the Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati, where he also witnessed a historic Bihu performance by over 11,000 *nasonis* (dancers) and *dhulias* (drummers).

Among the largesse are foundation stone of a bridge connecting Palashbari and Sualkuchi on the Brahmaputra River; beautification of Rang Ghar in Sivasagar; a 500 TPD Methanol

Plant in Namrup and five railway projects.

While addressing the gathering, he recalled his visit to the State during the State Assembly elections in 2016 when he had remarked about the day when people will voice 'A for Assam' and said that the State is finally becoming an A-One State.

The Prime Minister expressed his happiness about these projects besides opening of an All India Institute of Medical Science and three medical colleges (Please see Pg 8).

Mr Modi said that it is his belief in the people of the country that motivates his Government to strive to remove any obstacles that come in the way of the welfare of citizens of India.

He recalled that for a very long time, connectivity was thought of in a very narrow sense of going from one point to the other. The Prime Minister said that that approach towards connectivity has changed now. "Today, connectivity is a four-pronged enterprise (Mahayagya)," he said, terming them as – physical connectivity, digital connectivity, social connectivity, and cultural connectivity.

He said that his Government was addressing the issue of a lack of physical connectivity in the North East by focusing on road, rail and air connectivity.

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## State dances to glory

### AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

It was a bright sunny day in Guwahati. Like the previous few days, the mercury was inching Northwards.

Yet, braving the scorching heat, thousands, beginning the forenoon, started flocking to Sarusajai Stadium to witness history being made. More than 11,000 *Bihuwas* (male Bihu dancers with Dhol, Pepa, Gogona, etc) and *Bihuwaties* (Bihu *Nasonis*) would perform that evening to create two world records – one in Bihu dance and other in Dhol playing.

At 1 PM, these artistes assembled, with their traditional Bihu attire, on the main field,

the venue for the spectacle. Enthusiasm was writ large on their bright faces.

At 3.30 PM, Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma entered the Stadium and went to the main venue of the mega Bihu show. He along with some of his Cabinet colleagues inspected arrangements.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that Assamese people should uphold their identity in the world as a proud community. Dr. Sarma expressed optimism that the event will help to put Assam and its cultural history on the cultural map for the world to see.



*Bihu nasonis performing their way to the world record.*

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# Musings of a Chief Minister



**T**hey generally say that “April is the cruellest month”. Ask any Assamese, why this is absolutely the opposite here. This is the month when the old gives way to the new in our State. A month which declares the advent of spring and that of love being in the air. A month which welcomes a New Year. It was the month of April that saw the Prime Minister of India coming to Assam and dedicating not only key infrastructure projects to the nation but also baring his soul for its people, and its festival: Bohag Bihu.

Wherever the Prime Minister stepped in, he was all praises for Assam and its people. Don’t we now know why Assam is so much in his heart. Nay, it is the North East that he carries in his heart wherever he goes, besides, of course, the Gamosa, the cultural symbol of pride of any Assamese that he carries with him. The fact that the Prime Minister has rated Assam as an A-One State is more than enough for us. A man who has singularly carried the vision of a new and resurgent India in his heart speaking so highly of Assam is a matter of pride for all of us, who make up the entity called Assam. I know why I am reiterating that the state of the State has changed ever since Modi Ji came to be the Prime Minister of India. The attention that the State and the North East has received from New Delhi has clearly reduced the hyphen in the distance that had existed all this while between this land, which many term as periphery, and New Delhi, which they call mainland. Ask any Assamese or for that matter, anyone from the North East what it means to be an Indian now, you will have your answer. Massive strides in physical infrastructure have made life easier for the people, both in urban and rural geographies of the region. It has brought a new sense of belonging to us who had, for a long time, felt alienated at being so far physically and probably mentally from the Centre. No Government worth its salt could bring about this change in attitude but this Government is different. Thank you Prime Minister for making us believe that “We Belong”.

It was again in the month of April wherein President Droupadi Murmu came to Assam once again and won us over with her graceful simplicity and dedication to public welfare. Her participation in public programmes across the State never for once made us feel that she is the First Citizen. Her conduct and attitude were truly inspiring for each one of us who had the privilege of interacting with her from close quarters.

How can April be cruel for us when we have finally put a full stop to the boundary dispute between us and Arunachal Pradesh after 51 years? I had written in the same space previously that these are protracted negotiations which take time. I still believe these issues must take time to be settled once and for all. Afterall, it is the fate of the people that is on the table and not just two Governments sorting out a vexed political issue. The dynamic and decisive leadership of our Prime Minister and Home Minister were the biggest factors that led to the solution, besides of course, the will of my Arunachal counterpart Pema Khandu, and the skill sets of the team that was working behind the scenes for months together. We have already advanced significantly in our discussion with Meghalaya on the same issue. I am hopeful that this historic deal with Arunachal Pradesh will open avenues for other boundary disputes involving Assam to be laid to rest, once and for all. Actually boundary issues are never a zero-sum game. One cannot categorise them in a binary of either you win or I. Most negotiations are in the spirit of give and take. I have kept this in mind when negotiating with my counterparts from our neighbouring States.

I must conclude that April is the month all Assamese, like many of their fellow citizens, look forward to. For many forthcoming April now, people across Assam and India will talk of this April when 11,000-plus artistes set a unique record of solidarity and symphony, united in purpose to catapult their favourite Bihu dance to the world stage. I am a proud Assamese today more than ever in boldly proclaiming that our Bihu dance always deserved its rightful place in the cultural world. I am happy that our Government acted as a facilitator in the process. It is not the record that excites us. It is the unity in diversity that was at display, all through, that has made us believe that a united and strong Assam will be a shining example across the country. This was also the spirit of the address the Prime Minister made at the Sarusajai Stadium while witnessing the *nasonis*, the *dhulias* and the trainers, who worked alongside them, setting the stage on fire.

**Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam

**The fact that the Prime Minister has rated Assam as an A-One State is more than enough for us. A man who has singularly carried the vision of a new and resurgent India in his heart speaking so highly of Assam is a matter of pride for all of us, who make up the entity called Assam.**



# Murmu graces Gaj Utsav, Assam



The President acknowledging the affection of people and elephants in Kaziranga.



President Droupadi Murmu gracing the platinum jubilee of Gauhati High Court.



The President with Cabinet Ministers Chandra Mohan Patowary and Atul Bora, and other dignitaries at Mihimukh, Kaziranga.

## AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

President Droupadi Murmu showered her affection on Assam once again when she embarked on a three day visit to the State to attend a slew of programmes, including the platinum jubilee celebration of Gauhati High Court and the inauguration of Gaj Utsav (Elephant Festival) in Kaziranga National Park (KNP), while ending her visit to the State on a literal high by taking a historic sortie in a *Sukhoi 30 MKI* fighter aircraft from the Air Force base in Tezpur, prior to her departure to New Delhi.

The First Citizen of the country landed in Bokakhat on April 6 where she was welcomed by Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, senior ministers of the State and top officials.

On the second day of her visit, the President inaugurated Gaj Utsav-2023 at the KNP. Speaking on the occasion, the President dwelt on the sacred relationship between nature and humanity. "The culture of respecting nature has been the identity of our country. In India, nature and culture are linked to each other and have been receiving nourishment from each other. Elephants are respected in our tradition. It is considered a symbol of prosperity. It is the National Heritage Animal of India. Therefore, protecting elephants is an important part of our national responsibility to preserve our national heritage," she said.

Murmu said that actions which are in the interest of nature, animals, and birds, are also in the interest of humanity and mother Earth.

The First Citizen was of the view that elephants, considered as very intelligent and sensitive, are also social animals like humans. She said that the species deserve the same sense of sympathy and respect as humans. She added that mankind can learn the feeling of selfless love from animals and birds.

