

FESTIVALS OF NORTH-EAST INDIA



A. Lead in:

As you all know, India is a land of fairs and festivals. People of different communities from different religions live here ; they celebrate a number of festivals round the year. The festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi , Basant Panchami, Diwali, Dusshera, Raksha Bandhan, Id-ul-Fitre, Christmas , Buddha Jayanti and MahavirJayanti, etc. are celebrated by different communities in different regions of our country. We can see festive atmosphere everywhere as people celebrate their festivals with great pomp and splendour. The people of North Eastern states too celebrate their festivals with much interest and enthusiasm.

Let's read the following text and know how the people in the north-eastern regions of India celebrate their festivals with pomp and show.

B. The Text:

- The North-East India is a collective name for the eastern-most parts of India representing both a geographic and administrative division of the country. The region comprises eight states, namely
1. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura. The contiguous seven states – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are commonly described as the “Land of Seven Sisters” because of their interdependence on each other. On the other hand, Sikkim is geographically not a contiguous part of the northeast region. It is separated from the northeast by Siligudi corridor. So it is not included in the “Land of Seven Sisters”. However, Sikkim has happily taken up the role of being a little brother to the amazing seven sisters!

2. The north-eastern regions of India, is a place of diverse cultures. The different communities and tribes of northeast India celebrate their unique festivals with great enthusiasm and joy. Many of

these festivals are based on agriculture and no celebration is complete without traditional music and dance.

3. Blessed with lush greenery and the mighty River Brahmaputra, the people of Assam have a lot to celebrate. Bihus are among the major cultural festivals of Assam. They are a series of three prominent festivals— Rongali Bihu, Kongali Bihu and Bhogali Bihu. Rongali Bihu also known as Bohag Bihu is celebrated in mid-April with the onset of spring and the beginning of the sowing season . It also marks the start of a New Year there. Kongali or Kaati Bihu is celebrated in mid-October when the fields are lush but the barns are empty. On this occasion, people light lamps and pray to God for a thriving harvest season and to guide souls to heaven. Bhogali, called Magh Bihu is observed in mid-January. The festival symbolises the end of the harvest season. It is a thanksgiving when the crops have been harvested and the barns are full.

4. Any Bihu celebration is considered incomplete without melodious folk songs and traditional dance. The Bihu dance is joyous one. Young men and women get in their best traditional attire and perform the dance with brisk steps and hand movement. The tune of traditional musical instruments including cymbals, bamboo clapper , dhol which is similar to a drum and the pepa which is a wind instrument made of buffalo horn add different kind of flavour to the dance as well as the atmosphere. The songs have been handed down through many generations.

5. Lying farther north in the mountain region of the Himalayas, Arunachal Pradesh is one of India's most remote and picturesque locations with lush green paddy fields and pine clad mountains. Nature has provided the people of this region with a deep feeling of beauty which can be seen in their festivities, songs and dances.

6. The new-year festival, Losar, is perhaps the most important festival in certain areas of Arunachal Pradesh. On this occasion, people clean their homes and discard the old to bring in the New Year. Mopin is the harvest festival of the Galo tribe. People worship goddess Mopin and pray to drive away evil spirits and for acquiring prosperity and wealth. An indigenous folk dance called Popir is performed by the

young women. An iconic outdoor musical festival of Arunachal Pradesh is the Ziro festival of music held at Ziro in September every year. The music congregation features a combination of 30 indie bands from across the world and top folk acts from across northeast India.

7. A charming festival of Manipur- Ningol Chakouba binds and revives the relationships between married girls and their parents. The women and their children are given a sumptuous feast and gifts. During Cheiraoba , the Manipur new-year festival in April , people clean and decorate the houses and prepare special festive dishes. As part of the ritual, the villagers climb the nearest hilltops for they believe that this will help them rise to a higher plane in this life.

8. The Spring Festival or Chapchar Kut is an important occasion, mostly celebrated in Mizoram. Men and women of all ages, wearing traditional dresses and headgear, perform folk dances and sing traditional songs on this occasion. Drums, gongs and cymbals add to the festive air!

