



MYSTIC EAST

...nuggets galore

vol 1 | Issue 1 | November - December 2014

COVER STORY

SKY IS THE LIMIT FOR TOURISM IN BENGAL



BEWITCHING MIZORAM: WHERE ANTHURIUMS BECKON TOURISTS



HOTEL AND RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN INDIA

HRAEI SLASHES MEMBERSHIP FEES

The new membership fee structure for hotels, restaurants and associates were worked out as follows at the second managing committee meeting of HRAEI. It was decided to slash membership fees by 50%. In addition, a 20% discount card (it was 15% earlier) was introduced for members. The committee cleared all 28 new membership applications after due diligence.

HRAEI MEMBERSHIP FEES VALID UPTO 31.03.2015						
Category	Entrance Fee	Annual Subscription	Legal Fund @10%	Total	Service Tax @12.36%	Grand Total
HOTELS						
10 TO 30 Rooms	1500.00	4000.00	400.00	5900.00	729.00	6629.00
31 to 60 rooms	1500.00	6000.00	600.00	8100.00	1001.00	9101.00
61 to 100 rooms	1500.00	8000.00	800.00	10300.00	1273.00	11573.00
100 to 150 rooms	1500.00	11000.00	1100.00	13600.00	1681.00	15281.00
151 and above	1500.00	14000.00	1400.00	16900.00	2089.00	18989.00
RESTAURANT						
25 TO 100 Covers	1500.00	2500.00	250.00	4250.00	525.00	4775.00
101 and above covers	1500.00	3500.00	350.00	5350.00	661.00	6011.00
ASSOCIATES						
	1500.00	3000.00	300.00	4800.00	593.00	5393.00

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COVER STORY

SKY IS THE LIMIT

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ব্রাত্য বসু
Bratya Basu



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MESSAGE

I congratulate the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) on the launch of a magazine called 'Mystic East' which will be dedicated to developments in the tourism industry in eastern India, including the north-eastern states. I believe that this will cater to the diverse needs of all stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors of the region.

In West Bengal, we have taken some bold measures in the recent past to give tourists an experience of a lifetime, which they will cherish forever. In the coming years, we will open up new destinations with world class facilities. Tourists to our state will get a taste of our richest flora and fauna in Sundarbans, our music and food and also get a real feel of our rich cultural heritage.

I hope that the magazine will boost tourism industry in the state to delight tourists with a complete package of adventure, heritage, sports, culture and food tourism.

Dated: The 26th November, 2014

Bratya Basu
(BRATYA BASU)

To
The Secretary General
Hotel & Restaurant Associations of Eastern India
18/A Everest House, 18th floor
46C, Chowringhee Road
Kolkata-700071



A. R. Bardhan, IAS

**Principal Secretary
Tourism Department
Government of West Bengal
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Kolkata - 700 001
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17.11.2014

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) is coming out with a magazine called *Mystic East* which will cover hospitality trade and tourism industry-related news and events.

The entire east and north-eastern region is now humming with tourist activity as the good word spreads. We anticipate a quantum jump in tourist arrivals in West Bengal over the next couple of years as new projects take shape and existing tourist destinations get world class accommodation and related amenities.

Your magazine could not have come at a more opportune time. Our entire eastern region is endowed with amazing natural resources and a mind-boggling treasure trove of art, heritage and culture.

It is my conviction that your magazine will play a stellar role in promoting tourism in this region. I extend my good wishes to the entire team of *Mystic East* and hope it will deliver much more than our expectations.



(A.R. Bardhan)

**A. R. BARDHAN, IAS
Principal Secretary
Tourism Department
Govt. of West Bengal**



जय प्रकाश शॉ
J. P. Shaw

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
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November 28, 2014

MESSAGE

I am delighted to know that The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India has launched a bi-monthly trade magazine entitled 'Mystic East'. The magazine will provide all the latest updates and information relating to the hospitality industry in the country. As we are all aware that Hotel and Tourism industry at large has immense potential to act as catalyst for generating large scale employment. The 12th Five year Plan envisages that this sector will directly support about 80 million jobs by 2016. Hotel and restaurants constitute a major part of the tourism sector which employs 9.20% of the total workforce of the country. I wish the launch of 'Mystic East' magazine a grand success.

I also take the opportunity to extend my congratulations to all the newly elected members of the HRAEI fraternity and wish them a very Happy Seasons Greetings.


J. P. Shaw

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI



The year 2014 was a challenging phase for the hospitality sector, on account of headwinds emanating from global geopolitical and macroeconomic volatility. However, I am optimistic that the new year will bring a sustained turnaround in our industry's growth trail with eVisa/ TvoA scheme for international tourists and introduction of the much-awaited GST constitutional amendment bill in the parliament

Dear fellow members,

Season's Greetings and Happy New Year to everyone!

It is with great excitement and delight, I present to all of you, the inaugural issue of 'Mystic East', a bimonthly magazine from the HRAEI stable. On assuming the responsibility of leading this august organization as its President, I had identified two areas of immediate focus – expanding the range of value-added services which we provide to our esteemed members, and strengthening the Association's thought leadership initiatives. The successful launch of our exclusive magazine is an embodiment of this very commitment and fills a long-felt void. The magazine aims to keep our members abreast of the developments in the hospitality industry and latest developments on policy & regulatory issues including news and events, particularly from all the 13 member states of our association.

The year 2014 was a challenging phase for the hospitality sector, on account of headwinds emanating from global geopolitical and macroeconomic volatility. However, I am optimistic that the new year will bring a sustained turnaround in our industry's growth trail with eVisa/ TvoA scheme for international tourists and introduction of the much-awaited GST constitutional amendment bill in the parliament.

The abrupt suspension of registration of new units under the North East Industrial & Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), 2007 by the DIPP, has understandably led to considerable anxiety and disappointment among entrepreneurs and potential investors. On behalf of our industry, HRAEI is actively pursuing the revocation of the suspension with the Union Government at the highest level. I had raised this matter in our meeting with Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Hon'ble Minister of Tourism, Government of India, who has assured us of his full support. We have also submitted a detailed memorandum to Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce & Industry for revocation of the suspension orders, a copy of

which has been mailed to all members.

During his recent visit to the Northeast, the Hon'ble Prime Minister had strongly emphasized the immense potential latent in this region, by acknowledging the Northeast as India's "natural economic zone" and a strategic gateway to Southeast Asia. Therefore, it is vital that a facilitative measure such as the NEIIPP should continue, so as to position the Northeast as a viable investment destination as well as accomplish the overarching goal of integrating this region with the mainstream national economy. I am confident of a satisfactory resolution of the present impasse at the earliest.

In 2015, we will have the distinct privilege of organizing and hosting the golden jubilee celebration of the prestigious FHRAI Annual Convention. Over the past five decades, the FHRAI Convention has come to be regarded as the most eagerly awaited event of the Indian hospitality industry. The 50th FHRAI Convention is poised to draw together a galaxy of iconic and influential leaders, including distinguished dignitaries from the central and state governments, industry stalwarts, policymakers, renowned global experts, inspiring entrepreneurs as well as eminent representatives from the media and civil society. The event will be an ideal showcase for our region's abundant natural beauty, rich heritage, vivid diversity and cast a spotlight on the lucrative investment opportunities, inherent in the region's dynamic hospitality sector.

Have a great year ahead!
With warm regards,

Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



Pranav Singh
Secretary, HRAEI

The economies of the north-eastern states have assumed an entirely new dimension with the emergence of cross border trade opportunities as a result of the Centre's 'Look East' policy. Economic integration among nations is today a necessity as it ensures development and social welfare through poverty alleviation and generation of employment in the region.

Since the NDA government came to power in May this year, the government has taken several initiatives to promote economic cooperation with ASEAN and other neighbouring countries through the gateway of the north-east, particularly with Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spelt out these initiatives with clarity at the 2014 SAARC summit in Nepal. I would like to highlight some of them here for the benefit of our readers.

- India and Bangladesh have strengthened links through rail, road, power and transit facilities.
- India and Nepal have announced cooperation in energy and a free trade agreement with Sri Lanka is expected to improve radically trade between the two countries.
- India has taken the bold step of allowing duty free South Asian partners duty-free access to 99.7% of their goods.
- Infrastructure is the Achilles heel of north-east India, is being beefed up with a special purpose facility in India to finance infrastructure projects in SAARC area to enhance connectivity and trade.
- PM Modi assured his counterparts in

SAARC that trade facilitation at the border will be streamlined by simplifying procedures, upgrading facilities, establishing common standards and reducing paper work.

Our PM struck the right chord when he said: "Our relations become stronger when we connect the lives of the ordinary citizens of our countries." What is most reassuring is the government's commitment to promote tourism in the region by leveraging the shared heritage and diversity of SAARC member countries.

