

Asom Barta

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 8 | DECEMBER 2022

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Leaders from all walks of life paid their tributes to the legendary Ahom General



Nod to ₹ 50k cr road infra projects

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The visit of Union Minister of Roads and Highways resulted in a ₹ 50k cr bounty for Assam.



Govt inks MoU with IIM-B on young professionals

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An MoU with IIM-B has opened the way for participation of youth in the Government.

Lachit, his valour reverberate



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the programme.

SABIR NISHAT, NEW DELHI

The celebrations of the 400th birth anniversary of one of India's greatest warriors Lachit Barphukan reverberated in the air in the national capital from November 23 to 25. Hordes of visitors from different parts of Assam, Delhi-NCR and elsewhere joined in the celebrations to make the three-day event a roaring success.

The presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman added sheen to the celebrations.

The Prime Minister was the chief guest in the valedictory programme which started with the singing of Aai Sing Lao devotional prayer song of the Ahoms. Mr Modi paid floral tributes at the portrait of Lachit Barphukan

wherein he was presented with the Ahom hengdang (sword) by Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma.

In his address the Prime Minister said that many unsung heroes of India were deliberately erased from the annals of history, citing the example of 17th century Ahom General Lachit Barphukan. "Our history is not only about slavery but also about victories and saga of valour and sacrifices of countless fighters. It's about standing against tyranny and oppression with unprecedented valour and courage...", he said adding, "Unfortunately, we were taught, even after Independence, the same history which was written as part of a conspiracy during the colonial era. After Independence there was a need to change the agenda of foreigners who made us slaves, but it did not happen."

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Rewrite history: HM

AB BUREAU, NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has asked historians, scholars, academics, and students to correct history replete with 'lies' by delving deep into the annals of 30 Indian empires that ruled for over 150 years besides 300 historical personalities. "I hear many times that our history has been distorted and twisted. There is a possibility that what has been written was right, but no one can stop us now from rewriting our history with pride. We will have to amend this and place our history in front of the world with pride," he said this in the plenary session of the 400th birth anniversary celebration of Lachit Barphukan in New Delhi on November 24.

Underlining the slew of initiatives undertaken by the NDA Government under

the leadership of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to unravel the truth pertaining to Indian history, Shah sang paeans on the heroic exploits of Lachit Barphukan and the way in which the Ahoms defended their territorial integrity from repeated Mughal incursions. "Had it not been for Barphukan, the North East would not have been part of India," the Home Minister said.

Chief Minister, Sarma, while addressing the gathering, said, "Islamist powers attacked Assam at least 22 times between 1204 and 1607 but could win nine times and those victories, too, did not last long."

The plenary session was attended by Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways,

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Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his speech in the plenary session.

In this issue, the title "Barphukan" and "Borphukan" has been interchangeably used depending upon the preference of the writers: Editor



Musings of a Chief Minister



The grand way the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji and the Union Home Minister Amit Shah Ji participated in the 400th birth anniversary celebration of Assam's foremost warrior Lachit Barphukan was a touching moment for the people of Assam. This was not just Assam's celebration. It was a celebration of the country. It was a celebration of a hero who will go down in the annals of history as one of the most important generals of India. I am confident that our initiative will help our countrymen know the patriot in Lachit. History has an uncanny approach of being biased towards most, and I feel it is one of the ways in which Lachit Barphukan and his heroism was left out of history for over 350 years. However, I am determined to correct this error and do whatever it takes to redo the wrongs of history. The programme in New Delhi means the Central Government, especially our Prime Minister, and our Home Minister are with the people of Assam. I am also happy to know that there were grand celebrations across schools, colleges, and other institutions in celebrating the occasion. These steps will instil in our students the importance of responsibility, duty, and courage towards our country. I must inform you all that a lot of homework to make this celebration grand was initiated by the administrators and my Cabinet colleagues, whom I must appreciate. I also wrote an article in all major dailies in the country to promote the ideals Lachit stood for. Now, it is on each one of us to take these ideals to their logical conclusion. Once the event was announced, we swung into action. I had a 14-hour meeting with DCs and SPs of all districts in which we had discussed how to make the event a grand success, and as I write this, I am a very happy man today.

The 14-hour meeting was, of course, not all about this single event. It was about administration, and reforms, of governance, and on safety and security of our fellow citizens. We reiterated our single-minded focus on rooting the evil of drugs out of our society. The crackdown on drug-related activities will continue to gain momentum. The number and quantity of seizures are just but one way of judging it. The way our police have been able to hit the drug cartels operating in Assam and the North East is also something to talk about. We were very serious about modernising the police force, and it was a vital agenda of my meeting with these officers. However, a couple of developments in the recent past have left the police with a red face. I am very determined to make it known to the police force that any form of go-slow approach or corruption will not be tolerated by my Government. No poor or victim should be denied justice and ideally it should not be a delayed one as well.

The visit of the Union Minister for Roads and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari has given Assam and the North East yet another push to connect the hearts and minds of people, physically. I recall no other Government in my lifetime which has done or is doing so much for the North East as the one under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I am indebted to them for thinking about Assam and the North East in such a way.

This month we launched Mission Basundhara 2.0. The idea behind the scheme is to secure the rightful owners their land right. In this new avatar, what we are doing is seeking settlement of Government khas and ceiling surplus land, besides conferring ownership rights to occupancy tenants, among others. We hope to solve once and for all some of these intractable problems of land rights in our State by launching this ambitious scheme. We have been emboldened by the success of the first initiative on a similar line and believe that the same spirit will help us achieve our objective here as well.

In a first-of-its-kind programme in the country, my Government has decided to partner with the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. This initiative called the Chief Minister's Young Professional Programme will offer a two-year leadership programme to 70 young professionals through a combination of on the job experience and classroom training. This will help our Government identify opportunities for improvement in health care and education at the district level. This initiative is unique because we have borrowed elements from successful fellowship programmes offered by some State Governments, Central Government bodies and even the World Bank. This partnership is based on my inherent belief that governments must open their doors to talented youngsters be it from academia, private sector, civil society to help solve some of the challenges in governance. Therefore, the Assam's Chief Minister's Young Professionals Programme will attract mid-career professionals and students of social work, particularly in health and education. And while they will spend two years at one of our 35 districts, they will be jointly monitored and mentored by my office and IIM- Bangalore. It is a symbiotic process wherein we will be able to capture the youthful energy and spirit of talents while offering them an insight into the workings of the Government at the grassroots.

Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

History has an uncanny approach of being biased towards most, and I feel it is one of the ways in which Lachit Barphukan and his heroism was left out of history for over 350 years. However, I am determined to correct this error and do whatever it takes to redo the wrongs of history.

'These events are important for Next Gen'



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the inaugural ceremony.

