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**REPORT  
ON  
THE PARTICIPATION OF THE  
ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DELEGATION  
HEADED BY SHRI BISWAJIT DAIMARY, HON'BLE SPEAKER  
DURING THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA)  
IN GIBRALTAR FROM 17<sup>TH</sup> TO 20<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2023  
AND SUBSEQUENT STUDY VISIT.**



**ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT  
DISPUR, GUWAHATI-781006**

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## **COMPOSITION OF THE ASSAM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DELEGATION**

- 1. Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker,**  
Assam Legislative Assembly and Head of the Delegation
- 2. Shri Pijush Hazarika,**  
Minister of Water Resources, Parliamentary Affairs, Information &  
Public Relations , Social Justice & Empowerment.  
Government of Assam
- 3. Shri Taranga Gogoi,**  
Hon'ble MLA, Assam Legislative Assembly

### **Accompanying Officials-**

1. Shri Thang Joyful Tonsing,  
Secretary to Speaker (as Secretary to the Delegation)
2. Shri Sauman Baruah,  
OSD to Speaker

## **PREFACE**

1. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is one of the oldest International Associations of Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth countries, founded in the year of 1911. The CPA consists of over 180 Legislatures from across the globe, divided into 9 (Nine) geographic regions of the Commonwealth.
2. The aim of the Association is to deepen the Commonwealth's pledge to the highest standards of democratic governance and parliamentary practice.
3. The CPA Executive Meeting was held in Gibraltar from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 to key governance issues and planning for the year ahead, especially with regard to the preparations for the 66<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana to be held from 30<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2023.
4. I attended the CPA Executive Committee meeting in Gibraltar from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 and was accompanied by Shri Pijush Hazarika, Hon'ble Minister, Water Resources, Parliamentary Affairs, Information & Public Relations, Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of Assam and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA, Assam Legislative Assembly.
5. The report aims to bring out the details of the CPA Executive Meeting held in Gibraltar and the post-meeting study visit to Spain, France and Switzerland undertaken by the Assam Legislative Assembly delegation.
6. I hope the information contained in the report will be useful for the Hon'ble Members.

**BISWAJIT DAIMARY**  
Hon'ble Speaker,  
Assam Legislative Assembly and  
Head of the Delegation

Dispur:      The 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

## MEETINGS/DISCUSSIONS

### (a) CPA Mid-Year International Executive Committee in Gibraltar from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2023



*International Executive Committee Members  
of CPA at Gibraltar*

As a Member of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly attended the mid-year Executive Committee meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in Gibraltar from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2023. During this period, he was accompanied by Shri Pijush Hazarika, Hon'ble Minister, Water Resources, Parliamentary Affairs, Information & Public Relations, Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of Assam and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA, Assam Legislative Assembly.

The British overseas territory of Gibraltar shares a land border with Spain to the North. 14 kilometres (9 miles) to the south is Marocco, on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar, one of the world's most important shipping lanes. The landscape is dominated by the Rock of Gibraltar, at the foot of which is a

densely populated town area, home to over 32,000 people, primarily Gibraltarians. Gibraltarians are British citizens. Most Gibraltarians are bilingual in English and Spanish. Gibraltar has a Westminster-style Parliament and is responsible for its own internal affairs whilst foreign affairs and defence remain the responsibility of UK Government. It has one legislative body (Gibraltar Parliament).

Its Constitution was established by the Gibraltar Constitution Order in 1969, which provided for a House of Assembly consisting of the Speaker (appointed by the Governor), 15 members elected to four – year terms, and 2 ex-officio members. (A new constitution Order was approved by referendum in November 2006 and was implemented in January 2007; it renamed the House of Assembly as the Gibraltar Parliament and increased its number of members to 17). The Governor, appointed by the British Sovereign, is the Head of the Executive Gibraltar Council and appoints the Council of Ministers, composed of the Chief Minister and other ministers, from the party or coalition of parties that gains a majority of seats in the Gibraltar Parliament.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Executive Committee Mid-Year Meeting was held in Gibraltar to discuss key *governance* issues and planning for the year ahead. Speakers and Members of Parliament from across the Commonwealth joined both in-person and via video link to discuss matters including the CPA's legal status, financial reporting and future activities, such as the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana. The CPA Executive Committee comprises 38 Members representing the nine regions of the CPA- Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic; India; Pacific; South-East Asia as well as the Officers of the Association (CPA President, CPA Vice-President, Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, CPA Vice-Chairperson, CPA Treasurer and the Chairpersons of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), the CPA Small Branches and the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD)).