If we are firm in our commitment and resolve to further cross border trade from NER, then sky is the limit and the entire north-east region will reap the benefits of economic prosperity in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pranav Singh'.

Pranav Singh
Secretary, HRAEI

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Mr Pradeep Lata
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Hotel Swagath, Partner

PM MODI FLAGS OFF FIRST TRAIN TO MEGHALAYA



“We will not be happy in just adding one coach or upgrading one station. We want both horizontal and vertical development of the railways. It can become the engine of Indian economy,” he added.

The Prime Minister also favoured connecting northeast digitally by installing optical fibre network so that people in remotest area can also avail all facilities of the cyber world. We have ‘Look East Policy’ and now we will have ‘Act East Policy’. Northeast will be the centre of development,” he added. (source: IBNLIVE)

The Hindustan Times adds: In his address, the Prime Minister stressed on rapid infrastructure development in the northeastern region of the country. “It is believed in Vastu Shastra that the northeastern part of the house must be proper. Then things will be good at home. If we take good care of the northeast, the entire country will move ahead,” Modi said.

Guwahati: Almost after six decades of independence, northeastern state Meghalaya found a spot on the country’s rail map with Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagging off the first train to the state on Saturday, November 29.

The Prime Minister on Saturday inaugurated the Mendipathar-Guwahati passenger train and laid the foundation stone of broad gauge conversion of Bhairabi-Sairang line in Mizoram.



Modi said the Indian Railways have the potential to become the backbone of the country’s economic activity.

NEW FACES IN MINISTRY OF TOURISM



Dr. Mahesh Sharma has taken over as the Minister of State Tourism & Culture (Independent

Charge) and MoS Civil Aviation. Dr Sharma has replaced Shripad Yesso Naik, who will now be handling AAYUSH (I/C) and Health & Family Welfare. A doctor by profession, Dr Sharma holds an MBBS degree and is also the Chairman and Managing Director of Kailash Healthcare Limited.



Dr. Lalit K Panwar is the Secretary, MOT, Government of India. He has replaced Parvez Dewan. Panwar has served earlier as the

Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC). An IAS officer of the 1979 batch Rajasthan cadre, Panwar was also Director, Tourism, with the Rajasthan Govt. He is one of the pioneers in modernising the ‘Palace on Wheels’. Panwar also holds a doctorate degree in tourism.



Suman Billa has been appointed as the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of

India. Billa is currently Secretary of Tourism, Government of Kerala. He is a 1996 batch IAS officer and has studied at the Madras Christian College, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi and has been a British Chevening Gurukul Scholar at the London School of Economics.

Slainte



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ANDAMAN HOTELIERS BRIEFED ON SECURITY MEASURES

Port Blair: A meeting with local hoteliers of Port Blair area was held recently at the SP(D)SA office in which 36 hotel owners/representatives participated. The Superintendent of Police (CID)/ FRO Shri Atul Kumar Thakur highlighted the issue of sending the 'C' form of foreigners within 24 hours either through online mode or manually. He also mentioned that the latest photograph of the foreigner is to be sent/uploaded along with the 'C' form.

Hotel owners were also advised to disseminate information about anti-social elements and keep a watchful eye on suspected persons/foreigners. Ebola virus issue was also discussed. Hotel owners were also advised to ensure police verification of all employees working in the hotels. The matter regarding 'Bed and Breakfast' was also discussed.

Shri Shibesh Singh, IPS Superintendent of Police, South Andaman District also expressed his views regarding the importance of the IVFRT (Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking) and its significance in monitoring the movement of foreigners and other details relating to foreigners visiting these islands. He also suggested that the Hoteliers should install CCTV in their Hotels which not only helps the hotel owner but also the law enforcing agency. (source: Andaman Sheekha)

SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP ON BED & BREAKFAST SCHEME

India Tourism Kolkata, Govt. of India organised a 'Sensitization Workshop' with the State Government and stakeholders on 'Incredible India Bed & Breakfast Scheme' at Hotel Park Plaza, Ballygunge, 17 Garcha, 1st Lane, Kolkata-700 019 on Friday, the 1st of August 2014 at 3:30 PM. The workshop was chaired by Mr. A R Bardhan, Principal

Secretary (Tourism), Govt. of West Bengal And Mr. J P Shaw, Regional Director convened the workshop.

The guideline on Incredible India Bed & Breakfast Scheme is available on the Ministry of Tourism's website <http://tourism.gov.in/> (Link: Hotels & Restaurants).



India Tourism Patna, organised a 'Sensitization Workshop' with the State Government and stakeholders on 'Incredible India Bed & Breakfast Scheme' at Hotel Patliputra Ashok, Patna on 06.08/2014.

The workshop was chaired by Dr. Deepak Prasad, Principal Secretary (Tourism), Govt. of Bihar. Mr. R K Suman, Asst. Director, India Tourism, Kolkata presented the brief guidelines about the scheme.

HSRT MEETING

Regional Director (East) called upon a meeting of the General Managers / HR Managers of the classified hotels of West Bengal at Hotel Astor on 24th November 2014 at Hotel Astor, Kolkata to review the implementation of HSRT scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India by classified hotels of West Bengal and its importance in future classification/re-classification.



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SEMINAR ON PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE PROPERTIES



(Left to Right) - Mr. Navin Suchanti, CEO and Managing Director, Sinclairs Hotels, Mr. Pradip Chopra, President, Murshidabad Heritage Development Society (MHDS), Chief Guest His Excellency, Governor of West Bengal, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi lighting the ceremonial lamp. To the Governor's right are Mr. Sushil Mohta, President CREDAI Bengal, Mr. Sandeep Naulakha, Secretary, MHDS and Mr Aniruddha Lahiri, Past President, Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Murshidabad Heritage Development Society (MHDS) in association with CREDAI Bengal and The Institute of Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Development (ILEAD), with support from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), INTACH, Calcutta Club, and University of Cambridge organized a seminar and panel discussion titled "Get the best out of your heritage property". The seminar was held at The Palladian Lounge, Kolkata on November 22, 2014 with an aim to promote entrepreneurship by sensitizing heritage property owners about various business opportunities and options available today to restore and preserve their properties through viable economic models that can earn revenue. His Excellency, Governor of West Bengal, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi was the Chief Guest and inaugurated this seminar by lighting the ceremonial lamp. The seminar witnessed the distinguished participation of eminent panelists and industry stalwarts, who shared their national and international experiences and experiments to restore, conserve and convert the heritage properties into a financially viable entity which can be replicated in West Bengal.

Mr. Sushil Mohta, President, CREDAI Bengal, commented, "CREDAI Bengal makes a determined effort to preserve our heritage across the state of West Bengal. We believe that the preservation of heritage buildings, and along with them inherent traditions, endorses the fundamental bond with our historical, cultural, educational, aesthetic and economic legacies. We require a substantial policy to preserve the heritage properties in

India and make some of them viable business propositions for future. These buildings are a work of art and can act as ideal tourist getaways. All across European nations there is a significant development in revamping heritage structures as tourist attractions."

Mr. Pradip Chopra, President, Murshidabad Heritage Development Society and Chairman, ILEAD said, "In India, we need a sustainable policy to educate the people about the value of these buildings. Today's seminar and panel discussion is a noble initiative undertaken by CREDAI in association with Murshidabad Heritage Development Society to educate owners of heritage structures and common people the need to revamp and reestablish the legacy through a practical business model."

The seminar titled, "**Get the best out of your heritage property**", unravelled the multiple usages of heritage assets, innovative and easy-to-implement economic models for creating national and international tourism markets as well as promote entrepreneurship. A distinguished panel of delegates comprising heritage asset owners/custodians, trustees, curators, government officials, hospitality industry leaders, representatives of national and international organisations, conservation architects and architecture students participated in the seminar with the sole aim to create awareness about the rich and vibrant heritage of Bengal – encompassing architecture, arts, history and social mores – building a learning bridge between our past, present and future.

His Excellency, Governor of West Bengal, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi handed over the coveted 'Lifetime Achieve-



(Left to Right) - Mr. Navin Suchanti, CEO and Managing Director, Sinclairs Hotels, Mr. Sushil Mohta, President CREDAI Bengal, Mr. Pradip Chopra, President, Murshidabad Heritage Development Society (MHDS), Chief Guest His Excellency, Governor of West Bengal, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi, Ms Neeta Das, Author of Murshidabad: Forgotten Capital of Bengal and Aniruddha Lahiri, Past President, Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry posing with the life time achievement awardees and other delegates at a seminar held in Kolkata on "Getting the best out of your heritage property"

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ment Award' to select awardees who contributed in restoring, conserving and converting heritage properties into financially viable entities. The Governor also released a coffee table book- 'Murshidabad- The Forgotten Capital of Bengal' edited by Neeta Das and Rosie Llewellyn-Jones. The book examines the buildings and arts of the town alongside a wealth of visual material ranging from 18th century drawings to contemporary photographs.