AB BUREAU, NEW DELHI

The 400th birth anniversary celebration of Ahom General Lachit Barphukan kicked off at the Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on November 23 with Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, inaugurating an exhibition showcasing the glorious history of Assam dating back to the mediaeval times, in the presence of Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and other dignitaries.

In her inaugural speech, Sitharaman said that Indian history did not accord a fair share to many who made remarkable contributions. "In 70 years, we have not had a fair share of history for those who deserve to be mentioned, top of the agenda, top of the books, top of the indices, and top of the chapters about the contribution, remarkable intelligence and strategic experiences these people had," she added.

Terming Lachit Barphukan, 'a patriot to the core', Sitharaman said, "The Ahom warrior protected his motherland and ensured the safety of Assam. The Ahoms were extraordinary. Withstanding 17 attempts at incursions into Assam was by no means an easy task."

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Rewrite history....

and AYUSH, Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Rameswar

Teli, Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly, Biswajit Daimary, Justice (Retd.) Ranjan Gogoi MP, Topon Kumar Gogoi, MP, Minister for Information and Public Relations, Assam, Pijush Hazarika, Union and State Ministers, MPs, MLAs, senior officials of Central and State Governments, academics, historians, researchers, and students. Chief Secretary, Assam, Paban Kr Borthakur delivered the welcome address.

Earlier, accompanied by Chief Minister Sarma and other dignitaries, Union Home Minister, Shah went round the Assamese village with rural settings created by noted artist, Nuruddin Ahmed, and the exhibition displaying the artefacts of the mediaeval times of Assam. A documentary on Lachit Barphukan was inaugurated by the Union Home Minister.

Two panel discussions and a cultural programme were also part of the event.

Lachit, his valour....

In his speech, he interrogated, "Does the valour of Barphukan holds no significance? Does the sacrifice of tens of thousands of Assamese who fought against the Mughals to defend the country's culture and identity have no importance?"

The Prime Minister pointed out that historians had wrongly projected India as a land of the defeated and vanquished... and emphasised that only when a nation knows about its real past, it can learn from its experiences and tread on a correct path for the future. The Prime Minister was quick to add, "It is our collective responsibility that our sense of history is not confined to a few centuries or decades."

Complimenting the Assam Chief Minister for holding the event in the national capital and for taking steps to celebrate the legacy of its heroes, Modi said the country is rectifying the mistakes made earlier of not giving them their due place in history, and the event to commemorate heroes like Lachit is an effort in that direction. The Prime Minister suggested creating a grand theatre play on Lachit Barphukan on the lines of the one on Chhatrapati Shivaji and enacting it across the country. He also released a book, *Lachit Barphukan: Assam's Hero Who Halted the Mughals*, in the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Assam Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa

"The manner in which the Ahom dynasty defended Assam, also served as a great fortification which eventually protected the entire South East Asia from ruthless invasions, ending their advance at its threshold."

Lauding the Government of Assam for its initiative for remembering the great patriot, Sitharaman said, "This is a splendid attempt at showcasing the not-so-well remembered North East. Such events are important for our future generations."

The Union Finance Minister also urged the Ministry of Culture to join hands with the Government of Assam to collate the history of the iconic warrior and to spread it across the country.

The Government of Assam's bid for getting national recognition status to Lachit Barphukan as a hero along the lines of Chhatrapati Shivaji and Maharana Pratap Singh and its slew of projects such as to construct a memorial at Alaboi, a building and a statue in Barphukan's honour at the National Police Academy in Hyderabad, a 125 ft bronze statue at his maidam at Hollongapar in Jorhat district, instituting an annual memorial lecture starting this year at the National Defence Academy have been appreciated by all quarters.

Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, in his address, said that had it not been for the Ahoms who crushed the Mughal aggression, the entire cultural map of South East Asia would have been different today.

"India was not just about the Mughals. It was about so many other kings who ruled the country with affection. But Indian history has failed to recognise the longest ruled kingdoms of the South and North East. Indian history has ignored Lachit Barphukan and has ignored the glorious Ahom dynasty. I hope this campaign of the Government of Assam will put the dynasty into its proper perspective. Indian history will acknowledge the glorious contribution of various kings and that India had better generals and better kings than Aurangzeb," he said.



Sarma said that Prime Minister Modi always inspires them to bring history, unsung heroes to light. "PM Modi always inspires us to bring our history, unsung heroes to light. This is our humble effort to bring the proud saga of Lachit Barphukan before the country. But just the efforts of the Government are not enough, there should be efforts from people, historians too."

"Humble request to historians - India isn't just the story of Aurangzeb, Babar, Jahangir or Humayun. India is of Lachit Barphukan, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh, Durgadas Rathore. We should make an effort to see in a new light. It will fulfil our dream to be Vishwa Guru," he added.

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways and AYUSH, Sarbananda Sonowal, in his speech, spoke on the heroic deeds of the great warrior and lauded the efforts of the Government of Assam to perpetuate his hallowed memory for posterity.

Governor of Assam, Prof. Jagdish Mukhi, Minister for Information and Public Relations, Assam, Pijush Hazarika, who delivered the welcome address; Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly, Biswajit Daimary; Rajya Sabha MP, Justice (Retd.) Ranjan Gogoi; and Topon Kumar Gogoi (MP) were present on the dais.

The Prime Minister took a view of rural Assam and the exhibition on historical perspectives and appreciated the efforts to showcase them in the national capital.

The year-long celebrations of the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Barphukan kicked off in Guwahati on February 25 this year with the then President of India, Ram Nath Kovind inaugurating the event.

What they said about Lachit



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Greetings on Lachit Diwas.
This Lachit Diwas is special because we mark the 400th birth anniversary of the great Lachit Borphukan. He epitomised unparalleled courage. He placed the well-being of people above everything else and was a just as well as visionary leader.

“

Amit Shah

Union Home Minister

Had it not been for the legendary Veer Lachit Barphukan during those times, the North East would not have been a part of India. He not only protected North East India but the entire South east Asia.

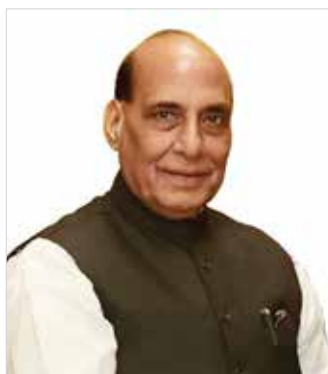


“

Rajnath Singh

Union Defence Minister

Lachit Borphukan was a courageous military leader who fought valiantly for the honour and dignity of his people. On the occasion of his 400th birth anniversary, I bow to him for his exemplary courage and bravery. He will remain an inspiration for India's coming generations.

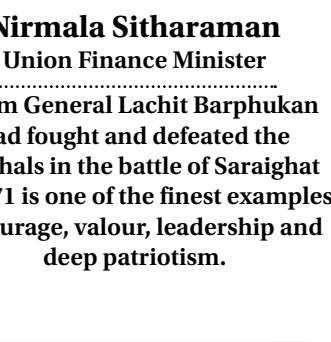


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Nirmala Sitharaman

Union Finance Minister

Ahom General Lachit Barphukan had fought and defeated the Mughals in the battle of Saraighat in 1671 is one of the finest examples of courage, valour, leadership and deep patriotism.



