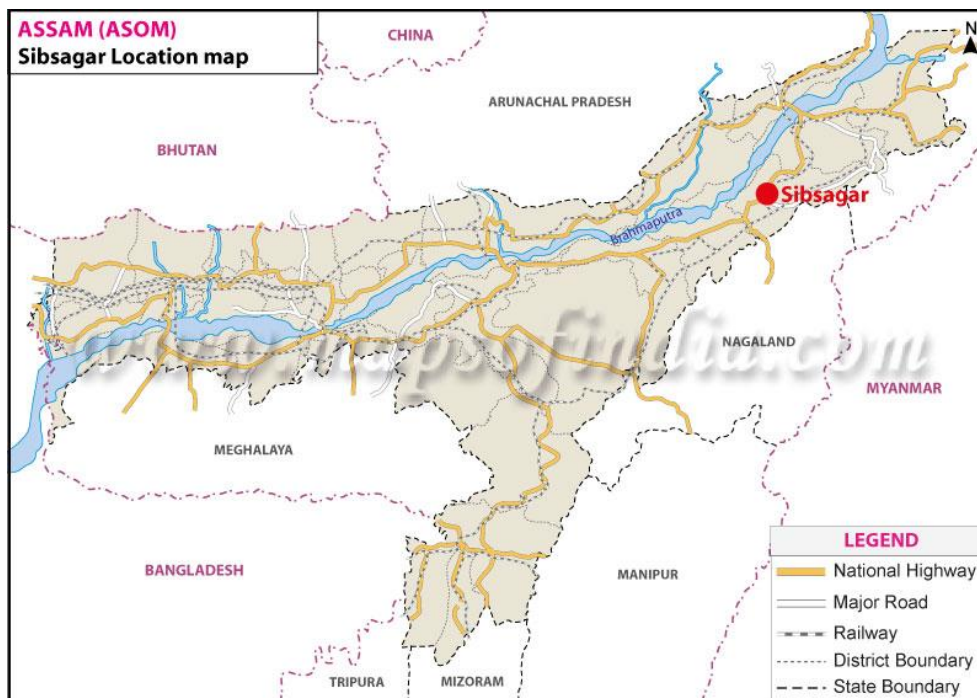


# SIVSAGAR

## A HISTORICAL CITY OF ASSAM

### INTRODUCTION:

Sivsagar ( [27.15°N 95.25°E](#)) is a historical city of upper part of Assam situated about 60 kilometers east of Jorhat. Sivsagar is surrounded by Brahmaputra and Dibrugarh district on the north, Charaideo on the east, Nagaland on the south and Jorhat on the west.



360 km east of Guwahati, Sivsagar erstwhile Rangpur is full of historic relics bearing testimony of 600 years of the Ahom rule. The Rangpur literally meaning “the city of Joy” occupied a very significant and unique place during the glorious Ahom rule as its 4<sup>th</sup> capital. Sivsagar was the capital of Ahom kingdom from 1699 to 1788 in which year of Ahom king Gaurinath Singha with about ten thousand followers had to flee this capital at the height of moamorian rebellion.

The headquarter of the district, Sivasgar town is associated with memories of 600 year of a glorious past of ahom era.

In 1734 king Siva singh's wife, her highness queen Bor Raja Ambika got dug a majestic pond (tank) in this place and named the tank after her husband. According to historians this tank is dedicated to Lord Shiva. this is a 257-acre (1.04 km<sup>2</sup>) tank, also known as the Borpukhuri, which is at a higher elevation than the rest of the town, with three temples on its banks.