The seminar coincided with the commencement of 'Resurgence – 3rd Murshidabad Heritage Festival 2014' towards observing the World Heritage Week on 22nd and 23rd November at two of the best heritage properties of Bengal – Hazarduari Palace and Kathgola Palace -- in Murshidabad and showcased the rich heritage of the bygone era featuring various types of art and crafts live by numerous artisans and the vegetarian 'Sheherwali' cuisine of Murshidabad along with exclusive handlooms and textiles sourced from there.

Eminent Panelists who attended the discussion:

- **Ms. Kasturi Gupta Menon** - Chairperson of Crafts Council of India
- **Mr. Debasish Nayak** - Director, Centre for Heritage Management, Ahmedabad University
- **Mr. R.K.Anil** - Mastermind behind Incredible India Campaign. A civil Engineer and Management Executive
- **Mr. Raj Basu** - Propagator of HELP TOURISM
- **Mr Aman Nath** - A heritage entrepreneur
- **Mr. Sunil Rampuria** - A heritage property owner

BENGAL MULLS SUNDERBANS TOURISM COMMITTEE

KOLKATA: West Bengal may soon have a separate committee to look into any impact of eco-tourism in the Sunderbans mangrove region, a minister said here on Friday.

According to tourism minister, Mr Bratya Basu, officials are mulling a proposal to constitute a committee headed by chief minister, Ms Mamata Banerjee.

"The committee, if formed, will seek to maintain a balance between tourism development and any effects on the fragile eco-system," he told reporters on the sidelines of an event.

He was speaking at the 'Travel India 2014' conference organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

The Bengal government has kick-started a series of initiatives to boost tourism in the Sunderbans delta, the world's largest mangrove reserve and one of the planet's most fragile eco-systems.

Ms Banerjee recently announced an allotment of Rs 25 crore for establishing world's first mangrove zoo in Sunderbans to conserve the endangered flora and fauna.

The state government plans to start river and sea cruises, stays in tents and on yachts, adventure sports and trips to the mangroves.

Some of the plans have evoked criticism from conservation activists and environmental experts.

Mr Basu said the government is also taking special steps to encourage and promote tea-tourism in the state. (IANS)

HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN INDIA (HRAEI) REACHES OUT TO HOTELIERS IN SIKKIM



Gangtok was selected as the venue for the 3rd managing committee meeting of HRAEI with the idea of mixing business with holidaying and relaxation and the managing committee members, with their spouses, responded enthusiastically to this proposal.

In order to interact one to one with the hoteliers of the 13 states of Eastern India, the managing committee of HRAEI decided to flag off its new initiative with Sikkim. Accordingly, the 3rd managing committee meeting of HRAEI was organised at the Mayfair Spa Resort & Casino, Gangtok on November 27, 2014 followed by cocktails and dinner.

Prominent hoteliers of Sikkim, Commissioner Industries, Govt. of Sikkim, Finance Secretary, Govt. of Sikkim and a large team of managing committee members, with their spouses, attended this meeting. President, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Sikkim, Mrs. Prema Lamtha's main query, as expected, was on recovery of capital subsidy claims under the NEIIPP 2007 scheme of the government of India. The President of HRAEI, Mr Sudesh Poddar, assured everyone present that the association was pursuing the matter aggressively with the concerned authorities both at the Centre and state levels for expeditious settlement of all pending claims of investors in the north-east region. Mr. TS Walia, President FHRAI

informed the hoteliers that he has taken up the subsidy matter in the inter ministerial conclave held at New Delhi on 12-13 November 2014.

Explaining the priorities of HRAEI in the current year, Mr. Pranav Singh, Hony. Secretary, HRAEI said; "We have decided to promote and strengthen HRAEI and to make its voice loud and effective so that it can play a seminal role in supporting the growth of hospitality and tourism sector in our country in general and eastern region in particular. For this, it is imperative to involve our fraternity members more actively and inculcate brotherhood among our members."

VINTAGE VEHICLE HOGS LIMELIGHT AT CARNIVAL

A 1942 model armoured carrier vehicle called the 'Tatanagar' remained a cynosure of the three-day Jamshedpur Carnival that kicked off here at Gopal Maidan, on December 19, 2014.

A large number of people on both sides of the road jostled to have a glimpse of the armoured carrier as the participants in a procession passed through the main thoroughfare of the steel city to the venue.

It was the first time that the vehicle was put up in exhibition as part of the carnival parade held from Jubilee park to Gopal Maidan, after it was displayed at the founder's day function on March 3 last.

Tatanagar was unveiled in Tata Motors' Jamshedpur Plant on September 28, 2014 in the presence of the Plant Leadership Team. The 'Tatanagars', each fitted with a Ford V8 engine along with armoured hulls sourced from the Railways and armoured plates, axles and tyres from Tata Steel, were the first vehicles to roll out of Tata Motors (earlier TELCO) 72 years ago, Tata Motors sources said.(PTI)

LUXURY HOTEL COMES UP IN IMPHAL



IMPHAL, Oct 31: Deputy Chief Minister Gaikhangam today inaugurated a luxury hotel at MG Avenue near City police station today.

The inauguration function of Hotel Yaiphaba was attended by the Deputy Chief Minister as the chief guest.

In his speech, Gaikhangam said that such hotels are rare in Manipur and the owners must be encouraged to open more hotels to enhance the hospitality sector in the State.

Saying that tourists from European countries are keen to visit the State, the Deputy Chief Minister said that opening of standard hotels is a must to boost tourism and make

Look East Policy a success.

He observed that the State is still unable to provide proper and adequate accommodation to visitors and tourists due to unavailability of well maintained hotels.

Contending that Manipur Sangai Festival is gradually earning international attention, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the annual tourism event has started serving as an major opportunity for both domestic and foreign tourists to explore the beauty and culture of the State. He also appealed to the well-to-do businessmen of the State to invest capital in the hospitality sector and bring a new dimension to tourism industry. Giving his keynote address, Hotel Yaiphaba chairman T Naoba said that the hotel has been opened under the guidance of Lamalai AC MLA Ksh Biren considering the accommodation requirement being witnessed in the State.

INDIA TRAVEL AWARDS EAST

The achievements of personalities from the travel and tourism industry were recognised at the maiden edition of India Travel Awards – East held recently at the Novotel, Kolkata Hotel and Residences.

The awards function was graced by the Tourism Minister of West Bengal, Mr. Bratya Basu and Minister of Tourism and Culture, Odisha, Mr. Ashok Chandra Panda, along with many other distinguished personalities.

The awards were presented to achievers from different segments of the industry which included aviation, domestic and international tourism boards, hotels and resorts, travel agents, tour operators, technology partners etc from the eastern region of the country. While the award for Wall of Legends went to Mr. Jitendra Kumar Mohanty, Mr. Debjit Dutta received the Face of the Future Award. Mr. J T Ramnani and Mr. Apurva Salarpuria were awarded the DDP Game Changer and Trailblazer respectively.

The winners of the awards were identified by a fair and unbiased selection process of online voting and judgment by a panel of jury comprising the travel industry's luminaries. The total scores of the judges and the number of votes received by each nominee determined the final scores of the winners.

WEST BENGAL TOURISM

SKY IS THE LIMIT

West Bengal government is focusing on several emerging destinations like Jhadkhali in the Sunderbans and Gajoldoba near Siliguri. They are being developed as major eco tourism hubs

West Bengal is one state which is blessed with bountiful resources, tangible and intangible, which give it a natural advantage over many other states and is, therefore, ideally positioned to cash in on the impending boom in tourism. In fact, its tourism-related assets are second to none. The state offers an awesome variety of destinations (to the discerning and well-informed traveller) ranging from the peace and tranquillity of the Himalayas, divine pilgrimage/historical sites and a tempting and heady cocktail of weekend getaways, forests and tourist hotspots.

Tourism creates employment on

a large scale besides generating foreign exchange for the country. Its employment potential is phenomenal in a wide range of activities ranging from travel, accommodation, catering, entertainment, preservation and promotion of traditional arts, culture and cottage industry like sericulture, handicrafts and handlooms etc.

The West Bengal government has identified “preservation and promotion of art, tradition, heritage, culture and environment as one of the thrust areas for tourism development”.

Religious and cultural tourism

Belūr Math or Belur Mutt is the head-



Belur Math or Belur Mutt is the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, a chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It is located on the west bank of Hooghly River, Belur, West Bengal



quarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, a chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It is located on the west bank of Hooghly River, Belur, West Bengal, India and is one of the significant institutions in Calcutta. This temple is the heart of the Ramakrishna Movement. The temple is notable for its architecture that fuses Hindu, Christian and Islamic motifs as a symbol of unity of all religions

In line with global trends, tourism boards have started promoting events and festival tourism and West Bengal Tourism has decided to focus on its festivals and religious heritage. The West Bengal government has taken several initiatives to participate in all major travel and tourism festivals across India.