“

Sarbananda Sonowal

Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, & Ayush

Mahabir Lachit Barphukan is the symbol of pride and valour. He protected the sacred land of Maa Kamakhya and Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev from external enemies. I thank Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji for his mantra of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, which is also a salutation to Lachit Barphukan. His weapons, naval vessels were all developed indigenously.



“

Prof Jagdish Mukhi

Governor, Assam

On this historic occasion of the 400th Birth Anniversary of Veer Lachit, I deem it my privilege to pay my floral tribute to Lachit Borphukan in Guwahati today. He was a great warrior & an eminent historical figure of Assam who played a significant role in shaping our civilization.



“

Kiren Rijiju

Union Minister of Law and Justice

Proud moment for every Indian as Assam Govt is celebrating 400th birth anniversary of one of the greatest Generals of India, legendary Lachit Barphukan at Delhi. I thank CM @himantabiswa Ji for the laudable effort to give Lachit Barphukan his due recognition at national level.



“

Pramod Boro

Chief Executive Member of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTR)

Today, as we celebrate the 400th birth anniversary of Bir Lachit Barphukan, let's commemorate the indomitable courage & valour of Assam's iconic war hero. His patriotism & selfless love for motherland continue to inspire us.



“

Sudarsan Pattnaik

Sand Artist

Tribute to the valiant Commander & fearless warrior Mahabir Lachit Barphukan Ji On the occasion of 400th Birth Anniversary. My Sand Art at Puri beach in Odisha.



Over 4.5 million upload their respect for Lachit

If even statistics had conveyed something, it must be in this instant. The number of entries received in the portal lachitbarphukan.assam.gov.in. At 45 lakh plus figure, the response received by the initiative, a brainchild of the Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, has been unprecedented. From October 26 when Dr. Sarma announced it in a press conference to the midnight of November 26 when entries finally closed, the average entries received goes beyond the word: Imagination. The districts that topped the charts in the number of enthusiasts were Nagaon, Barpeta and Kamrup respectively.

The first among such entries received by the app was at 1.34pm on October 26 the same day that the announcement was made. It was by Tapan Deka, a Block Resource Person (Language), Boitamari Education Block, Bongaigaon

“Around three months back, we received a notice on this. Keeping in sync with that, we developed a portal in our district as well. I had been studying about Lachit Barphukan since then. It was ready. Minutes after the Chief Minister made the portal public, I uploaded by views on the hero on this,” said Deka.

“Since Lachit Barphukan was never made a part of the curriculum in the school, whatever we read then was for an essay on the General. Once


“Since Lachit Barphukan was never made a part of the curriculum in the school, whatever we read then was for an essay on the General. Once the Government took this step, I renewed my interest on research on the subject,” Tapan Deka

the Government took this step, I renewed my interest on research on the subject,” Deka told this reporter adding, “However, I would want this to go beyond Lachit alone to other martyrs and brave hearts of Assam. This will inspire patriotism in the next generation,”

The early entries were not confined to people of Assam only. Ramesh Prasad, a New Delhi-based clinical data manager with a private company also uploaded his writing on Lachit. A native of Uttar Pradesh, he informed Asom Barta that his wife was studying for competitive examinations, it was then that he came to know about Lachit by reading a book on Ahom history. “My brother resides in Assam. He informed me of this portal. I discussed with my wife and uploaded by thoughts on the brave general. Lachit is not only Assam’s pride but of India. I appreciate the step taken by this Government. I am sure the world will soon come to know of his valour,” Prasad told Asom Barta over phone.

However, what should not go unnoticed is the behind-the-scene activity that has made all this possible. The Government of Assam owned Assam Electronics Development Corporation Limited (Amtron) was entrusted with the responsibility of managing and supervising the app. “We started with a bandwidth of 1.2 GB. Initially all was all. However, one day, we were overwhelmed with the number of entries being uploaded. That brought operation to a standstill. We then increased the bandwidth by nine times to manage the inflow and even extended the last date of submission by two days,” says Trailokya Borkotoki, senior executive in the Corporation.


District Name	Entries Uploaded
NAGAON	335766
BARPETA	302935
KAMRUP	230241
MORIGAON	222871
KOKRAJHAR	217452
UDALGURI	175574
TINSUKIA	175346
HOJAI	174356
GOLAGHAT	163518
SONITPUR	162251
SIVASAGAR	160195
NALBARI	133686
LAKHIMPUR	133570
DHUBRI	132260
BAKSA	128557
GOALPARA	127726
DARRANG	127180
BONGAIGAON	115819
DIBRUGARH	115377
HAILAKANDI	107195
JORHAT	105683
BISWANATH	104228
CACHAR	96225
KARIMGANJ	94986
DHEMAJI	94467
KAMRUP METRO	91354
CHARAIDEO	69365
TAMULPUR	68735
KARBI ANGLONG	58918
CHIRANG	47415
MAJULI	44076
BAJALI	43701
SOUTH SALMARA	40624
DIMA HASAO	26184
WEST KARBI ANGLONG	12656



As on November 26(6:30pm).


45,34,818

Total Writing uploaded from Portal and Mobile App



65,642

Total Writing uploaded by Online Writing option



44,69,176

Total Writing uploaded by Hand Written option



A true protector



Lachit Barphukan will be remembered best by generations for his unparalleled valour and victory against the Mughals. He is an epitome of bravery and patriotism and should get his due more for his love of the motherland than just the victory he scored on the battlefield.

Rajib Phukan
Guwahati

An exceptional leader



He should be the most important figure in the history of Assam. His leadership, bravery, and skills on and off the battlefield was exceptional. The way he marshalled his troops against Ram Singh and his army is exemplary. The State Government should ensure that children in other parts of the country learn about the heroism of Lachit and the North East, a beautiful part of India.

Rajesh Patel, Guwahati

He stands tallest among all



Of all the heroes that are part of Assam's history, there is no doubt that Lachit Barphukan stands the tallest. His valour, patriotism, and selfless dedication to the cause of his motherland has no parallels. Had he been given his due in history, he would have been a household name today. Alas! However, by celebrating the 400th birth anniversary of the Ahom General in the way it has, the Government of Assam has taken the first major step in redeeming 'lost history'. Also, the activities which were organised in educational institutions on the occasion will go a long way in motivating the next generation to follow the footsteps of the great Lachit Barphukan. The grand celebration will definitely go a long way in making Lachit Barphukan a role model for the young generation. This is a beginning and I hope it will not end here.

