

# Traditional sports in assam

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Traditional sports in N-E Games soon| A STAFF REPORTER| | A traditional sport in progress during the recent Bihu festivities. A Telegraph picture | Guwahati, May 22: The newly-formed Assam Traditional Sports and Dragon Boat Association claimed that efforts were being made to include some traditional sports of Assam in the North-East Games in near future.

Addressing the media, regarding the proposed traditional sports carnival — Amar Khel, Amar Utsav — on Saturday, one of the founder office-bearers of the association, Subhash Basumatary, said he was making efforts to get a few disciplines included in the North-East Games, organised annually by SAI. Basumatary is also the director-in-charge of the SAI regional sub-centre, Guwahati. Boat racing, one of the most popular traditional sports, is all set to be the first from among a dozen traditional disciplines which could make it to the North-East Games.

The Dragon Boat carnival, to be held here on Saturday, will include 10 other disciplines apart from boat racing at Dighalipukhuri. The field events at the carnival at Latasil ground include dhop khel, koni juj, ghila khel, malla juddha, rashi tana, tel khuta, tangon tona, kelah loi dour, tekeli bhonga and dighal thengia dour. “ The idea is to conserve the traditional sports and bring them out of the remote villages to the urban areas. We hope to get co-operation from the government too in organising the event.

So far, the tourism department, the State Sports Council of Assam, the Kamrup (Metro) district administration and few others have already come forward to help us in the noble venture,” the association’s president Taher Ahmed said. | Dhopkhel The most popular indigenous game in the state of Assam is Dhopkhel. An ancient game, it is closely related with the <https://assignbuster.com/traditional-sports-in-assam/>

development of the state as such. The game requires absolute physical fitness - speed, stamina and acrobatic skills. Dhob is a seasonal game, played during the state's Spring Festival, known as Rangoli Bihu.

The game really flowered under the royal patronage of the Ahoms. There are two types of Dhob, one played by men and the other by women. The game, which uses a rubber ball, is played by two teams comprising 11 players each, in an open field, 125 m in length and 80 m in breadth, with a central point in the right middle of the arena. Two lines called kai are drawn at a distance of 12 ft on each side of the point at the centre. At the four points where the kai meets the 125 m lines, four flags are planted. Similarly, four flags are planted in the four corners, known as chukor nishan.

Parallel to the central point in each half of the field, is one point each, at a distance of 13'6" from the centre, and circles surrounding them known as gher. The game begins with the dhob i. e the ball being thrown in the air, by a player. If the ball does not fall in the opponent's court, it is to be thrown again. The dhob has to be caught by the opposing team, and if they fail, then the other team takes the throw. If caught, the player who takes the catch proceeds to the gher of the court, and throws it to the katoni, who stands on the other gher.

If the thrower fails on either count, his team forfeits the chance of a throw at the katoni, and the guilty player is requested to deliver a high lob to the opposing team, like the lob which started the game. The opposing team thus gets a chance once more for a catch and throw, at the opponents' katoni. If the katoni is hit below the waist, it is considered a kota, and the katoni becomes a hoia or a bondha, and automatically loses his status of a ghai - a

name initially used for all the players. The bondha goes over to the opposing side and tries to prevent the players of the team from catching the dhop. This move is known as aulia.

If a bondha succeeds in catching the dhop in the opponents' court and can recross over to his original side without being touched by any of the opponents, he becomes a ghai, and this move is known as hora. However, he has to cross both kais and he cannot leave the court in the process of crossing over, or catching the dhop in the zone between two kais. If a team loses ten ghais as hoia or bondha, then the last ghai will be named ghai katoni, and if a kota can be done to him, then it is known as piriutha, which signifies victory for the side. If at the end of the game, there are equal number of ghais, the game is pronounced a draw. Rang Ghar

Location: Joysagar, 4 km to the west of Sibsagar town Built By: Ahom King Pramutta Singha Built In: 1746 AD Highlights: Oldest amphitheatre in Asia Rang Ghar is one of the major attractions of the state of Assam. It is said to be the oldest amphitheatre in the whole of Asia and has often been referred to as the 'Colosseum of the East'. Situated to the northeast of the Tolatol Ghar, in the Joysagar area of the Sibsagar district; is the two storied Rang Ghar, which was the royal venue for witnessing a number of games, like buffalo fight, bull fight etc. This ancient amphitheatre was constructed by the Ahom ruler Swargadeo Pramutta Singha.

Rang Ghar dates back to 1746 AD, when it was basically built for the purpose of amusement and fun. The theatre is a double storied building and on the roof, there is a design of an Ahom royal long boat. It is overall oval in shape, unlike the multi-storied Tolatol Ghar situated just adjacent to it. Every year,

during the occasion of Rongali Bihu, Rang Ghar used to be the royal sports pavilion, from which the Ahom kings and nobles witnessed games in the Rupahi Pathar below. The Rupahi Pathar is a vast field, where various activities like bull fighting and other such traditional games used to be organized for the entertainment of the royalty.

The Rang Ghar was even the symbol of the recently concluded 33rd National Games, which was held in February (9th to 18th) 2007, in Guwahati, Assam. In case you are planning to visit Sibsagar district of Assam in the near future, do make sure to pay a visit to the Rang Ghar as well. Rang Ghar (Assamese: ৰঙা গহৰ , rong ghor) (meaning " Amusement House") is a two-storied building, which was the royal sports-pavilion from which the Ahom kings and nobles witnessed games like buffalo fights and other sports at the Rupahi Pathar (pathar meaning field in Assamese) specially during Rangali Bihu festival in the Ahom capital, Rangpur.

