

Sagol Kangjei

January 7, 2023

In news– The Union Home Minister has inaugurated a 122-foot-tall statue of Sagol Kangjei, a polo player astride a Manipur Pony in Imphal.

A brief note on Sagol Kangjei-

- **Modern polo is said to have originated from Sagol Kangjei, a sport indigenous to Manipur, in which players ride horses, specifically the Manipur Ponies,** which are referenced in records dating back to the **14th century.**
- It was reproduced into a formal sports form by King Ningthou Kangba, of Ancient Manipur (Antique Kangleipak).
- The 'PUYAS' or ancient scriptures trace it to the mythological age when the game was played by gods.
- The game is played with 7 players on each side mounted on ponies, which are often not more than 4/5 feet in height.
- Each player is outfitted with a polo stick made of cane having a narrow angled wooden head fixed at the striking end. The ball, 14 inches in circumference is made of bamboo root.
- The mounted players hit the ball into the goal. Extremely vigorous and exhilarating the game is now played in two styles – the PANA or original Manipuri style and the International Style i.e. POLO.
- The fact that Manipur is the birthplace of polo is already supported by the Guinness World Records, by a declaration in the year 1991, as: "Polo can be traced to origins in Manipur state c. 3100 BC, when it was played as Sagol Kangjei."
- The Marjing Polo Complex has been developed as a way to conserve the Manipur Pony.
- The state government's Manipur Pony Conservation and Development Policy 2016 refers to the mythology around

the Manipur Pony.

Manipur Pony-

- **The Manipur Pony is one of five recognised equine breeds of India**, and has a powerful cultural significance for Manipuri society.
- The Manipuri pony has been indispensable with Manipuri society for its socio-cultural association for centuries. Its antecedents, however, are not clear, as one source stated Tibetan ponies as its ancestors while another source stated its origin to be a cross between Mongolian wild horse & Arabian.
- However, all agreed that it was derived from ancient stock. In some manuscripts, it is referred to as Mangal-sa or Mongolian animal.
- In Manipuri mythology, the Manipuri pony was regarded to have descended from “Samadon Ayangba” the winged steed of Lord Margjing, one of the guardian deities of Manipur.
- According to the Imphal-based curator and author, the **Manipur Pony features in mythological stories, and is celebrated in oral tradition, ballads, and rituals**. Historically an important part of Manipuri armies, it is used only for cavalry, rituals, and sport, not for working as a draught animal.
- **The mythology is that it was created as a winged beast** that had to be controlled because of which its wings had to be lopped off and it fell to the ground.
- **It was created by Sanamahi, also known as Marjing**, who is the older of two brothers in an archetypal sibling mythology. He feels that his birthright is stolen by his younger brother Pakhangba and creates the winged beast
- Samadon Ayangba to try to kill his brother.
- The horse turns out to be really destructive and begins to get out of control. Sanamahi’s father orders him to control it, as a result of which Sanamahi cuts off its

wings.

- However, the small and dwindling numbers of the Manipur Pony has been a cause for concern.
- The 17th Quinquennial Livestock Census 2003 had recorded 1,898 Manipur Ponies; the number fell to 1,101 in the 19th Quinquennial Livestock Census in 2012.