Dipshikha Balari, Jorhat

Hats off to the Government



The Government of Assam should be commended for the way it has undertaken the 400th birthday anniversary celebration of Lachit Barphukan to people outside Assam. If we know about Shivaji, Rani Laxmi Bai and Samrat Ashok for their deeds, there is no reason why people in other parts of India should not know about one of the bravest of Indian patriots called Lachit Barphukan. We must go beyond this celebration. A true respect for the Ahom general would be to selflessly love our country just as he did.

Jayati Deb
Nalbari

Was dutiful since childhood



The one whose name comes to mind when we recall an Assamese hero is Lachit Barphukan. Since childhood, he was said to be dutiful and honest. As a young boy, he took lessons in warfare. It is said that when the Ahom forces fighting the Mughal were on the retreat, a fearless Lachit took to the boat and went to inspire them by saying that either he will die in the battle or be captured by the enemy. This is said to have galvanised the demoralised Ahom soldiers. The rest as they say is history.

Mrinal Das
Barpeta

Testimony of courage



Lachit Barphukan's strong, selfless and visionary leadership reminds the world of the might of the Assamese nation. Lachit today stands as a testimony to indomitable courage and epitome of bravery.

The Barphukan belonged to the Lan-Phima clan of the Lukhurakhan clan. It is a famous clan of the mighty Ahoms with a history of six hundred years. Lachit Barphukan was born on 24 November 1622. He was the first to become the commander-in-chief of the Ahom kingdom. However, it was a single act of not even sparing his uncle for direction of duty that he became a household name. It was this singular act which inspired the Ahom Army to achieve what was thought impossible by them: Defeating the might of the Mughal army.

Jiban Saikia
Rupohi, Nagaon





Lachit - Buranji Likha Toruwal' staged at Hazarapar Stadium, Tezpur. It was organised by Sonitpur district administration in association with Repertory, Tezpur. It was performed on an open stage with nearly 10,000 people in attendance.



A street play organised by the Karbi Film Society in collaboration with the district administration of Karbi Anglong in Dokmoka town.



Earthen lamps being lit at various places in Kamrup district to recall the heroics of the Ahom General.



With Valour, Courage, Sacrifice as the motto, Nagaon Police celebrating the anniversary of one of India's most valiant generals.



A symbolic boat show of the Saraighat War displayed on the banks of River Brahmaputra to mark the occasion.



An art competition among children at Lala Town in Hailakandi.



Cleanliness drive in Bakalia Rukasen College, Karbi Anglong to celebrate Lachit Divas.



Presentation of the Ahom Royal Court (Raj Darbar) by students of Rahdoi High School, Nazira, Sivsagar to celebrate the day.

Nod to ₹ 50k cr road infra projects



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari addressing the media in Guwahati.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari during his November visit to Guwahati and other capitals of North Eastern States announced five projects worth ₹ 50,000 crore to make international standard surface-connectivity in Assam.

"Our aim is to change the entire scenario of road transport in the North East by 2024. We aim to make roads of international standards in this region," Gadkari said while addressing a press conference after reviewing various national highways in the region.

He witnessed the MoU signing ceremony between the National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML) and PWD Assam for five ropeway projects worth ₹ 2000 crore in the presence of Chief Minister Dr. Himanata Biswa Sarma and Union Minister

of State V K Singh besides Central & State transport officers in Guwahati.

On the first day of his three day programme of NH projects in the region and Sikkim, Gadkari reviewed the progress of NH projects in Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Nagaland. He discussed issues related to land acquisition, progress of ongoing projects, proposed projects, use of new technologies, disputes & arbitration, and possible financial interventions.

He reviewed the delayed projects in the four States to understand the reasons for delay and issued specific instructions to get them on track.

He stressed the importance of coordination and partnership between Central and State agencies to develop top-class transport infrastructure in North Eastern States.

The five projects in Assam which got Centre's approval are i) Guwahati Ring Road and Narengi - Kuruwa Bridge, ii) 38 km elevated Kaziranga corridor, iii) Expansion of Khanapara - Jorabat Road into Six Lane, iv) Ropeway from Khanapara to LGBI Airport and v) Jorhat-Majuli Bridge to link National Highway. Gadkari also announced construction of 10 new flyovers and road overbridges under the package.

Gadkari said under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his Ministry is working towards bridging the connectivity gap in North East India and giving momentum to transport infrastructure in the region.

The Union Minister said that the Government will complete the ongoing ₹2 lakh crore worth of road projects by 2024 in the NE region.



GUWAHATI RING ROAD: The 91-km ring road connecting the peripheries of Guwahati will be constructed at a cost of ₹ 4,500 crore. It will be a key component of the State capital region and will provide Guwahati a modern look. The work on the ring road project is slated to start in the next 2-3 months. As part of the ring road project, a bridge on the Brahmaputra connecting Narengi and Kuruwa is also proposed to be constructed at a cost of ₹ 1,800 crore.

ELEVATED KAZIRANGA CORRIDOR: The 38-km elevated road is planned to be built over nine corridors used by the animals of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) usually during high floods. The highway along the southern edge of KNP has often proved fatal for animals fleeing the park during floods for the safety of the hills of the Karbi Anglong district, further south.

6-LANE KHANAPARA-JORABAT ROAD: The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) will convert the existing 25-km-long four-lane stretch from Jalukbari to Jorabat via Khanapara into a six-lane highway. The project is designed to ease the growing traffic and congestion on the NH-37 from Jalukbari near Guwahati to Jorabat.

FIVE ROPEWAY PROJECTS: The NHLML and the Government have signed an MoU for five ropeway projects in the state at a total cost of ₹ 2,000 crore. One of these, is a rope-way project connecting Khanapara with Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport.

JORHAT-MAJULI BRIDGE: The 6.8-km bridge on NH-715K is being built over Brahmaputra River between Majuli (Kamalabari) and Jorhat (Nimati Ghat). The estimated cost is ₹ 925.47 crore. Work has been awarded to UP State Bridge Corporation Limited. This bridge will be constructed by March 2025.



Medical infra gets a facelift

Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurating the auditorium in GMCH.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Medical facilities in the State got a significant boost in November with a slew of announcements by the Government besides a CSR gesture by a leading corporate group in the country.

The first of these was the announcement of the Government to spend ₹300 crore to boost infrastructure in Assam’s oldest medical college, the Assam Medical College in Dibrugarh. Here Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma announced a package of ₹ 300 crore during its platinum jubilee celebration to enable it to transform itself into a state-of-the-art research institute responsive to deal with the new age ailments.

Most of the allocation will be spent on improving and constructing teachers’ quarters and students’ hostels, he said while inaugurating the platinum jubilee celebration.

Just the next day, the State Government inked an MoU for the infrastructure development of the academic block of the second medical college of Guwahati with Bright Star Investments Pvt. Ltd.