The two-day meeting, hosted by the Gibraltar Parliament, took place from 18 to 19 April 2023. The following persons attended the meeting as representatives of CPA India Region:-

- Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly
- Shri Uday Pratap Singh, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha
- Smt. Ritu Khanduri Bhushan, Hon'ble Speaker of the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly.



*Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly along with other representatives from India attending the Executive Committee meeting of CPA at Sunborn Hotel in Gibraltar*



*Members of Executive Committee of CPA from India-Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam, Smt. Ritu Khanduri Bhushan, Hon'ble Speaker, Uttarakhand and Shri Uday Pratap Singh, Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha)*

**The Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee Hon. Ian Liddell-Grainger MP (UK) said:**

“The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association provides a unique platform for inter-parliamentary dialogue to take place amongst its membership of Parliaments and Legislatures. The CPA Executive Committee is pleased to be meeting in Gibraltar to further the CPA’s work in strengthening parliamentary democracy across the Commonwealth supported by the CPA Headquarters Secretariat team.”

The Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament and CPA Gibraltar Branch President, Hon. Melvyn Farrell, JP, MP, and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Hon. Fabian Picardo, KC, both welcomed the representatives at the reception programme hosted by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar at the Sunborn Hotel on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2023. On 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, CPA Gibraltar Branch hosted dinner at the Grand Battery House for the representatives.



*Assam Legislative Assembly Delegation with delegates from other countries at the reception programme*

The Executive Committee meetings were held on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 which the Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly attended. Hon'ble Speaker also attended the meeting of the Planning and Review Sub-Committee meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 as a Member of the Sub-Committee. In the Planning and Review Sub-Committee, the theme for the 66<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference and the workshop topics were approved. The main theme of the 66<sup>th</sup> CPA will be "The Commonwealth charter 10 years on : Values and Principles for Parliaments to Uphold". The following workshop topics are approved:-

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Workshop A (Host Topic): | The threat of terrorism to statehood: the role of Parliament  |
| Workshop B:              | Gender Quotas in Parliament - a means to an end?  |
| Workshop C:              | What does sustainable trade and economic development mean for small jurisdictions ?                 |
| Workshop D:              | Youth Roundtable: Role of the Commonwealth in international security and peace building.            |
| Workshop E:              | Environmental approaches in tackling energy poverty   |
| Workshop F:              | 20 Years of the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers: Is it working?                |
| Workshop G:              | The Commonwealth Charter: A Charter for all Human Rights, or just some?                             |
| Workshop H:              | E-Parliaments: An effective mechanism for intersectional diversity and equitable public engagement? |

The CPA Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg also attended the meetings and updated Members on recent activities.



*The Indian team with Mr. Stephen Twigg Secretary-General,  
CPA HQs at Gibraltar*

On 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, after the conclusion of the Executive Committee meeting, all the delegates were taken to the Gibraltar Rock tour.

After the meeting in Gibraltar, Hon'ble Speaker accompanied by Shri Pijush Hazarika, Hon'ble Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA undertook post-meeting study tour to Spain, France and Switzerland.

**(b) Visit to Congreso de los Diputados (Lower House of Spanish Parliament) and meeting with Foreign Affairs Committee of Spanish Parliament**



*Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam with Shri Pijush Hazarika, Hon'ble Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA in Congreso de los Diputados, Spain.*

The Assam Assembly delegation led by Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, visited the Congreso de los Diputados (Lower House of the Spanish Parliament) on 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2023.



*Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam with Shri Pijush Hazarika, Hon'ble Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA in Congreso de los Diputados, Spain.*

After visiting the chamber, the delegation held a meeting with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Congreso de los Diputados. The following Members/officers participated in the meeting:

**Representatives of Assam Legislative Assembly**

1. Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker
2. Shri Pijush Hazarika, Hon'ble Parliamentary Affairs Minister.
3. Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA
4. Shri Thang Joyful Tonsing, Secretary to Speaker
5. Shri Sauman Baruah, OSD to Speaker

**Representative of Congreso de los Diputados**

1. Mr. Pau Mari-Klose, Head of Foreign Affairs Committee

## **Representative of Indian Embassy in Madrid, France**

1. Ms. Prithika Rani M, Second Secretary (Eco and Com)



*Shri Biswajit Daimary , Hon'ble Speaker Assam, with Mr. Pau Mari-Klose, Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee of Congreso de los Diputados, Spain.*

At the outset, Mr. Klose welcomed the delegation and expressed his sincere thanks to the Assam Assembly delegation for the visit. He said that he looked forward to more such meetings. He praised the role of India especially in COVID vaccination and acknowledged that India is growing exponentially in terms of economy as well as technology. He said that India and Spain has always maintained very close and cordial relationships and that he hopes that this relationship would continue.

Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly also expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Congreso de los Diputados for facilitating the visit and giving opportunity to the Assam Assembly for having discussions with them.



*Assam Assembly delegation with Mr. Pau Mari-Klose, Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee of Congreso de los Diputados, Spain.*

The delegation was informed that Spain has Autonomous Communities which are like States in India and which has the same degree of autonomy and decentralization. The delegation was also informed that there are 350 Deputies elected by constituencies (matching fifty Spanish provinces and two autonomous cities) by closed list proportional representation. Deputies serve four-year terms. The presiding officer is the President of the Congress of Deputies, who is elected by the members thereof. It is the equivalent a speaker in the Indian system. Deputies basically have the role of discussing and passing of laws. The Congreso has a session every week for three days. However there is one free week every month, therefore, there are 9 sittings of the Congreso in a month. The sessions take place during the two meeting terms: February to June and September to December.

Committee meetings are held during the session in which Ministers appear. The Congreso can pass non-binding resolutions in which Deputies express what they want the government to do.



*Meeting of the Assam Assembly Delegates with the Foreign Affaris  
Committee of Congreso de los Diputados*

**(c) Visit to Guimet Museum, Paris and meeting with regard to Vrindavani Vastra**



*Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam with Mr. Vincent Lefèvre, Muséum Director and Ms Hélène Gascuel, curator in charge of the textile collection at Guimet Museum, Paris.*

On 26th April, 2023, a team of Assam Legislative Assembly delegation led by Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA, Assam Legislative Assembly visited the Guimet Museum, the National Museum of Asian Arts in Paris, accompanied by Ms. Pujya Priyadarshini, Second Secretary, Indian Embassy in Paris. The delegation met with Mr. Vincent Lefèvre, Muséum Director and Ms Hélène Gascuel, curator in charge of the textile collection.



*Shri Biswajit Daimary , Hon'ble Speaker, Assam and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA with officials of Guimet Museum, Paris.*

The delegation was shown the **Vrindavani Vastra**, which is a drape woven by Assamese weavers led by Mathuradas Burha Aata during 16th century under the guidance of Srimanta Sankardeva, a great Vaishnavite saint and scholar of Assam. The Vrindavani Vastra was not on public display and specially preserved in a room but specially shown to Assam delegation due to arrangements/requests made by the Indian Embassy in Paris.

The delegation requested the museum authorities for exhibition/display of the Vrindavani Vastra in Assam in the near future. The museum authorities are also very positive in the matter and the matter is to be taken up for further action through the Indian Embassy in Paris.

Thereafter, the Assam Assembly wrote to the Indian Embassy in Paris to take up the matter further with the Guimet Museum authorities. The Indian Embassy replied in the matter outlining some guidelines for the exhibition and asking for discussion of the technical matters with the Museum authorities. Accordingly the matter has been taken up with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for further action. Hon'ble Chief Minister constituted a Core Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 for the purpose of communication, visits, infrastructural development, display, safekeeping, insurance, return of the Vrindavani Vastra and other events associated with the display of the Vastra including viewing/ visiting rights. The Core Committee is in the process of taking up the matter with the concerned authorities.