The President said that the 'Human-Elephant Conflict' has been an issue for centuries. She pointed out that barriers created in the natural habitat or movement of elephants is the root cause of such

conflicts. She noted that protecting elephants, conserving their natural habitats, and keeping elephant corridors free from obstruction are the main objectives of Project Elephant.

During her speech, she said that Assam has the second largest population of wild elephants in the country and termed Kaziranga an apt place for organising the Gaj-Utsav.

Later in the evening, she graced a programme organised to mark the completion of 75 years of Gauhati High Court in Guwahati. On the occasion, she launched a mobile app 'Bhoroxa' created for the safety of women and elderly people.

Addressing the gathering, the President said that the Gauhati High Court holds a unique place in India's judicial landscape. "Since its inception in 1948, it had jurisdiction over seven States for more than six decades and still has jurisdiction over four States. It has established a distinct identity for itself by producing leading legal luminaries. It has also received attention for delivering several landmark decisions," she said. She expressed confidence that the Gauhati High Court would continue to serve the people in the same manner in the years to come.

The President said that the North Eastern region is possibly the best example of how various communities have lived together historically. "As a result, it has rich ethnic and linguistic diversity. In such a region, institutions need to have a great deal of sensitivity and responsibility, as divergent traditions and laws govern the lives of the people. The legislations applicable to different areas may vary, but the entire area is administered by a common High Court," Murmu said. She conveyed her satisfaction that the Gauhati High Court has continued to uphold customary laws, that have been in practice in some of the States, under its jurisdiction.

The President said that justice, by definition, must be inclusive, and thus must be accessible to all.



## A historic sortie

### AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

President Droupadi Murmu took a historic sortie in a *Sukhoi 30 MKI* fighter aircraft from the Tezpur Air Force Station on the concluding day of her three-day visit to the State. The President, who is the Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces, flew for approximately 30 minutes covering Brahmaputra and Tezpur valley with a view of Himalayas before returning to the Air Force Station.

The aircraft was flown by Group Captain Naveen Kumar, Commanding Officer of the 106 Squadron. The aircraft flew at a height of about two kilometers above sea level and at a speed of about 800 kilometers per hour. President Murmu is the third President and second woman President of the country to undertake such a sortie.

Later in the visitor's book, the President expressed her feelings by writing a brief note which read "It was an exhilarating experience for me to fly in the mighty *Sukhoi-30 MKI* fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force. It is a matter of pride that India's defence capabilities have expanded immensely to cover all the frontiers of land, air and sea. I congratulate the Indian Air Force and the entire team of Air Force Station Tezpur for organising this sortie."

## Assam is becoming ...

Highlighting the achievements in expanding connectivity since 2014 when he became the Prime Minister of the country for the first time, Mr Modi mentioned all-road connectivity to most of the villages in the North East, new airports where commercial flights are landing for the first time, broad gauge trains reaching Manipur and Tripura, new rail lines being laid three times faster

than before, and the doubling of rail lines at a pace which is almost 10 times faster than before. The Prime Minister highlighted that the five railway projects inaugurated on the day will have investment over ₹ 6,000 cr.

The Prime Minister said that for development, the thread of trust should be equally strong. "Due to the efforts of our Government, there is permanent peace everywhere in the North East now. Many

youths have left the path of violence and started walking on the path of development. The atmosphere of mistrust in the North East is going away, the distance between hearts is disappearing," he said, while concluding, "In order to build a developed India in the Amrit Kaal of Independence, we have to enhance this atmosphere. We must move forward with the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas."

## ABOUT THE PROJECTS

1

### 12.21 KM PALASHBARI - SUALKUCHI BRIDGE project across River Brahmaputra:

- Palashbari on the southern bank of Brahmaputra River with Sualkuchi on the northern bank of the river. It will lead to development of Palashbari, Bijohnagar, Mirza, Chhaygaon, Sualkuchi, Hajo, etc
- Four lane bridge over the Brahmaputra River
- A New Development Bank-assisted project
- Total project cost : ₹ 3,200 cr

3

### Launch of new Double Lines, New Line and Electrified Tracks of Northeast Frontier Railway:

- 102-km-long New Bongaigaon- Dhupdhara and 147km -long Digaru-Lumding Double Line section for more trains towards North East and Upper and South Assam areas
- Reduced train running time
- 512 km of Electrified Railway tracks ( Rani Nagar-Jalpaiguri-Guwahati; Chaparmukh-Senchowa and Silghat Town-Senchowa sections) creating a greener railway
- 86 km of Gauripur-Abhayapuri New Line - an alternative path towards North East
- Reduced dependency on fossil fuel will save valuable foreign exchange
- Total project cost: ₹ 7,280 cr

↓

### Launch of 500 TPD Methanol Plant of Assam Petro-chemicals Limited, Namrup

2

- A step towards promoting clean energy with methanol as biofuel
- Export potential to Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal
- Capacity of 500 tonnes methanol per day
- It will create employment opportunities in the region
- Total Project cost: ₹ 1,603 cr

↓

### Beautification of Rang Ghar, one of Asia's oldest Amphitheatres in Asia (In Sivasagar):

4

- Beautification of Rang Ghar campus to showcase the magnificent history of the Ahom dynasty
- Traditional huts to merchandise local handicrafts, ethnic foods, etc
- 3,000-capacity Amphitheatre
- Adventure sports facilities, including water sports
- State-of-the-Art Guest House for visiting dignitaries
- Parking facilities for 600 vehicles
- Captivating fountain show built around a huge water body
- Total Project cost : ₹ 124 cr

## State dances to ...

"While planning this event, we were asked, 'Where are these many dancers'? It is not the numbers. Bihu is in the heart of each one and finally, when we are here. There were many who had to be left out. But we will have another event with 25,000 dancers on an even bigger stage and there everyone can participate," said Dr Sarma.

Before the final show began, Guinness World Record officials, led by its adjudicator Rishi Nath, carried out a headcount drive in the main pitch where *Nasonis* and *Bihuwas* were assembled and in few of the galleries where Bihu drummers (*Bihuwas* with *Dhol*) were eagerly waiting to showcase their art. The Guinness World Record authority even used drones and other instruments for the head count.

At 5.44 PM, an official of Guinness World Record uttered - "5, 4, 3, 2, 1.... Go". At 5.45 PM, the attempt began with the Bihu Naam- "Riniki Riniki Dekho Gaon Ekhone...Dekho Gaon Ekhone, Xeikhoni Chenaire... Xeikhoni Chenaire Gaon..." The entire stadium was on its feet.

"Eight members of our family came today to witness this occasion."

Sekhar Jyoti Bhuyan (51), an educationist, from Rangapara in Sonitpur district.

Brisk steps coupled with rapid hand movement and rhythmic swaying of hips to the accompaniment of *dhol* (Drum), *taal* (cymbal), *Mohor singor pepa* (a pipe made from Buffalo horn), *Gogona* (a bamboo-made jaw's harp), *taka* (a bamboo clapper, etc) were all in sync. A couple of Bihu songs articulated the ethos of the Assamese culture, while some were expressions of the youthful passion of love.

At 6.01 PM, the 15 minutes and 39 second performance culminated to a thunderous applause, whose echo could figuratively be heard throughout Assam.

A jubilant Chief Minister informed the gathering that the Guinness World Record authority had told him that a total of 11,304 *Bihuwas* and *Bihuwas* were marked present

"I came with my husband. My husband told me that a similar kind of Bihu dance at a single venue is unlikely to be repeated."

Kaushalya Talukdar (41), a housewife from Halogaon village in Kamrup district.

in the show, a number that has surpassed the previous World Record of the largest number of folk dancers' traditional dance performance at a single venue.