Commissioner and Secretary (Medical Education & Research) to the Government of Assam Siddharth Singh and promoter & founder of Bright Star Investments Pvt. Ltd.,Radhakishan Damani, signed the MoU, an occasion which the Chief Minister termed

“ historic” stating that this would herald a new beginning in medical education in Assam. It is for the first time that the Assam government has collaborated with the private sector for building infrastructure of a medical college in the State.

He said that this second medical college in Guwahati will have a provision of a 1000-bed hospital and academic block with hostels for boys and girls for 100 MBBS students annually. Bright Star has contributed ₹ 150 crore for infrastructure development of the academic block, UG and Intern Hostels of this medical college from its CSR fund.

The Chief Minister also said that the State Government is working with a vision of one medical college in each district in Assam. His Government, he told the gathering, has taken steps for setting up 15 new medical colleges in addition to the nine existing ones. Out of the 15 new medical colleges, seven medical colleges are being constructed at Nalbari, Nagaon, Kokrajhar, Tinsukia, Charaideo, Biswanath Chariali, including the one in question at Guwahati.

“We are going to start construction of five more medical colleges at Golaghat, Bongaigaon, Marigaon, Tamulpur and Dhemaji during this month and work for three more medical colleges proposed at Sivasagar, Karimganj and Goalpara will be taken up very

“We are going to start construction of five more medical colleges at Golaghat, Bongaigaon, Marigaon, Tamulpur and Dhemaji during this month and work for three more medical colleges proposed at Sivasagar, Karimganj and Goalpara will be taken up very soon”

soon. In the next five years Assam will have a total of 24 Medical Colleges, greatly improving the availability of doctors and medical care in the State.,” he said.

The Chief Minister said that with the increase in medical colleges in the State, the number of MBBS seats have also increased from 726 in 2014 to 1,200 in 2022.

Minister Health and Family Welfare Keshab Mahanta; CSR head of Damani Foundation, Madhu Chandak, Principal Secretary Health & Family Welfare Department Avinash Joshi, Commissioner & Secretary, Medical Education & Research, were also present on the occasion.

On November 15, Dr. Sarma inaugurated several infrastructure additions to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, aimed at transforming the region’s premier institution into a world-class centre dedicated to medical studies and services.

Of the five new buildings inaugurated by the Chief Minister, a 156-bedded guest house, named Vishram Sadan, has been built at a cost of ₹ 13.5 crore under corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding from Power Grid Corporation of India Limited. With separate dormitory facilities for men and women, it is meant to cater to the attendants of patients seeking treatment at GMCH.

This apart, the Chief Minister inaugurated a state-of-the-art 450-seat capacity college auditorium with partial financial support from Oil India Limited.

Addressing the gathering he said that these additions would go a long way in helping the Government realise its long-term vision for GMCH.



Radha Krishna Damani (left) and Siddharth Singh (IAS) exchanging the MoU.

Govt-IIMB MoU on young professionals



Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Samir Sinha (left) and IIMB Director Prof. Rishikesh T. Krishnan exchanging the MoU.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

The Government of Assam and Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for bringing transformative changes in the State's health care & education sectors through the Chief Minister's Young Professional Programme (CMYPP).

The MoU was signed at the Chief Minister's Office by Prof. Rishikesh T. Krishnan, Director, IIM Bangalore, and Samir Sinha, Principal Secretary, CMO, Government of Assam.

It mandates the engagement of 70 young professionals, to be jointly monitored by

the Government and IIMB, who will assist authorities for two years at the district level.

Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the two-year certificate programme will help strengthen the formation of human capital in Assam by supporting public policy and Central and State schemes in Health and Education.

"This is a unique initiative where highly skilled people will get an opportunity to contribute at the grassroots level as well as gain academic expertise from a prestigious institute like IIM Bangalore. Endeavours such as these will open the doors of the Government to talented people," Dr. Sarma said.

Professor Rishikesh T. Krishnan, Director, IIM Bangalore, said, "This marks our biggest efforts in the North East and we hope the brightest talent in the country will get an opportunity to work for one of India's fastest growing States."

Professor Arnab Mukherji, faculty in the Centre for Public Policy (CPP) at IIM Bangalore and one of the programme directors of CMYPP, Ms. Shambhavi S. Rao, and Ms. Sneha G. Angadi from the Office of Executive Education Programmes (OEEP) at IIMB, were also present at the signing.

Designed by IIM Bangalore and anchored by the school's OEEP, CMYPP is meant for early career individuals with a postgraduate degree in any field and willing to work in the district. Professor MS. Sriram and Professor Mukherji, from the CPP at IIMB, will be the programme directors. The programme will be a blend of academic and district-based work with a staggered academic program spanning 40 days in Guwahati (i.e. off-campus programme).

The first batch of CMYPP will see more than 70 talented professionals being recruited jointly by the Assam Government and IIM Bangalore. Upon successful completion of the two-year programme, the participants will be awarded a Certificate in Public Policy and Management by IIMB.

The programme has been billed as unique by the Government of Assam because it has elements from successful fellowship programmes offered by State Governments, Central Government bodies and even the World Bank. All three elements – competitive remuneration, academic certificate and a focused domain approach – makes this programme a unique effort and the most significant attempt ever by Assam to attract quality talent outside traditional recruitment channels, an official note read.



"This is a unique initiative where highly skilled people will get an opportunity to contribute at the grassroots level as well as gain academic expertise from a prestigious institute like IIM-Bangalore. Endeavours such as these will open the doors of the Government to talented people"

SALIENT FEATURES

- Chief Minister's Young Professional Programme (CMYPP).
- Engagement of 70 professionals.
- Designed by Centre for Public Policy, IIMB.
- Professionals to work in the districts.
- Sector targeted: Education and Health.
- Two-year certificate programme.

A model way forward



Malipara Anganwadi Kendra (above); Class in progress at Bezera Kendra (right); facade of Koitasidhi Kendra (bottom)



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Nearly 44 km west of Assam capital city of Guwahati is Malipara village under Rampur Development Block in Kamrup district. Here in Malipara village, a Model Anganwadi Centre was constructed a few months ago under the aegis of the Social Welfare Department of the State Government for implementation of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). This centre is the upgraded version of the previous centre, which was in a dilapidated State since the last few years.

This is one of the nearly 3,000 model anganwadi centres across the State virtually inaugurated by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on August 15, 2021.

"In the previous anganwadi centre, facilities for smooth functioning of the ICDS scheme were missing. It is better now. As a result, enrolment of children has increased in the last three months," Minoti Das, an anganwadi worker, told *Asom Barta*.

Manisha Das, a beneficiary of PMMVY (Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana) scheme said she and other women had enjoyed support from the centre during their respective pregnancy.

"We come to know about PMMVY scheme from anganwadis here. Apart from having benefitted under ICDS, they had shown us ways to avail maternity benefits under PMMVY Scheme," said Manisha, who has enrolled her 4-years-old son Madhurjya in the centre.