9. Wangala or the Hundred-drum Festival is the most important festival celebrated by the Garos in the villages of Meghalaya. The festival is named so because 100 drums are beaten together during the celebration. This harvest festival is celebrated in November to mark the end of hard work which naturally brings a good harvest. The celebration features beating of drums, blowing horns and traditional dancing. The dance during the festival has two parallel lines – one of men and the other of women, clad in their festive costumes. While the men beat the drums, the lines move forward together in a rhythmic manner.

10. Karachi Puja of Tripura is a week long festival marked by animal sacrifice and worshipping fourteen gods as instructed by Lord Shiva. The festival takes place in the month of July in old Agartala or Puran Heveli, where there is a temple that houses of 14 deities. Thousands of people throng Tripura during the festival and enjoy cultural programmes and fairs.

11. The main features of festivals in Tripura is that all the people join in the celebrations. Many of the dances performed during some of the festivals represent hunting, food-gathering and various other activities.

12. Nagaland consists of different groups of people who are unique in their customs and traditions that they celebrate. Songs and Dances form the soul of these festivals. Celebration of these festivals is an effective means of preserving and passing down their oral history.

13. A major Naga festival is Moastu, celebrated mainly in the villages after the sowing season. Dressed in colourful clothes and headgear decorated with feathers and wild boar tusks, the people in villages dance to the traditional music.

14. One of India's most colourful and charming festival is Nagaland's Hornbill festival. Named after the state's most admired bird, the event showcases the cultural heritage of 16 tribes there. It is a 10-day long cultural dance and sporting events held in December every year. Men, clad in full warrior costume, show off their hunting and warring skills.

15. Situated in the eastern Himalayas, Sikkim is one of the most beautiful states of India. The Sikkim festivals are celebrated with a lot of pomp and show and as per the Buddhist calendar. Throughout this festivals people take part in lively dances and music. Saga Dawa is an amazing Buddhist festival celebrated on the full moon day in Tibetan lunar month between May and June. On this sacred day people visit the monasteries, offer prayers, water, incense sticks and butter lamps. The festival commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of Lord Buddha. Losoong is celebrated at the end of the harvest season. Locals wearing brightly coloured masks, playing fascinating musical instruments perform Chaam dance. Archery contest is also held along with feasting and other celebrations. Tibetan New Year, Losar is marked with immense joy, extensive meals and merriment. It is usually held in February. Tihaar is the festival of light. It is somewhat like Diwali.

16. Hardly a month passes in any of the seven states without a festival or two. Most of them have a religious importance or significance, as the people offer thanks to the gods for a good harvest or prosperity, or ask for protection against calamities. But these celebrations also help encourage cultural and artistic activities and bring out the natural talent of the people.

C. Notes and Glossary:

region	: one of the areas of a country having its own customs/ government
comprise	: formed from
contiguous	: touching , sharing the boundaries with others
interdependence	: depending on each other
corridor	: a long narrow strip of land that follows the course of an important road
amazing	: wonderful
culture	: the habits, traditions and beliefs of a country
traditional	: following older methods
enthusiasm	: great eagerness
lush	: growing very thickly and well
mark	: celebrate
brisk	: quick and energetic
cymbal	: one pair of round metal plates used as a musical instrument, ଝିଞ୍ଜ, କରତାଳ
bamboo clapper	: a traditional Chinese /Burmese percussion instrument made with boards of bamboo, ଦାସକାଠିଆ
generation	: all the people in a family, group or country who are born at about the same time
picturesque	: a place very attractive or charming to look at
discard	: to throw something away that you no longer want or need
prosperity	: a state of being successful, especially with money
congregation	: a group of people meeting together to worship
feature (v)	: to include some means or something as an important part
iconic	: symbolic
indie	: a pop group not belonging to company
revive	: to make something past exist again, renew

sumptuous	: very rich and with a lot of variety
ritual	: religious rites, customary ways of celebrating a religion
plane	: progress and development
instructed	: told in a formal way
take place	: (Phr. verb) to happen
rhythmic	: having regular pattern of sound and movement
form the soul of	: form the inner part of
effective	: successful in producing a desired result
preserve	: to maintain (something) in its original state
oral history	: collection of historical information which is not written but is passed on by the people who remember past event
headgear	: something worn on the head for fashion or for a religious purpose
heritage	: the traditions, qualities and culture of a country that have existed for a long time
sporting event	: athletics activity
situated	: located
lunar month	: the average time between one new moon and next
sacred	: holy
commemorate	: to remind people of an important person or an event from the past
enlightenment	: knowledge about and understanding of something
fascinating	: extremely interesting or attractive
extensive	: great in amount, sumptuous
ask for	: to say that you would like somebody to give you something
calamity	: a sudden bad event that causes a lot of damage or unhappiness
bring out	: (phr.v) to make

