

# Felicitous step for indigenous people

■ Dr Navajyoti Borah, Bishaldeep Kakati, Bagmita Borthakur

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in its very first session, requested the United Nations to prepare a report on the state of the world's indigenous people (SOWIP). The SOWIP's first publication, which was published in 2021, revealed certain alarming data on the state of the indigenous people – poverty, health, education, employment, human rights, environment, etc. On September 2007 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on Rights of the Indigenous People) basically contains provisions that indigenous people and communities can use to protect and preserve their rights and heritage and 146 countries have adopted the declaration and also given a commitment to respect the provisions in it.

The indigenous culture of India carries within itself an amalgamation of integration, unification as well as synthesis of socio-cultural demonstrations belonging to the Mongoloids, the Negritos, the Australoids and the Nordics. In case of Assam, its culture is actually a result of the continuous exchange of ideas and practices between the Indo-Aryans and the tribals. But with the advent of globalisation as well as with the inflow of intra-nation and inter-nation cultural migration, there has been an adverse effect on the ethnicity of the region. The direct outcome of this is the loss of many ethnic practices ranging from festivals to customs to food habits as well as dress-

ing and living standards.

Although Assam has many tribes, the major tribes include predominantly Bodo, Karbi, Missing, Sonowal-Kachari, Deori, Rabha, Dimasa, Tiwa, Tai-phake, Singpho, Kuki, Khelma and the tea tribes. Each tribe is unique in its own ways and therefore it is important to know their basic facets and as such, to preserve and protect their cultural heritage. Although the Bodos and Karbis basically depend on agriculture as their primary means of occupation, the seasonal festivals of the Bodos include Baisagu, Domashi and Katrigacha alongside the religious festival Khe-rai, while the main festivals of the Karbis include Rongker and Hacha Kekan. The Misings are another major tribe of Assam who are basically dependent on agri-

culture. Mising women are known for their weaving skills and they celebrate festivals like Ali-Ai-Ligang and Porag. The Sonowal Kacharis have a common belief that Nature is still alive with invisible forces, deities and spirits and the tribe celebrates the three Bihus – Magh (Bhogali) Bihu, Bohag (Rongali) Bihu and Kati Bihu with great fun and gaiety. The Deoris on the other hand, speak a Tibeto-Burman language, also known as Deori and they celebrate festivals like Lbaku Bisu, Magiyo Bisu and Joydam. Dance and music are an important part of the lifestyle of the Rabhas and most of the rituals that they perform are accompanied by dance to please the deity. The

Dimasa tribe basically lives on riverbanks and Bushu is their most important festival. The Tiwas speak the Tibeto-Burman language, but a majority of the tribe speak Assamese as their mother tongue. People of the Tiwa tribe are associated with 'Gobha', and relevance of the Gobha king can still be found in contempo-

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rary times in the form of a fair which is still celebrated as Junbeel Mela. The Kukis are basically Tibeto-Burman people spread out throughout the north-eastern states of India and an important event in the history of the Kuki tribe was the acceptance of Christianity that was basically influenced by the missionaries. The tea tribes are also among the prominent tribes of Assam and they are also known as Adivasi. They have dance forms like Jhumur, Santhali, Chhau, Karam and Sambalpuria.

Assam has always shown immense respect and reverence to all the cultural practices and customs of the tribes. Unfortunately the denizens of Assam in contemporary

times have been either deliberately forced or have been willingly influenced by the inflow of a western culture to move astray from their practice of respecting cultures and traditions of different tribes. For instance, the famous Chandubi Festival which is regarded as a means to celebrate the rich tribal ethnicity has somewhere down the line lost its essence with the introduction of western cul-

ture in the form of food items. Similarly, while Assam is known for its indigenous celebration of Holi commonly known as Douls Utsav, the Indianised version of La-Tomatina and the rain dance have affected the traditional practices of Holi celebrations to a great extent. The tribes of Assam are also unique in their dressing styles and the westernised form of wardrobe changes that our people have em-

braced has also adversely impacted the traditional attire of the tribes.