Promoting major festivals like Durga Puja will be central to the marketing campaigns of the state tourism department in future. The department is also making a conscious effort to promote tea tourism in Darjeeling.

Major hubs for eco tourism

The state government is keen to develop tourism in the Sunderbans in a “sensitive, sustainable and integrated manner with due respect to the environment and local culture”, says a RFP document for development of a high end resort at the Eco Tourism Hub at Jhadkhali. The proposed project components include eco resorts in the high end, star category and budget category respectively. It will also have an ethnic food court, fishermen village, craft village with amphitheatre, jetties, fishing area and other world class tourism amenities.

The Sunderbans Reserve Forest (SRF), located in the south-west of Bangladesh between the river Baleswar in the east and the Harin-

bhanga in the west, adjoining the Bay of Bengal, is the largest contiguous mangrove forest in the world. It is a World Heritage Site acknowledged by UNESCO.

A brief prepared on the Sunderbans by IIDC (IL & FS Infrastructure Development Corporation) for the state tourism department says: “It is a treasure island of biodiversity”. Wildlife thrives in the Sunderbans, including the eponymous Royal Bengal Tiger. The Sunderbans, according to UNESCO is of “universal importance for globally endangered species including the Royal Bengal Tiger, Ganges and Irawadi dolphins, estuarine crocodiles and the critically endangered endemic river terrapin (Batagur baska). It is the only mangrove habitat for Panthera tigris tigris species.”

The birds in the Sunderbans are a major tourist attraction and include a large variety of waterfowl, raptors and forest birds including the kingfisher and the majestic white-bellied sea eagle.

Gajoldoba, 35 kms east of Siliguri under Terai-Dooars forest circuit, is

A BRIEF PREPARED ON THE SUNDERBANS BY IIDC (IL & FS INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION) FOR THE STATE TOURISM DEPARTMENT SAYS: “IT IS A TREASURE ISLAND OF BIODIVERSITY”



THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF MALLABHUM, BISHNUPUR, IS A REPOSITORY OF SOME EXCELLENT TERRACOTTA TEMPLES



BISHNUPUR IS A TOWN IN THE BANKURA DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL ABOUT 132 KM, FROM KOLKATA. IT IS FAMOUS FOR ITS TERRACOTTA TEMPLES



Terracotta work on Jor Bangla temple, Bishnupur, Photo Courtesy: Wiki Commons

the other as one of the Mega Tourism Hub proposed by the state government to improve the tourist inflow in the state. The land earmarked for the project measures 208 acres and total investments in the two tourism hubs of Jhadkhali and Gajoldoba are expected to be close to Rs 5000 crores, according to media reports.

The Tourism Department is also working on developing two new eco-tourism hubs at Sylee, adjacent to Malbazar, and Kunjanagar near Falakata in the Dooars over an area of 90 acres.

Sylee, situated around 62 km from Siliguri, is adjacent to Sylee tea gar-

den and surrounded by hills, a river and greenery, making it an excellent tourist spot. Activities like trekking, bird watching and jungle safari can be an added attraction for the tourists.

At Kunjanagar, around 105 km from Siliguri and close to the Jaldapara wildlife sanctuary, visitors can get a panoramic view of the area's natural beauty.

Meanwhile, tourist resorts have come up at Murthi in the Dooars and the Tourism Department is planning to develop Nature Interpretation Centre at Tilabari and Batabari in the area.

West Bengal currently ranks ninth in tourism with tourist inflow of near-

ly 24 million per annum, and is looking to scale up inbound visitors up to 30 million over next two years. According to a recent policy document of the state government, West Bengal accounts for 5 per cent of India's tourism revenues.

BISHNUPUR

Bishnupur is a town in the Bankura District of West Bengal about 132 km, from Kolkata. It is famous for its terracotta temples and baluchari saris. The town has a glorious past that is reflected in its rich architecture, music and handicrafts such as pottery and weaving. It prospered in the 17th



Digha Sea Beach: One of the most popular beach resorts of West Bengal

and early 18th Centuries. Ruled by a line of Hindu Rajas of the Malla dynasty, Bishnupur developed a unique form of architecture and has perhaps the most brilliant and detailed terracotta work in Eastern India that has withstood the ravages of time. The history of Bishnupur can be traced back to 694 AD, when King Raghunath I founded the Malla dynasty. However, it was much later in 994 AD that the place was named Bishnupur. The name is derived from the name of the Hindu God 'Vishnu'. The majority of the people belong to the 'Vaishnava' sect. The most pow-

erful king of the dynasty was King Raghunath Singh Dev II, who ruled from 1626 AD. At that time the administration of Bengal was in the hands of Shahjahan's son Suja. He developed a close friendship with the king and there followed a period of peace when art and music, already flourishing, reached great heights. It was during this period that the Jorebangla Temple was erected.

The ancient capital of Mallabhum, Bishnupur, is a repository of some excellent terracotta temples. The oldest brick temple is a curiously shaped Rasmancha with an elongated pyra-

midal tower surrounded by hut-shaped turrets. It was built in the late 16th Century. Terracotta gained further momentum under King Raghunath Singh, who built the Pancha Ratna Temple of Shyam Rai with its superior figurines and floral patterns was the first of its kind in Bengal.

The temple of Madanmohan, the best known in Bishnupur, in the Sankharipara area was built outside the fort compound by King Durjana Singh Dev, in 1694 AD. Its rich decorations and designs surpass the Shyam Rai and Keshta Rai temples. There are impressive scenes from the Ramayana, Ma-



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habharata and the Puranas carved on the temple walls. Apart from the temples, Bishnupur has some very attractive large tanks that offer good sightseeing. The Lalbandh, Krishnabandh, and Pokabandh were built by Malla kings around 17th and 18th centuries. These were made to provide water to the villagers and to protect the town from enemy attack by draining out the water towards them.

Nearby places of tourist interest are Mukutmanipur, Simlapal & Jaipur.

Art & Craft

The most famous art form of Bishnupur is terracotta work. Apart from the temples, terracotta pottery, artifacts and even jewellery are popular. One of the most exquisite saris in India called the Baluchari Saris are created by craftsmen of this place. The silk strands are dyed separately and then put into a loom. One sari may have an entire episode from the Mahabharata woven into its border and Pallu. Bishnupur is also famous for the metal craft, popularly known as 'Dokra'.

Fairs & Festivals

The Bishnupur Mela is held every year around the last week of December, near the Madanmohan Temple. This fair stretches over four days and people from all the nearby villages come together to celebrate the end of the agricultural season. A recent addition is the Bishnupur Utsav, held immediately after the Mela. It is a classical music and dance festival in recognition of the 'Bishnupur Gharana' in music.

Beach resorts

The coastal strip of West Bengal extending from the Gangetic delta to the border with Orissa offers some well-developed and delightful sea resorts. The beauty of these resorts is enhanced by the presence of casuarina forests. Over the years, a number of sea resorts have been developed



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at Digha, Mandarmani, Shankarpur, Junput, Bakkhali and Sagardwip on the east coast of Bengal.

Cultural hotspot

Shantiniketan is a small town near Bolpur in the Birbhum district of West Bengal and about 212 kms north of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta).

It was made famous by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, whose vision became what is now a university town – Visva-Bharati University. The place now attracts thousands of visitors each year.

Shantiniketan was earlier called Bhnbandanga (named after Bhuban Dakat, a local dacoit), and was owned by the Tagore family. In 1862, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, the poet's father, while on a boat journey to Raipur, came across a landscape with red soil and lush green paddy fields. He decided to plant more saplings and built a small house. He called his home Shantiniketan, the abode of peace. He founded an Ashram here in 1863 and became the initiator of the Brahmo Samaj.

In 1901, Rabindranath started a school at Shantiniketan named Brahmachary Ashram that was modeled on the lines of the ancient gurukul system. After he received the Nobel Prize that enhanced not only the Pride of India but also the prestige of Shantiniketan, the school was expanded into a university. It was renamed Visva Bharati, which Tagore defined as “where the world makes a home in a nest.”

The Shantiniketan campus is adorned by splendid sculptures, frescoes, murals, and paintings of Rabindranath, Nandalal Bose, Ramkinkar, Binodbehari Mukhopadhyay, and others.

Birbhum District, where the Shantiniketan is located, is also famous for its fairs and festivals like Poush Mela (December), Joydev Mela (January), Basanta Utsav (Holi) in March and the famous mystic Baul Singers.

