

ASI mulls GPR survey to trace lost Hindu temple

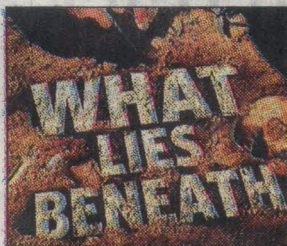
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Guwahati: A mysterious ninth-century Hindu temple, believed to be buried deep in the ground, may receive a new lease of life with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) planning to conduct a Ground Penetrating Radio (GPR) survey to locate it by the end of this year.

On Wednesday, officials of the Guwahati Circle of ASI said they had already sent a proposal for the GPR survey to the office of the director-general of ASI in Delhi and were awaiting an approval. The Guwahati circle of ASI, as part of a trial excavation, unearthed remains of a temple thought to have been lost at Bhitripam village in Lakhimpur district. The site's historic importance was brought to the fore when stone blocks supposedly belonging to a temple were unearthed.

Once approved by the director-general's office, a GPR survey will be carried out across a 75mX50m area to locate the core of the ancient structure. The main purpose of the GPR survey will be to know the exact nature, dimen-

GROUND BREAKING SURVEY



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sion and core structure of the temple.

"The survey will be helpful in knowing the extent of the structure. If everything is approved, we will do the survey during October and November," said Milan Kumar Chauley, superintending archaeologist, Guwahati Circle, ASI.

Talatal Ghar and Ahom Royal Palace (Kareng Ghar).

The GPR survey is a non-destructive tool or method used by experienced archaeologists and geologists across the world. Conventional excavation spoils the landscape of a historical site and leaves permanent scars on monuments.

"This circle has also approached IIT-Kanpur and it has agreed to do the same survey again. If permission for GPR is not approved, we will have to modify the trenching over the excavation site for more information," Chauley added.

The discovery of the stone blocks, dating back to 1000 years, proved once again that the Brahmaputra Valley was once dotted with stone temples. Most of them had either been forced deep underground due to topographical or weather changes or were swallowed up the mighty Brahmaputra.

The trial excavation that was carried out recently was able to expose some plain and carved architectural stone remnants. It also showed that most of the architectural fragments were removed from their original position.

If the approval was received, this would be the second such study to be conducted in the region. The first GPR survey in the northeast took place in April at two Ahom monuments in Sivasagar district. It was carried out by IIT-Kanpur, in collaboration with the Guwahati circle of ASI, at