



## Tribal Lockdown Rituals

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### Why in News

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Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh have revived indigenous lockdown rituals to contain the spread of **COVID-19**.

The State of Arunachal Pradesh is geographically closest to **China's Hubei province** where the COVID-19 outbreak began.

### Rituals by Different Tribes

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#### Galos Tribe

- The **Galos**, which are one of the 26 major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh that dominate West Siang district practised the **Arr-Rinam ritual**.
  - The Galo community has been recognized as a **Scheduled Tribe** in the Amendment to the Constitution (ST), Order, 1950, Part-XVIII.
  - **Mopin** is the main festival in Galos which is celebrated for the prosperity of the villages. The Galos perform **Popir dance**.
- **Arr-Rinam** is the Galo equivalent of **lockdown** imposed by consensus for 48 hours whenever an epidemic strikes.
- The Arr-Rinam follows the **Ali-Ternam** (the word Ali means epidemic and Ternam means forestall) ritual **to ward off an epidemic**.
- These rituals were last performed almost four decades ago when a water-borne disease had affected many members of the community.
- However, these rituals have been performed periodically for **livestock, primarily the semi-wild animal mithun, that are prone to contagious diseases**.
- This is for the **first time in 30-40 years** that the rituals were performed for the **safety of humans**.
- The **Bos or deputy priests** performed the Ali-Ternam under the guidance of a **Nyibo (shaman)**.

- The ritual **ended with the community leaders sealing five major entry points of the district.**

### **Adi Tribe**

- The Adi community also performed a similar ritual called the **motor or pator system** in the Adi (tribe) dialect.
- This is a customary **self-restriction**, where the locals lock down several villages by **erecting barricades** to prevent the entry of outsiders. No person is allowed to enter or leave the villages.
- They believe that this ritual lets shamans with legendary powers to locate wild herbs to combat an epidemic.

### **Note:**

- The Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh is believed to have come from southern China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- They are the **Tibeto-Burman language** speaking population..
- They reside in the far north inhabiting **East Siang and Lower Dibang Valley districts** of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Adis are experts at **making cane and bamboo items.**
- **Solung** (harvesting festival where animal sacrifices and rituals are performed) and **Aran** ( a hunting festival where all the male members of the family go for hunting) are two major festivals of the Adi tribes.

### **Nyishi Tribe**

- In districts such as Papum Pare and East Kameng, the dominant Nyishi community observed **Arrue** involving **self-quarantine.**
- Nyishi Tribes also called **Bangni** are the tribal people of eastern Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh (formerly North East Frontier Agency).
- Nyishi is a **Scheduled Tribe.** It is the **single largest tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.**
- They speak the **Tibeto-Burman language of the Sino-Tibetan family.**
- The Nyishi support themselves with **slash-and-burn agriculture and with hunting and fishing.**
- They live together in a longhouse without partitions but with a separate fireplace for each conjugal family.
- Aside from a patrilineal household there is **no formal social organization or village government.**
- Their religion involves **belief in spirits associated with nature.**

**Source: TH**