

**THE ONLINE VISIT FOR JULY 2022 WAS PROPOSED WITH THE
FOLLOWING PROGRAM**

Awareness Campaign on

Hajo is an ancient pilgrimage centre for three religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The Hayagriva Madhava Mandir is the most famous temple of Hajo. Lesser known temples of Hajo like that of Ganesha received royal patronage during the reign of Ahom King Pramatta Singha . The **Kedareswara Temple**, a Shiva temple, has an inscription on the temple indicating patronage of Rajeswar Singha period. Hajo is also famous for Barmaqam Powa Makkah which is an ancient mosque and contains the shrine of a Muslim preacher.

This was aimed to enhance

Tourist Awareness campaign, School students awareness campaign, visit (Online /offline)

Tourist Stakeholder Awareness workshop

HAJO - THE LAND OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY



Hajo is an important religious destination of Assam. Hajo sees a unique confluence of the three most important religions of the world – Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, which is an important aspect as well of Hajo tourism. There are several temples dedicated to Hindu gods and goddesses, Lord Buddha and shrines of important Muslim saints.

Its closeness to the Assam capital makes it accessible and hugely popular. The small town lies on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra in the Kamrup district of Assam. There are many varying opinions about

the history of Hajo. It is believed that this small town was the capital of the Koch dynasty which later came under the rule of the Mughals. Over centuries, Hajo has been known by different names. If in the 11th century it was known as Apurnabhava and Manikuta, in the 18th Century it was called Manikutgram. On the other hand, the Buddhists believe that it was at Hajo that Lord Buddha attained nirvana.



Hajo is a historic town set in the hills northwest of Guwahati, Assam, India. It is a meeting point of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims due to the various pilgrimage sites on the different hills of Hajo. To the Hindus, the Manikut Parbat of Hajo is the site of the 10th-century temple ruins and the 11th- to 16th-century temples complex for Vaishnavism as well as shrines of Shaivism and Shaktism. To the Buddhists, particularly from Bhutan and Tibet, Assam is where the Buddha died and the Hayagriva temple in Hajo is a part of the sacred geography of the Buddha. To the regional Muslims, the Mughal era Powa-Mecca shrine on another hill of Hajo has the tomb of GiyasuddinAulia built in the 17th-century. Hajo is one of the important historical and archaeological sites

in northeast India as it preserves the history, inscriptions and architecture in a range of temples and monuments over about 1200 years. It is also a site known for its tradition of preserving rare species of tortoises, with Hindus believing that they are a form of Kurma avatar of Vishnu.

History:

Ancient to 16th century:

The Hajo pillar fragments are found within the premises of the temples complex called the Hayagriva Madhava Temple. It is a large monolithic pillar that likely broke in a historic earthquake, along with any monuments that may have existed near it. Four pieces of this pillar are known, three significant and retained by later restoration efforts of the temple, and one smaller piece of the same stone found after 1950. The locals now refer to it as the "Ashoka pillar". The pillar lacks any inscription, but has marks on it that appear to be of water erosion and not a script of any language. However, marks are on the side where the erosion marks would normally not be expected, given that Brahmaputra flows from east-northeastern to west-southwestern direction in Assam. Talukder in 1959 conjectured that this Hajo pillar was a Buddhist pillar, installed in 400 BCE (2400 years ago), created before Ashoka built "84000 stupas at a cost of 100 crores of rupees", and that the marks may have been caused by reverse flow of a small turbulent Brahmaputra stream in Hajo. If Talukder's conjecture is true, this would be the oldest known monolithic pillar and Buddhist monument in Asia. However, states the historian D.D. Kosambi, Talukder does not offer any evidence or arguments to support his conjecture. There is no evidence of any Buddhist stupa or vihara was ever built in Hajo. The Hajo pillar may be of much later date and may belong to either Buddhism, Hinduism or

another tradition. The pillar's existence does suggest Hajo is a very old historic site where its people had mastered building methods long ago.