TOURISM PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTS

PROJECTS BY GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

- **Gangasagar Tourism Hub** – With Tourist Lodge and Cottages with 150 beds coming up at Sagar Island– Estimated Investment: Rs. 25 Crores (\$4.73 million)

SELECTED TOURISM PROJECTS IN WEST BENGAL UNDER PPP

- **Kolkata Giant Wheel** - Development of a Giant Wheel on the Howrah Riverbank with allied Tourism Facilities – Estimated Investment: Rs 500 crore (\$94.70 million)
- **Gajoldoba Tourism Hub, Dooars** – Site is 25 kilometers from Siliguri and involves development of a Mega Eco Tourism Hub with Lake Resort, 3 star/4 star/Budget hotels, Open Air Theatre, Ayurvedic Spa Village, Arts and Craft Village, Retirement Home, Golf Course, Jungle Trail, Picnic Gardens etc over 208 acres.

The project has immense tourism potential with Garumara National Park, Chapramari Wildlife sanctuary, Jaldapara Wildlife sanctuary, the Buxa Tiger Reserve being in neighbouring areas. Estimated Investment: Rs 300-350 crores (\$56.82-66.29 million)

- **Kunjanagar Tourism Park, Dooars** - Development of an Eco Tourism Resort with Tourism Cottages, Interpretation Centre, Handicraft cum cultural Village, Natures Studio etc over 90 acres - Estimated Investment: Rs 120-170 crores (\$22.73- 32.20 million)
- **Sylee Tourism Park, Dooars** - Development of an Eco Tourism Resort based on the principles of Tea Tourism over identified land of around 90 acres - Estimated Investment: Rs 80-120 crores (\$15.15- 22.73 million)
- **Sundarban Tourism Hub** - Development of Eco Tourism Hub with Cottages on stilts, canopy walks, boating canals, arts and cultural village, interpretation centre, viewing towers as the Gateway to the Sundarbans over an identified area of around 110 acres including water bodies - Estimated Investment: Rs 50-70 crores (\$9.47-13.26 million)
- **Digha Tourism Hub** - Development of Five Star Resort/Budget Hotels/ Tower

Restaurant/ Amusement Park/Aquamarine Park over an area of 24 acres – Estimated Investment: Rs 70 crores (\$13.26 million)

- **Tajpur Resort** - Tourism Hub based on Fisherman Village Concept over an area of 15 acres of land - Estimated Investment: Rs 25 crores (\$4.73 million)
- **Iconic Hotel** – With Tourist Resort at Sonada in Darjeeling District: Estimated

Investment: Rs 150 Crores (\$28.41 million)

(Source: Investment and Industrial Policy of West Bengal)



FASCINATING DOOARS

A journey through the rolling hill slopes, mesmerizing lush green tea gardens separated by meandering silvery mountain streams, high Sal forests, quite ethnic villages, vast meadows with a blue outline of the great Himalayan ranges in the horizon, endless sky.... It is Dooars for you!

Lying in the Himalayan foothills in North Bengal, Dooars has great natural beauty. The wildlife-rich tropical forests, innumerable hill streams cutting across the green carpet of tea gardens and undulating plains, low hills rising up from the rivers all make it one of the most picturesque destinations. A drive through the Dooars plains, the gateway to Bhutan and the

PHUNTSHOLLING (161 KM FROM SILIGURI VIA JALDAPARA), ON THE BORDER OF BHUTAN, IS A MAJOR GATEWAY TO BHUTAN

TEESTA BARRAGE (57 KM FROM SILIGURI) IS EMERGING AND BEING DEVELOPED AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION.

whole of North east India, can be the experience of a lifetime.

The Dooars valley (also called Duars), stretching from the river Teesta on the west to the river Sankosh on the east, an area covering roughly 130 km by 40 km, forms a major part of the Jalpaiguri district.

The name Dooars is derived from “doors” as the region is the gateway to the whole of North-east India and Bhutan. Dooars is also the gateway to the hill stations of the Darjeeling – Sikkim region. Dooars is famous for its rich biodiversity and forests, the most notable of which are Gorumara National Park, Jaldapara Wild Life Sanctuary, and Buxa Tiger Reserve.

Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, Go-

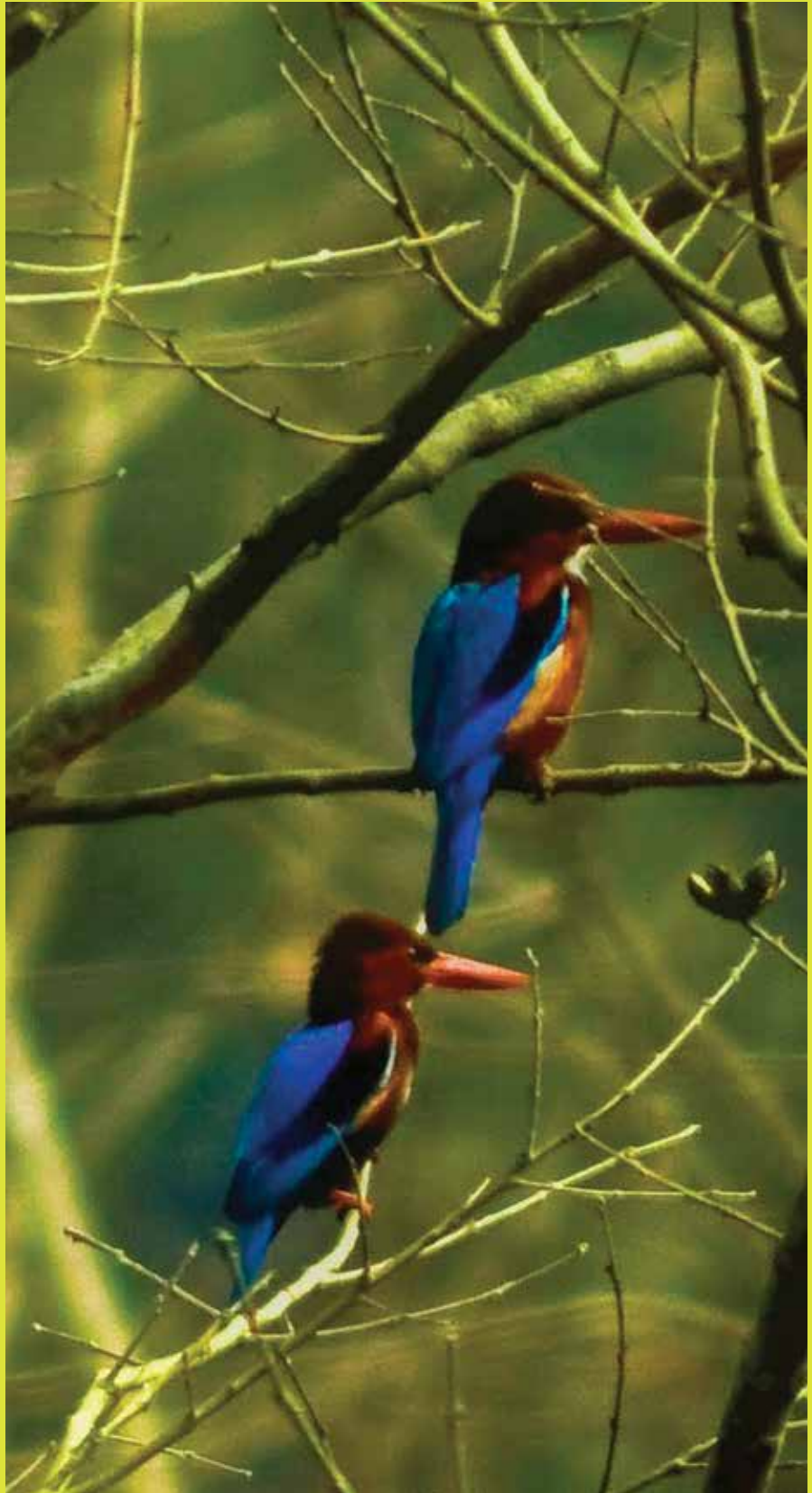
rumara National Park, Champamari Wildlife Sanctuary are habitats of the rare one-horned rhinoceros, the mighty bison, leopard, spotted deer, sambar, hog deer, reptiles, huge wild tuskers, wild boars, and the rarest variety of and birds, including peacocks. Elephant – riding through the Jaldapara forest in search of wild animals, particularly the one-horned rhinos, is specially popular among tourists. Other places of attraction in and around the region include Jayanti, (30 km from Alipurduar) is a beautiful spot encircled by the Jayanti river and the hills around. The leopard Rehabilitation Centre and Nature Park at Khayrabari is 11kms from Madarihat.