#### (d) Meeting with Zurich Cantonal Parliament



*Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA with the Members of Zurich Parliament.*

Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly and Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA visited the Zurich Cantonal Parliament on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 and had discussion on the practices and procedures of the Zurich Cantonal Parliament, its relationship with the Federal Government, the system of government in Switzerland, etc. The following are present during the meeting:-

#### **Representatives of Assam Legislative Assembly**

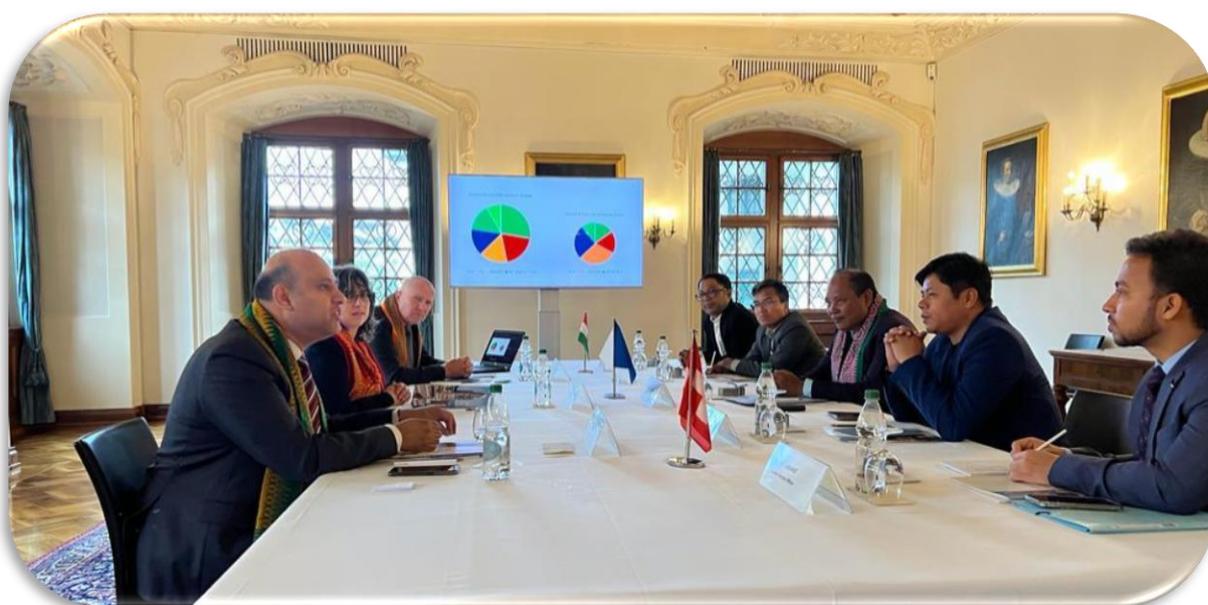
1. Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker
2. Shri Taranga Gogoi, Hon'ble MLA
3. Shri Thang Joyful Tonsing, Secretary to Speaker
4. Shri Sauman Baruah, OSD to Speaker

### **Representative of Zurich Cantonal Parliament**

1. Mrs. Sylvie Matter, 1st Vice-President
2. Mr. Benno Scherrer, former President, Zurich Cantonal Parliament and present Member
3. Mr. Jean-Philippe Pinto, Member

### **Representative of Indian Embassy in Berne, Switzerland**

1. Shri Ujjwal Jaiswal, ASO (Pol)



### ***Meeting of Assam Legislative Assembly delegation with Zurich Parliament.***

The meeting started with introductory remarks by Mrs. Sylvie Matter, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the Zurich Cantonal Parliament. There are 26 cantons in Switzerland. Zurich is the largest canton in Switzerland in terms of area and population.