D. Let's understand the text:

1. What is North-East India?
2. Which states form the North-East India?
3. Which states are called the "Land of Seven Sisters"?
4. Why are they called so?
5. Why is Sikkim not included among the "Seven Sisters" ?
6. What role does it play?
7. What is culture?
8. People here celebrate their festivals with _____ and _____.
9. Many of their festivals are based on _____.
10. What are the two important parts of celebrating their festivals?
11. What is the most important festival of Assam?
12. Bihu festivals are of three kinds. What are they?
13. Rangali Bihu is also known as _____.
14. Kongali Bihu is also called _____.
15. People also name Magh Bihu as _____.
16. When is Rongali Bihu celebrated?
17. What does Bohag Bihu celebrate?
18. When is Kaati Bihu celebrated?
19. What do people do during Kongali Bihu?
20. When is Magh Bihu celebrated?
21. Bhogali Bihu marks _____.
22. Which festival is a thanksgiving for a rich harvest?
23. Bihu celebration is incomplete without _____ and _____.
24. Which musical instruments are played during Bihu dance?
25. Where is Arunachal Pradesh?

26. Name three festivals that Arunachal Pradesh celebrates.
27. Which is the new-year festival of Arunachal Pradesh?
28. What do people do on this occasion?
29. Which festival is the harvest festival here?
30. What do people pray for during Mopin?
31. Popir dance is performed on the occasion of _____.
32. Ziro festival is an indoor / outdoor festival. (Tick the correct word.)
33. Which festival in Manipur establishes a family bond?
34. How are the married daughters and their children treated during Ningol Chakouba?
35. Which festival celebrates new-year in Manipur? When?
36. What do the people of Manipur do during the celebration of Cheiraoba?
37. Chapchar Kut is popular in Mizoram as _____.
 - A. the Spring festival
 - B. the Winter festival
 - C. the Autumn festival
 - D. the Summer festival
38. How do people of Mizoram celebrate Chapchar Kut?
39. Wangala is also known as _____.
40. Where is Wangala celebrated?
41. Wangala is a harvest festival. What does it mark?
42. Describe the dance performed during Wangala.
43. How do people of Tripura celebrate Karachi Puja? When? Where?
44. Why do people throng Tripura during the festival?
45. What do the dances during festivals in Tripura showcase?
46. Name two Naga festivals.

47. Describe the Naga dance during the celebration of Moastu.
48. Which Naga festival is famous in India? What for?
49. Which bird is most admired in Nagaland?
50. Which Naga festival is named after the bird?
51. What does the event showcase?
52. Describe the dance by men during the Hornbill festival.
53. What helps Nagaland protect and continue its history?
54. Name four Sikkimese festivals.
55. Match the festivals under **A** with their occasions under **B**.

A

B

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| a. Losar | festival of light |
| b. Saga Dawa | harvest festival |
| c. Tihaar | New Year festival |
| d. Losoong | Buddhist festival |

56. What do people do while celebrating Saga Dawa?
57. How do the Sikkimese celebrate their harvest festival?
58. When is the Tibetan New Year celebrated?

E. Let's read between/beyond lines:

1. Many different things make up a society's culture. These things include:

food	arts	language	ideas
clothing	music	literature	beliefs
tools	dance	customs	religion

Can you add any more to this list? Write in the blank spaces.

2. What is oral history? Why is it important?

3. Folk songs and traditional dances of Assam have been handed down through many generations. Who passes down these songs and dances? To whom? Why?
4. The festivals of northeast India are based on two significant backgrounds. What are they? (Paragraphs- 1 and 14)
5. The people of north-eastern India live in the lap of nature. Simplicity is the most beautiful ornamentation on them. They are fatalists. They believe there is some force that controls events and guide them– call it God, destiny or fate. So they worship, pray and thank Him for the life they live. Which sentence states their religious beliefs? (Paragraph-14)
6. Besides rooting religious beliefs, the festivals help in many other ways. What are they? (Paragraph-16)

F. Let's Sum up:

The text you read is built up of many ideas. Each idea is described in just one or more than one paragraph. Match the ideas under 'A' with their paragraph number(s) under 'B'. Write serial number of each idea in the box against paragraph number(s).