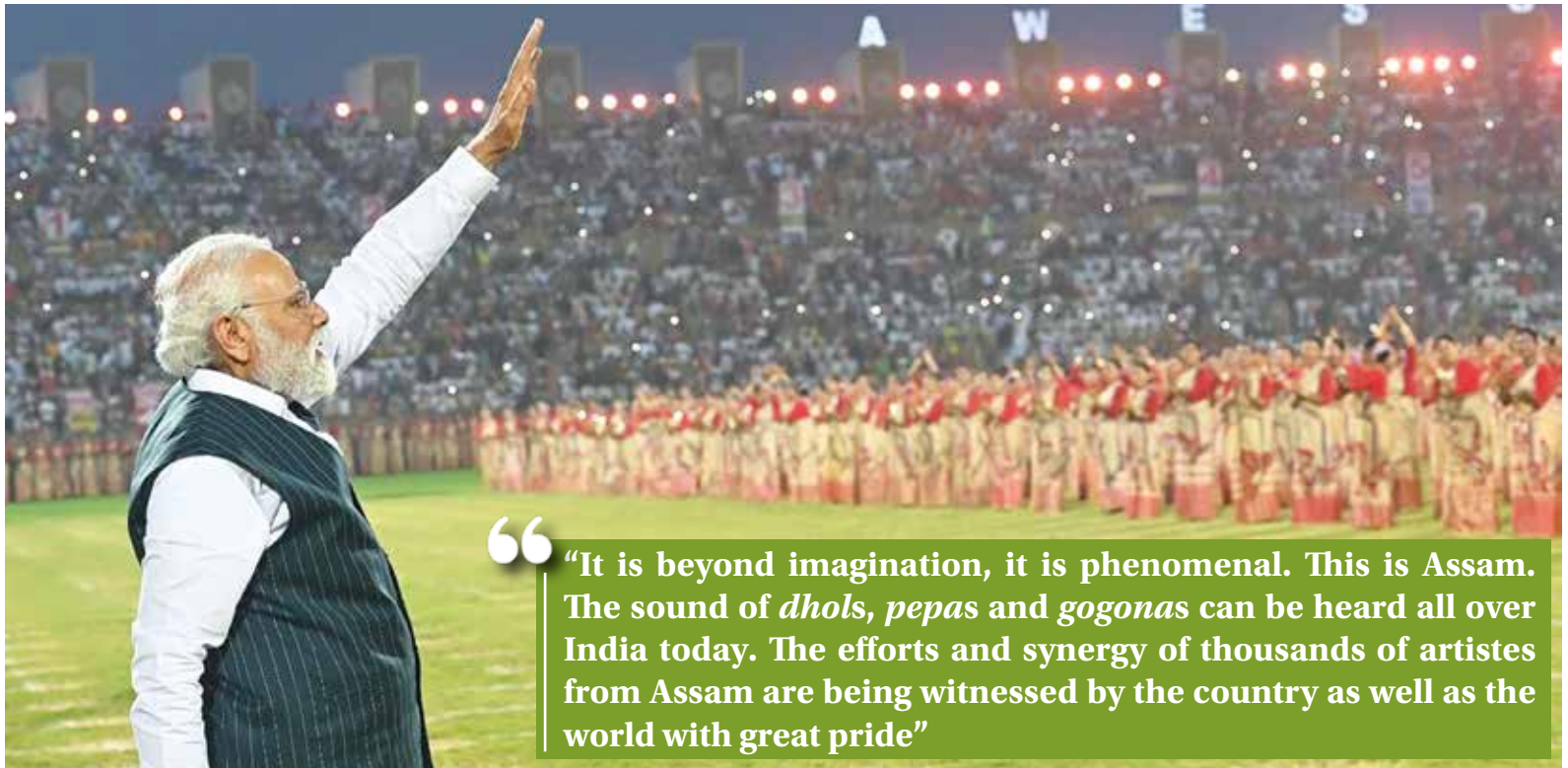
The adjudicator termed it "absolutely fantastic" and "the most mesmerising show I have seen till date."

After the first show, the main venue was cleared for *Dhulias* for yet another world record attempt. In a performance spanning seven minutes, Assam etched itself into yet another world record of the "largest dhol drum ensemble" played at a single venue.

Chief Minister Dr Sarma, too, shook his legs as his Cabinet colleague and Minister of Cultural Affairs Bimal Borah sung a Bihu number at the conclusion of the event.



# Bihu record feat phenomenal: PM



“It is beyond imagination, it is phenomenal. This is Assam. The sound of *dhols*, *pepas* and *gogonas* can be heard all over India today. The efforts and synergy of thousands of artistes from Assam are being witnessed by the country as well as the world with great pride”

*The Prime Minister waving to nasonis and dhulias at the Sarusajai Stadium.*

## AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 14, the first day of Rongali Bihu celebration, became a witness to the biggest ever conglomeration of Bihu dancers and drummers at the Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati.

Just a day earlier, Assam scripted its name in the Guinness Records by staging the largest ever Bihu dance and largest dhol drum ensemble. The feat was achieved by 11,304 folk dancers and 2,548 drummers who performed at the same venue.

Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister remarked that anybody watching today's (April 14, 2023) magnificent spectacle would never forget this in his lifetime.

“It is beyond imagination, it is phenomenal. This is Assam” the Prime Minister said adding, “The sound of *dhols*, *pepas* and *gogonas* can be heard all over India today. The efforts and synergy of thousands of artistes from Assam are being witnessed by the country as well as the world with great pride.”

The Prime Minister said that those present in today's programme or watching it on TV can never forget this spectacle in their life. “It is unforgettable, wonderful and unprecedented,” said Mr Modi.

Highlighting the significance of the occasion, he applauded the spirit and enthusiasm of the artistes. He also used the occasion to convey his greetings to the people of Assam and the country on Bihu and other festivals across the country coinciding with the day. He termed this as a reflection of the spirit of ‘Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat’.

The Prime Minister lauded the people of Assam for carefully preserving their culture.

“Our festivals are not just a celebration of culture. Rather, they are also an inspiration to connect everyone and move forward together. This is the eternal spirit of Rongali (Bohag) Bihu. It is a festival of heart and soul



*Bihu dancers swaying to glory.*

for the people of Assam. It bridges every gap and erases every difference. It is the best symbol of harmony between man and nature. Therefore, no one can understand Bihu only in a literal sense. Rather, feelings are required to understand it. The same feeling comes from 'Kopou Phool' decorated in the hair of sisters and daughters, Muga silk, Mekhela Sador and Riha. This feeling is also felt in those special dishes prepared in every household today,” added the Prime Minister.

Mr Modi remarked that the speciality of India is its traditions which have been connecting every Indian together for thousands of years. He observed that the nation stood together as one against the dark times of slavery and suffered numerous inflictions on India's culture and heritage. He emphasised that India remained immortal even though it saw numerous changes in powers and rulers who came and left. “The consciousness of every Indian is made from the soil and traditions of the country and it is also the foundation of a Viksit Bharat,” the Prime Minister said.

Recalling the song *Biswa Bijoy Nojawan* by cultural icon Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Mr Modi said that this song has become a source of inspiration for the youth of Assam and India. He sung a few lines of the song to a massive applause from those present. He explained

that the song exhorts the youth of India to listen to the call of Mother India and be the agent of change. “This song was written when Independent India was the biggest dream. Today, when we are free, Viksit Bharat is the biggest dream,” the Prime Minister exclaimed, calling upon the youth of India and Assam to move forward and open the doors of a developed India.

Talking about cultural connectivity, PM Modi gave the example of the grand celebration of the 400th year of the great Assamese warrior Lachit Barphukan in Delhi.

