

## ***PHDCCI Launches 'Border Tourism' Webinar Series***

### ***The first in the webinar series – Arunachal Pradesh focused on Mechuka, Anini & Anjaw districts***

*With a view to explore the tourism potential in the border districts of India and to create awareness about the lesser-known destinations across the country, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) launched its Border Tourism webinar series. The webinar series highlighted the need to promote tourism education among the locals and also to give strategies to develop rudimentary tourism infrastructure in that area. The first webinar on Arunachal Pradesh focused on Anjaw district and other destinations like Mechuka, Anini for the promotion of Border Tourism in Arunachal Pradesh.*

*Addressing the webinar, **Ms. Rupinder Brar (IRS)**, Additional Director General – Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, mentioned that Border Tourism is of immense interest to the Government of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs is taking keen interest to develop this segment. She mentioned that in order to promote Border Tourism, there is a need to enhance connectivity and the Government has thrust in improving the road network and creating air strips. The Regional Connectivity Scheme- UDAN 4.0 undertaken by the Ministry of Civil Aviation has given huge focus to the north-eastern part of the country. There is a lot of work happening on roads as well to ensure last-mile connectivity to the new and older destinations.*

*Talking about the importance of digital connectivity, she mentioned that a lot of work is happening on that front. Ms. Brar emphasized that there is a need for capacity building and skill development as it will help to scale up the quality of human resources while creating employment opportunities. Other areas where the capacity building is required are for homestay owners, service providers which need both centre and state intervention. She also mentioned that there has to be a timely balance of tourists in the state so that environment doesn't get hampered in the long run.*

***Mr. Abu Tayeng**, Director – Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, mentioned that the state should take advantage of its natural beauty, environment, bio-diversity, flora and fauna to attract tourists but at the same time not make it over crowded. He informed that infrastructure development is taking place with the help of Chief Minister Paryatan Vikas Yojana (CMPVY). There are a lot of youth training programs happening with the help of Government schemes which is helping to promote tourism in the state. He also informed that civilian flights are open for Pasighat, Tezu, Mechuka and others are in pipeline of opening soon.*

*While giving an overview about the demographic and geographic locations of Anjaw district, **Ms. Ayushi Sudan (IAS)**, Deputy Commissioner – Anjaw District, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, said that the district carries historical tourist attractions, spiritual locations and eco-tourism hubs especially in bird watching, which needs to be developed as a major tourist attraction. She informed that Anjaw is the only district that shares border with China and Myanmar and has the potential to unlock Border Tourism. She mentioned that there is a need for development of road infrastructure and telecom connectivity.*

**Mr. Minga Sherpa (IAS)**, Deputy Commissioner – Dibang Valley District, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, deliberated on the district's issues due to remoteness along with its strength in terms of biodiversity, environment and natural resources. Talking about scope and opportunities ahead, he mentioned camping, bloggers and trekkers meet can be organized along with bird and butterfly watching events. Mr. Sherpa emphasized that there is a need for handholding of budding local entrepreneurs which can help in revamping the tourism business along with promoting local artists and craftsmen in the district.

In his welcome address, **Mr. Pradeep Multani**, Senior Vice President, PHDCCI, mentioned that Arunachal Pradesh has a long international border with Bhutan to the West, China to the North and North-East, and Myanmar to the East. Adorned with an unspoiled landscape, this North-East State of India is a place that every nature lover and explorer should visit.

He mentioned that the problem of border districts and tourism development is recognized as an important challenge for local communities along the border. Although institutional environment and security barriers remain the stumbling block for entrepreneurial cooperation; conditions for Border Tourism enhancement can be enabled through the setting up of frameworks for easier cooperation of public, private, and civil actors.

Border Tourism webinar series shall be an ongoing feature and PHDCCI would work towards showcasing the tourism potential of the diverse and untouched border districts of India, he added.

Other panelists included **Mr. Nirmalya Choudhury**, Chairman – North East States Chapter, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) and **Mr. Sudesh Poddar**, President, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI). They gave an overview of the basic aspects of development of tourism in the State and emphasized that the industry needs to collaborate, explore new destinations and look at domestic travel following the safety norms and precautions.

**Mr. Anil Parashar**, Chairman – Tourism Committee, PHDCCI, highlighted the challenges of border districts in terms of gaps in knowledge and information about how a border area can become a tourist destination; gaps in accessibility, transport and economic infrastructure that is required by tourists. Interconnection between the Ministry of Tourism, State Tourism Development Boards, community participation, and industry participation is strategic. He further said that besides ensuring common strategic planning, it is necessary to ensure the participation of the local population in the entire process.

**Mr. Rajan Sehgal**, Co-Chairman – Tourism Committee, PHDCCI, delivered the formal vote of thanks and mentioned that PHDCCI will come out with a White Paper after each webinar and the recommendations shall be submitted to the relevant Ministries for their immediate action.

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

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*The next webinar with Focus State – Rajasthan is scheduled for 29 June 2021 from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM and shall focus on the Jaisalmer district.*

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*Media Division*

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