The Social Welfare Department is the implementing authority of ICDS and PMMVY schemes. Both are being implemented through these centres.

"We have been stressing on providing timely benefits to our targeted beneficiaries under ICDS. There has been a positive change in villagers' attitudes, particularly among women. They no longer hesitate to avail benefits of the Government's welfare scheme. In all the centres under my jurisdiction in the greater Rampur area, I have noticed this development in recent months. They are aware of these schemes," said Padmashri Devi, supervisor of ICDS at Rampur ICSD block.

All the children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers are eligible for services under Anganwadi Services under the ICDS scheme.

Anganwadi Services (under Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services Scheme) was launched in 1975 with the objectives (i) to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years; (ii) to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child; (iii) to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout; (iv) to achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and (v) to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

The Kaitasiddhi 'A' Model Anganwadi centre under Chayani Barduar ICDS Project at Palasbari in Kamrup district also makes for a

pretty picture. The walls are pastel shades of pink and yellow and are dotted with colourful posters of fruits and vegetables, flowers, names of months and days, and other informative charts. Toys and learning tools are neatly stacked at the back and one of the corners appears to be the designated science section.

The virtual inauguration by the Chief Minister of these centres across the State was done from the Kaitasiddhi 'A' Model Anganwadi centre.

"A model centre has better facilities in comparison to the previous anganwadi centre. We have 24 X 7 electricity and water facilities. Our anganwadis are better trained in ICDS implementation. All care is taken of the children in the centre, including their physical and mental development," said Gulsanara Zannat, CDPO of Chayani Barduar ICDS Project.

The intake capacity at this centre is 40. All the seats have been filled up. We get requests at regular intervals from villagers," said Bharati Devi, an anganwadi.

Anganwadi centres are also the prime point in implementation of the Centre's ambitious POSHAN scheme being celebrated every September.

"Nutritious foods have been provided to our children here. Anganwadis maintain hygiene in the centre. They have carried out awareness drives among pregnant women for food diversity and importance of leafy vegetables," said Bijuli Das of Bongora Joypur village. Das is a beneficiary of PMMVY, who has enrolled her three-year-old daughter in the Kaitasiddhi 'A' Model Anganwadi centre.

At Bezera, 45 km north of Guwahati, the State Social Welfare department has upgraded the previous Anganwadi centre to a model Anganwadi Centre.

"Children under 6 years of age of surrounding villages have been enrolled in the Centre. We are happy that after the inauguration of the model centre, we have been able to provide services under the ICDS properly to children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers," said Renuka Deka, an anganwadi of the Bezera Model Anganwadi Centre.

It has been made mandatory for development of Posahan Vatika (vegetable garden) at each of these centres. The objective is to increase the dietary diversity among pregnant women and children below 6.

Anganwadis are playing a vital role in inculcating hygiene behaviours, especially latrine use and hand washing with soap (after toilet use and before eating) in very young children, their caregivers (mothers), and adolescent girls.

Kalita said that since the physical and mental foundations of a child are built at Anganwadi centre, a proper infrastructure is a must to achieve the original objective.

Mission Basundhara 2.0 launched



Assam Chief Minister launching Mission Basundhara 2.0.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

After the successful implementation of the first phase of Mission Basundhara, Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sharma launched Mission Basundhara 2.0 at a function held at Srimanta Sankardev International Hall on November 14.

The application under the Mission would be accepted till January 10, 2023.

Under Mission Basundhara 2.0, the service aims to protect land rights of indigenous landless families by providing them land pattas for agriculture and housing slums based on the existing land policy of the Government of Assam.

The Chief Minister is hopeful that the second phase of the programme would be as successful as the first phase. The State Government has already sanctioned ₹ 329.19 crore for the campaign.

▪ Applications received 13050

▪ NC villages to be surveyed 766

▪ Overall survey progress 96.48%

▪ Total villages to be resurveyed 772

▪ Overall Resurvey progress 36.22%

As on November 30.

- The new services which will be made available under the Mission are:**
- Settlement of Government khas and ceiling surplus land
 - Conferring ownership rights to occupancy tenants
 - Settlement of transferred annual patta land
 - Settlement of VGR/PGR land
 - Settlement of land for indigenous special cultivators (tea, coffee, rubber, etc.)
 - Settlement of hereditary land of tribal communities
 - Composite Land Transfer Service (Auto-mutation)
 - Online Payment of Land Revenue
 - Digital stamping

Millet Mission launched



Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma at the launching of Millet Mission.

AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma launched the Assam Millet Mission on November 16 in Guwahati. The Mission is mandated to expand and increase millet cultivation across the State.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma termed the day as a historic one. “The day which marks the launching of Assam Millet Mission is targeted to raise the nutrition quotient and doubling of farmers’ income. The mission will also increase crop productivity and contribute to crop diversification,” he said.

The Chief Minister said that the mission has been launched in synergy with the Prime Minister’s clarion call for *atmanirbharata*.

“With the launch of the millet mission, the farmers of Assam can diversify their cropping practices and other than conventional crops, they can extend their farming to grow millets,” Dr Sarma said.

He congratulated the Agriculture Department for taking the initiatives in launching the millet mission which in the beginning will be practised in 25,000 hectare crop land, which in due course will be doubled to 50,000 hectares.

Along with launching the Millet Mission, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma also inaugurated six Soil Testing and Quality Control Laboratory at Bongaigaon, Morigaon, Udalguri, Golaghat, Karimganj and Darrang and two knowledge

centres at Dhemaji and Titabor through the virtual mode at the same programme.

Synchronizing with the programme, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma also started the process of distributing 126 combined harvester, 1000 mini trucks, 450 village level farm machinery bank, 12,000 Solar PV Pump Set, 8,500 five HP Diesel Pump set, 5,091 power tillers, seeds 2,23,963 quintals, 1,461 multipurpose pulveriser.

Dr. Sarma urged upon the farmers to take the advantage of Mission Basundhara 2.0 and convert the status of their lands to patta land.

Agriculture Minister Atul Bora while speaking on the occasion gave a brief outline of the schemes of his department.

Chabua: Reforming educational atmosphere



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

Beginning 1837 when the first tea garden was brought into existence in the lush green sylvan settings of Chabua, the place has not seen much limelight. All that may soon change if the initiatives of its MLA Ponakon Barua start bearing fruits.

The 121 Chabua Legislative Constituency has a historic imprint associated with it not only on the tea front but also through the Mayamoria Satra of Sri Sri Aniruddha Dev. The sage had scripted 181 songs or borgeets as they are now known, some four hundred years back, to promote spiritualism among the masses. These songs have travelled through time, popularised mostly through an oral tradition. The MLA has now taken it upon himself to document them for posterity. He is already in touch with experts to ensure that these orally transmitted forms of history are recorded in the right setting with the aid of musicians and experts.