“Today the connection is being deepened between all forms of thought and culture,” he said. He referred to Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma's visit to Madhavpur Mela and said that this bond of Krishna Rukmani connects North East to Western India. He also hailed the GI tag status to Muga Silk, Tezpur Lesu (litchi), Joha Rice, Boka Chaul, Kaji Nemu and Gamosa.

The Assam Chief Minister received the Guinness Record certificate of “Largest Bihu dance” and the “Largest dhol drum ensemble” in the presence of the Prime Minister.”

The Prime Minister also moved around the venue in a modified battery-operated vehicle and interacted with some Bihu dancers.



## CM unveils projects in Udalguri, Rangiya



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma launching multiple developmental projects in Udalguri district.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Continuing with the idea of “A Day with Development”, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma laid the foundation stone for multiple projects in the health, education, water resource sectors, among others, in different parts of Udalguri district on April 2, a week after he did the same in Rangiya.

Dr. Sarma inaugurated the Borola Multi Village PWSS scheme in Bormukli along the Indo-Bhutan border in the Udalguri district followed by the inauguration of the statue of ‘Asom Gaurav’ Kalpana Boro in Rowta in the district.

He laid the foundation stone of projects such as upgradation of Tangla CHC to 100-bed SDCH; Tangla Water Supply scheme under AMRUT; restoration work of Jalimukh Bundh; Chilarai Bhawan at Tangla; Tangla HS School Building, etc. He announced a grant of ₹ 25 cr for Tangla city beautification, including drainage development, and

₹ 10 cr for the construction of an auditorium at Tangla College.

The Chief Minister also laid that the foundation stone of Eklavya Residential School, Malmura; 14 PWD road schemes; and SDPO office-cum-residence at Bhergaon; Dimakuchi Mini Stadium, tea garden model schools in Dimakuchi, besides the Nanaikhuti Multi-village Public Water Supply Project, worth ₹ 178.53 cr, under the Jal Jeevan Mission in Dimakuchi. He also inaugurated the Dimakuchi Model Hospital, which marks a significant boost to healthcare facilities in the region.

A week prior, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of 23 projects for ₹ 545.19 cr related to connectivity, healthcare, and higher education at Rangia in Kamrup district.

The Chief Minister, among other projects, inaugurated a four-lane link road that will connect Rangia to National Highway 31.

## GI CERTIFICATE TO GAMOSA



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa received the Geographical Indication Registration Certificate for Asomiya Gamosa from Controller General of Patent, Designs and Trademarks and Registrar of GI Registry Dr. Unnat P. Pandit at a programme at the Sarusajai Stadium, the venue of the Bihu World Record performance on April 13.

It may be noted that eight variety of Gamosas – Uka or Xadharan Gamosa, Phulam Gamosa, Bihuwan, Tiani or Pani Gamosa, Anakata Gamosa, Telos Gamosa, Dora Boron or Jor Gamosa and Gossain Gamosa– have been included in GI Registration. GI Registration is a legal recognition of goods for a definite geographical area or territory which no one else can produce and market. The GI Tag will ensure protection of lakhs of weavers in the State, who often fall prey to machine-woven pieces.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said, “It is a moment of honour and pride for the people of Assam just before Rongali Bihu celebrations when I receive the GI Tag for our pride, the Asomiya Gamosa. As a result of this honour, Asomiya Gamosa will receive a legal recognition which will protect its quality and distinctiveness. It will ensure protection of the interests of our weavers.”

The Chief Minister, on the occasion, congratulated the people of Assam on earning the honour. He said that this GI Tag would be yet another step for placing Assam on to the world stage.

## Kamakhya corridor set for renovation

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma has unveiled a grand plan to renovate the most prominent shakti peethas of the country, the Kamakhya Temple, to make it comfortable for devotees and attract pilgrims and tourists alike to the historic temple. In a video through his Twitter handle, Dr. Sarma shared the first glimpse of what the renovated shrine will look like.

He used the occasion to tweet: “Sharing a glimpse of how the renovated Maa Kamakhya corridor will look like in the near future. #NewIndia”

He also shared his vision of making the Kamakhya Temple, situated atop the Nilachal Hill range, on the lines of the Kashi Vishwanath corridor. Dr. Sarma said that the renovated corridor work will be completed in the next two years.

The idea struck immediate resonance with even Prime Minister Narendra Modi retweeting it. Mr Modi tweeted his optimism that the step would be a revolutionary one and lead to growth in tourism and of the local economy.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also tweeted his compliments for the initiative. He felt that the renovated Maa Kamakhya corridor



will enhance the spiritual experience for tourists and boost the local economy. He said that this initiative will further dignify the divine light of the sacred land of Maa Kamakhya.

Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha appreciated the move in his tweet terming it as a transformative step towards development of Assam which will facilitate an easy access to Maa Kamakhya Temple.



# The excitement that was!



*Nasonis during the record-breaking feat (top). Dhulias acknowledging the support of the people.*

## AB BUREAU, SARUSAJAI STADIUM, GUWAHATI

Sarusajai Stadium has seldom seen more than 25 people in action with all seriousness on its deftly curated green grass, but certainly seen, many a times, over 20,000 on its famed chairs and benches to witness spectacles being played out on its revered turf.

However, April 13 produced a different game altogether. There were an unprecedented 10,000 players on its hallowed turf, giving their best for the State, and the nation.

It was a sight to behold. Bathed in majestic colours of all hues, they were symbolic not only of the famed diversity of Assam and the North East but also of any professional, when present, in the sporting venue.

One of them was Mausumi Sonowal of Jorhat. A second semester college student, Mausumi said that she was part of an 800-strong delegation representing Jorhat in the attempt to register their name in Guinness World Records. "I know a few of them only. Yet, we are working for one common goal. Emotions of thousands of families are attached with this initiative," she informed *Asom Barta*, while waiting to catch her breath.

Shyamal Deka of Hajo, however, had tightly hung the decorative cover of his dhol around his neck and stuffed few pairings of clothes before embarking towards the Stadium knowing full well that he will be performing from the stands, assisting the likes of Mausumi and many thousands like hers. A teenager of 19, he was one of the over 1,100 dhulias who ringed out his Bohag Bihu excitement through his dhol.

Nearly 8.5 km from the Stadium is Sankardev Kalakshetra. The window counter there witnessed an unprecedented surge for passes from people of all age groups who were keen to be part of the unprecedented feat their fellow citizens were working on. (Such was the excitement that the State Government was forced to allow everybody an entry even without the formal passes.)

The Stadium, too, was witnessing a disciplined set of queues comprising men, women, and children. All waiting for their turn to enter the Stadium to watch these performers going through their final rehearsal under the hawk-eyed supervision of their seniors and experts. "I have been here since 7am in the morning," said an energetic dhulia not willing to take even the slightest of chance in ensuring a heart-rending performance the same evening when Guinness supervisors will be watching them do it for themselves and their State. Also watching them with bated-breath will be their family members who have accompanied them from all over the State.



"It is one of the most memorable and impressionable moments for me in my 19 years. I was selected after a rigorous scrutiny by observers in a trial in Amingaon. I came here on April 10 and since then have stationed myself in Guwahati," said Deka while sharing his emotion with this newsletter.

Brojen Borgohain of Chariadeo, a dhulia, stood out. He was from Charaideo, the historic town which was once the seat of the Ahom dynasty. He was there to perform for the record alongside two of his sons. "I know that I will not be part of the customary Goru Bihu (the first day of Bihu where every Assamese household takes care of their cows bathing them in a nearby pond and offering prayers to them in acknowledgement of their role on the farm) this year. But we also know we will be part of something historic and something that is emotionally part of our core," he said without a tinge of regret.