The three temples – Shiva doul, Vishnudoul, and Devidoul on the banks of the tank form the centre of the town. From the name of this pond, the town got the name Sivsagar. Of these temples, the most prominent is the Sivadol, standing tall at 104 feet (32 m), drawing large crowds on Shiv Ratri. The Raj Kareng or royal palace and Talatal Ghar in Sivasagar complex standing magnificently near Joysagar tank bears the unfurled historical extravaganza unanimously. To its south stands the Fagua-Doul with eight symbols or octagonal in shape according to Taoist cosmology built by king Rudra Singha in 1703-04 A.D. for religious purpose, while the Ranghar known to be the first sports pavilion in Asia and built in its present shape by king Pramatta Singha in 1746 A.D., still proudly stands on the west. American Baptist missionaries tried their best to work for the development of Assamese language, literature and culture from this town. The first Assamese magazine orunodoi was published from Sivasagar. Besides many ancient relics like Rang Ghar , Talatal Ghar etc. there is also a Tai Museum in Sivasagar. For this reason, Sivsagar is the important tourist spot of Assam. sivasagar is well connected by road with the rest of the state. State-run buses connect it to Guwahati, Dibrugarh, and Jorhat from the Assam State Transport Corporation's (ASTC) bus station in Sivasagar. Another option for getting here is via Dibrugarh Airport, located at a distance of 95 km from the city. There are frequent flight services to both Jorhat and Dibrugarh. Taxis to Sivasagar are available from either airport. The Dibrugarh-Bangalore Express connects through Sibsagar Town railway station. The nearest railway station on the Tinsukia-Guwahati sector of the North East Frontier Railways is located at Simaluguri, 16 kilometers (9.9 mi) from Sivasagar. A rich wetland eco-system of 33.93 square kilometers (13.10 sq mi) is on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra, in Sivasagar district. A paradise of migratory and resident birds, over 165 species of birds have been identified and recorded here. Among these is a high concentration of geese and other migratory birds. Common species include bar-headed goose, grey leg goose, spot billed duck, mallard, gadwall, wigeon, gargany, shoveller, red-crested pochard, common pochard, ferruginous duck, adjutant stork, lesser adjutant stork, open-bill stork, and the white-necked stork. Aquatic fauna: Several varieties of fish have been identified here, along with various species of frogs, snakes, and other amphibians and reptiles.

Sibsagar district has two sub-divisions, viz. Sibsagar, Nazira

Nazira is a sub division of Sivsagar.it is a historical town on the bank of the Dikhow River. [Nazira](#) was an important place during the regime of Ahom Kingdom. Nearby Gargaon was the capital of Ahom Kingdom over a long period. According to legends Nazira got its name from 'Now-Jeera', which in Assamese literally means resting place of boats. The primary source of income of this area is employment in ONGC.



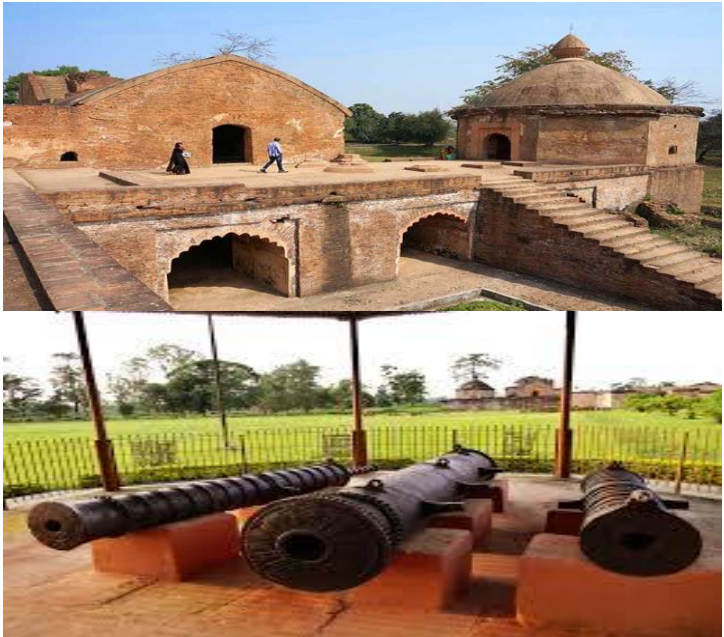
## **How to reach Sibsagar :**

How to reach Sibsagar by Air: The nearest Airport is Jorhat Airport, Assam, roughly one hour drive from Sibsagar. The nearest International Airport is Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati, roughly six hour drive from the city. It is well connected to the major cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Mumbai, Imphal, Lilabari and Jaipur etc. via Air India, Indigo, Kingfisher Airlines, Pawan Hans, Jet Airways and Druk Air.

Nearest Airport : Jorhat Airport, Jorhat

How to reach Sibsagar by Rail :The nearest Railway Station is Simalguri Railway Station which is 16 Kms from Sibsagar and is well connected to Dibrugarh and Yeshwantpur. It is also well linked with many cities of the state like Mariani, Jorhat, North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Mokokchung etc.

