**Guwahati Lit Festival kickstarts**

**Guwahati, 27 Dec:** The Publication Board Assam launched the Guwahati Literary Festival today at NEDFI House. A first of its kind initiative, it brings together great intellectuals, eminent writers, journalists and critics form across India and the North-Eastern region. The festival will extend from 27th to 29th December with a number of sessions each day. The inauguration began today at 9:30 am with a one-minute silence, paying tributes to the victims of the recent mass killing. The day long programme started with a Borgeet by National Award Winner Tarali Sharma followed by the felicitation of the guests and lighting of lamps. The Guests comprised of Sir William Mark Tully; former Bureau Chief, BBC, Dr. Puspesh Pant, Educationist; Namita Gokhle, Eminent Writer; and Dr. Dhrubajyoti Bora, newly elected president of Assam Sahitya Sabha.. Dr. Bora delivered the keynote speech on Assamese literature and culture and various issues concerning it. He mentioned, “The only thing that can redeem humanity is literature”. Dr. Puspesh Pant focused on the traditional Bihu Festival, the essence of the Assamese culture and its heritage, and the enormous contribution of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika’s enigmatic songs. The vote of thanks was delivered by Mitra Phukan on behalf of the publication board.

With the closing of the inaugural session, a number of themes followed through a series of scheduled sessions, The first session starting at 10:00 am on ‘Shifting Sands of history: Remembering and forgetting’ was co-ordinated by Namita Gokhale in conversation with three panelists about history, its appropriation and archiving and portrayal of a larger canvas of North-eastern India. The parallel panel on ‘Short stories: My world, my writing’ was moderated by Prasanta Rajguru

The second session followed at 11:45 with two panels held parallelly: one moderated by Arup Kumar Dutta on the topic ‘Resisting stereotypes: Writing in Northeast’, discussing on the originality of literature and focusing on the influence of folk culture of different tribes and the other by moderator Harekrishna Deka on ‘Shadows of Self: Being a poet in NE’ .

The third session was a talk, ’Remembering Indira Goswami’, chaired by Namita Gokhale and the speaker was Mitra Phukan. The fourth session at 4:00pm evinced high enthusiasm from the audience with the presence of Arnab Goswami, Mark Tully, John Elliott and Rahul Bhattacharya in conversation with Samudra Gupta Kashyap. It discussed and debated crucial issues about the present scenario of North East India and its priorities.

The concluding session included three parallel panels: ‘Is there a North East identity?’ moderated Uddipana Goswami, the second on ‘Myth, society and story telling’ moderated by Dr. Birendra Nath Dutta and the final panel on ‘Emerging trends in fiction’ chaired by Jerry Pinto and co-chaired by Phanindra kumar Dev Choudhury. The festival received great appreciation and response from the participants and the audience. The organizers hope that it will be a turning point as it is providing a platform for the emerging writers and enthusiasts. The event hopes to bring together the literary voices from the region and have them interact with writers of national and international repute.