Behind all these emotions and excitement was the role played by the State Government which facilitated possibly everything that was required for such an attempt. From master trainer to mekheles, to buses for transportation and money for food and lodging, the Government of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma literally opened its purse to ensure that only the *nasonis* and *dhulias* are there physically but also mentally with the feeling that they have been properly taken care of. Kamaljit Dutta, a master trainer of Nagaon was all praises for the district administration. "Nagaon is being represented by 750 artistes. It has been a seamless journey thus far. We are feeling at home. I must thank my DC and the State Government for doing this for us," he said.

Devika Rai, a master trainer from Bongaigaon, said that for her the very idea of performing before the Prime Minister of the country was something that she had not been able to come to terms with. "It will be the most memorable day ever for me," she summed up her feelings to this reporter.

So was the emotion of Ranjit Gogoi, the head choreographer of the programme. "This will be a document for posterity. The world will witness us and remember it for good. I think this April 14 will be the best day of my life," he said.



*A young enthusiast with her entry pass.*



PM dedicates AIIMS, medical colleges to the nation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries during the inauguration ceremony of AIIMS.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation projects worth more than ₹ 3,400 cr in the health care sector in Guwahati during his visit to Assam on April 14.

PM Modi dedicated AIIMS Guwahati and three other medical colleges to the nation. He also laid the foundation stone of Assam Advanced Health Care Innovation Institute (AAHII) and launched ‘Aapke Dwar Ayushman’ campaign by distributing Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards to eligible beneficiaries.

Addressing a gathering at the inaugural ceremony of AIIMS, Guwahati at Changsari in Kamrup district, the Prime Minister remarked that health infrastructure of Assam and the North East has found a new strength after the setting up of AIIMS and three new medical colleges.

He said that the foundation stone for a 500-bed super speciality hospital has also been laid for advanced research in collaboration with IIT Guwahati. He also noted that work is underway in a mission mode to distribute Ayushman cards to millions in Assam.

Mr Modi said that along with physical infrastructure, social infrastructure has also received a massive boost in the region with

expansion in education and health facilities. He referred to the support to medical facilities and, in turn, to patients from the ever-improving rail-road connectivity in the region.

PM Modi expressed happiness that the people of North East have taken charge of their destiny and development. “We are moving forward with the mantra of India’s development through the development of the North East. In this movement, the Central Government is accompanying as a friend and servant,” the Prime Minister said.

He informed the gathering that in the last few years his Government started work on 15 such AIIMS wherein treatments and courses have also begun.

Highlighting the developments in the field of medical infrastructure, the Prime Minister said that approximately 300 medical colleges have become functional in the last nine years compared to only 150 medical colleges between 2004-2014. He added that the number of MBBS seats in the country has doubled to around a lakh in the last nine years, while seats in postgraduation have risen by 110%.

In the North East, the Prime Minister said, the number of medical colleges along with the number of seats has doubled since 2014.

Reflecting on the successes of the Government schemes, PM Modi said, “Our Government is modernising India’s health sector according to the needs of the 21st century.” He listed Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission and Digital Health ID as the two projects meant to improve hospital services. Noting the growing popularity of e-Sanjeevani, the Prime Minister informed the gathering that 10 crore e-consultation through the scheme have been achieved.

“The biggest basis for change in India’s healthcare system is Sabka Prayas (everyone’s effort),” Mr Modi said. He recalled the spirit of “Sabka Prayas” during the Corona pandemic and said that the entire world is praising the world’s biggest, fastest, and most effective Covid vaccination campaign.

Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of State



Aapke Dwar Ayushman’ campaign:

The ceremonial launch of ‘Aapke Dwar Ayushman’ campaign by the Prime Minister is a step towards realising his vision of reaching out to ensure 100% saturation of welfare schemes. He distributed Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards to three representative beneficiaries. It was followed by the distribution of about 1.1 crore AB-PMJAY cards in all districts of Assam.

About AAHII:

The foundation stone of Assam Advanced Health Care Innovation Institute (AAHII) is a step towards realising the Prime Minister’s vision of ‘Atmnirbhar Bharat’ and ‘Make in India’ in the health sector.

for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Bharati Pawar and Ministers from Government of Assam were present on the occasion, among others.

The Prime Minister also dedicated to the nation three medical colleges: Nalbari Medical College, Nalbari; Nagaon Medical College, Nagaon; and Kokrajhar Medical College, Kokrajhar, built at a cost of ₹ 615 cr, ₹ 600 cr and ₹ 535 cr respectively. Each medical college has an attached 500-bed teaching hospital with OPD/IPD services, including emergency services, ICU facilities, OT and diagnostic facilities, etc. Each medical college will have an annual intake capacity of 100 MBBS students.





# Shot in the arm for health services



*The AIIMS in Guwahati will boost Assam's health infrastructure and also help the entire North East.*

## AB BUREAU, CHANGSARI/GUWAHATI

About 28 km northwest of Assam's capital Dispur is Changsari in Kamrup district of the State. The place is witnessing a spurt of development activities in recent years, but no other physical construct will be as important to the town as the recently built All India Institute of Medical Science, the first AIIMS anywhere in North East India, inaugurated on April 14 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

### About AIIMS-Guwahati

This institute was planned under Phase V of the 22 new AIIMS under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY). The foundation stone of the institute was laid by the Prime Minister on May 26, 2017 on a plot measuring 189.2 acres. Work on it began on May 2, 2019.

The Union Cabinet approved setting up of AIIMS at Guwahati at a cost of ₹ 1,123 Crore in May 2017. HITES was appointed as the executing agency for the project in May 2018. The work for construction of new AIIMS was awarded in May 2019 after earth filing of 80 acres of the site by the State Government. Almost 85% of the construction work on the project site has been completed..

### On Clinical Services

Services available include Day Care, Pharmacy (Amrit Pharmacy), Laboratory facilities, Radiological Investigation.

The state-of-the-art hospital will provide high quality patient care services in various specialities and super specialities, including cardiology, neurology, burns and plastic surgery, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, interventional Radiology, etc.

Coincidentally, the name Changsari is derived from the Tai-Ahom word meaning Chang (expert) Sa (good) and Ri (make), that is, an expert who nurtures a sick person back to health! In the Ahom era, it was a village of doctors, Changkakati and Baruah.

The opening of the hospital has triggered a wave of jubilation in the area for obvious reasons. "We did not get AIIMS on a platter. We had to struggle for it for over nine years", Madan Deka, president of AIIMS Nirman Sahayak Committee told *Asom Barta*

"We had to fight an almost four-year-long legal battle for AIIMS's present site selection at Changsari. It started in early 2014 and ended in November 2017. Former Union Minister and Guwahati Lok Sabha MP Bijoya Chakrabarty, former MP Ramen Deka and the then State Health Minister and present Chief Minister of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma were support pillars for us," informed Deka.

"We have high hopes that this AIIMS will bring a transformation in the health care sector in the State," he told this reporter.

The locals are thanking the Assam Chief Minister, who is also their MLA. Basanta Sarania, assistant general secretary of the AIIMS Nirman Sahayok Committee, appreciated the role of Dr. Sarma, the then Health Minister in the State, in convincing the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to set up AIIMS in Changsari.

The locals are also reaping the rewards of having a major health institution in their area.

"We have seen significant development

### Academic

MBBS courses started from the academic year 2020-21. The first batch of students started their classes from a temporary campus in the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences adjoining Guwahati Medical College. On March 5, 2022, the academic and administrative activities shifted to the permanent campus at Changsari. At present, there are 199 MBBS students, 78 faculty members, 125 nursing officers and 12 senior residents here.



around greater Changsari. With AIIMS beginning its operation, infrastructure and business activities within a radius of 5 km of the institute has picked up sharply," said Kushal Ch Das, a native of the area.