Bhutanghat (45 km from Alipurduar), famous for scenic beauty, is close to the river Raidak that borders Bhutan. Buxa Fort (30 km from Alipurduar), is famous for the ruins of the Detention Camp used by the British Government for detaining freedom fighters of our country. Malbazar (52 km from Siliguri) has tea gardens and scenic spots around. Chalsa (61 km from Siliguri) is famous for scenic beauty. Teesta Barrage (57 km from Siliguri) is emerging and being developed as a tourist attraction.

Phuntsholling (161 km from Siliguri via Jaldapara), on the border of Bhutan, is a major gateway to Bhutan.

BIRD SANCTUARY

Raiganj Bird Sanctuary along the National Highway and the Kulik river is spread over an area of 35 acres and a buffer area of about 286 acres. Among migratory birds seen here are the open bill stork, night heron, cormorant, little cormorant and egrets from South Asian countries and coastal regions. Local birds like dove, bulbul, sparrow, kingfisher, woodpeckers, owl, duck and cuckoo are also seen here. The best time to observe the birds is between October and November.



JHADKHALI - GATEWAY TO THE SUNDERBANS



The government of West Bengal proposes to develop Jhadkhali as a gateway to the Sunderbans on the edge of a tiger rescue centre which is going to be upgraded as a major wild-life centre.

Jhadkhali is located around 140 km from Kolkata International Airport. The nearest

Railway station is Canning which is 42 km away. The site is connected with Kolkata through the Basanti Main Road. Given its connectivity with Kolkata and the location on the edge of the Forest, the site offers the opportunity of being the entry point to Sunderbans as well as a Tourism Hub on its own. It would be possible to connect the site through water channel from Canning to Jhadkali giving the project site a high level of connectivity. The project site is directly connected by road which

makes it a unique destination in Sunderbans.

The site is an island surrounded by shallow water channels. The total site area is around 99 acres out of which land area is around 49 acres. The island also includes three shallow creeks which divide the island in four major parts. Some other notable destinations in the Sunderbans are:

Halliday Island

Located south of Sunderbans Tiger Reserve, Halliday Island is thronged by tourists every year. The last retreat of the Barking Deer can be found here. Apart from this, travellers can also check out Lothian Island Wildlife Sanctuary, which is a must-visit place for bird watchers.

Piyali

Travellers on their way to Sunder-

bans can stop at Piyali, a quaint small town, and

explore the lifestyle of its inhabitants. It is the best place to chill out, when you are on

your way to explore the rich, dense forest of Sunderbans.

Kanak

Kanak is a safe haven for Olive Ridley Turtles, which thrive in its shallow waters and

beaches. These turtles, during their breeding season, approach the beaches of Kanak, from

distant places located around Sunderbans.

Large parts of the texts have been extracted from Tourism Department, Government of West Bengal

HRAEI PRESIDENT URGES GOVERNMENT TO SETTLE CLAIMS UNDER NEIIPP, 2007



MR SUDESH PODDAR
PRESIDENT HRAEI



THE TWO-TIER SYSTEM OF VERIFICATION OF CLAIMS MUST BE DONE AWAY WITH. ONCE THE CLAIM IS APPROVED AT THE STATE LEVEL, THE ENTREPRENEUR SHOULD RECEIVE THE APPROVED AMOUNT

MR SUDESH PODDAR, PRESIDENT, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI), has submitted a memorandum to the relevant authorities both at the Centre and state levels for early settlement of capital investment subsidy and allied benefits under the North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, 2007 (NEIIPP-2007). Mr T.S. Walia, president, FHRAI, has been kept in the loop so that the matter receives urgent attention of authorities at the highest level. We are hopeful that a favourable outcome will emerge soon.

Highlights of the memorandum

The North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, 2007 (NEIIPP-2007) was notified on April 1, 2007 to accelerate industrial development in north-eastern region of India. The members of HRAEI are suffering due to inordinate delay in finalising their legitimate financial claims under this policy.

Benefits announced under this scheme:

The government of India had announced capital investment subsidy of 30% to hotel projects. Further, 100% income tax exemption, interest subsidy at the rate of three per cent on working capital loan and reimbursement of 100 per cent insur-

ance premium were also announced under this scheme.

The Guidelines:

Current operational guidelines under NEIIPP, 2007 were announced on May 7, 2013 which included the following:

- The DI/DIC should ensure that all the claims are placed before the appropriate Committee within 180 days from the date of receipt of the claims.
- Meeting of DLC/SLC must be held at least once in a quarter to avoid accumulation of cases pertaining to claims under the schemes.
- Usually, the SLC organizes a field visit to the unit before considering its claim. In case of claims under Central Capital Investment Subsidy Schemes of NEIIPP, 2007,



HRAEI TO REDUCE MEMBERSHIP FEE

On assumption of office, Mr Sudesh Poddar, president of HRAEI, convened the second managing committee meeting of the association. It was decided that membership fees will be slashed by 50%. Besides, there will be a 20% discount card for members instead of 15%. Mr T.S. Walia, president of FHRAI, and membership committee chairman, HRAEI, along with Mr Amit Ruia, joint secretary, HRAEI, approved on the spot all 28 membership applications after due diligence.

requiring approval of Empowered Committee/ Union Cabinet i.e. for claims above Rs 1.5 Crore, the concerned State Government must organize field visit of the unit, by a team consisting of one representative each from (a) State Government concerned (b) each of the Financial Institutions which assisted the unit, (c) Department/Ministry of the Central Government administering the sector in which the claimant industrial unit falls and NEDFi.

- All the cases of subsidy claims approved/recommended by the SLC/SLC shall be subjected to DIPP vetting, who will arrange for deputing a pre-scrutiny team. Pre-scrutiny will be carried out at NEDFi office at Guwahati/concerned State Capital.

Difficulties faced by entrepreneurs:

Pre Sanction

- The time period of 180 days for DI/DIC processing & sanctioning of the claims is rarely adhered to due to duplicity of verifications done at different levels.
- The frequency of SLC meetings is uncertain & delayed owing to the preoccupation of officials in multiple subjects.
- Field visit of Empowered Committee is delayed as the entire team is rarely available for inspection of the property.

Post Sanction

- The Pre-audit scrutiny by DIPP is available for short period at site and leaves many unresolved queries keeping the entrepreneur's file pend-

ing for years. The same is uncalled for as the rigorous scrutiny undergone by the unit prior to sanction is sufficient basis for immediate disbursement of the sanctioned amount.

- Adequate funds are not made available timely for disbursement of sanctioned amounts, which dampens the entrepreneur's confidence. Thus even after such rigorous screening the disbursement of sanctioned subsidies does not take place timely owing to paucity of funds.

What's the remedy?

We suggest the following:

- The government should form a small committee consisting of the secretaries from departments of tourism, finance, industry and financial institutions so that they can meet at regular intervals for approval of claims.
- The two-tier system of verification of claims must be done away with. Once the claim is approved at the state level, the entrepreneur should receive the approved amount.

President's appeal to hoteliers

We request all hoteliers, who have pending claims under the NEIIPP, 2007 scheme, to forward the current status of their claims to the HRAEI. We will direct them to the appropriate authorities for expeditious settlement.

HRAEI NEWS & EVENTS



JANAB JAVED KHAN, MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, GOVT OF WEST BENGAL BEING FELICITATED BY T S WALIA, PRESIDENT, FHRAI AND SUDESH PODDAR, PRESIDENT, HRAEI



JANAB JAVED KHAN, MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL AND T.S. WALIA, PRESIDENT, FHRAI FELICITATE COMMODORE RAVI AHLUWALIA, HEAD-NAVAL SERVICES (EAST), KOLKATA



T.S.WALIA, PRESIDENT, FHRAI BEING FELICITATED BY SUDESH PODDAR, PRESIDENT, HRAEI



FROM L TO R-NAVIN SUCHANTI, TREASURER, HRAEI; ALKA SEHGAL, HONY. JOINT TREASURER, HRAEI AND DILIP K NANDA, MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBER, HRAEI



FROM L TO R- RATAN MAROTHIA, MEMBER OF HONOUR, HRAEI; AMIT RUIA, DIRECTOR, HOTEL NARAYANI ENCLAVE; SUDESH PODDAR, PRESIDENT, HRAEI AND PRANAV SINGH, HON. SECY, HRAEI



FROM L TO R- RAVI BIPIN PARIKH, DIRECTOR, THE SONNET; Ms SMITA RAJ PARIKH, VICE PRESIDENT, HRAEI AND DILIP K. AGARWAL, MD, GOLDEN PARK HOTEL & RESORT



SECOND COMMITTEE MEETING OF HRAEI IN PROGRESS



RAVINDRA KUMAR KASHUKA, MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBER, HRAEI AND SUDESH PODDAR, PRESIDENT, HRAEI SHARING A LIGHT MOMENT



GEORGE KURUVILLA, GM, OBEROI GRAND IS ALL EARS AS T.S. WALIA, PRESIDENT, FHRAI, EXPLAINS A POINT



SUDESH KUMAR KHULLAR, MEMBER OF HONOUR, HRAEI IN A PENSIVE MOOD



SUDESH PODDAR BEING FELICITATED BY DILIP AGARWAL, MD, GOLDEN PARK HOTEL & RESORT



VINAAY MALHOTRA, SR. VICE PRESIDENT, HRAEI AND CHARLES MANTOS, MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBER (CO-OPTED), HRAEI

BEWITCHING MIZORAM WHERE ANTHURIUMS BECKON TOURISTS

Mizoram's stunning landscape can floor any visitor not just for its imposing mountains and colourful valleys but also its exotic wealth of flora and fauna. The Mizo people are one when it comes to religion, culture and language. It shares its borders with Tripura, Manipur and Assam. It shares its borders on the east with Myanmar and Bangladesh on the west, making the state a perfect conduit for international trade with these two countries.