How to reach Sibsagar by Road : Sibsagar is well connected with major cities of Assam state by road. It is 2 Kms from Bishnu Nagar, 12 Kms from Gaurisagar, 16 Kms from Nazira, 17 Kms from Simalguri, 30 Kms from Amguri, 49 Kms from Bhojo, 56 Kms from Jorhat, 61 Kms from Cinnamora, 70 Kms from Barbari, 83 Kms from Dibrugarh, 117 Kms from Kamrup and is linked through Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) and some private travel services.

Name of the monuments	Highlights	Image
RANG GHAR	Ahom sports pavilion	
KARENG GHAR	Ahom royal palace	
TOLATOL GHAR	Ahom army base	

TAI MEUSUM

Display house of  
the artifacts and  
former glory of  
Ahom rule



SHIVA DOUL

A group of  
structures  
comprising three  
Hindu temples of  
Sivadol, Vishnudol  
and Devidol  
shrines, and a  
museum.



**SIBSAGAR  
TANK**

A large tank in Sivasagar dug by the Ahoms in the 18th century, also known as Borpukhuri.



**PANI DIHING  
BIRD  
SANCTUARY**

It is home to many migratory birds and was declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary in the year 1996.



**JOYSAGAR  
TANK**

Joysagar is a man-made lake made by Swargadeo Rudra Singha, an Ahom king in the memory of his mother in the year 1697. Joysagar becomes home to hundreds of migratory birds during winters



NAMDANG  
STONE  
BRIDGE

The Namdang Stone Bridge is a historic bridge made out of a single stone built by Ahom king Rudra Singha II



## AHOM RULE

From 13<sup>th</sup> century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ahoms ruled over Assam. Their long reign established political and cultural unity and gave economic stability to this region. This helped in the process of evolution of a new nationality and culture by bringing together various ethnic groups under one administration.

The Ahoms are member of the Great Tai group of peoples. In the 1215 CE , the Ahoms migrated from Mong-Mao. They entered in to the upper Assam region of the Brahmaputra Valley through Patkai hills under the leadership of a Siu-ka-pha. He became the first king “Swargadeo” of the Ahom dynasty.

## RANG GHAR



### OVERVIEW:

Rang Ghar 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 Rang Ghar of Assam is an entertainment house. It is situated very close to the Gargaon Palace. It has a royal origin. It is said that the kings of the Ahom dynasty used to watch different sports from here. It is a two-story structure. This pavilion is oval in shape.



## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

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. 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.

The Rang Ghar in Assam is known to be one of the earliest such pavilions of India. This outdoor stadium was constructed between the years of 1744-1751. It was built by the king Pramatta Singha. This a fascinating structure. During the early days the Rang Ghar of Assam was mainly used for watching elephant fights.

The pavilion is 10 meter in height. Its length and width are 27 meter and 11 meter respectively. There is a wonderful ground just in front of the Rang Ghar. Probably it was the venue for the different sports that the royal personalities used to watch from the pavilion. A very steep flight of steps will reach you to the higher points of the pavilion. These were supposedly the places from where the kings and other royal dignitaries used to enjoy the sports competitions.

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

## **KARENG GHAR**



## **OVERVIEW:**

‘Kareng Ghar’ is a Royal House of the Tai-Ahom kings, which is situated in Gargaon, the third capital of the Tai-Ahoms at a distance of 4kms east of the historical city of Sivasagar. It is a seven storied structure out of which the three floors underground are called the ‘Talatal Ghar’ while the rest of the four

floors above ground is called Kareng Ghar. Since the Talatal Ghar was primarily built as an army base, it consists two secret tunnels- one linked to Dikhow stream which is around 3 kilometres away and another linked to the Garhgaon fortress, which lies at a distance of 16 kilometres. These were built as hiding chambers and escape routes for the king and his army. Tourists are allowed to visit the upper three levels of Talatal Ghar. The underground floors are closed to visitors. Walking through the long passageway from the east to the west, you will find a number of rooms flanked on either side of the passage. These rooms were used as live-in chambers by the Assamese royalty. The rooms situated along the north to south passageway were minor division chambers, each assigned to a certain task or to the servers in the palace.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The Kareng Ghar has its own historical importance as it itself is located in the historical town of Sivasagar. The place was once used as the capital by the powerful rulers of the Ahom dynasty. The construction of the palace was commenced by Swargadeo Rudra Singha in the year 1698 AD. Rangpur was also used by the Ahom kingdom as a military station during battle.

