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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CM Dr. Sarma presents Jnanpith award to noted Assamese poet Nilmani Phookan**

**Dispur, April 11:** Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma presented the 56<sup>th</sup> Jnanpith Award for the year 2021 to eminent Assamese poet Nilmani Phookan in a programme held at Rabindra Bhawan in the city today. Organized for the first time in Assam by Bharatiya Jnanpith, the programme was also attended by Education Minister Dr. Ranoj Pegu, Cultural Affairs Minister Bimal Bora and Chairperson of Jnanpith Selection Board Pratibha Ray among others.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said that the country's highest literary honour presented today to renowned poet Nilmani Phookan made the people of Assam proud and elated. He said that this honour was a great moment of achievement for the Assamese people and he thanked Bharatiya Jnanpith for presenting the prestigious award to the eminent poet.

Stating that while novelist Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was the first recipient of the prestigious Jnanpith from Assam, which he received in 1979 and Mamoni Roisam Goswami being the second Assamese Jnanpith awardee got the award in the year 2000, Dr. Sarma said that repeating history, poet Nilmani Phookan received the Jnanpith exactly after two decades.

He said that Nilmani Phookan through his dedication to the task of writing poetry over the years and with his uniquely creative language and recurrent use of symbols and imagery gave a new dimension to modern Assamese poetry. He said that by presenting the Jnanpith to Phookan, Bharatiya Jnanpith has infused a new energy into Assamese literature.

"Most of the poems of the poet Nilmani Phookan, who created the era of modern Assamese poetry, rich in quality that attracted the reader, have a beautiful picture of nature. Through poetry, he explores life, youth, love, joy, the world's most common mysteries, nature, etc. and many other subjects", Dr. Sarma said while terming him as one of the best poets of twentieth century.

The Chief Minister further said that there is a need to take Phookan's poetry to the world readers and expressed desire to take the initiative through Assam Publication Board to translate his poems.

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