

Assam has a new hero



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Aiyushman Dutta 29 May 2009 21740 views

Assam has got a new hero. And a true hero he is at that. In the violence-hit district of Karbi Anglong where the youths are angry and frustrated at being targeted by both the underground elements for fresh recruits and the security forces harassing them on suspicion of harbouring the boys in the bush, they have now found a new youth icon in the form of Kiri - the boy from Diphu who was the only entrant from the entire Northeast into the popular television reality show 'MTV Roadies' and who subsequently made it to the finals.

Your average boy next door, Kiri - who is a science graduate and an activist with the "Karbi Human Rights Watch" (KHRW) - has become an unlikely hero among the Karbi youths. Not just because he had participated in the highly popular television reality show, but because of his in-born attitude, charisma and honesty which manages to bowl over everyone at first sight. So the last couple of months, while the entry country was feeling the heat generated by the 15th parliamentary elections, the people of Northeast India, especially those in Karbi Anglong and other parts of Asom, had a new pastime - watch MTV to cheer for their new youth icon!

A shy person, Longkiri Timung, or Kiri as he is popularly known, likes to maintain low profile and let his actions speak more than his words. Or that was the case until MTV Roadies happened, that is. His entry into the highly popular Roadies show has had thousands of Karbi youths fired up, who now look up to him as their spokesman.

What endeared Kiri to thousands of people in his home district were just a couple of sentences he had spoken about his district when the twin baldies were grilling him. He had spoken about the popular autonomous State demand in his district and about his participation in rallies in support of their constitutional demand. At a time when the people of the entire region are lambasting their representatives for failing to highlight

their problems in the right places, the young brigade of Karbi Anglong have now found an unlikely hero in Kiri. Not surprisingly, the local media of Karbi Anglong chose to make full use of the opportunity. A prominent newspaper of Karbi Anglong had featured him prominently in its front-page, displaying his portfolio alongside that of Biren Singh Ingti, the four-times Lok Sabha MP from the lone reserved ST constituency of Karbi Anglong and NC Hills, who is blamed for having failed to take up any of the problems and issues of the people of his constituency at the national level.

Kiri, who managed to push through the grueling tests in Roadies to finally bow out in the finals, has now become a celebrity with a tremendous fan following. He is recognized in public places, in bus stops and train stops, with youths pestering him for his autograph. But for someone who likes to maintain low profile, the sudden twist in fate does get dramatic at times. An unknown Longkiri, who is now back home in Diphu, is still running from pillar to post making arrangements for his mother's treatment. His father, a terminal cancer patient who was suffering for a long time, had expired just a month back, while the Roadies show was still being aired on television. Having had to grapple with his father's demise when he was still basking in the glory of his triumph in Roadies, Kiri, like a dutiful son, is now attending to his mother, whose health is deteriorating with each passing day. He is just back from Vellore where he had taken his mother for another round of treatment, which, like the previous times, failed to yield any results.

The last time I had gone to Diphu, Kiri had come to drop me at the station, dodging the countless people who, after recognizing that it was their own 'Roadie boy', kept pestering him for his autograph. But Kiri's is well-grounded for he is well aware of the fact that like beyond the reality show is much tougher. He is happy with himself and takes pride

in whatever little he could do for his land and his people. Karbi Anglong and Asom have truly got a new hero in their midst!

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BY AIYUSHMAN DUTTA

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