### **DESIGN:**

With regard to architecture, the Ahom kings are always known for their efficient and effective work in the past and it is no different in the case of Kareng Ghar. The interior of monument has been largely designed on the basis of local architectural style. The monument has a four storey structure arranged gradually. The completion of the monument was seen under the reign of Swargadeo Rajeshwar Singha and his successor during 1751- 1769 AD. The top floor was designed in the form of a chamber. There were four watch towers within the palace but in the present day only two can be seen by the people. In the ground floor of the palace there are three west facing halls along with a front and rear chamber. Furthermore, there were four main gates within the palace which was named as Singhduar 'lion's gate'. The palace has a secret tunnel from Kareng ghar to 'Talatal Ghar' in Rangpur. It was used as an escape route in case of an enemy attack during battle. Notably, the ground floor of the palace served as store room and servant quarters. The entire palace was built with the use of wood. The Talatal Ghar was made with bricks and an indigenous cement which includes a mixture of bora-chaul(a type of rice) and eggs of hens. There was a large number of rooms which were used by the royal family member personal use. The southern side of the palace was served as a puja Ghar of the palace. A room on the southern side was used by queen in her imprisonment.

### **TOURIST ATTRACTION:**

The kareng ghar is one of the most tourist visited destination in Assam. It attracts a large number of tourists owing to its historical and architectural beauty. In the present day, visitors can witness the ground floor, 1st floor and the 3rd floor of the palace as they are the only preserved sections. The Talatal Ghar which was on the underground of the monument have been sealed off, and most of the wooden part of the

palace have been disappeared .This place provide an ambience for the tourist owing to the calm surroundings atmosphere. Overall, it can easily prove to be a never before seen experience for the tourist.

## TALATAL GHAR



### OVERVIEW:

The Talatal Ghar or the Rangpur Palace is situated in the northern region of Assam and is one of the most impressive of Tai Ahom architecture. Not only does it stand as a worthy testament to the vibrant Assamese culture and its rich history, but it is also the largest of all Ahom monuments in the entire world. History buffs and architecture lovers should add Talatal Ghar to their go-to list.

Boasting of a typical Mughal architecture style, the upper ground floor of the Talatal Ghar is popularly known as Kareng Ghar and was used by as a live-in palace by the royalty of Assam. Raja Swargdeo Rudra Singha, the successor of Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, added these top floors during his regime making the Talatal Ghar an elegant and truly spectacular seven-story royal palace.

An interesting fact about this stunning monument is it has been built with purely organic materials - bricks and organic cement (a mixture of rice powder and duck eggs). What is truly notable is that this structure has been standing tall and strong for centuries.

### HISTORY OF TALATAL GHAR:

Located in Rangpur, capital of the Ahom Kingdom, this magnificent palace was originally built as an army base by the great Ahom Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha between 1751 AD and 1769 AD. In fact, this elegant structure has two tunnels and three underground floors that were built to

facilitate emergency evacuation for the King and his army in times of crisis. The alleys are built like a maze, such that even if the enemy entered the premises, they would be completely lost!

After Swargadeo Rudra Singha demise, the massive fort underwent major changes. Three ground storeys were added to the structure making the Talatal Ghar a seven-storey palace. Walking through the long passageway from the east to the west, you will find a number of rooms flanked on either side of the passage. These rooms were used as live-in chambers by the Assamese royalty. The rooms situated along the north to south passageway were minor division chambers, each assigned to a certain task or to the servers in the palace.

Of the seven levels of the fortress, four levels lay above the ground and three levels lie below. The first level on the land was used as stables, constants, hoard rooms and servants' lodgings. The chambers of the majesties are on the two higher levels but are not open to the general public. There is an octagonal room towards the north known as the veneration room right next to it. Among the many chambers, there is one such separated towards the south of Talatal Ghar that stands a little farther from the other rooms. This is presumed to have been used for imprisoning the queen.