“Chabua is a small geographical entity. Yet, it has contributed immensely towards the socio-economic front. However, in the last few decades, because of many reasons, the place has lagged on economic, social, educational, and sporting parameters. Hence, it is important to bring an educational revolution of sorts. That is why last year we organised a full-fledged book fair in Chabua for four days. There was tremendous enthusiasm among the people,” the MLA told *Asom Barta*.

To create a conducive atmosphere in educational institutions, a team of educationists frequently interact with students, especially those who are due for their matriculation examination. Besides, to create a culture around reading, the MLA has penned articles in a magazine published by a local publisher which, in turn, is distributed among students. The publication contains articles by meritorious students as well. All these are being done under the aegis of the MLA.

“How can a society advance without a culture of education? Especially my constituency which consists of a significant tea tribe population. All these while they were exploited as a vote bank. However, with the new Chief Minister at helm in Dispur, the number of model schools which have sprung up in tea gardens has given a boost to education among these people,” he told this reporter.

“More than 3,000 anganwadi centres are coming up in the State. Eleven such centres are being built in Chabua alone. According to an assessment by the Chief Minister of these anganwadi centres’ construction quality, Chabua has managed a score of A+,” Barua informed this newsletter.

Besides, the Asom Darshan Scheme, Flood Control measures, gas pipeline service, most schemes of the Government or the MLA has given Chabua a lot to cheer like the tea leaves from its tea garden.



Department Snapshots



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

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

Environment & Forest

A French delegation led by country director of Agence Française de Développement (AFD) India Bruno Bosle called on Minister of Environment & Forest Chandra Mohan Patowary at Janata Bhawan and discussed the status of project implementation in the sphere of biodiversity protection in Assam. Additional Chief Secretary of the Department Ravi Shankar Prasad, M K Yadava, Principal

Chief Conservator of Forest and Head of Forest Force, Pavan Kumar, the then PD, APFBC were also present during the meeting.

Housing and Urban Affairs

The State Government. has released ₹ 98.69 cr towards the long-standing dues of municipal employees of the State. This was tweeted by Department Minister Ashok Singhal who expects that the move is a much-needed relief to the employees & will encourage them to work with greater dedication.

Tourism

The Assam Government recently launched



a new sustainable tourism policy in New Delhi aimed at attracting entrepreneurs and investors to the State. The Department also conducted the Assam Tourism Road Show in the national capital. The policy was launched by Jayanta Malla Baruah, Minister of Tourism, among others. The policy will facilitate on-the-job training to be provided by employers for local employees in hotels and resorts and aims to guarantee effective standardisation of processes and practices, to foster uniformity which can result in sustainability and an overall improvement in the quality of tourism products.

Going Wild with Tea



World Bank officials in the Dong Valley unit.



AB BUREAU, GUWAHATI

The year 2020, just before COVID hit India. Five seasoned professionals from the booming telecom sector in India namely Rajdeep Bora, Nashat Hussain, Boilal Gangte, Mohit Naru, and Dipankar Ghosal were sitting in an informal meeting following up on their frequent discussion in branching out on their own. At the same time, Rajdeep and Nishat were following the spice industry for quite a while by engaging with people from the Spice Board. Boilal, hailing from Manipur, had been working on a special project for wild tea in his state along with his family. In fact, these wild teas have been consumed in his native community for generations and are highly revered among the elders. However, it was never commercialised for reasons unknown. In no time, it was unanimously agreed that this tea could be introduced in the market. That meeting of 2020 led to the formation of a start-up christened Dong Valley Creations Private Limited.

All of them put down their papers and started their entrepreneurial journey. They built

Robert Bruce had tasted this form of beverage in the house of one Bisa Gam in a Singphow village, and then declared the potential of growing tea (*Camellia sinensis var. assamica*) in Assam. According to research, wild tea has more antioxidants and nutrients than tea grown in the estates.

5000 Sq Feet state-of-the-art manufacturing & packaging facility at Garchuk in Guwahati, for production, blending, storing and packaging. They streamlined the production and supply chain of wild teas, which were collected from multiple villages across 450 Sq KM in Manipur.

Whereas in China, wild tea is also known as an elixir of immortality. Robert Bruce had tasted this form of beverage in the house of one Bisa Gam in a Singphow village, and then declared the potential of growing tea (*Camellia sinensis var. assamica*) in Assam. According to research, wild tea has more antioxidants and nutrients than tea grown in the estates. Dong Valley has taken all these facts and added herbs like bhut jolokia (ghost pepper), Lakdong Turmeric, Karbi Ginger, Tulsi, etc., to go with various flavours into its composition to make the final product. They then created a brand called "Beyondarie" by playing with the words 'beyond the ordinary'.

"We have involved eight villages of Manipur in the process. This has allowed us to offer earning opportunities to a lot of people in these eight villages. It gives us a lot of satisfaction. We also," says Nashat.

"We built a strong network of 100s of indigenous & small farmers from Karbi Anglong, Upper Assam, Jowai, Arunachal and Nagaland from where they procure various spices & herbs. We have employed people of the locality in our factory in Gorchuk in Guwahati. We can proudly say that more than 500 families are earning their livelihood through our start-up," claims Rajdeep.

"Tea Bag filling, packaging, and most other jobs are used by engaging manpower. In August, we had a World Bank team that visited our unit. They were visibly satisfied at our working style and hygiene

Appu Saikia, the quality manager of Dong Valley, is an alumnus of Assam University having studied Microbiology, who looks after the raw materials procured. "Our company has a vision. It is geared towards development of the North East of India," he states to his employers.

One of the important customers of the company is US-based Dr and businesswoman Poorvi Chordia. Based out of Atlanta in Georgia, the doctor sells Beyondarie through an online platform in her country. In an email chat with *Asom Barta*, she says that she started by buying a packet, and increased her purchases. "When a significant number of people had tasted this tea, I knew that I could start selling it online. "Each month, I procure anywhere between 40-50 kg of tea in various flavours from Dong Valley," she says, adding that it has clicked with the consumers in the US.

Another regular consumer of Dong Valley Tea is Guwahati-based Mrinal Sarma. "I tasted a sample of this tea. Its taste and medicinal value have attracted me. I have linked a few importers to Dong Valley Creations," he says.

Trinity Siao, a Meghalaya-based businesswoman has been supplying Lakdong Turmeric to Dong Valley Corporation since 2020. She told this correspondent that her supplies to the company have increased by over 50%. "Four families from Meghalaya supply Turmeric, Ginger, Cinnamon, and Bay Leaf to this company," she informs.

Available online for B2B and B2C, Dong Valley has managed to enter a competitive tea market segment with its unique product. However, the entrepreneurs know it will take some doing to spread their wings in the national and international market. But they say they are determined to do it.





Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma felicitating Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at a reception organised in the honour of Mr Shinde.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma meeting officials of State Level Recruitment Commission, on recruitment of Grade III & IV employees, in Janata Bhawan.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma attending the platinum jubilee celebration of Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dibrugarh. It was Sir John Berry White whose efforts led to the birth of the first institute of medical education anywhere in the North East in the year 1900. The then Assam Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi played a key role in establishing the present AMCH.



Women in a procession to celebrate the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Shrimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati. The organisation has played a significant role in promotion and preservation of the rich culture & tradition of Assam.



View of the Raas celebration in Nalbari (left) and that of the Majuli Garmur Satra

EDITORIAL

He Deserves It

The buzz around the grand celebration of Lachit Barphukan's 400th birth anniversary in Assam and around the country, especially New Delhi where the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman participated, speak volumes of the way the State Government was able to take the valour and identity of the general to the heart of India. Although not much is known as to how Aurangzeb had reacted when a defeated general Ram Singh had entered Delhi after being chased away from Assam, but what will now be known certainly to the next generation is how the Government of Assam made an all out attempt to secure Lachit his rightful place in history.

Lachit, as most speakers, including the Prime Minister, said, represented the best in a warrior: integrity, valour and patriotism, not necessarily in the same order. However, history and historians have not been kind to him, whether by design or a quirk of fate is not to be pondered. But can the people of State afford to only bemoan a wrong done to them or also have the responsibility to undo that? This has been answered befittingly by the present dispensation in Dispur led by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. His Government envisioned ways in which the wrongs of history need to be righted and the proudest son of the soil needs to be recast in the eyes of the world. A three day celebration may not have been enough to expiate the sins of history, but it should now be seen as a fresh departure in which Assam and its proud episodes of history can continue to inspire successive generations to bring out the Lachits in them.

More than 45 lakh people had taken the effort to upload their feelings of the valiant general in a special app designed and developed by Amtron. Educational institutions, private and public organisations, and district administrations made all efforts to drive the objective of the celebration. One is sure that the exercise will continue to unfold in the days to come not only across the State but also the country to help Assam bask in the glory of producing one of the most courageous generals in India's history.



LACHIT BARPHUKAN AND HIS GALLANTRY IN SARAIGHAT

by Dr Alaka Buragohain

November 24, 2022 was the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Barphukan, the valiant commander-in-chief of the Ahom Kingdom in the fight against the mighty Mughals. His bravado merits a recall, for all times to come.

He began his attack on them in the present Guwahati and pursued them up to the Manas river, a feat unparalleled in history. The Mughal army was led by the renowned warrior Man Singh, the son of Jai Singh, the king of Amber. Lachit was the most efficient son of Mumai Tamuly Barbarua, the first Barbarua of Ahom administration appointed to assist and carry out reformatory measures to strengthen the Ahom administration. At this time, at the advice of Barbarua, Assamese being the common language of the diverse ethnic groups was made the court language along with Tai Ahom thus cementing a regional sentiment in the hearts of the people. Lachit, having been brought up in the disciplined royal atmosphere under an active, intelligent and extremely duty-bound father, would prove to be an intelligent, far-sighted and exceptionally capable commander in the battle against the Mughals. It was his deep sense of love and concern for the safety of the motherland, a sense of duty with indomitable courage and presence of mind that enabled Lachit the final onslaught on the Mughals.

It may be mentioned that Emperor Aurangzeb, immediately after settling his tussle with his brothers for the throne of Delhi appointed Mir Jumlah, the most powerful of his nobles, as the Governor of Bengal and urged him to recapture the territories occupied by the Kochs and the Ahoms. Aurangzeb's motive was also to keep the potential rival Mir Jumlah occupied and not return from the forbidden kingdom of the Ahoms. Mir Jumlah, commanding a huge army consisting of thousands of cavalry, infantry, war-boats, vessels and ammunition, had an extraordinary successful campaign; first recapturing Guwahati on February 4, 1662 and then seizing the Ahom capital Garhgaon on March 17, 1662, when the Ahom king fled to Namrup.

It was argued that contrary to the convention, the leadership to challenge the Mughals was not given to someone belonging to a royal Ahom family but to one Manthir Bharali, hence the debacle because officers may have been nursing their ruffled feathers. However, once the rainy season set in Assam, Atan Buragohain, the most successful Prime Minister, guided the hit and run guerrilla warfare on the Mughals which made Mir Jumlah to retreat and agree to a treaty. This treaty dated January 23, 1663 resulted in Ramani Gabharu, the only daughter of Swargadeo Jaydhwaj Singha, being brought to the imperial harem at Delhi. She was later married as Rahmat Banu Begum to Sultan Muhammad Azam, the third son of Aurangzeb. Moreover, gold, silver, elephants, etc., were to be paid immediately and annually to the Emperor in Delhi and that Mir Jumlah and his forces would withdraw to Guwahati. Mir Jumlah died on his way back before reaching Dacca.

This adversity, a first experience ever for the Ahom kingdom, gravely pained Swargadeo Jaydhwaj Singha and the people alike. At the advice and initiative of Rajmantri Atan Buragohain, a long time preparation for acquiring experience in the art of warfare, production of food, armoury and war-boats as well as construction of forts at strategic places started. On the other hand, continuing to fulfil the humiliating conditions of the Treaty by accepting the supremacy of the Mughals had become unbearable for the Ahom kingship. Swargadeo Chakradhwaj Singha spotted Lachit to be the most suitable Barphukan to undo the loss of prestige.

Under Lachit, the Ahoms easily overrun Mughal forts at Kajoli, Sonapur, Panikhaiti, etc., and on November 4, 1667 attacked the Mughal fort at Itakhuli on the south bank of Brahmaputra at Saraighat, slaughtered the enemy soldiers, while a few of them fled beyond Manas. Just the previous night, the Assamese spies had poured water into the cannons of the Mughal fort thereby making them incapable of firing shots.

Expecting an adverse and strong reaction from the emperor in Delhi, Lachit Barphukan and Atan Buragohain started strengthening the fortification surrounding Guwahati. The Mughal Army, as expected, arrived in huge numbers. Several attempts were made by Ram Singh through negotiation or force to enter into Guwahati but they failed. The final attempt to enter Guwahati through Andharubali Fort in March, 1671 had been thwarted by Lachit Barphukan in spite of his suffering from high fever. The Mughals were driven down to Manah for good. Lachit knew that the Ahom army would not be able to resist the huge columns of Mughal cavalry and infantry fighting on land. It had proved true in the battle at Alaboi earlier. As such, while Guwahati all-around had been protected with unflinching forts, Lachit compelled the Mughals to fight, finally, in water; the Assamese army provided with innumerable number of boats led by Lachit Barphukan struck down the Mughals in Brahmaputra at Saraighat. Ram Singh, while retreating praised the enemy that "every Assamese soldier is an expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches, and in wielding guns and cannons" who needed only a brave, valiant and worthy commander like Lachit Barphukan, the pride and glory of Assam. *(The writer is a retired professor of Gauhati University)*

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