Hon'ble Speaker, Assam made his introductory speech highlighting the similarities in Indian and Switzerland system which both have 3 levels of governance. He stated that the delegation would like to learn from the Swiss

system like the functioning of the Cantons which are like the States in India and the municipalities. In Switzerland, Canton and village raise taxes

One thing that other democracies have, that does not exist in Switzerland is that one political power-group, one political stakeholder or one political party which has the strength to ensure a majority in Parliament or in a popular vote for the duration of four years. That is why they call themselves “Democracy of minorities” or “democracy of changing majorities” All major parties together form the government.

For drafting of an important law, an expert group is set up. The first draft is discussed by the government and brought into a consulting procedure, in which every party, all political stakeholders, every citizen can give their opinion on the draft. Based on these statements, the government decides on a definite draft for the parliament, which should already contain a clear compromise. The Parliament itself takes the final decision.

In Switzerland, voters have the possibility of referenda on important parliamentary decisions to give a final say at the ballot box. For constitutional amendments, there is mandatory referendum, for bills and international treaties an optional referendum. A popular initiative is another way for citizens to request a plebiscite on the complete or partial revision of the Constitution. 50,000 signatures for referendum. The number required is 3000 for Zurich Canton.

The delegation was informed that both Houses are directly elected at National/Parliament level. Regarding the taxation system, all indirect taxes are levied at the federal level and direct taxes levied at the Canton level. Foreign policy and army comes under the federal government. As per the Constitution, cantons have power only on those matters which does not come under federal power.

Contrary to popular opinion, tourism is not a very big part of the economy of Switzerland.

Regarding facilities given to Members of Parliament/ Cantonal Parliament, it is stated that there is no individual research support. Also the pay

given to them is very small amount and lower than a teacher's salary. Most of them are engaged in other professions.

The delegation had a great learning experience from the Zurich Cantonal Parliament with regard to the functions, procedures and system of governance of the Zurich Canton and Federal Government of Switzerland.



*Shri Biswajit Daimary, Hon'ble Speaker, Assam and Shri Taranga Gogoi  
Hon'ble MLA, with 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of Zurich Parliament,  
Mrs. Sylvie Matter*

## **OBSERVATIONS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS/ACTIONABLE POINTS ARISING OUT OF THE DISCUSSIONS DURING THE STUDY VISIT**

The delegation had a very good learning experience during the meeting in Gibraltar and the interactions with the Speakers and representatives of various Commonwealth Parliaments.

The delegations also learnt a lot about the practices and procedures of other Parliaments during its post-conference study visit like the system in Spain and Switzerland. The delegation learnt about the fact that in Spain, Ministers appear before the Parliamentary Committees and that Congress can pass non binding resolutions in which Deputies can express what they want the Government to do. In Switzerland, the people can call for a referendum on important issues/legislative proposals.

In Paris, the delegation had the opportunity of seeing the Vrindavani Vastra in Guimet Museum even though it is not displayed for the public. The delegation had requested for exhibition of the Vrindavani Vastra in Assam and efforts are ongoing for the same as a follow up to the visit and discussions. Thereafter, the Assam Assembly wrote to the Indian Embassy in Paris to take up the matter further with the Guimet Museum authorities. The Indian Embassy replied in the matter outlining some guidelines for the exhibition and asking for discussion of the technical matters with the Museum authorities. Accordingly, the matter has been taken up with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for further action. Hon'ble Chief Minister constituted a Core Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 for the purpose of communication, visits, infrastructural development, display, safekeeping, insurance, return of the Vrindavani Vastra and other events associated with the display of the Vastra including viewing/ visiting rights. The Core Committee is in the process of taking up the matter with the concerned authorities.

## Some Photos of the Visit/ Meetings



*During the meeting at Congreso de los Diputados, Madrid, Spain*



*During the meeting at Zurich Cantonal Parliament, Zurich*



*At Zurich Cantonal Parliament*



*At Guimet Museum, Paris*



**Assam Assembly delegation at Spanish Parliament**



**Indian delegation at CPA ExCo Meeting, Gibraltar**

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