On the roof of the Rang Ghar is a design of an Ahom royal long boat. The building was constructed during the reign of Swargadeo Pramatta Singha in 1746. It is located north east to the Talatal Ghar a multi-storied royal complex in Joysagar west of Sivasagar town, on the other side of the Assam Trunk (AT) Road in Sibsagar district in Assam, India . The Rang Ghar is said to be the oldest amphitheater in Asia[citation needed]. The base of the monument has a series of arched entrances and atop the roof is a decorative pair of carved stone crocodiles.

In many of these, only the brick framework exists with vestiges of sculptural adornments here and there. The Ahoms, who used special thin baked bricks, did not have the use of cement and, therefore, used a paste of rice and eggs

as mortar for their construction. They also made use of powdered mixed lime and bricks to cover the surface of the inner walls. It is said that this layer of powder used to keep the inside of Ranghar cool. The entrance to Sankardev Kalakshetra at Guwahati is made in the style of the Rang Ghar.

The Rang Ghar was the logo of the recently concluded 33rd National Games that was held from 9 to 18 February, 2007 in Guwahati, Assam. About a kilometer towards the north east of Rangh Ghar is the Jaysagar Pukhuri. It is a manmade tank, encompassing an area of about 120 Bighas of land. It was dug in memory of Rani Joymati, the mother of Rudra Singha, the most illustrious of the Ahom kings. Guwahati, Apr 6 (PTI) Seismic survey work by the ONGC is posing a threat to Assam's 18th century amphitheatre, 'Rang Ghar' at Gargaon in Sibsagar district, perhaps the largest stadium in Asia, which has proudly stood the ravages of time.

Lesser known than the internationally famous 'Colosseum' in Italy, the 'Rang Ghar' bears mute testimony to the state's chequered history. The most potent symbol of the glorious 600 year rule of the Tai-Ahom kings hailing from Thailand, the monument constructed in 1746 AD, has been in the news after a report carried by PTI on cracks appearing on its facade. The report prompted the Assam government to constitute a seven-member expert committee to examine the damages on the walls of the heritage site.

The damages to the protected monument have prompted the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) which maintains it, to threaten legal action against the public sector Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) The ASI move comes after eight 10 metre cracks have appeared on the Rang Ghar walls following blastings in the seismic survey work at nearby Rupohipathar, an open oil

field. The ONGC officials when contacted refused to comment on the matter and only maintained "that precaution had been taken not to harm the heritage sites and historic monuments during survey works".

The damages have created a public outcry with a local students body, All Assam Tai Ahom Students Union (AATASU), calling an 'indefinite ONGC bandh' from March 5 and the proscribed ULFA issuing a warning to the ONGC to stop all seismic work or face dire consequences. The Rang Ghar, stated to be the oldest outdoor stadium in Asia, bears mute testimony to Assam's history. The medieval Tai-Ahom kingdom (1228-1826) was founded by Sukapha in the 13th century establishing its suzerainty over the Brahmaputra valley and putting paid to Mughal expansionism in the North-East seventeen times successfully.

The monument also saw the annexation of Assam by the British Empire through the historic Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 paving the way for the advent of the Britishers into the state and the end of the 600 year old Ahom rule. The monument at Gargaon was the crucible of the proscribed ULFA movement with its leaders congregating under Rang Ghar's portals on April 7 nearly 30 years ago to script one of the most violent chapters in the annals of the state in its fight for an independent homeland.

The original amphitheatre was constructed with wood and bamboo by King Rudrasingha, also known as Siukapha who ruled between 1696-1714, but was rebuilt into a permanent structure by King Pramatasinha (1744-1751). With no knowledge of modern day cement, the Ahoms used a paste of rice and eggs as mortar and special thin bricks for construction of the Rang Ghar, that has withstood decades of neglect till Independence. As its name

suggests, 'Rang Ghar' was a 'merriment house or a place of joy'. It was in this sports pavilion that elephant, buffalo, bullock and hawk fights, wrestling, besides Bihu (Assamese cultural festival), etc. were held. The Mongolian style oval-shaped two-storyed pavilion is 10 metres high, 11 metres across and 27 metres long with a steep flight of steps leading to the higher elevation from where the royal patrons and nobles are presumed to have watched the contests on the Rupohi Pathar (field) below surrounded by a huge meadow meant for the royal subjects. The monument's base has a series of archways with vestiges of sculptural adornments, and its roof is designed like a royal long boat with a pair of carved stone crocodiles on either ends.

The amphitheatre is located north east to the royal palace 'Kareng Ghar' in modern day Sibsagar town in Upper Assam. The Ahom kingdom with a successful multi-ethnic polity made major advances under king Susengpha Pratap Singha who revamped the administration and established the first military and diplomatic contact with the Mughals. Under King Gadadhar Singha, Mughal influence was, however, completely removed from the Brahmaputra valley and the Ahom Kingdom achieved its golden period under his son Rudra Singha.

The Ahom rule declined with the rise of the Moamoria rebellion and subsequently fell to a succession of Burmese invasions. The defeat of the Burmese after the Anglo-Burmese War and the treaty of Yandaboo on February 24, 1826, control of the once glorious Ahom kingdom passed into the British hands. Though during the colonial and subsequent times the Tai-Ahom rule was called the 'Ahom Kingdom', the Ahoms called their kingdom



`Mong Dun Shun Kham (casket of gold), while others called it Assam. The Rang Ghar was the logo of the 33rd National Games held in Guwahati from February 9 to 18 last year.