

Karbi Anglong all set to host state's first national rock competition



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The people of Karbi Anglong are all geared up for this year's edition of the Rongtheang festival that begins from November 2. The festival will continue for three days to culminate on November 4 and will also see the first national rock competition of Assam being organized there.

This time around, the 8th traditional Rongtheang festival 2010 is being organized by the Eastern Beats Music Society and the Rongtheang Klimsomar Club with the support of ICCR, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) and State Bank of India (SBI).

The Rongtheang Festival is a traditional festival of the people of Karbi Anglong which is into its eighth year now. Celebrated over a three-day period in Rongtheang village of Karbi Anglong every year, the festival has within a very short time become a much loved and popular festival of the people of Rongtheang, Diphu and adjoining areas. The festival was started in 2001.

Originally conceived as a festival to foster the spirit of bonding and brotherhood amongst the people of the district and to provide a platform for the young talents of the new generation, the Rongtheang fest has been helping channelize the frustrations and unspent energy of the youth in a positive direction. By introducing the people with the immense power and healing force of music and other art forms, the festival has been playing a major role in guiding the youth towards inculcating a healthy and positive lifestyle.

In recent years, the festival's influence and popularity has spilled over from Karbi Anglong to embrace a much wider spectrum with more and more artistes, musicians and youngsters from the rest of the North-east taking a keen interest in the festival. The festival now has a regular stream of visitors from places like NC Hills, Jorhat, Guwahati, Nagaland and other areas who come here to get acquainted with the rich culture and traditions of the Karbis and the other communities residing there.

Eastern Beats Music Society secretary Aiyushman Dutta said, "At a time when gaps in the social fabric of Assam are becoming more and more evident with each passing day, Rongtheang fest can be the perfect village festival for villages and towns in other parts of the State to emulate. The Rongtheang festival witnesses the participation of more than 12 different tribes and communities and the same acts as a perfect platform for building the spirit of brotherhood and bonhomie."

Some of the major tribes and communities in Rongtheang are the Karbis, Dimasas, Rongmei Nagas, Biates, Hmars, Mizos, Vaipheis, Bodos, caste Hindu Assamese, amongst others.

Following are the main objectives behind organizing Rongtheang fest.

- To promote inter-cultural and inter-faith harmony among the people of different communities and faiths residing in the district.
- To promote the unique cultural traditions, heritage and rituals of the people.
- To develop a sense of respect and appreciation amongst the people, especially the younger generation, towards their culture and roots.
- To wean away the youth from the negative influence of violence, insurgency, and apathy.
- To promote a culture of peace and positivism in the district, thereby opening up avenues of tourism and entrepreneurship in the district.
- To raise awareness against the menace of substance abuse and other social evils.

2nd KARBI ANGLONG BEATS CONTEST 2010

The Karbi Anglong Beats Contest (KABC) was started in the 7th Rongtheang fest 2009. This contest for village bands of Karbi Anglong – the first such contest in this part of the world – was a resounding success and proved the immense musical talent in the villages of Karbi Anglong. It also proved the healing power of music. The contest was held as a tribute to the victims of the October 30 serial bomb blasts.

In order to make the youth take a more active participation, the 2nd Karbi Anglong Beats Contest will be held on a national level this year. This is the first national rock competition of Assam. The winner of the beats contest will get a prize money of Rs. 50,000, a recording deal and the best guitarist will get an electric guitar. KABC is being supported by Mc Dowells No. 1 soda, State Bank of India, Rolling Stone, The Northeast Today, Sound Box and ICCR.

Around 80 bands from all over the country had sent in their entries for the contest. A jury formed by the Eastern Beats Music Society selected nine bands out of the same. Moreover, one band was selected to represent Karbi Anglong in a beats contest organized in Diphu for this purpose on October 2, 2010. The selected bands are:

1. Dream Diabolic (Sikkim)
2. Circles End (Darjeeling)
3. Dementia (Nagaland)

4. Melodrama (Nagaland)

5. Maestro (Haflong)

6. Cleave (Manipur)

7. Horjwlai (Tripura)

8. Dissected Soul (Darjeeling)

9. Filharmonix (Jorhat)

10. Ball of Fire (Karbi Anglong host band)

Dutta said, “Many people ask us as to why we organized the festival in an interior place of Karbi Anglong. But we continued with our quest because we felt it is time we shifted the attention of the people from insurgency and negativities to the rich culture and other positive issues.”

BY Karthik Kashyap

editor

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