

Assam Association, Delhi: Diamond Jubilee celebrations



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It was a handful of Assamese families, who were residents of the national capital just after India attained its Independence, who got together to form “ASOM SANGHA”, an informal organization basically meant to be a platform to occasionally get together on social occasions and help one another to keep in touch with their home state. At that time, there were hardly about a dozen Assamese families in New Delhi. The first president was Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, who later became the Chief Minister of Assam, and the general secretary was Debendra Pal Das.

It's been 60 years since then, and the NCR region's Assamese population that includes permanent residents, employees of various government & private sector organizations and students, have gone up to over 75,000. Over the years, the ASOM SANGHA continued to be the platform for the growing population of people of Assam, on the way changing its name to “ASSAM ASSOCIATION, DELHI” during its registration as a society in 1967. And over the years, several sister organizations have enlarged the vision that is the Assam Association, Delhi.

They are: the Delhi branches of Asom Sahitya Sabha (the highest literary body of Assam) and Sodou Asom Lekhika Samaroh (a highly regarded body of women writers from Assam), Uruli (a women's organization), Kirtan Sangha (to highlight the works of Assam's 15th century social reformer-cultural visionary-Vaishnavite saint-litterateur), Pragjyotishpur Sanskritik Kendra (a cultural organization named after the ancient capital of Kamrupa Kingdom of the yore), and Luitporia (a cultural organization of the students from Assam), apart from Assam Association-Gurgaon and Assam Association-Faridabad, the last two emphasizing the fact that the Assamese population is growing to a significant number in the NCR region.

A cursory glance at the Association's membership list brings up several prominent names, the most prominent being Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, a life member, who is currently having a unbroken fourth term as a member of Rajya Sabha from the state.

The bustling community from Assam in the capital comprises several prominent names, such as Delhi High Court Chief Justice Dr Mukunda Kam Sharma, Director General of Civil Aviation Kanu Gohain, Union Ministers Santosh Mohan Dev and B K Handique, Air Officer commanding-in-chief of the Western Air Command Air Marshal PK Barbora, noted painter Col Jiten Hazarika, Sahitya Akademi award-winning writer Molya Khound, Director (Onshore) of ONGC Ltd Ajit Kumar Hazarika, former ONGCL CMD Bikash Chandra Bora, Mr. N M Bora, Director (Operations) Oil India Limited, Mr. Jayanta Bhuyan CEO, India Brand Equity Foundation and many more. Jnanpith awardee and one of the country's foremost writers, Indira Goswami, who is known popularly as Mamoni Raisom Goswami, was a long-time resident of the capital till when she shifted recently to Guwahati. Further, in recent years, the number of media personnel hailing from the region and working in various print and electronic media houses in the capital have gone up to nearly 100, no way an insignificant number!

The Association is in the process of completing the construction of the Srimanta Sankardev Bhawan, a cultural complex named after the 15th Century saint-social reformer-cultural icon Srimanta Sankaradeva and located at the Qutub Institutional Area near Jawaharlal Nehru University in South Delhi. Once fully functional, it will offer courses in Assamese language and the classical dance form Sattriya, apart from having an auditorium and a dispensary through which doctors from the community aim to offer voluntary primary health care facilities to the needy. It already has a functional library, accommodation facility and a restaurant offering Assamese cuisine.

The Assamese community has been regularly observing four events – the Rongali Bihu festival in April heralding the Assamese new year, the post-harvest Bhogali Bihu coinciding with Makar Sankranti, Sankardev Tithi and Idd Milan. It has also been taking up social causes like collecting financial and material help for flood-affected people back home.

Quite naturally, it's a great moment in time for the organization as it celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year. And to make the occasion memorable, a series of programmes are being lined up, showcasing the diverse culture of the state and also bringing up amidst the people of the capital some important issues concerning Assam and the larger North-East region.

The Diamond Jubilee Programmes:

The celebrations will start with a concert by Sarod Maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan – a son-in-law of Assam - and his worthy sons Amaan and Ayaan Ali Khan, on FEBRUARY 8. The concert, to be held at the Siri Fort Auditorium and sponsored primarily by ONGC Ltd and co-sponsored by Oil India Ltd and Ansal Properties Ltd, has been aptly named 'STRINGS OF PEACE'. Incidentally, the highly-respected musical family, has contributed highly towards the development of the Srimanta Sankardev Bhawan, the association's cultural centre located in the Qutub Institutional Area, by performing more than once to raise funds for it, and this latest concert will see the trio once more letting their magical musical instruments talk in aid of the centre. The concert is being sponsored by ONGC Ltd, Oil India Ltd, Ansal Conero and Sarod Ghar, a unique museum set up by the Khan family at Gwalior.

The association, in an effort to highlight the fact that Assam shares more than an umbilical cord with its neighbouring states, is also organizing a Festival of dance & music from the North-Eastern states during FEBRUARY 21-24, at the Central Park in Connaught Place (Rajiv Chowk), showcasing the rich culture of the eight sister states including Sikkim. The association believes that unity amidst diversity is the 'mantra' of our nationhood, and the initiative of binding the region with the mainstream has also to come from within.

The association is also organizing a series of lectures by eminent people to bring about an understanding of the region among media, intellectuals, policy makers, planners, bureaucrats, citizens, etc., of the capital city (all lectures to start at 5 pm). They are :

1. FEBRUARY 16 : Lt. Gen (Retd) S K Sinha, Hon'ble Governor of J&K, on the "Glorious History of Assam", at the USI Auditorium located on the Rao Tularam Marg.
2. MARCH 1: Union Minister for DONER, Mani Shankar Aiyar, on "Opportunities and Road Blocks: Look East", 1 at the Speaker's Hall, Constitution Club, Rafi Marg.
3. MARCH 8: Famous journalist & writer Sir Mark Tully on "Telling the North-East Story: The conflict and the media"
4. MARCH 15: Pride of Assam and noted filmmaker Jahnu Barua, on "A United North East- My never-ending dream", at the Deputy Speaker's Hall, Constitution Club, Rafi Marg.
5. MARCH 29: Famous historian Dr Ramachandra Guha, on "History of independence : as if the North East mattered", at the Speaker's Hall, Constitution Club, Rafi Marg.

An all-India prize money essay competition on “Sankaradeva: a Saint-Poet-Artist-and Scholar”, is being organized among college students of the country to sensitise the youth about the great social reformer, saint, poet, playwright, guru and his tenets.

The association is full of talents and a programme highlighting them is being planned for APRIL 6 at the Sai International Centre Auditorium near Lodi Road. Five-time president of the association and current Chief Minister of Assam, Sri Tarun Gogoi, will be joining the members during the programme. The winners of the essay competition will be given away the awards on that day. Also an open session will be held in which former presidents and general secretaries of the association will be felicitated.

The GRAND FINALE of the celebrations will be held on the day of Rongali Bihu festival - marking the advent of the Assamese new year - on APRIL 20 at Samaj Sadan, Laxmibai Nagar (near Dilli Haat). A Bihu team will be invited from Sibsagar, Assam and the star attractions of the show will be Zubin Garg and Debojit Saha. The Bihu team will also present the infectious dance for the students of a few select schools in Delhi.

The celebrations are aimed at creating an everlasting impact in the minds of the Delhite for a long time to come and to create a positive image about Assam.

editor

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