A region can thrive in the longer run if its distinctive dialects, culture, traditions, customs and practices are preserved as well as promoted. To enhance the longevity of a region's ethno diversity, it is pivotal to safeguard the tribal aspirations from which the branches of diversified cultural heritage strengthen. Therefore, understanding the importance of preserving and promoting the rich cultural identity of Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had a dialogue with representatives of thirty tribal communities in March 2021 and expressed his desire to introduce a specific de-

partment known as Indigenous and Tribal Faith and Culture Department for promoting and preserving the tribal history and heritage. Accordingly, after the Cabinet's approval, the Governor of Assam on July 30, 2021 directed the introduction of a new administrative department known as the Indigenous and Tribal Faith and Culture Department with immediate effect and thus, Assam became the second state in the NE to introduce such a department.

This felicitous step of the government definitely needs to be appreciated, but in order to achieve the goals the CM has set, the department needs to take certain prudent steps. First it needs to bridge the gap between the age-old traditions and customs of Assam and the interest of the younger generation towards them and then take forward the State's unique culture and tradition to the global level. For doing so, the department should focus on recruiting an adequate number of researchers to extensively carry out studies on different tribes of the State. Once the extensive research is completed the department should focus on promoting the unique research details of each tribe through various seminars, exhibitions, practices, etc. But the greatest danger that the tribal identity of Assam faces is the domination by western influence and that is something the department should administratively handle. The department should also engage in talks with representatives of all tribes and try to inculcate among them the sense of belonging alongside the other dwellers. This can uplift the very purpose of establishing the department and can solve the age-old problem of the web of tribal indifference.



# দিছপুৰ মহাবিদ্যালয়ত তৃতীয় লিংগৰ শিক্ষার্থীৰ বাবে সুকীয়া শৌচাগাৰ-প্ৰস্ৰাৱাগাৰ মুকলি

প্ৰতিদিন বিশেষ সেৱা,  
গুৱাহাটী, ২৩ জুলাই :  
দিছপুৰ মহাবিদ্যালয়ে  
শিক্ষানুষ্ঠানখনত পঢ়ি থকা  
তৃতীয় লিংগৰ  
শিক্ষার্থীসকলৰ বাবে  
আটকধুনীয়া শৌচাগাৰ  
আৰু প্ৰস্ৰাৱাগাৰৰ ব্যৱস্থা  
কৰিছে। মহাবিদ্যালয়ৰ  
অধ্যক্ষ ড° নৱজ্যোতি  
বৰাই আজি এই শৌচাগাৰ  
আৰু প্ৰস্ৰাৱাগাৰ মুকলি



কৰে। মহাবিদ্যালয়খনত বৰ্তমান ৭ গৰাকী তৃতীয় লিংগৰ শিক্ষার্থী পঢ়ি  
আছে। মহাবিদ্যালয়খনত লিংগ বৈষম্য দূৰ কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত আৰু সকলো  
শিক্ষার্থীৰ মাজত পাৰস্পৰিক সহানুভূতি, সহযোগিতা আৰু সহায়ৰ ভাব  
উদ্ৰেক কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এনে ব্যৱস্থাই এক সুদূৰপ্ৰসাৰী প্ৰভাৱ পেলাব বুলি  
ড° বৰাই ব্যক্ত কৰে। উল্লেখ্য যে বিগত সময়ত তৃতীয় লিংগৰ  
শিক্ষার্থীসকলৰ সৈতে অধ্যক্ষ ড° বৰাই কেইবালানিও আলোচনাত  
মিলিত হৈ ভাব আদান-প্ৰদান কৰিছিল। তেনে এক আলোচনাৰ সময়তে  
তৃতীয় লিংগৰ শিক্ষার্থীসকলে শৌচালয়, প্ৰস্ৰাৱাগাৰৰ সমস্যাটো দৃষ্টিগোচৰ  
কৰে। তাৎক্ষণিকভাৱে তেওঁ নেতৃস্থানীয় তৃতীয় লিংগৰ কেইগৰাকীমান  
ব্যক্তিৰ সৈতে যোগাযোগ কৰে আৰু এক পৰিকল্পনাৰ আধাৰত এটি  
শৌচালয় আৰু প্ৰস্ৰাৱাগাৰ আনুষ্ঠানিকভাৱে মুকলি কৰে। তদুপৰি তৃতীয়  
লিংগৰ শিক্ষার্থীসকলৰ সুবিধাৰ্থে অহা আগষ্টৰ ভিতৰত এটি জিৰণিকোঠা  
নিৰ্মাণৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰিব বুলিও অধ্যক্ষগৰাকীয়ে জনায়। দিছপুৰ মহাবিদ্যালয়ে  
লোৱা এনে পদক্ষেপক তৃতীয় লিংগৰ শিক্ষার্থীসকলৰ লগতে সমাজৰ  
বিভিন্ন ব্যক্তিয়ে প্ৰশংসা কৰে।