Hayagrive Madhav mandir is situated on the Monikut hill (ManikutaParvata). The present temple structure was constructed by the King Raghudeva Narayan in 1583. The earliest ruins suggest and the local tradition believes that the original temple was built during the Pala dynasty in the 10th-century. It is a stone temple dedicated to Vishnu, and the best known, most frequented monument in Hajo. The temple enshrines an image of Hayagriva Madhava (Vishnu as part-man-part-horse avatar). Some regional Buddhists have long believed that the Hayagriva Madhava temple is a part of their sacred Tsmach'og-gron geography because it is where the Buddha died. According to Lavoni, the Tibetan Lamas believe that the Hayagriva image inside the Madhava temple is of "Mahamuni" (the Buddha) because near the statue is the inscription "Om Mani Padme Hum" The image is of four-armed Vishnu. This combination of a Buddhist mantra and Hindu iconography has made this temple sacred to both traditions. The 7th-century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang visited Assam, and describes it to be a country with no Buddhists and only Deva-worshippers (Hindu). According to Spooner, this temple was repaired and plastered over in 1903–1904 to help preserve it



Kedareswara Temple: This is a Shiva temple on the Madanachal hill in Hajo with inscriptions showing land grants made during the Rajeswar Singha period. According to a field visit and survey completed by Spooner for ASI in 1912, the alternate name for this temple is Kedarnatha temple. He observed that the temple was likely rebuilt with stone during the Singha period, since it shows molding to be of a different stone and an attempt to fit the reconstructed temple over the remains of an older temple



Kamaleswara Temple: A Shiva temple from the Ahom-period also on the Madanachal hill, east of the Ganga-pushkarini.



Ganesha Temple: at the foot of the Madanachal hill. A boulder here looked like a Ganesha, per the local legend, and it has been carved to reveal the full image of Ganesha.



Fakuwa Dol: near the Hayagriva Mahadeva temple, this Hindu shrine has an octagonal plan and domical top

The rows of elephants at the plinth of the Hayagriva Mahadeva temple are likely the oldest part here, about 10th century. They are fine specimens of Assamese art. The Hayagriva temple is a Nagara architecture temple, with a mandapa, antarala and garbhagriya. It has artwork from Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism.

17th century:

Powa Makkah: The Garurachal hill in Hajo is the site of a Muslim tomb and mosque – Powa Makkah (Poa Mecca, a quarter of Makkah). It is a place of pilgrimage for the Muslims. Near it is now a renovated mosque, with an old Persian inscription from the 17th-century. It mentions the Mughal prince Muhammad Shujauddin – one of the sons of Shah Jahan. The shrine has the tomb of GiyasuddinAulia. The mosque and Aulia's tomb were visited by Spooner in 1912. His report states that the mosque was in a ruined state and the local Muslims have asked the British government to repair it with public funds. He mentions that the ruined "Poa Mecca" mosque was made from bricks that had collapsed in several places, and has an inscribed granite inside (5 feet by 1.75 feet) which states that it was built in 1657 CE. It is likely that the ruined mosque was restored with bricks again after the 17th-century. It was covered with "jungle" and had not been used in a while. He also mentions that the GiyasuddinAulia's tomb in front of it is just a grave and there is no shrine over it. The tomb, states Spooner, is of a Muslim governor who ruled over Kamrup district and nearby area. The inscription found inside this Hajo mosque said that it was built by an Iranian named Lutfullah Shirazi. Instead of calling the location as Hajo, the inscription renames it "Shuja'abad".



There is a big pond known as Madhab Pukhuri near the temple. Dou, Biyu and Janmastami festivals are celebrated every year in the temple. Sayani, the first wife of Kalia Bhomora Borphukan of the Ahom kingdom donated a plot of land and other gifts to the Hayagriva Madhava temple during the reign of Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha.

Conclusion:

But compared to the potential, development of tourism has not yet taken place at Hajo. There are many reasons for this firstly there is a lack of proper infrastructure Communication bottlenecks like roads, railways come in between the way of easy transit of tourist. Conditions of roads are not proper. Secondly there lacks standard accommodation, a tourist transport network and travel agencies. Tourists especially foreign tourists demands facilities that are at par with international standard. Insurgency has also vitiated the atmosphere so much necessary for the tourism necessary. Moreover unnecessary bandhs call by different

organization effects the time schedule and increasing the expenditure. A tourist general perception is that he or she wants a tension free atmosphere while undertaking a tour. Absence of peaceful situation is the main hurdle which affects tourism industry. This trend off late haverisen to glaring proportion. There also lacks the apathy of the government to repair the damages that have been observed in the Vishnu Pushkar tank where large number of fish have died due to various reason. Moreovercracks have also been observed in the pillars of the Hayagriva Madhava built by Pramatta Singha where the department of archeology have not taken any concrete steps. Tourism is primarily a state subject hence it is the responsibility of the government to develop infrastructure, disseminate information and coordinate sector activities for attracting substantial private sector investment in tourism sector. Publicity outside Assam about Hajo is a must. A master plan is also mandatory for linking the various location of tourist interest in Hajo with proper infrastructural facilities. Governmental role is pivotal for the development of Hajo as a tourist spot which needs to be supplemented by positive help from the local people.