

Hussainiwala Border at Ferozepur can outshine Wagah Border if promoted and marketed efficiently

*Thousands of tourists visit the holy city of Amritsar every day to visit Golden Temple followed by Jallianwala Bagh, Beating Retreat Ceremony at Wagah Border and to experience the cuisine of Punjab. However, there are several other unexplored districts like Ferozepur, which despite having immense tourism potential gets overlooked due to lack of awareness and promotion. This was discussed during the 3rd webinar of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry's **Border Tourism Webinar Series** focusing on Ferozepur district for the promotion of Border Tourism in Punjab.*

*Delivering the Keynote Address, **Mr. Gurpal Singh Chahal (IAS)**, Deputy Commissioner – Ferozepur District, Government of Punjab, informed that recently Punjab Government has sanctioned INR 5 crores for the development of Light and Sound Show at the National Martyrs Memorial at Hussainiwala Border. The Indo-Pak Retreat Ceremony at Hussainiwala Border is a popular activity and can be witnessed from as close as 100 feet from the Zero Line. If developed and marketed properly, this can outshine the retreat ceremony at Wagah Border, Amritsar.*

He further mentioned that the Harike Wild Life Sanctuary, situated on the confluence of the River Beas and Sutlej at the Ferozepur and Amritsar border is one of the most important Wild Life Sanctuaries being recognized throughout the world. It has the potential for promoting eco tourism and other activities like bird watching, boating.

Mr. Chahal pointed out that the only challenge the district faces for promoting tourism is that it doesn't fall in mainline unlike other cities like Amritsar. He urged the industry members to visit Ferozepur and include it in the tour packages for tourists visiting Punjab.

***Mr. Rama Kamaraju**, Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog, spoke in length about the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2018. He said that ADP is based on 49 indicators from the 5 identified thematic areas, which focuses closely on improving people's Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development and Basic Infrastructure.*

He mentioned that tourist footfall to any area is directly proportional to the livelihood of the local people. He said that Ferozepur district has many historical places, museums, forts, wildlife to offer. Connectivity is a challenge in the district and if addressed properly can certainly help in improving tourism. Mr. Kamaraju suggested that the state government can look at launching a 'Desh Bhakti' circuit which can connect the key tourist places of Punjab.

Appreciating the efforts of the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Kamaraju informed that Ferozepur district has performed extremely well in the ADP with average growth of 25% in all the thematic areas.

Mr. Harsh Mittal, Manager – Marketing and Skill Development, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Government of Punjab, discussed about the projects and initiatives undertaken by the state government to attract more tourists to the state. He shared that a project ‘Countryside’ has been launched which helps in promoting authentic cuisine, culture and the rural side of Punjab to the tourists.

He further said that there are three retreat ceremonies organized at Attari, Ferozepur and Fazilka. While Attari is already a popular tourist attraction, the other two need push for the promotion of Border Tourism in the state.

Mr. Manmeet Singh, Chairman – Punjab Chapter, Indian Association of Tour Operators, mentioned that while Amritsar has been a tourist attraction for years, there is a need to promote Ferozepur and other adjacent areas of Punjab. He said that the government needs to improve the infrastructure at Hussainiwala Border and Saragarhi Memorial so that Film Tourism can be promoted at these areas.

Mr. Manasvee Pushkarna, Director of Sales, Taj Hotels, highlighted the need for better road connectivity and accessibility.

Mr. Anirudh Gupta, CEO, D.C.M. Group of Schools, while giving a holistic background on Ferozepur district said that the district has several attractions which need to be capitalized and infrastructure should be developed to ease tourists’ connectivity.

Mr. R S Sachdeva, Mentor – Punjab State Chapter, PHDCCI, mentioned that Ferozepur district along with other districts of Punjab can play a pivotal role in promoting Border Tourism as they have a lot of tourist attractions and hospitality facilities. He suggested that rural stays should be organized for the tourists to get a firsthand experience of the local flavour and culture of Punjab.

While presenting the theme address, **Mr. Anil Parashar**, Chairman – Tourism Committee, PHDCCI, said that Punjab has always ranked high when it comes to courage, might and valour. The state has made major contributions to the freedom struggle of India though in the process it had to face its own division. The richness of the state is reflected in its dress, customs, traditions and also cuisine. There are religious sites to be visited, museums, forts and palaces to be explored and many other things to be done during a visit to Punjab.

He further mentioned that Border Tourism webinar series will continue and PHDCCI would work towards showcasing the tourism potential of the diverse and untouched border districts of India.

Mr. Rajan Sehgal, Co-Chairman – Tourism Committee, PHDCCI while proposing a formal vote of thanks to the delegates, mentioned that post pandemic, tourists are looking at exploring lesser known destinations across the country and Ferozepur can be an ideal option for them with so much of history and culture associated with it.

*The webinar was moderated by **Dr. Jatinder Singh**, Director, PHDCCI, and received participation from senior government officials, tour operators, hoteliers, tour guides, airline professionals, travel associations, students from the travel and hospitality institutes.*

PHDCCI's webinar was supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; DLF India; Multani Pharmaceuticals; UFLEX; JK Tyre & Industries; Marble City; Paramount Cables; SMC Investments and Advisors; Blossom Kochhar Aroma Magic; Comtech Interio; DCM Shriram Industries; Radico Khaitan; R.E. Rogers India; Ajit Industries; Synergy Environics; Timberworkz; Jindal Stainless; P S Bedi & Co; and IFFCO.

The next webinar with Focus State – Meghalaya is scheduled for 30 July 2021 from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM and shall focus on East Khasi Hills district.

End

Media Division

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