

# Minister of State for Tourism Shripad Yesso Naik inaugurates 11th edition of International Tourism Mart in Shillong, Meghalaya in the presence of CM Conrad K Sangma

## 3-day Tourism Mart to showcase untapped potential of NE with focus on promoting sustainable tourism

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Union Minister of State for Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India, Shri Shripad Yesso Naik inaugurated the 11th edition of the International Tourism Mart (ITM) in Shillong today, in the presence of Chief Minister of Meghalaya Shri Conrad K Sangma and other dignitaries. The three-day event is being held from today to November 23 at the Lariti International Centre for Performing Arts and Culture. Tourism Ministers from Sikkim Shri Bedu Singh Panth, Assam Shri Jayanta Mallabaruah and Meghalaya Shri Paul Lyngdoh attended the inaugural programme along with senior officials of the Central and State Government.





Addressing the event, Shri Yesso Naik said that Meghalaya is a beautiful state with huge potential in adventure and eco-tourism and that ITM plans to facilitate interaction between government agencies and stakeholders. “This year ITM is different in many ways, after a long gap international tour operators, bloggers are participating in this current edition. The Ministry is making efforts to make this event carbon neutral. The Northeast of India has emerged as a popular tourist destination for travellers seeking adventure, culture, nature, festivals and offbeat experiences,” said Shri Naik.

The region is known for its rich biodiversity, ethnic diversity and stunning landscape comprising snow clad mountains, pristine lakes and dense forests, he said, adding, “I have been informed that the Mart has elements of B2B meeting between the buyers for international as well as domestic markets and sellers from north east region, focused panel discussions on various contemporary subjects, presentation by the northeastern States, northeastern bazar, musical performances, food demonstration, specially curated technical tools to provide the participants a complete taste of tourism that the region is offering.” The mart also has elements of students’ participation from different parts of the country, under the banner of the Yuva tourism with the objective of providing the students the firsthand knowledge of this cultural rich region.



While interacting with the Pressmen, the Union Minister said that tourism plays a huge role in development of any region. While reiterating the commitment of the Central Government for the

development of the region, the Minister said that “Soon after assuming power, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi laid focus on the northeastern region of the country. The development that is witnessed in NE now is a vision of our PM. And certainly, today we are celebrating the 11th International Tourism Mart to ensure that development takes place in all the eight States of NE in the desired manner. Only when development improves, tourism will improve and when tourism improves, the country’s economy also improves.”



Meghalaya Chief Minister Shri Conrad Sangma welcomed all the delegates, students and the dignitaries present on the occasion. He thanked the Government of India and Ministry of Tourism for having selected Shillong for the 11th Tourism Mart. The Chief Minister in his address acknowledged that the kind of economic growth that the region is witnessing in the northeast is unprecedented. “In the last many years the kind of the support that has been given by the Hon’ble Prime Minister, Govt. of India and different Ministries has been unprecedented. There is a very strong and special focus to ensure that the NE States moves together with the rest of the country and ensure that economic development reached in this region, whether it is in respect of infrastructural development, youth development programme, agricultural sector, or the socioeconomic sector like tourism, there has been tremendous support from the government of India,” he said

While acknowledging the huge potential for tourism in the region, Shri Sangma said, “Tourism is one of the sectors that can ensure that we create job opportunities for the ever growing number of youth seeking employment every year. Tourism has been one of the main pillars of economic policies and programme for our State government.”

He also stressed that plan and policies should be tailored made to the strengths of our State, it has to be made based on the competitive advantages, or the kind of USPs that the State has and can develop on those. He also said, “We have to ensure that we involve the community in whatever we do and while focusing on the economic development and tourism, we need to ensure that we take care of the environment and the ecology also.”

He shared many of his ideas that can yield positive responses if implemented in true spirit. In respect to working on the protection of elephants, the CM said, “We as a State want to work with the Government of Assam to protect the elephants. We have one of the largest populations of elephants in the entire Asian continent and hence we can have an elephant corridor permanently marked, which could also serve as a tourism destination where people can come an experience and see the elephants and at the same time human and elephants can live in peace and harmony.”

Addressing the Press at the launch of ITM2023, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Smt. V. Vidyavathi shared the objective of organising the annual tourism mart, i.e. to showcase the untapped potential of the region, both domestic and international markets to promote

sustainable tourism.

“We have 28 international delegations from 18 countries today. We also have 50 buyers from different parts of the country. These include tourism professionals, media opinion makers, tour operators, and participants from the hospitality industry as well. This demonstrates a growing interest to travel to the unexplored destinations of the country,” she said while speaking about the responses.

She added, “We are keen to look at the cultural, spiritual, heritage, and rural tourism. The effort on our side is to work on different aspects of tourism. One aspect is that northeast, as a region has taken lead in terms of sustainable tourism and also being extremely conscious about the adverse effects of tourism, if any. There are lessons, which we really want to learn from northeast and take it to different parts of the country and equally be sensitive to the very fragile environment here so that we develop tourism as sustainable and a dream tourism model.”

The International Tourism Mart is an annual event held by the Ministry in one of the North Eastern States on rotation basis, with an objective to provide a bigger platform to the North Eastern stakeholders to interact with their counterparts from both within the country and overseas markets as well as to create awareness about the tourism potential of North East Region (NER) and highlight its unique tourism products, rich bio diversity, unique intangible heritage including local traditions, dance forms, arts, handicrafts and handlooms to a domestic and international audience.

The International Mart is also going to be a unique event, as it has been planned as a Green Event by adopting low carbon options on the lines of the action points formulated by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GOI for implementation of Mission LiFE and sensitizing the tourism stakeholders and generating greater awareness about its objectives. There will be no use of SUP (Single Use Plastic), a digital and paperless route will be followed as well as a tree plantation drive will be undertaken.



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