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# Unabated trespassing remains a worry for Dispur College

## Several issues need authorities' attention: Principal

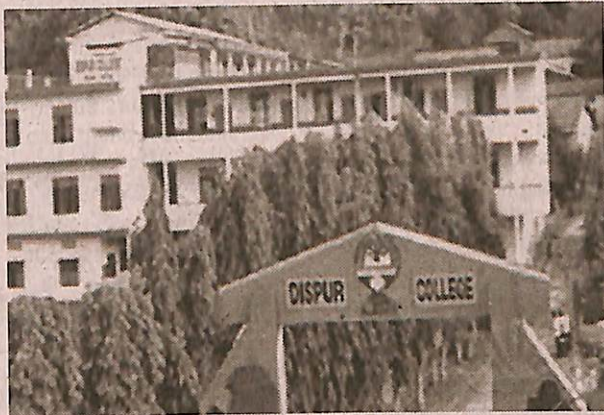
**ABINASH KALITA**

GUWAHATI, July 24: The settlements in the vicinity of Dispur College and the unabated trespassing of outsiders through its entry and exit gates have been a major worry for the institution which has gone unaddressed for years.

There are four households in the hill behind Dispur College. The residents have only one entry and exit point which is through the main entrance of Dispur College.

"We are not able to control trespassing even though the college authority has tried several times. Security issue is one of the major concerns for us," said Navajyoti Borah, principal of Dispur College.

"They are residing in the area covering one *bigha* of land belonging to the State government for many years. The issue has been intimated to the authority concerned but till date we have not seen any steps in this connection," he added.



He further said that during the recent incessant rains, a landslide occurred in the hill and somehow luckily a house survived from the collapse. "People were provided shelter in the institution for two to three days," he said.

Due to the encroachment and trespassing, the college authority has not been able to seal the boundary of the college.

There are 2,500 students studying in Dispur College.

An employee of the college who did not want to be quoted said that the place is a hotbed of petty crimes.

"Untoward incidents like

fistfights have occurred inside the campus many times, especially at night. Alcoholic people roam around the campus late at night," the employee said.

Principal Borah said, "We admitted many people in the hospitals several times who were found in inebriated conditions inside the college during college hours. We should be vigilant all the time."

Moreover, the college is also facing health and hygiene issues due to illegal parking, unauthorized street vendors and the public urinal near the main gate of the college.

"The students of the col-

lege and passersby are facing hardships due to the foul smell emanating from the public urinal set up without giving much thought about the people in the surroundings concerned. The matter has been taken up with the GMC several times but no action has been initiated yet. We already have a public toilet under the Ganeshguri flyover. There is no need for a urinal near the college," Borah rued.

Borah further pointed out that the college does not have any playground for the students.

"The playground near the college belongs to Gopal Bodo HS School. We wrote to the government for mutual usage of the ground. The college can also improve the condition of the ground if it will be allowed to use the same," he said.

"As the school authority organises different programmes in the playground including theatres and *melas*, sometimes classes were disturbed by unwarranted sounds," Borah added.