

Karbi Anglong wakes up to beats of a different kind



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karthikkashyap 31 October 2009 7686 views

Hit by insurgency and violence for decades, fear and despair have more or less become a way of life in Assam. It is more so in the strife-torn district of Karbi Anglong, where the rich natural beauty of the place and the warm hospitality of the Karbi people have long been overshadowed by the power of the gun and the tremors of bomb blasts. But the ripples created by a spate of blasts, a year back, hundreds of kilometres away from this district, has somehow managed to bring people together - cutting across human-made barriers - and take a strong stance against the mindless bloodshed.

I am talking about the 1st Karbi Anglong Beats contest – the first contest for rock bands of Karbi Anglong – which was held yesterday, on the eve of the October 30, 2008 serial Assam blasts. A new addition in the 7th Rongtheang Festival, the Beats contest was held in memory of the victims of last year's blasts. The event saw musicians from Guwahati, Karbi Anglong, NC Hills and Dimapur get together on the same stage to pay tributes to those who lost their lives in the October 30 blasts and to try and ease the hurt. The Rongtheang Fest is a traditional dance and music festival of Karbi Anglong and the beats contest is a new addition, thanks to the Eastern Beats Music Society. The Eastern Beats Music Society was formerly known as the Rockarolla Music Society and the Karbi Anglong Beats contest was organized in association with the Rongtheang Klimsomer Club. As the contest kicked off towards the afternoon on Thursday, ten local bands from Karbi Anglong battled it out for the winners trophy at Ser Hongkup in Rongtheang Village. While the competition was tough and the huge crowd that had assembled were left amazed at the quality of the musicians, the judges had to make the tough decision of selecting the winner. LAD (Living Among Dead) finally walked away with the winners trophy and the cash award of Rs 10,000 sponsored by Maharaja Pradyut Kishore Manikya Debburman, the King of Tripura. Karbi Anglong SDO H Rajkumar and DSP L Dungal gave away the prizes to the bands, while local leader Tuliram Ronghang supported us in this noble endeavour. Aiyushman Dutta, the founder secretary of Eastern Beats Music Society, said, "The most awaited part of the event, however, was the peace concert, organized in memory of last year's serial blasts. As Dark Horizon and Rok-Rak took on the stage and brought the audience to a frenzy with their own compositions protesting the bloodshed, candles were distributed by the organizers among the audience, which was made up of a staggering number of around 5,500 people. And while pin-drop silence ensued in the crowd as the host of the evening Sreemoyee Raina Sharma narrated the devastation caused by last year's blasts, tears could be noticed streaming down some of the members of the audience. But no matter the extent of the hurt, the fact that there is always hope was reaffirmed once again as more than 5,000 candles were waved by the crowd of music lovers that had assembled." There have been speculations galore about this particular festival for the past couple of weeks. What exactly is this beats contest and why is a Guwahati-based music society so interested in it? These were just some of the questions floating around. According to a media release of the Eastern Beats Music Society, the contest was held with the aim of promoting musicians at the grassroots level. "The Karbi Anglong Beats Contest is a big boost to musicians of Karbi Anglong, which is known to be the epicentre of western music in Assam. Besides just promoting local musicians, it

will also help acquaint our youth with their traditions as it is part of the glorious Rongtheang Festival. We plan to make this show an annual affair and better ourselves with each passing year. We want to use this beats contest to bring our youth closer with their roots,” the release said. Eastern Beats Music Society chairman DN Dutt, who is also the Chief Information Commissioner of Asom, said that the show was a tribute to the victims of the October 30 serial blasts. Dutt, who headed the one-man commission set up by the Assam government to enquire into the serial blasts, said, “The October 30 blasts will continue to haunt the people of Assam for a long time. If the dread and terror finds expression in the voices of musicians and that too, at the grassroots level, there can be nothing better than it. The Karbi Anglong Beats Contest is a noble endeavour for it seeks to promote the musicians at the grassroots level and give them a sense of direction.”

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