The three levels built by King Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha were built with completely natural materials- red bricks and organic cement made of rice powder and duck eggs and has been standing strong since its construction. However, the upper levels built by his successor Swargadeo Rudra Singha were built primarily of wood, and hence have been completely dilapidated.

Since the Talatal Ghar was primarily built as an army base, it consists two secret tunnels- one linked to Dikhow stream which is around 3 kilometres away and another linked to the Garhgaon fortress, which lies at a distance of 16 kilometres. These were built as hiding chambers and escape routes for the king and his army. Tourists are allowed to visit the upper three levels of Talatal Ghar. The underground floors are closed to visitors.

#### **BEST TIME TO VISIT TALATAL GHOR:**

The best time to visit the Talatal Ghar in Sibsagar would be between March and April. The temperature during this time ranges between a low of 8 degrees Celsius and a high of 28 degrees Celsius. You will be surprised to know that Sibsagar experiences seasonal showers in the summers! These showers cool down the humid temperatures and make it quite pleasant.

The winters here are very cold with temperatures ranging from a low of -6 degrees Celsius and 10 degrees Celsius. During the monsoons, the temperature is quite pleasant and keeps fluctuating between 11 degrees Celsius and 20 degrees Celsius, but the frequent rains may not allow you to fully explore the place.

It is best to visit the Talatal Ghar during the daytime when the sun is bright. The premises of this

structure are not very well lit during the evenings and nights rendering you unable to appreciate Talatal Ghar in the dark properly.

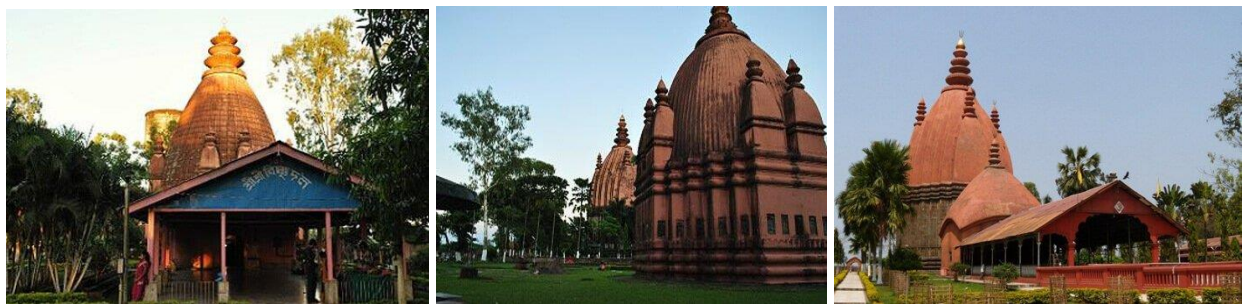
### **HOW TO REACH TALATAL GHAR**

The Sibsagar Railway Station is closest to Talatal Ghar at a mere distance of 4.7 kms. This railhead is well connected to all the major cities in and around the state and is barely a 17 min drive from Talatal Ghar. You can hail a cab or an auto rickshaw once you get off the station and they will take you to Talatal Ghar in no time and at affordable rates.

Many buses ply from the Sibsagar Bus Stand quite frequently which take you around the entire city at very cheap rates. Many interstate buses also stop here, including luxury buses and night journey buses. This Bus Stand lies very close to the Sibsagar Railway Station.

### **MYTHOLOGY**

Sivsagar is famous as Shivasagar now a days and it was basically the capital of Ahom kingdom. In 1228, the Ahom king got a switch to Assam, India from South China and thus established their first capital at 'Charaideo' in 1253 which is about 28 kilometres from Shivasagar. They were Buddhists in the beginning, after that Hinduism came to triumph. It was also the capital of the Ahom Kingdom till the British Reign was established in India. Bar Raja Ambika, queen of Ahom king Swargadeo Siba Singha (1714–1744) has taken the management to construct these temples shrines etc. The main deity of Sivasagar Shiva Dole temple is Shiva Lingam which is internally attached with an Antarala- Antarala is a tiny foyer which is situated in between the sanctum and the 'Mandapam'. Vishnu Dole temple and Devi Dole temple are designed way too similar as Shiva Dole temple.