Mizoram is primarily an agrarian state and enjoys the second position in the country in terms of literacy rate.

Agriculture

The Mizoram economy is largely dependent on agriculture with nearly 80% of its population engaged in this activity. The state's climate is conducive to the existence of a wide variety of flora and fauna. Among fruits grown in the state are mandarin orange, banana, passion fruit, grapes, pineapples, papaya etc and flowers like Anthurium, Bird of Paradise, Orchid, Chrysanthemum and rose etc.

The Mizo people have started extensive cultivation of palm oil, medicinal and aromatic plants which fetch high prices both in national and international markets.

Bamboo forests

Mizoram has abundant reserve of

Mizoram is called the land of the Highlanders who are by nature carefree and hospitable. Predominantly an agrarian state its strategic location makes it ideal for promotion of cross-border trade and tourism



Anthurium festival is the most popular festival in Mizoram

bamboo forests and contributes 14% to the national bamboo distribution. It is widely used to construct pillars, rafters, roofs, floors, walls etc. It is also used for earthquake-resistant and emergency housing. Bamboo is the key material used for handicrafts, furniture, handmade papers, curtains, handlooms, chopsticks and industrial intermediates like paper pulp, rayon, charcoal etc.

The state government welcomes investors to set up industrial units in all these areas either as joint venture with the Mizoram Bamboo Development Agency or in partnership with local entrepreneurs.

Tourism

Mizoram has limitless potential for tourism development. Investment avenues in this sector include-

- Creation of facilities for adventure and wildlife, eco tourism, amusement parks and other entertainment units, health farms etc.
- Hotels and lodges
- Travel agencies, tour operators and tourist transport services
- Convention/seminar centres

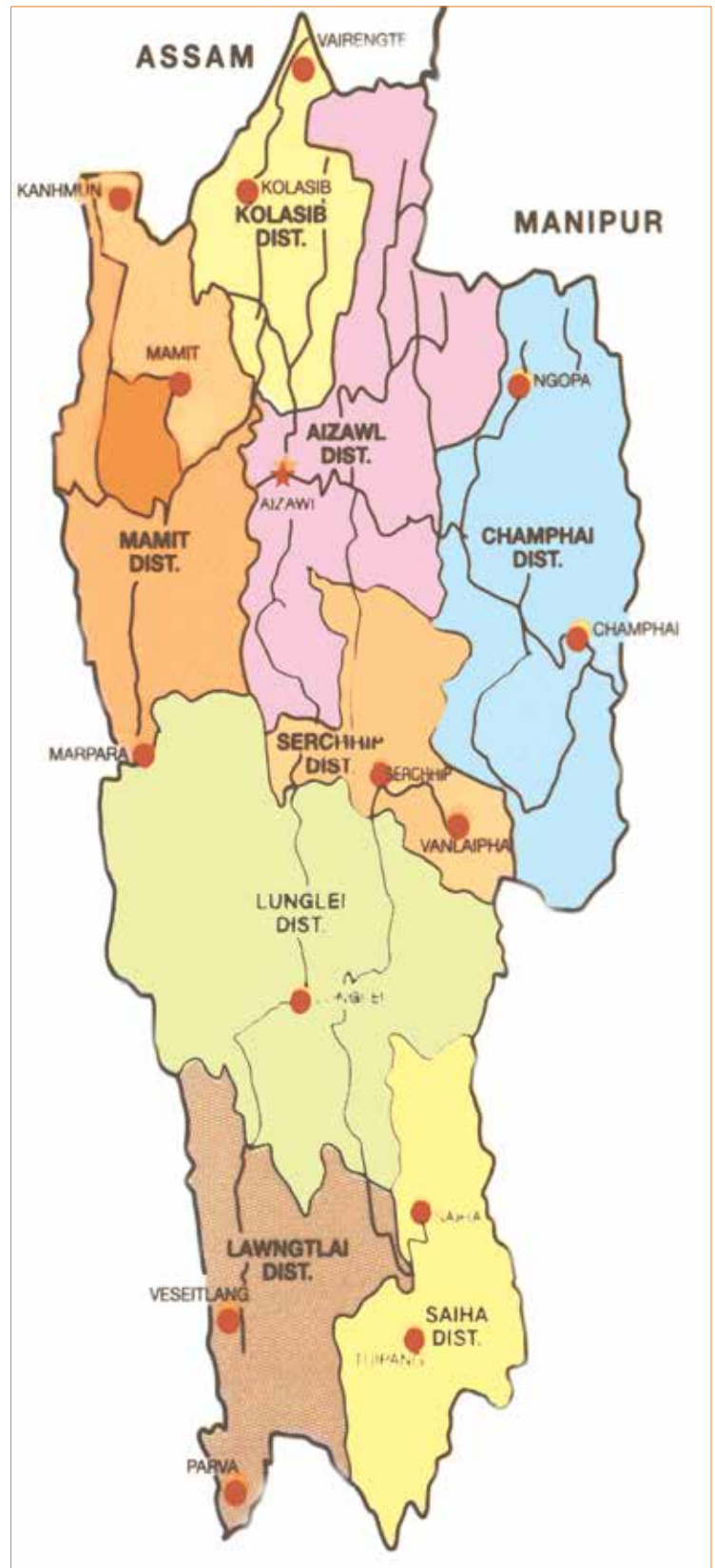
Hotspots

Tamdil lake

Literally “Lake of Mustard”, Tam Dil is situated near Saitual Village, about 110 kms from Aizawl. Having been developed as an important pisciculture centre by the Fisheries Department and a holiday resort by the Tourism Department, this is one of the most frequented lakes in the state. The lake and the surrounding thick forest are home to wide species of trees, plants and animals.

Hmuifang tourist resort

Located at a distance of 50 kms to the south of Aizawl, Hmuifang Mountain with an elevation of 1619 metres, is still covered with virgin forests reserved since the days of the Mizo chiefs. Hmuifang Tourist Resort, lo-



cated at the scenic peak of the mountain, has been created and maintained by the Department of Tourism.

The resort was built on the former land of the erstwhile Mizo chief and offers an ideal getaway in the midst of nature. The resort has comfortable accommodation offering 6 double rooms and a cafeteria. The patches of grasslands on the peak are also ideal for picnics and outdoor camping. This is also the venue of the annual Anthurium Festival and Thalfavang Kut hosted by the Department of Tourism. From here, one may visit the Mizo villages situated on the hillsides – Hmuifang village, Sumsuih village, Lamchhip village and Chamring village, to see the typical rural life of the Mizos.

Thenzawl

Thenzawl is a village located at a distance of 43 kms from Aizawl. It was initially a dense forest with lots of wild animals before it was cultivated and inhabited in 1961. The Tropic of Cancer runs through this picturesque village. It is an important center of traditional Mizo handloom industry. The looms at Thenzawl produce rich and colorful varieties of handlooms. One can also observe the indigenous weaving techniques of the Mizos here and obtain Mizo handlooms at bargain prices.