A	B- Paragraph(s)
1. North East India	[] 15
2. Festivals of Arunachal Pradesh	[] 8
3. Assamese festivals	[] 10,11
4. Festivals of Manipur	[] 12, 13, 14
5. Festivals of Meghalaya	[] 1, 2
6. Festivals of Mizoram	[] 3, 4
7. Festivals of Nagaland	[] 5, 6
8. Sikkimese festivals	[] 9
9. Festivals of Tripura	[] 7

G. Let's learn words:**(a) Word Search :**

While reading a text, we come across some new words or the words we are not familiar with. The meaning of such words are available somewhere around the text.

Puzzle out the meanings of the words listed in the table below. Use the clues or hints — other words (synonyms, antonyms, examples, expressions, etc.) given in the context to help you understand. Numbers in brackets under col. 1 indicate paragraph numbers. Numbers under col.2 show the number of paragraphs where you can get the hints/facts/clues/ other words , such as synonyms, antonyms, examples, expressions, etc.

Copy and complete the table.

Words (para no)	Words/clues that helped me. (para no)	What I think the word means.	What the dictionary says.	Put a tick if your mean- ing is correct, and a X if you are not.
diverse(2)	2			
thriving (3, 15)	15			
onset(3)	3			
prominent(3)	6,8,9,13			
symbolize(3)	11			
attire(4)	8,13			
get in(4)	8,13			
instrument(4)	4			
clad(5)	13			
costume(9)	8,13			
atmosphere(4)	8			
hand down(4)	12			
showcase(14)	14			
significance(16)	16			
extensive(15)	8			

(b) Word Use :

Read the following sentences and notice the words in italics.

Hardly a month passes in the seven states without a festival or two.

The sentence means: Almost no month passes in seven states without a festival or two(= There is a festival or two in the seven states almost every month .). *Hardly* is an adverb meaning *almost no, almost not, almost none*. It is chiefly used with *any, ever, at all*, or the verb *can*.

Look at these sentences:

There is *hardly* any tea at home.

She *hardly* ever goes to the pictures.

It *hardly* rains in deserts.

I can *hardly* walk such a long distance.

Notice that *hardly* goes after the auxiliary verbs and before other verbs.

Now mark the following sentences :

I can hardly *believe* it.

*I can't hardly *believe* it.

The first sentence is correct but the second one is ungrammatical and so not acceptable. It is because *hardly* is a negative word and should not be used with *not* or other *negatives*.

Rewrite the sentences using *hardly, barely or scarcely* in them.

- (i) I saw almost none in the darkness.
- (ii) The team could not score any goal.
- (iii) The beggar has nothing to eat.
- (iv) Many cities do very little to check air pollution.
- (v) I know her very slightly.
- (vi) Working children have almost no chance to enjoy.
- (vii) There was almost no sugar in the jar.
- (viii) Samita cannot wait for her birthday.

(c) Homophones :

Homophones are words which sound the same but are spelt differently. For example : knew – new ; flour – flower , etc.

Read the sentences, underline the incorrect homophones and replace them with the correct ones.

- (i) Assam is a state in the north-eastern reason of India.
- (ii) Losar is a new-ear festival in Arunachal Pradesh.
- (iii) People prey gods for prosperity.
- (iv) The women and children are given a sumptuous fist.
- (v) People worship God to rise to a higher plain of life.
- (vi) Rich harvest is the result of herd labour.
- (vii) Folk dance and traditional music add to the festive heir.
- (viii) People throng Tripura to enjoy cultural programmes and fares.

H. Let's learn Grammar:

1. Look at the underlined words in the following sentences.

People clean and decorate their houses.

The temple houses 14 deities.

In the first sentence, house is used as a *noun* which is the object of the transitive verb 'decorate'. In the second sentence house is used as a finite verb.