## SHIVA DOL



### OVERVIEW :

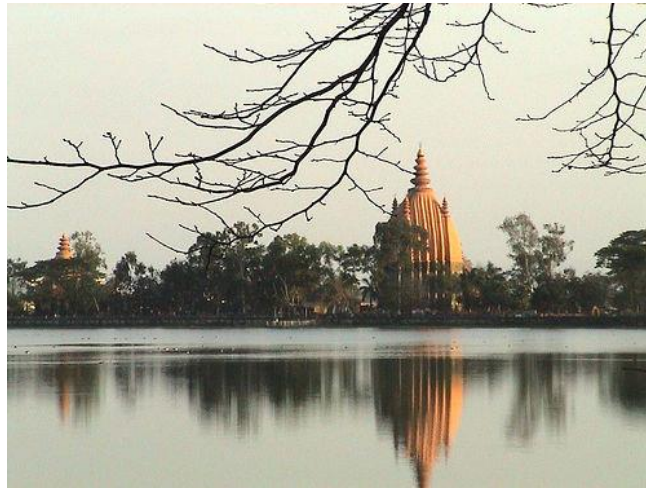
A major tourist attraction in the state of Assam is Shiva Dol. This place happens to be one of the most famous pilgrimage spots in the country as well. Shiva Dol is the tallest Shiva temple in the entire Northeast India. It is the highest temple in the country as well with a height of 104 feet. Sivasagar Sivadol temple premise has three Hindu temples of the shrines- Sivadol, Vishnudol and Devidol. The temple has other presiding shrines, and a museum inside. These all are situated on the banks of the Sivasagar in the Indian state of Assam, which is the ocean of the gods' tank. Sivasagar is also termed as Borpukhuri tank. This tank was positioned in between 1731 and 1738 and the temples inside the premise were built in 1734. Basically the Temple area of Shiv Dol comprise of 270 acres land. And the height of the temple peak of the Sivadol is 104 feet (32 m) and the perimeter of the sanctum is 195 feet (59 m) at the base side. Shivadol( Siva- lord and Dol means Temple) is monarched with an 8-foot high golden-dome called Kosoloi at the centre . Pre-dominantly, the temple Sivadol is dedicated to the lord Shiva, Vishnudol to Lord Vishnu and Devidol (Joidol) to Goddess Durga. Just at the centre of the sanctorum, a Shiva lingam of Lord Shiva is hallowed and the garbhagriha is linked with an entrance or an antechamber with an Antarala. The temple wall is engraved with beautiful historic and ancient flowery and sculptures designs

### POPULAR THINGS TO DO & SEE AROUND :

Devi and Vishnu Dol are other temples that people visit when paying homage to Shiva Dol. The Sivasagar tank attracts many migratory birds during the months of winter, and thus it is an ideal place for birdwatchers.

**BEST TIME TO VISIT:**

Winter is the best time to visit this place. Monsoons receive heavy rainfall and should be avoided. Summers are hot and humid, and thus should be avoided. Maha Shivratri is one of the most important festivals that is celebrated here and is ideal time to visit to see the rich culture of the place.

**SIBSAGAR TANK**

This large tank was built by Queen Ambika, wife of King Shiva Singha, in the year 1734 and named it after her husband. The tank is built on an area of around 130 acres. It was originally 64 feet in depth. The embankment of this tank is artificial and raised the surface of water to height of around 40 feet from the surrounding plain. According to historian Mills this tank was built in one night! The water level of the tank testifies to the advanced hydrology of Ahom period as the level of the tank never changes and remains above the level of the town all the time. Currently this tank's bank is the center of district administration and also many parks, gardens and a museum etc. Apart from the temples the bank also carries a Church, a Buddhist Monastery and a Masjid, almost assimilating people from all the religions into it.

The Sivasagar tanks also known as 'Borpukhuri' is one of the important habitats of the migratory birds during the winter season now-a-days is also the most attractive landscape of the Sibsagar town. This tank with three grand temples has emerged as the testimony to the growth, development and consolidation of a culture - that continues upto modern times - in the psyche of the Assamese people.

