



New track to avert animal deaths in Dooars

▶ 2



Develop eco-tourism to save Kolkata wetland

▶ 3



Air service to Cooch Behar likely

▶ 4



FOCUS

# Tourism

WEST BENGAL

## Tourist Arrivals

In November and December 2008, foreign tourist arrivals in India showed a negative growth for the first time in six years



A Bengal Chamber initiative to promote TOURISM in West Bengal



### Wellside Hotels & Resorts

Unit C-301, 3rd Floor, City Centre, Block-DC Sector-1, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700064, India  
Tel: 91-33-2358 3421/3422, 4006 3004  
Fax: 91-33-4006 3005  
E-mail: info@wellside.in

Vol 1 No 8 January - February, 2009

## West Bengal Tourism launches The Great Kolkata Shopping Festival

West Bengal Tourism in collaboration with Anandabazar Patrika organised The Great Kolkata Shopping Festival. The 30 day festival from 24th December 2008 to 22nd January 2009 across all formats of retail establishments, with over 3000 participating outlets, generated sales in excess of around Rs. 100 crore. This is by far the largest initiative of its kind in the country.

The inaugural function was marked by performances by renowned artistes like Soumitra Chatterjee, Anjan Dutta and Tanushree Shankar.

Commenting on the initiative Mr. Manabendra Mukherjee, Minister of Tourism, Govt. of West Bengal said "This festival has been conceptualized with a view of changing the perception of Kolkata and also to demonstrate the market potential of the city and the state. It is a combination of various brands and formats. Both tourism and retail of the state will benefit from this endeavour."

Besides big industry players like Maruti Suzuki, Tanishq, VLCC and Kaya Skin Clinic the festival had popular local names in the categories of consumer durables, home décor, clothes, jewellery, personal care and restaurants as participants.

Maruti Suzuki, Tanishq and Hero Honda were principal sponsors for the weekly and mega lucky draws of the event. Prizes included apartments, Maruti Suzuki SX4 and WagonR cars, Hero Honda motor cycles, etc.

Kolkata attracts a large number of shoppers from neighbouring states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and the 7 north eastern states and also from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The shopping festival expected to attract large number of shoppers from these places with the discounts and prizes on offer.



*The frequency of this newsletter is being increased from quarterly to bi-monthly. Thank you for your continued support.*

## Exciting Places to see in West Bengal

### Colonial Cooch Behar

Cooch Behar was a princely estate ruled by the feudal Koch kings before being merged with the state in 1950. The rich cultural, historical and traditional heritage of the place can be witnessed from the grandeur of the palaces and temples which dot the entire town. Prominent among the royal buildings is the Rajbari – palace of the Koch kings. The Madhupur Dham Temple, Madanmohan Temple, Kamteshwari Temple and Baneshwar Shiva Temple are other places of interest. A recent excavation of ancient sculptures, engravings and a water system at the Gosanimari Rajpath is a major attraction. Migratory birds can be seen at the lake called Sagar Dighi.



### Kool Kurseong

Just 30 kms from Darjeeling, situated at an altitude of 4864 ft is Kurseong. The peace and serenity of the place has always been its major attraction and has been the muse for some famous works of Rabintra Nath Tagore, Atul Prasad Sen and Mark Twain. Peaceful walks through the forest leading to vast open meadows at Chimney offer a delightful experience. The Eastern Forest Rangers' College in the deep woods of St. Mary's hill is a magnificent place to visit. A trip to the Kettle Valley on the banks of river Rinchengtong and trekking to surrounding areas offer rare opportunities of being amidst nature in such profusion.



### Resonant Rajabhatkhawa

Rajabhatkhawa is an ideal place for wild life lovers and is just 17 kms from Alipurduar. It is a small hamlet surrounded by dense forests of the Buxa Tiger Reserve and is a major ecotourism centre. A watchtower deep inside the forest gives a rare opportunity to see the wild animals in their natural habitat so closely. The Nature Interpretation Centre, Tiger Rescue Centre, an orchidarium and the local bazaar are other important places of interest.