Use each of the following words first as a *noun* and then as a *verb* in separate sentences of your own.

dance, harvest, drive, climb, spring, dress, name, group, mark, help

2. **Complete the sentences using appropriate prepositions choosing from the box.**

(to, against, of, for, on, with)

- (i) India consists _____ 28 States and 9 Union Territories.
- (ii) The movie is based _____ a real life incident.

- (iv) She is blessed _____ good health.
- (v) Shall I add some sugar _____ your tea ?
- (vi) The camel is the only means _____ transportation in deserts.
- (vii) Safety rules prescribe precautions _____ fire.

3. Perhaps you know what a **phrasal verb** is. A phrase that consists of a verb and a preposition or an adverb is called a phrasal verb. It acts as a verb in a sentence. It usually has a meaning that is different from that of the original verb in the phrase.

Look at the use of the phrasal verbs and their meanings in the following sentences.

What time did you get back last night ? (= return)

I'll get back to you. (= to speak/write to somebody again later, in order to give a reply)

Winter sets in and trees start to shed their leaves. (=begins)

Complete the following sentences using the phrasal verbs appropriately .

(bring in, show of, hand down, bring out, get in,
ask for, take place, drive away, pass down)

- (i) Young men and women _____ their best traditional attire.
- (ii) The festivals _____ in the month of July.
- (iii) On this occasion, people discard the old to _____ the New Year.
- (iv) People pray the gods to _____ evil spirits.
- (v) The songs have been _____ through many generations.
- (vi) The celebration of these festivals is an effective means of preserving and _____ their oral history.
- (vii) Men clad in full warrior costumes _____ their hunting and warring skills .

- (viii) People offer thanks to gods and _____ protection against calamities.
- (ix) These celebrations also help _____ the natural talent of people.

4. Look at the following sentences.

Rongali Bihu is celebrated in mid-April.

The crops have been harvested.

The sentences are in their passive forms. But the 'by-phrase' (by + agent or the doer of the action) in each of them is missing.

In some passive constructions, the 'by-phrase' is willfully dropped because the agent is either unknown or well understood or not disclosed by the speaker.

Put the following sentences into the passive without 'by-phrase'.

- (i) Farmers grow grapes in Hyderabad.
- (ii) Poachers kill a lot of wild animals every year.
- (iii) People make paper from pulp.
- (iv) Someone broke the window.
- (v) We should respect the elders.
- (vi) Somebody stole her purse.
- (vii) The police have arrested the miscreant.
- (viii) My friend has eaten up all the grapes.(But I want to keep it a secret.)

5. Read the following sentences and notice the underlined verbs.

- (a) The North East India, comprising eight states, is a place of diverse culture.
- (b) Blessed with lush greenery and mighty River Brahmaputra, the people of Assam have a lot to celebrate.

- (c) They pray to God to guide souls to heaven.
- (d) These celebrations also help encourage cultural and artistic activities and bring out the natural talent of people.

The verbs underlined in the above sentences carry no TENSE and hence, non-finite. Therefore, the parts of the sentences they occur in are non-finite clauses. The non-finite verb forms used in the sentences are *to-infinitive* (*to guide*), *bare -infinitive* (*encourage*, *bring out*), *-ing form* (*comprising*) and *-en form* (*blessed*).

Underline the *non-finite* clauses in the following sentences.

- (i) The pepa is a wind instrument made of a buffalo horn.
- (ii) Lying farther north in the mountainous region of the Himalayas, Arunachal Pradesh is one of India's most remote picturesque locations.
- (iii) On this occasion, people clean their homes and discard the old to bring in the New Year.
- (iv) The villagers climb the nearest hill tops for they believe that this will help them rise to higher plane in this life.
- (v) The Spring Festival or Chapchar Kut is an important occasion, mostly celebrated in Mizoram.
- (vi) Men and women of all ages, wearing traditional dresses and head-gear, perform folk dances and sing traditional songs.
- (vii) Wangala or the Hundred-drum Festival is celebrated in November to mark the end of hard work.

6. Read the following sentences.

- (a) Pepa is a wind instrument made of buffalo horn.

People use buffalo horn for making a pepa. We produce/make an object/ a thing using some material.

Now look at two more such examples.

- (a) Books are made of paper.
- (b) Paper is made from pulp.