Abul Kalam (38), a resident of Purabi Nagar, adjacent to AIIMS, informed this newsletter that the price of land in the area has gone up several folds in recent years.

"We have information that many business houses have bought land on both sides of the four-lane highway. Prices of agricultural land which was ₹ 15,000 per katha till about four years ago is now ₹ 30- 32 lakh per katha. You can imagine the kind of development that is in the offing in the area," Kalam told this reporter.

Azizul Amin (48), a grocery seller in Dhopatary Bazar, confided to this reporter that not only his income, but those of other retailers in the area has gone northwards since construction of the AIIMS began. "My income from this grocery shop has seen a seven-eight times growth. I know that others, too, are doing well," he said.

Dr. Ashok Puranik, Executive Director, AIIMS, told this reporter that it was established with a three-pronged objective in mind: i) As a state-of-the-art patient care institute, (ii) High quality medical education and (iii) cutting-edge research.

He said that the patient care services started via telemedicine from August 2022 and limited OPD for locals started from September 2022. "Most of the clinical departments are functional. Average OPDS footfall at AIIMS Guwahati is around 150 patients per day," Dr Puranik said.



# Assam evaluates health institutions

AB BUREAU  
BARPETA/GUWAHATI

It was an unusually busy day for the staff of the Chenga Block Primary Health Centre (PHC). The entrance to the PHC had been whitewashed and decorated. There was a makeshift reception gate, too, wherein doctors and health workers were waiting with gamosas to welcome a guest in whose assessment lied their certificate of dedication and service. The day was April 7. The second day of a unique health initiative termed Swasthya Sewa Utsav, a first-of-its-kind practice anywhere in the country, to assess Government-level health institutions over three days. The benchmarks were health infrastructure, service delivery, and human resources in Government health institutions across Assam, under the aegis of the National Health Mission.

The PHC in Chenga, established in 1955, was among the 1252 institutions evaluated during the exercise. After a few minutes of the arrival of this reporter, came the appointed evaluator Ms Nimashree Dauka, an Assam Civil Service officer, now posted in Barpeta district as an Assistant Commissioner. "After the success of Gunotsav in elevating the standard of education in Government schools, we felt the importance of having one such exercise for Government-owned health institutions in the State. Having realised that Assam is the first State in the country to do so has given me an additional focus," she told *Asom Barta*.

"Health is a subject that touches the lives of the rich and the poor, the literate and the unschooled, beyond the gender, sex, caste, and religious divide. In that sense, it is everybody's call that the sector should be vibrant and healthy



at any point in time. Hence, the exercise will give us a true picture of the areas that need improvement to fulfil people's expectations," she told this reporter.

"This is a very important exercise. It will benefit all the stakeholders: doctors and health workers, the institutions as well as patients. At this point, these Government-health institutions do not have enough facilities for medical investigation or research. This evaluation exercise will help us take note and mitigate some of these deficiencies," said Dr Nurul Islam, the Medical Officer of Chenga Subdivision.

In February, the NHM had conducted a training and sensitisation programme for evaluators in Assam.

The initiative geared to bring a transformation in health care services was conceived by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. Towards that end, he unveiled a logo of the Swasthya Sewa Utsav on March 29 at Janata Bhawan in Guwahati in the presence of the State Health Minister Keshav Mahanta. Later on April 5, a day prior to the launch, NHM Mission Director Dr MS Lakshmi Priya interacted with health officials of all districts through video conferencing briefing them of the exacting standards expected of them, the health institutions, and the parameters thereof. She informed them that the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare was



Evaluator Ms Nimashree Dauka interacting with patients at Chenga BPHC



Dr Nilmadhab Das (DHS) at the Health Service Unit in Hengrabari in Guwahati



Officials and others at Gandhi Basti PHC.

interested in the key learnings from this exercise for future use.

Among the external evaluators like Ms Dauka, the NHM had sought the services of Members of Parliament/MLAs, senior bureaucrats for assessment of these institutions. They were aided by faculties/doctors/postgraduate students at medical colleges. In total, 450 teams spread across the State covering 21 district hospitals, 16 sub divisional civil hospitals, 205 community health centres and 1010 PHCs based on a pre-defined checklist against each category of health institutions.

Assessing one such institution in Gandhi Basti in Guwahati, Dr Anup Talukdar, a district veterinary officer and an evaluator, pointed out to this reporter that the health centre was operating from a rented accommodation and hence had limitation in expanding its scope. However, he was fulsome in his praise for its health workers.

Auxillary Nurse and Midwife Sima Das, while operating from the Health Service Unit in Hengrabari in Guwahati, sounded emotional while narrating to this newsletter that she was looking forward to this day since she first heard that such an exercise would be put into motion by the NHM. "This has been a learning experience. At the same time, I shared with the evaluator the constraints that we face while on duty," she told this newsletter, adding that her work will finally find acceptance.

Dr Nilmadhav Das, Director Health Services, Assam highlighted the importance of uplifting the standard of health services delivered to a benchmark set by Indian Public Health Standards in his interaction with this reporter.

Such findings were precisely the reason why the idea of Swasthya Sewa Utsav was conceived. The outcome will, in likelihood, lay down the track on which health care in the State need to jog.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma launching the Swasthya Sewa Utsav logo at Janata Bhawan.



# Gunotsav thumbs up to schools



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma unveiling the Gunotsav result booklet.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Government schools across Assam have registered a significant and qualitative improvement in their overall standard vis-à-vis the last few years according to results announced by the School Education Department recently.

According to data released by the Department, the number of A+ schools and A+ students have registered a double digit jump from 11.52% to 28.64%, and 23.79% to 38.16% respectively from 2022 to 2023. Similarly, the number of A Grade school has also gone up while the number of schools in the C Grade category has come down drastically. (PI see Box).

Among the three top performing districts, Sivasagar continued its domination at the top with over 800 schools getting A+ while Charaideo, a relatively new district, has emerged as the second-best performer. Golaghat was third on the list.

Addressing the media after releasing the findings, Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the results were a reflection of a peaceful and agitation-free atmosphere in the State.

For the record, Gunotsav was conducted across the State in three phases from January



18 to February 18 to evaluate school education in the State on four broad parameters: Scholastic (learning outcomes of children), co-scholastic, infrastructure, and community participation.

A total of 18,097 evaluators, including ministers, MLAs, senior bureaucrats covered 44,531 schools enrolling 41.35 lakh students.

Talking to *Asom Barta*, Kamaljyoti Gogoi, the ex-School Inspector of Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, listed several areas where these two districts focused on, including special emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematical abilities, besides working on many other qualitative aspects of the evaluation parameters.



- 1. No. of A+ Schools increase to 28.64% from 11.52%. The increase % is 17.12
- 2. No. of A+ students increase to 38.16% from 23.79%. The increase % is 14.37
- 3. No. of total A+ and A grade schools increase to 74.83% from 52.22%. The increase % is 22.61
- 4. No. of C grade schools decrease to 4.75% from 11.14%
- 5. No. of D grade schools decrease to 1.85% from 5.09%.
- 6. No. of C grade students decrease to 6.37% from 12.58%
- 7. No. of D grade students decrease to 6.39% from 16.78%.
- 8. 3233 schools obtained A+ in both Gunotsav 2022 and 2023.
- 9. A total of 8380 A , B, C & D grade schools of Gunotsav 2022 upgraded to A+ in Gunotsav2023.