### Serene Santiniketan

Founded as an ashram in 1863 by Rabindranath Tagore's father, Santiniketan was made an open air school 40 years later by Tagore and gradually developed into an international university. A museum, an art gallery, the five abodes of the Tagores, are main attractions of the place. Santiniketan is also famous for its festivals which mark the changing seasons. Among the major festivals are Poush Mela in December and Basanta Utsab in March. These festivals are marked by cultural programmes and attract tourists from far and wide. Kankalitala, Deer Park, Kenduli, Nonoor and Tarapith are other places of interest around Santiniketan.



## Water woes in Darjeeling to end



Darjeeling Municipality has taken charge of the north and south Sinchal lakes along with the Sindaph lakes from the public health engineering department (PHED) of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). Darjeeling town's average water demand is around 15 lac gallons, but the town receives only 8-9 lac gallons during the rainy season which is further reduced to 4-5 lac gallons during lean periods.

The water distribution system of Darjeeling is comprised of 3 main reservoirs– north and south Sinchal lakes and Sindaph lake. Twenty three conduit lines are meant to supply water to the three lakes from perennial sources. But many of these conduits are broken and will also be transferred to the municipality after being

repaired. The north and south Sinchal lakes are also in a bad condition. Along with their repair work an alternative network of supply lines will be laid from the Jorebunglow filter house station to the supply tanks in the town.

Pemba Tshering, the municipal chairman, said, "The drinking water supply will improve next year. We are also banking on the Darjeeling Water Supply Pumping Scheme." Aimed at providing drinking water to 1, 75, 000 people of the Darjeeling hills, the pumping project will be unparalleled in the country. Under the scheme water will be pumped from the Balason river to the Sinchal reservoir and then distributed. The project is estimated to cost Rs. 55.86 crore and is being implemented by the state PHED.

## New track to avert animal deaths in Dooars

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has directed Indian Railways to lay another track beside the existing one from New Jalpaiguri to New Bangaigaon and convert into a double line to save wildlife especially elephants.

All goods trains that run through this route bypassing the Dooars will be shifted to the new tracks. This would curb elephant deaths due to train accidents, reported every year from the Dooars. Speed guidelines while driving trains through the Dooars region have also been made more rigid.

About 39 elephants have been killed since 2003 when the line was converted into a



broad gauge from a meter gauge. The committee has also recommended two new trains – from Haldibari to Howrah and from Jalpaiguri to Delhi.

## TALK CRORES AS IT POURS

Great Conference Packages from Sinclairs at Siliguri, Darjeeling, Dooars, Ooty and Port Blair

Contact : t: 2280 1317/18/19/20, e: kolkata@sinclairshotels.com  
www.sinclairshotels.com www.sinclairshotels.com



## Develop eco-tourism to save Kolkata wetland

Bidhannagar Municipality has submitted a proposal to the tourism department of West Bengal Government to develop the 20 sq km wetland area as an eco-tourism centre. This initiative has been taken to restrict the errant promoters trying to construct buildings on many areas of the East

Kolkata Wetlands. The wetland area under the jurisdiction is almost twice the mainland area of Salt Lake and can be



developed as a beautiful eco-tourism centre. East Kolkata Wetland Management Authority (EKWMA) had also presented a plan to preserve and develop the 12,500 hectare East Kolkata wetland area. EKWMA also plans to develop the wetland into an eco-tourism center.

## Bishnupur Festival

A two-day Bishnupur festival was organised from December 27, 2008 showcasing classical dance, instrumental and vocal performances. Rasmanch and other heritage monuments were elaborately illuminated for the festival. Micro and small scale enterprises also showcased their handloom and handicraft products in different stalls during the festival.



## West Bengal Tourism and Food Festival 2009

West Bengal Tourism organised the festival with the support of Kunming Tourism, (China) India Tourism and the state tourism boards of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The highlights of the festival were dance performances by Tanushree Shankar and Priti Patel, musical performances by Anwasha, Anik Dhar and Vyas Brothers, folk dance performances, cultural performances from Rajasthan and Karnataka and for the first time in West Bengal, a Chinese dance performance. The initiative provided a platform to promote the tourism potential and art and culture of West Bengal as well as of other states.