What is the basic difference between the expressions 'made of' and 'made from' as used in the above sentences ?

If an object consists of a material that has not been changed in any significant way during the process of making the object, we say 'made of'. 'Paper' remains 'paper' in a book after manufacturing. 'Buffalo horn' remains 'buffalo horn' even after fastening it into a pepa . 'Made of' emphasizes inherent (original) material or qualities of the material used in making the object.

If the material is significantly changed in the process of making or producing the object, we generally say 'made from' . The inherent quality of the material is changed. Paper is solid and pulp is liquid. You cannot reverse it.

(a) Match the things under 'A' with the materials under 'B'. Write the serial numbers in brackets.

A		B	
(i)	shoes	[]	wood
(ii)	blanket	[]	milk
(iii)	house	[]	cotton
(iv)	ice	[]	flour
(v)	shirt	[]	water
(vi)	juice	[]	bronze
(vii)	bread	[]	iron
(viii)	statue	[]	denim
(ix)	gate	[]	leather
(x)	chair	[]	bricks
(xi)	cheese	[]	fruit
(xii)	jeans	[]	wool

(b) Now make sentences for each pair using 'made of' or 'made from'.

One is done for you.

(i) Shoes are made of leather.

I. Let's Learn Study Skills:

(a) The table below contains necessary facts on the festivals which the eight states of North East India celebrate. But some facts are missing. Copy and complete the table supplying the missing information.

State	Festival	Time	Purpose	What people do
Assam	Rongali Bihu	onset of spring	mark the start of the New Year, beginning of the harvest season	-put on traditional clothes -sing melodious folk songs -perform traditional dance
	Kongali Bihu			
	Bhogali Bihu			
Arunachal Pradesh				
Manipur				
Meghalaya				
Mizoram				
Nagaland				
Sikkim				
Tripura				

(b) Use the information/facts available in the table you have completed above and write a paragraph of 4 to 5 sentences on the festivals of each state.

J. Let's write:

1. Write answers to all questions under the activity- D. "Let's understand the text."
2. You are going to celebrate a popular festival of your locality. Write a letter to your friend inviting him/her to visit your place on the occasion. Mention the important features, such as name, time, preparation, gathering, fun and merry making, entertainment, sales and purchase, usefulness, etc.

K. Let's do this activity:

"Festivals of North-East India" is full of many interesting facts. Therefore, your teacher can organize and conduct a quiz activity on the topic in order to revisit the facts/information for your better understanding and learning.

The quiz programme will have three rounds. The 1st round will be based on "one-sentence answer"; the 2nd round, on "True/False response" , and the 3rd one, on "One-word option".

The sample questions for each round are as follows :

Round 1: What are the different types of Bihu Festival ?

(Participants are to answer each question in one complete sentence.)

Round 2: The River Brahmaputra flows through the state of Tripura.

(Competitors will answer : 'TRUE' or 'FALSE'.)

Round 3: Which of the following is not a new-year festival ?

A. Cheiraoba

C. Wangala

B. Losar

D. Rongali Bihu

Instructions to the Teacher to conduct the quiz :

Prepare 10 questions – two parallel sets, each having 5 questions – for each round. Each set of questions will legibly written/typed on separate sheets of paper and arranged/tagged round wise. In addition, prepare the answer sheet for quick/ready reference at the time of administering the quiz.

Declare the date/time for the quiz when teaching/learning of the lesson is complete in all respects. You may need two or more consecutive periods. In such a situation, seek your colleague's cooperation to lend you his/her period(s) with the knowledge of the headmaster/headmistress.

If possible, you may arrange for the winner's award/consolation prize as a token of inspiration/encouragement.

Once again, see that everything is well prepared for the show.

On the day as scheduled, enter the class, greet the pupils, welcome them to the programme. Divide the class into two groups with equal learning ability. Tell them about the rules of the quiz. Keep the kids in good humour. Start the session. Yes, one thing more. You are the quiz master. And choose someone, of course not from among the participants, who will act impartially to record the scores on the blackboard. Why not choose one of your colleagues?

Perhaps you know the rest – how to go on.

When the quiz programme is over and the winner is declared, invite your institutional head or a senior colleague to give away the prize(s) with a few words of encouragement to the partakers.

