

Celebrating Asomiya: A Classical Language's Journey to Recognition



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AT News 22 November 2024 26585 views

The Directorate of Cultural Affairs under the Assam government marked its 53rd anniversary with a historic event celebrating the recognition of Asomiya (Assamese) as a classical language. Held at the iconic Rabindra Bhawan, the evening highlighted the significance of this achievement and charted a roadmap for the language's preservation and growth in written and colloquial forms.

The courtyard of Rabindra Bhawan, adorned with vibrant decorations and a podium beneath lush Bokul trees, hosted an enthusiastic audience of dignitaries and scholars. As the sun dipped below the Brahmaputra's horizon, the program commenced with three distinguished panelists sharing their insights.

The panelists emphasized the need for a comprehensive dictionary with standardized spellings and advocated for digital tools to ensure correct usage in the online sphere. They urged the integration of modern terminologies in Assamese while ensuring authenticity and accuracy. They highlighted that nearly two million people use Asomiya as their primary language, underscoring its potential for a brighter future.

Director Rahul Ch Das opened the event, themed *সুন্দর অসমীয়া ভাষাৰ চিহ্ন চিনাক্তকৰণ* (Melodious Assamese Language and Classical Recognition). He reflected on Asomiya's journey to classical status and laid out plans to safeguard its legacy.

Dr. Namita Devi of Barbhag College traced the language's historical evolution, emphasizing how cultural and linguistic assimilation shaped Assamese. "Assamese language and culture are rooted in the ancient civilizations of Pragjyotish, Kamrup, Kamata, and Koch, where diverse anthropological and linguistic groups collectively forged the language and culture," she explained. She urged the younger generation to take proactive steps to preserve and expand this heritage.

Dr. Arup Kumar Nath of Tezpur University explored Assamese's illustrious past, highlighting its presence in inscriptions, *Charyapadas*, and mythological texts since the 4th century. He stressed the importance of developing advanced technological tools, such as text-to-speech applications, machine learning systems, and robust Unicode support, to secure the language's future in the digital age.

Dr. Upen Rabha Hakacham of Gauhati University delved into Assamese's historical inventiveness, discussing its role in uniting cultural identities and enriching linguistic diversity.

The event also acknowledged the pivotal decision by the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to confer classical language status to Assamese on October 3, 2024. This recognition places Asomiya among the elite group of classical languages, including Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, and Bengali.

Prominent figures such as Malaya Goswami, Manisha Hazarika, and Satyashree Das, along with former directors of the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, graced the occasion. Students from the Luit Konwar Rudra Barua State Music College added to the event's vibrancy with their performances.

The celebration was more than a tribute to the past; it was a clarion call to preserve, nourish, and modernize Assamese. With its classical status now secured, Asomiya stands poised for new heights, carrying the pride and legacy of its speakers into the future.

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