## Comparison of Gunotsav grading in 2017, 2018, 2022 & 2023 (SCHOOL)

	GUNOTSAV 2017		GUNOTSAV 2018		GUNOTSAV 2022		GUNOTSAV 2023	
GRADE	Number of Schools	%	Number of Schools	%	Number of Schools	%	Number of Schools	%
A+	6,037	12.35	10,678	23.01	4841	11.56	11886	28.64
A	12,927	26.45	21,801	46.98	17041	40.69	19172	46.19
B	13,636	27.9	10,935	23.56	13207	31.54	7710	18.58
C	9,163	18.75	2,299	4.95	4660	11.13	1972	4.75
D	7,105	14.54	691	1.49	2129	5.08	767	1.85
All Grades	48,868		46,404		41878		41507	



# End of a dispute heralds new beginning



Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu after the signing of the MoU in New Delhi.

## SABIR NISHAT, NEW DELHI

The Governments of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh went that extra mile in their quest to solve the decades long boundary dispute by entering into a historic agreement to settle it once and for all. The development follows the signing of a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on April 20 at the Ministry of Home Affairs office in North Block.

The Assam Chief Minister and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema Khandu were signatories to the boundary settlement agreement.

Speaking on the occasion, the Home Minister said that it was a red-letter day for both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh resolving their decades long boundary dispute amicably. Mr. Shah exuded optimism that the boundary settlement would usher in all-round development and peace in the North East. He said that row involving 123 disputed villages on both sides of the inter-State border along the 800-km long stretch have been resolved once and for all at a time when the country is celebrating its 75th year of Independence.

The Union Minister said the Local Commission Report on settlement of the Assam-Arunachal border issue was kept in abeyance spanning decades, both by the erstwhile Governments and the courts. He added that the latest pact is yet another milestone towards a peaceful, prosperous, and dispute-free North East, with the Modi Government entering into several peace accords since 2019, including those with NLFT, Brus, Bodos, Karbi-Anglong tribes, and the Assam-Meghalaya boundary pact that covered 66% of the disputed area.

He said the result of these efforts were that over 8,000 insurgents in the region have eschewed violence and joined the mainstream. Also, there was a sharp decline of 67% in violent incidents, 60% in security forces deaths and 83% in civilian deaths in the region.

**“The row involving 123 disputed villages on both sides of the inter-State border along the 800-km long stretch have been resolved once and for all at a time when the country is celebrating its 75th year of Independence”**

**Amit Shah**  
**Union Home Minister**

The Assam Chief Minister termed the signing of the MoU as historic and said that it would be the harbinger of peace and prosperity not only in the two States but also the region as a whole.

In his address, Mr. Khandu termed the settlement of boundary dispute as momentous and historic and expressed the hope that it would bring sea change on the peace and development fronts.

The Assam Cabinet on April 19 approved the recommendations given by 12 Regional Committees formed by the State Government to resolve the decades long border row with Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chief Minister of Assam has had several rounds of meetings with his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart to address the boundary problem.

In July last year, both the States signed the Namsai Declaration in which it was agreed to scale down the number of disputed villages from 123 to 86 and resolving the boundary row by forming 12 committees each headed by a Cabinet Minister that would take stock of the situation in the disputed areas, obtain feedback from residents and submit reports to

their respective Governments.

The signing of the landmark MoU has earned encomiums from the people at large. "The long festering border dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has been resolved after a long 50 years, thanks to the sincere efforts of the BJP dispensation at the State and Centre," said Biren Baishya, a businessman based in Delhi.

Arun Dash in his tweet commented, "This is called statesmanship and nation first policy! Congratulations to both the CMs and Home Minister Amit Shah! After Sardar Patel we have a Home Minister who is doing a great work in integrating the nation. Congrats."

Sumit Prashar in his twitter handle said other States must take a leaf out of the manner in which the North Eastern States have acted sensibly and not politicising the issue thus paving the way for a permanent solution to the problem.

This historic agreement comes close on the heels of the agreement between Governments of Assam and Meghalaya in the national capital to resolve their 50-year-old pending border dispute in March 2022. The agreement was signed two months after a draft resolution was submitted by the Chief Ministers of the two States to the Union Home Minister on January 31 for examination and consideration by the MHA.

The Governments of Assam and Meghalaya had come up with a draft resolution to resolve their border disputes in six of the 12 "areas of difference" along the inter-State boundary.

Following the border settlement between Assam and Meghalaya and now Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, even Nagaland and Assam are exploring ways to find an out-of-the-court settlement of the border imbroglio with the Dr. Sarma and his Nagaland counterpart Neiphiu Rio getting down to meaningful discussion in New Delhi (on the same day the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh boundary dispute was resolved) to hammer out a solution benefitting both States.



# Time is now... Assam beckons you all

by Paban Kumar Borthakur, Chief Secretary, Assam



The development of Assam has seen a new momentum under the visionary leadership of the Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. Positive changes and progress are evident across all sectors in the State.

Dr. Sarma, as a Minister of different important departments in the previous regimes, had initiated various innovative schemes. These schemes still continue under the present Government impacting common lives to a great extent. The *Orunudo* scheme initiated by him during his tenure as the Finance Minister has resulted in a paradigm shift in financial independence of rural women and their families. This path-breaking scheme has benefited 18,97,915 beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode. *Gunotsav* is an initiative to ensure quality education in the schools which helps to identify learning gaps and take remedial measures for improvement of children. The 4<sup>th</sup> round of Gunotsav-2023 covered 44,531 schools with 41,35,163 students.

Under his visionary leadership, all Government departments and functionaries are now working relentlessly and in the same direction with the motto of 'Assam First'. Coming out of departmental silos, all the Government officials are inspired to work as a member of 'Team Assam' to fulfil common goals and objectives. *Lachit Divas* organised in New Delhi from November 23-25, 2022 is an example of such a synchronised action. The event was graced by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, Union Finance Minister Smti. Nirmala Sitharaman. This event offered an occasion for national and international audience to peep into the heroic and resplendent history and heritage of Assam. Likewise, Bihu has been taken to the world arena with more than 11,000 Bihu dancers and drummers performing

at Sarusajai Stadium, Guwahati on April 14, 2023. The event was a Guinness World Record.

Governance and administration have to come closer to the people to ensure all-round development. The present Government has taken many innovative measures to meet this end. Examples can be cited from Transport Department. It has launched online contactless Aadhaar-based citizen-centric service which has enabled them to apply online and get learner's driving license, renewal as well as duplicate driving license from the comfort of their homes. Similar steps also have been taken in other departments. Under Industries and Commerce Department, the amendment of Assam Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Act is an instance of such initiatives. It will now enable a person or enterprise to obtain all clearance, except power and fire services, for setting up an Industrial Unit in the 'Notified Industrial Area' within 30 days of application.

A vibrant bureaucracy is a crucial factor for better services to the people. Holding of regular conferences of Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police is an apt action to rejuvenate the bureaucracy for efficient delivery. Assam Police has enhanced its drive against social evils like drugs, cybercrime, crime against women, etc., during the present regime. Many steps are being taken to use scientific aids in investigations. Steps have been taken to set up new Regional and Mobile Forensic Science Laboratories and upgradation of State FSL at Guwahati.

The Chief Minister has appointed 'Guardian Ministers' and 'Guardian Secretaries' to oversee the implementation of government policy decisions, administrative reforms, and other welfare schemes in districts of the State. This step has also made Government easily accessible for the common public. Districts will now be made the fulcrum of development.

Dr. Sarma is a great institution builder. From model high schools in tea gardens, new medical colleges in different districts to sports infrastructure, he has made a mark in all spheres. All India level institutions like AIIMS have been set up and made functional. National Forensic Science University of Gujarat, a University of Eminence, is going to set up one of their campuses in Assam.