## PANIDIHING BIRD SANCTUARY



The Panidihing bird sanctuary is located in the northern part of Sivasgar district. It is situated near about 22 Km from the Sivasagar town. Situated between Disang and the Demow rivers the Panidihing Wildlife Sanctuary has a rich wetland ecosystem with an area of 33.93 sq. kms.

The resident of several migratory birds the Panidihing bird sanctuary is declared as Wildlife Sanctuary in 1996. The sanctuary's prized possession are its variegated species of aquatic birds whose medley of cacophonous twitters and chirps sound tuneful to the ear that has grown accustomed to the chaotic noise of a bustling city life. Adjutant storks, fishing eagles and a variety of ducks are some of the species of birds that are the pride of the place.

A paradise of migratory and resident birds, so far 165 species of birds have been identified and recorded. A place for quite high concentration of Geese and other migratory birds. The common birds seen are Bar-headed Goose, Grey leg Goose, Spot billed Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Wigeon, Gargany, Shoveller, Red crested Pochard, Common Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Adjutant Stork, Lesser Adjutant Stork, Open bill Stork, White necked Stork etc.

Panidihing is famous for migratory birds. Adjutant Storks, Fishing Eagle etc. are commonly found here. The wildlife is mostly about the avifauna over here. This place is beautiful and a very good place to see the water birds and waders. The Sanctuary qualifies as a Ramsar Site as its water bird population in winter is more than 20,000.



## MAIDAMS

The Ahoms took up a number of secular and religious architectural activities in their region. One of the which drawn the attention of the world community is the MAIDAM ( THE BURIAL MOUNDS). Traditionally, the Ahoms buried their dead. The maidams are the burial mounds of the Ahom kings, queens and nobles. The word maidam is derived from the Tai word Phrang mai – dam or Mai-tam. Phrang mai means to put into the grave or to bury and dam means the spirit of the dead.

### DESIGN:

The dead person's body is placed in a coffin called Rung Dung which is made of wood called Urium. This coffin is then buried under the Earth after performing the rituals. The top of the Maidam bears a semi circular shape. On the maidam , there is a house (ka Rang Rung ) which was built with pieces from sal tree. Here, body was taken out of rung Dung and performing the rituals, the dead body was bathed and dressed with new cloths and then placed on a bed inside the Ka Rung Rung Dam with the head placed towards the east while the feet towards the west.

### HISTORICAL RECORD :

From the reign of Swargadeo Lakshmi Singha, after adopting the Hindu religion , the dead bodies of the Ahoms kings began to cremated and remaining ashes and bones were buried at Charaideo.

Many of the *maidams* were excavated and looted, most famously under the Mughal general Mir Jumla who had occupied Garhgaon briefly in the 17th century

The Ahoms had a guild called “Maidamia” who looked after the maidams.

A large number of maidams are protected by the government of Assam while many more are unprotected.

### IMAGES OF MAIDAMS:



## NAMDANG STONE BRIDGE



Constructed by Ahom king Rudra Singha in 1703 the Namdang Stone Bridge (Namdang Hilo Haku in Assamese) made up of a single stone. This stone bridge on Namdang River was constructed by the craftsmen of Bengal. Later it was brought from there. This bridge is one of the magnificent structures built under the patronage of the Ahom kings. This bridge is thus also famous for its historical importance.

Namdang Stone Bridge, built across the Namdang River, a tributary of the Dikhou river, is a massive structure with many culverts and embossed images. Uniqueness is that it is made from a single piece of rock.

Namdang is one of the ten stone bridges built by the Ahom kings. The bridge was constructed by the labours brought from Bengal. The bridge has been the target of natural calamities like earthquake and flood. Nevertheless it stands still. Presently the National Highway 37 passes over this stone bridge and proudly taking loads of tonnes of vehicles everyday. The bridge is a testimony of great architectural style of the Ahom kingdom.

The bridge is 60 m long (196.85 m), 6.5 m wide (21.32 ft) and 1.7 m high (5.57 ft). The bridge is a little curved in shape. During the time of the Ahom kings cement was not in use for construction. A paste of rice, eggs, black lentils and lime was used to make the bridge. Sculpture has been cut on the pillars of the bridge. There are many culverts. The bridge connects Sibsagar town to Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam. One of the major problems facing the bridge is that it is the target of natural calamities like flood. The architectural work of the bridge gets damaged due to flood.