## Park Street Carnival

A three-day carnival marked the beginning of a year long initiative of re-branding Park Street as the cultural hub of the city. An art camp and auction, a food festival, live music concerts, musical contests among the youth, street performances and seminars were the main events of the carnival. The aim of this initiative is to restore the importance and heritage of Park Street. Some landscaping ideas to create a vision for the future image of the street, integration of Allen Park into the street to make it an attraction among tourists, encouraging sale of plants, saplings and publications on the cemetery, etc will be other activities of this initiative.

## Sarbamangala Temple, Burdwan

The Sarbamangala Temple is an old religious institution built by Maharaja Kirtichand in 1702 A.D. The temple has great historical importance and is religiously as popular as Kalighat and Dakshineswar temples.

The idol of Goddess Sarbamangala is about 1000 years old and has mention in ancient literary works. This is an idol of Goddess Durga with eighteen hands and was the first navaratna temple in undivided Bengal.



The structure of the temple manifests a unique blend of the terracotta style of art and the popular architecture of Bengal and is of great archaic value.

After abolition of the zamindari system, the Maharaja of Burdwan, Sir Uday Chand Mahatab had constituted a trust in 1959 and had handed over the maintenance of the deity to the trust board.

Festivals like Durga Puja, Kali Puja Shiv Ratri are celebrated ceremoniously and attract devotees and tourists in large numbers. The trust board has built a new bhog ghar measuring around 4000 sq ft, for a daily bhog for devotees, grown a garden within the temple premises, a rest house and has developed other public facilities in perspective of the large number of tourists and devotees visiting the place.



My Place to  
Heal



www.thevedicvillage.com  
Call: + 91 98300 25900





## Do you know?

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has requested the Union Government to accord tourism ventures the status of infrastructure projects

## Bengal - Sikkim Rail Link to spur tourism in the region

Sikkim will soon be connected with the rest of the country through a 52 kms long broad gauge rail line from Rangpo in Sikkim to Sevoke in West Bengal. The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs has decided to implement it as a national project at an estimated cost of Rs. 1, 339.48 crore.

Being a national project, 25% of the fund would come from the gross

budgetary support of the railways and the remaining 75% from the finance ministry.

The broad gauge line will facilitate direct movement of freight and passengers from this region to other parts of the country. Work on the project will begin this fiscal and will be completed by 2016. This will give a huge boost to the tourism of the region.

## Air service to Cooch Behar likely



A direct air connectivity between Kolkata and Cooch Behar is likely to begin soon. Zav Airways, a regional airline is planning to launch scheduled air services on this route from February 2009. Zav Airways is planning to launch service across 26 airports in the eastern and north-eastern regions.



Doors, West Bengal

**Virgin. Vibrant. Alive. Adventurous. Wild. Thrilling. West Bengal. Must. Once. If not more.**

### Tourism Centre

M-4 Building, Hill Cart Road,  
 Siliguri, District: Darjeeling  
 Ph: +91-353-2511974, 2511979  
 Fax: +91-353-2517561

### Tourism Centre

3/2 BBD Bag (East), Kolkata-700 001  
 Ph: +91 33 2248-8271/22103199/22437260  
 Fax: +91 33 2248-5168

### West Bengal Information Bureau

State Emporia Building (1st floor)  
 Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi-110 001  
 Ph: +91-11-2374-2840

### West Bengal Information Bureau

West Bengal Youth Hostel  
 18 Wallajah Road, Chennai  
 Ph: +91-44-2841-1046

[www.wbtourism.com](http://www.wbtourism.com)

A bi-monthly newsletter edited and published by Navin Suchanti on behalf of the Tourism Sub-Committee of The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 6 Netaji Subhas Road, Kolkata 700 001  
 We welcome information on new developments in Tourism in West Bengal

Design courtesy Pressman Advertising Limited and printed at the Naba Press Pvt. Ltd., 66 Grey Street, Kolkata 700 006