The weekly Cabinet meeting is another path-breaking initiative of his. Since May 11, 2021 to April 29, 2023 a total of 87 Cabinet meetings have been held taking hundreds

**Governance and administration have to come closer to the people to ensure all-round development. The present Government has taken many innovative measures to meet this end. Examples can be cited from Transport Department. It has launched online contactless Aadhaar-based citizen-centric service which has enabled them to apply online and get learner's driving license, renewal as well as duplicate driving license from the comfort of their homes. Similar steps also have been taken in other departments.**

of critical decisions for fast forwarding the development process. Making a departure from earlier practice, in almost all cases, departmental secretaries give detail presentation regarding their proposal before the Cabinet, to help it understand the proposal in the right context. Holding Cabinet meetings in different districts has changed the development scenario in these places.

The people of the State are availing great benefits from what Hon'ble Prime Minister terms as the 'double-engine'. The active support and cooperation received from the Centre gives impetus to development initiatives of the State Government. On the other side, the relationship of the State Government with the 6th Scheduled Councils are at its best. Thus, as the Centre, State and 6th Schedule councils tune to the same wavelength, the momentum for development becomes most agile and synergetic.

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

## Time is now...

The Chief Minister understands well the need of good health of the citizens of the State. His initiatives and actions, earlier as Health Minister and now as the Chief Minister, bear testimony to this fact. Along with the new AIIMS and three other medical colleges at Nalbari, Nagaon and Kokrajhar, health is getting an impetus like never before. The aim is to have 24 medical colleges in Assam in the next 4 to 5 years. The Prime Minister during his visit to Guwahati also launched the distribution of 1.1 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards.

As a part of the citizen-centric governance initiated by the Government of Assam, Mission Sadbhavana was rolled out to dispose all pending public applications at Janata Bhawan prior to May 10, 2021. Mission Sadbhavana, was launched by the Chief Minister on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2022 for responsive administration to the people of Assam through three components: 1) Application Disposal 2) File Categorization and 3) Implementation of e-Office. All the applications received under Mission Sadbhavana were disposed within stipulated time. Introduction of e-Office File Management System as part of digitization efforts of the Government of Assam has brought in a new dynamism in the Secretariat. The second phase of Mission Sadbhavana will include all the Deputy Commissioners' Offices and Directorates/Commissionerates of the Government of Assam for e-Office.

The Chief Minister launched Mission Basundhara on October 2, 2021. The objective of the mission is to purify and update all land records and maps with each deliverable. Under Mission Basundhara 1.0, a total of 8,13,981 applications were registered and out of which 5,82,688 applications were delivered. Under Mission Basundhara 2.0, a total of 13,39,498 applications were registered. These numbers speaks of the overwhelming public response.

Mission Bhumiputra was launched on August 1, 2022 in order to avoid the delay in obtaining caste certificates by applicants, especially in the rural areas. Through Mission Bhumiputra caste certificates could be obtained in a uniform and a simplified procedure through an online form. As part of the Mission, a special drive has been initiated wherein Deputy Commissioners distributed printed application forms through Principals/Headmasters and delivered caste certificates at the school itself. Under the Mission, 11,38,294 applications for caste certificates have been approved.

Kritagyata Portal is a one-stop transparent ICT platform which provides all required information and guidance on retirement procedures. The online portal enables the State Government pensioners for submission and tracking of their pension proposals. Pension Seva Kendras are being set up in the Districts to facilitate the uploading of the pension papers.

During the last two years, the State has witnessed general peace, a precondition for growth and progress. This has been

## Introduction of e-Office File Management System as part of digitization efforts of the Government of Assam has brought in a new dynamism in the Secretariat. The second phase of Mission Sadbhavana will include all the Deputy Commissioners' Offices and Directorates/Commissionerates of the Government of Assam for e-Office.

possible due to the ability of the Government to persuade different armed groups to surrender and join the mainstream. The State Government has developed good relations with the neighbouring States and addressed the complex and perennial boundary disputes for early amicable solutions.

Constitution of civilian awards – Assam Baibhav, Assam Saurav and Assam Gaurav – has induced a new value system in the society while spreading optimism among people from all walks of life. The range of awardees encompasses achievers from industrialists,

physicians to a weaver or an ASHA worker. These three awards carry the message that irrespective of the background, Assam Government will acknowledge the good deeds of the deserving personalities and that work culture is the best culture.

The relentless and tireless works of the Chief Minister have instilled new hopes and aspirations into the minds of people. Assam beckons all to join in her journey to make it a peaceful and prosperous State, with Nature and Culture as its perennial spirit of an age-old civilisation.





**Shri Pijush Hazarika**  
**Minister, Assam**



Water Resources, Parliamentary Affairs,  
Information, Public Relations,  
Printing and Stationery and  
Social Justice & Empowerment Departments.

Dispur, 27 April, 2023

**MESSAGE**

*Asom Barta*, the e-newsletter of the Government of Assam, has completed one year. Printed and published by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, this development-based newsletter highlights the schemes, policies, and work of the Government. In just one year, this e-newsletter has managed to create a loyal readership of over 30 lakh. It is, without doubt, a matter of pride and happiness for all of us. I take this opportunity to compliment all those associated with the editorial and other related activities of this newsletter and wish them the best.

Because of the dream and relentless efforts of our hon'ble Chief Minister, the people of Assam have got an opportunity to become witness to an all-round development in the State. The unrelenting crackdown on drugs, the support to rural women to bail them out of their microfinance debt, merit-based and transparent appointment process, which has brought a ray of hope among the youth, construction of bridges and medical colleges, crackdown on child marriages, measures to resolve boundary disputes with neighbouring States, bringing back insurgent groups to the mainstream, securing the rightful place to Ahom general Lachit Barphukan in the pages of history, paddy procurement from farmers, etc., are some of the activities of the present Government which people of the State have become witnessed to.

This e-newsletter has covered these achievements of the present Government in a very balanced manner. I consider this to be a salient feature of this newsletter.

I hope *Asom Barta* will persist on this trajectory and continue to highlight the sincere efforts of the Government of Assam in its subsequent issues.

I thank the readers of *Asom Barta* who have been companions in the one-year journey of this newsletter, and once again wish *Asom Barta* my best.

**(Pijush Hazarika)**



ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা  
**Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma**



মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, অসম চৰকাৰ  
**Chief Minister, Assam**

Dispur  
C M S. 7/ 2023/ 251  
19 April, 2023

### **MESSAGE**

I am pleased to know of the initiative undertaken by the Directorate of Information and Publicity Department of the Government of Assam to publish a special anniversary volume of *Asom Barta*.

The foundation of a vibrant media culture in Assam that was laid in the 19th century by *Orunodoi* has continued unabated well into the 21st century thanks to the efforts of vernacular media in the State. Today, many of the salient features of the media have changed significantly. Information technology has not only made the media speed-centric but has also added conspicuously to their number. The change in modes of communication has made our world a global village. This has resulted in an increasing number of information sources for mankind. Not only print and electronic media, but the social media has also managed to reach out to the masses. The complexities and comfort of our modern life which have impacted social media, in turn, have made the media domain that much challenging. Electronic and online media have increased the terrain of mass media while also managing to catch the attention of readers. In the light of this, *Asom Barta*, the monthly e-newsletter, must organise itself continuously to touch the hearts and minds of its readers. Ever since its inception, *Asom Barta* has managed to disseminate policies and programmes of the Government of Assam to the masses and have successfully managed to take the administration closer to them. It has also stood out in the modern-day media landscape by highlighting the achievements and efforts of individuals in uplifting the social life of Assam. Its contribution to showing the right path to the next generation is seminal. I am hopeful that the first anniversary of *Asom Barta* will act as an inspiration for it to advance with added responsibility.

I wish all success to this anniversary issue.

(Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma)

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