Other tourist attractions at Thenzawl include Vantawng Waterfall which is located at a distance of 5 kms south of Thenzawl, Thenzawl Deer Park and Chawngchilhi Cave

Reiek tourist resort

About 30 kms to the West of Aizawl sprawls a prominent mountain on which Reiek village is located. This is one destination that one should not miss visiting. The mountain itself, though appearing to be of gentle slopes on its eastern side, has spectacular rocky cliffs notched with caves and caverns with luxuriant



Reiek tourist resort



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3.	Tourist Complex Berawtlang	9436155187/2352067
4.	Highway Restaurant Thingdawl	9862719019/03837-268526
5.	Tourist Lodge Kolasib	9436145916/03837-220067
6.	Tourist Lodge Vairengte	9612660112/03837-261606
7.	Tourist Lodge Champhai	9436143518/03831-235866
8.	Tourist Lodge Lunglei	9436157014/0372-2342013
9.	Tourist Lodge Saiha	9436149031/03835-222591
10.	Tourist Lodge Bairabi	9436780421/9862733398
11.	Tourist Lodge Saitual	9862775342/2562395
12.	Tourist Lodge Sangau	8014354604/0372-2553110
13.	Highway Restaurant Hnahthial	9436147957/9862804139
14.	Tourist Lodge Lawngtlai	9436148665/03835-233239
15.	Tourist Lodge Thenzawl	9612065527/03838-261489
16.	Tourist Resort Lengpui	9862202975/9336155467/2573391
17.	Highway Restaurant Chhiahtlang	9436379544/03838-225059
18.	Tourist Lodge Mamit	9436192771/2565600
19.	Tourist Resort Reiek	9436144947/2567344
20.	Tourist Lodge Khawbung	9863292441/9436786548/9612133483
21.	Tourist Lodge Ngopa	03830-261220
22.	Tourist Lodge Pangzawl	9862742423
23.	Tourist Lodge Tlabung	9436760290/03834-222352
24.	Tourist Resort Hmuifang	9436360574/9862842494
25.	Tourist Lodge Kanhmun	8014004751/9612945064
26.	Tourist Lodge Saichho	0372-2566155/9402187388
27.	Tourist Lodge Sakawrdai	9436144335/8974419960
28.	Tourist Lodge Zokhawthar	9402321100/03831-291292/9402327592
29.	Tourist Lodge N.Maubawk	9863436320/9612216753
30.	Tourist Lodge Saipum	9856652428/9774514927
31.	Picnic Spot Sairang	9436784010
32.	Tourist Lodge Darzo	9436779317
33.	Tourist Lodge Hrangchalkawn	9612328158/9615311814
34.	Tourist Lodge Chawngte	9612656708/9612356708/9863701861
35.	Highway Restaurant Tawipui 'S'	9862344162
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38.	Viewing Gallery Tlangnuam	9862898290
39.	Tourist Lodge N.Vanlaiphai	9863222270



On the forest trail

A TYPICAL MIZO VILLAGE GIVES THE VISITORS A PEEK INTO THE GLORIOUS PAST OF THE VALIANT HIGHLANDERS A FEW MODERN HOUSES HAVE ALSO BEEN CONSTRUCTED NEARBY TO SHOW THE CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE MIZO WAY OF LIFE

natural forest preserved since the days of the Mizo chiefs. It is only an hour's drive from Aizawl for which taxis and private vehicles are available. The mountain road takes one through the lush green hills, crosses the Tlawng river as it gushes through a narrow rocky gorge, and then climbs up the hills winding up gradually to make a comfortable drive, during which one comes across a few cascades which are a photographer's delight.

At Reiek, a typical Mizo village consisting of the distinctive traditional huts of different Mizo sub-tribes, Mizo chieftain's house, a bachelor dormitory, etc. has been created and maintained by the Department of Tourism. This gives the visitors a peek into the glorious past of the valiant highlanders. A few modern houses have also been constructed nearby to show the changes that have taken place in the Mizo way of life in keeping pace with the modern developments. The Department also maintains a resort with cafeteria providing decent accommodation and food.



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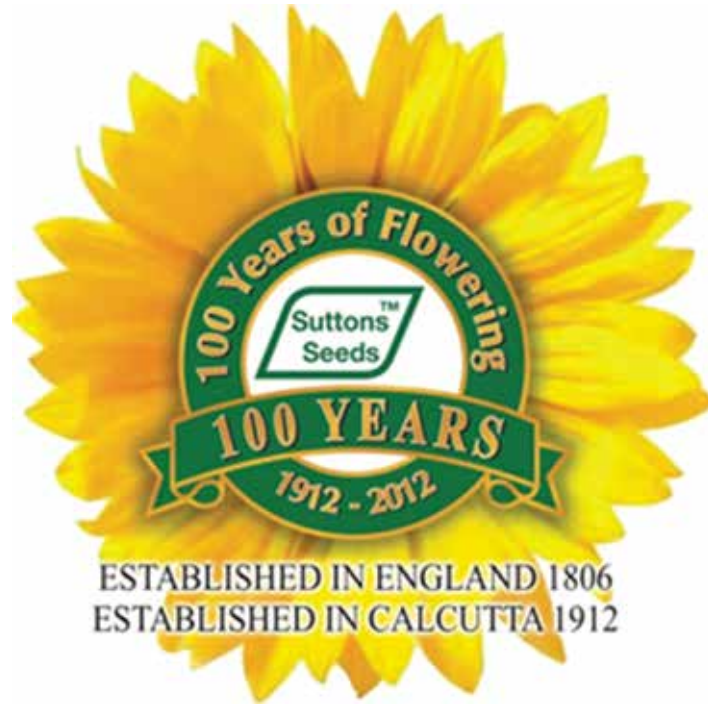
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Vantawng Khawthla - Mizoram's highest waterfall



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VANTAWNG KHAWHTHLA

Located at a distance of about 137 kms from Aizawl, Vantawng Khawthla or Vantawng Fall is the highest and most spectacular of all the waterfalls and cascades in the fast flowing rivers of Mizoram. It is located in Vanva river near Thenzawl and is named after Vantawnga who was said to be an excellent swimmer. So good a swimmer was Vantawnga that he could hover in the cascading water like a fish, but unfortunately during one of such performances, a drifting log fell from above and killed him.

The height of the fall is recorded as 750 ft and though it is difficult to get close to it because of the sheer forested hillsides surrounding it, a comfortable viewing tower has been constructed by the Tourism Department.

Phawngpui

The highest peak in Mizoram, Phawngpui or the Blue Mountain is situated near the state's south-eastern border overlooking the bend of the mighty Chhintuipui River and the hill ranges of Myanmar. Sangau village, which is about 229 kms from Aizawl, is the closest settlement to Phawngpui. With a height of 2157 metres at the peak, the ridge stretches nearly 10 kms in north-south direction. It is surrounded by sheer precipices and cliffs, of which Thlazuang Kham is the most spectacular one. This breezy ridge is a virtual garden of beautiful flowering trees like rhododendrons and orchids of various hues, and one can also get splendid views of blue hazed hills extending to the horizon all around.

Abounding with diverse flora and fauna, Phawngpui has been declared a National Park covering an area of about 50 sqkm. Exploring the park requires trekking and one can get the most exciting views of Mizoram from the cliffs of Phawngpui. It is famous for its exotic species of flora and fau-



Anthurium Flower

na especially the orchids and rhododendrons spread within the valleys surrounding on all sides. Here one has a good chance of sighting gorals grazing peacefully in the steep slopes, brightly plumed sunbirds hovering over colourful flowers, peregrine falcon swooping down on fleeting cliffs or hearing in the evening the sharp calls of barking deer . Phawngpui is also home to an amazing variety of birdlife including the rare Blyth's Tragopan, Dark Rumped Swift and Hume's pheasant, and endangered mammals like the Slow Loris, Tiger, Leopard, Leopard Cat, Serow, Goral, Asiatic Black Bear, Stump-tailed Macaque and Capped Langur.



Phawngpui - Highest peak in Mizoram

MAJOR FESTIVALS



Chapchar Kut

After completion of the laborious cutting of forests for jhum site, the felled trees and shrubs are left to dry in the sun. This period of respite is called 'Chapchar' and Chapchar Kut is celebrated with joy and fanfare. Dressed in colourful attire, people celebrate the festival with gay abandon. It is the time when winter gives way to spring and life and greenery is restored to nature. A spring festival, it is the most important and the only one regularly observed during the first week of March in Mizoram.

Thalfavang Kut

This is an autumn festival celebrated in the month of

November. It showcases the diverse culture and traditions of the Mizos and is a major tourist attraction. Another interesting characteristic of Thalfavang Kut is that it provides a scope to the tribal communities living in the far flung corners of Mizoram to demonstrate their inherent cultural characteristics. In a way, Thalfavang Kut is not only a festival but also an opportunity to reveal the cultural traits of the tribes of Mizoram.

Anthurium Festival

The Anthurium Festival is the most popular festival celebrated in the state. It is a successful tourism promotion venture celebrated every year at the tourist resort in Reiek Village at the foothills of the Reiek Mountain in September every year during the peak season of the beautiful and exotic Anthurium blossom. These showy flowers are borne in a long-stalked spikes surrounded by a flaring heart-shaped white or red bract. It is a three-day extravaganza that showcases various culture and traditional activities.

Other attractions include music, dance, traditional games and sports, handloom, handicrafts and a re-invention of a Mizo typical Village. The festival also includes archery, rifle shooting, and angling competitions. A cultural display of traditional attires of different tribes is also a regular feature of the festival.

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