SHANTINIKETAN DECLARATION

30th March 2010
Workshop Backdrop Banner

• 36 participants from all over India, specially Northeast, West Bengal and Orissa with delegates from Bhutan and Bangladesh.

• Included Government officials, NGOs, Academicians, tourism industry representatives, tourism activists, film makers, social activists and travel writers.

• 30 Students of the Department of History, Visva-Bharati.
An AV documentary based on this theme was released.
The Cross-Border description

• Borders are human-made, both physical and in the minds.
• Capitals far away from the borders should understand and address the sentiments, livelihood and basic needs of the people living in the borders and constantly seek cooperation of neighboring countries.
• Tourism should be seen as meaningful tool to bring our borders and communities out of isolation and create better people to people participation along the borders.
Cross-Borders within country

- We must first confirm our inter-district and inter-state cooperation in regard to tourism and have common tourism circuits.
- Permits at gates or on the internet for the various districts or states (wherever may be necessary) within a country to confirm National citizenship.
- **West Bengal and Orissa with eight Northeastern states of India should be brought under a single brand of Northeast for tourism purposes.**
- Interstate transport Permit to be simplified for the implementation of integration as one region.
Cross-Border with neighboring countries in the Indian subcontinent.

• We must reciprocate among the different neighboring countries each others respect in regard to entry permits and visas.
• Armed forces, customs and other Government personnel at borders must display good behavior as they are the face of the country.
• Online Visa and Visa on arrival at the borders is a priority for the countries of the Indian sub-continent joining south and southeast Asia to promote more land and water based travels. Carbon potential and spreading tourism benefits to a larger section.
• Medical Tourism potential for people across border should be brought under a more organized sector through a policy.
• Education Tourism should also be a priority to attract students and scholars from across the borders.
Direct Stakeholders

- The local people must be direct stakeholders of all cross-border initiatives.
- The local people should be empowered ownership on the local natural & cultural resources, which are to be protected.
- The local natural and cultural heritage should be part of the school curriculum at site.
- There should be cross-border relation development through tourism festivals and several tourism events.
- Establish ‘Cross-Border Tourism Peace Parks’ in Inter-District and Inter-State within a country and also across neighboring countries.
- Appreciate & support the local community initiatives in tourism and help to set up local bodies to advise the district officials on tourism matters.
- Local traditional beliefs, legends, rituals and myths to be a part of tourism.
- Low Cost and Simple local information brochures at every village with maps.
- Rural trails through river walks, boat rides.
- Also the same for the wetland conservation tourism initiatives.
Proposed Areas to open specially for tourism exchange (including foreigners)

- Ultapani, in Bodoland, Assam with Sarpang in Bhutan to access the other areas of Bhutan.
- Upper Assam & Eastern Arunachal Pradesh through Pangsa Pass on the Stilwell Road with Myanmar.
- West Bengal-Assam-Nagaland- Manipur through Tamo-Morreh Border with Myanmar, the existing arrangement to be made more active.
- Connect World Heritage Sites, Paharpur near Joypurhat in Bangladesh with Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in Darjeeling District India through the Hilly Border.
- West Bengal-Assam-Meghalaya to Bangladesh through Dawki and Dalu.
- Orissa and West Bengal-Nepal through Panitanki and Pashupati Fatak in Darjeeling District.
- West Bengal-Sikkim to Tibet through Nathula Pass.
- Open up the route from Agartala through Bangladesh to Kolkata for transit of tourist, saving both economic resources and carbon emission.
- South Tripura, Sabrrom-Agartala to Chattagong which existed should be re-established for Buddhist circuit with Pilak Heritage site as the main attraction.
- Include similar old Buddhist ties of Orissa with Cambodia and Sri Lanka.
Cross-Border Tourism Circuit proposals

- Land-route Religious (Buddhist & Hindu) circuits through contiguous Northeastern states to Myanmar and on to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and China.
- Connect the Common Heritage sites of the countries across borders.
- Following the historic trails of Lord Buddha, Guru Padsambhava and early travelers to India.
- Nepal-India-Bhutan Heli-Tourism on the Guru Padmasambhava trails to start discussions immediately.
- Connect West Bengal-Orissa through water route with India’s Northeast, considering the Brahmaputra to Sea route.
- India-Bangladesh Sunderbans through water route.
- Andaman Islands with the Malayan Peninsula and Myanmar by water route.
Infrastructure

- Consider immediate upgradation of Kolkata Airport for International Tourist in all respects including making it tourist friendly.
- Consider the same for Bagdogra and Guwahati.
- Improvement of the existing airports and air traffic for the Northeastern states with existing air terminals.
- Multiple Permits from a single window at the airports and railway stations like NJP, Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Tezpur.
- The future is in Heli-Tourism and immediate introduction of Inter-state services among the tourism Northeastern states.
- Protected Area Permit system for Manipur is the major hurdle for any kind of tourism and is stopping the Cross-Border International tourism through Myanmar.
- For other India’s Northeastern states ILP, RAP and PAP should be abolished or made easier through internet or permits at gate.
- Bhutan is already planned two domestic air terminals which will be a new opening for Northeast India.
Waterways have great tourism potential in Orissa, West Bengal and Northeastern states

- Silting of the rivers makes it impossible during low tide, same for Namkhana, Bhagwatpur and other places in Sunderbans. IWAI to look into desilting.
- Too many restrictions on waterways route by security forces and Forest Department, the matter to be considered to make a policy.
- The common circuit for the legendary Brahmaputra-Ganga cruises connecting through Bangladesh can make the subcontinent the most popular River Cruise destination to be made possible.
ACTION

• Circulate the ‘Shantiniketan Declaration’ widely across countries and all International developmental organizations.
• Constant endeavor through a committed volunteer team to follow up after this workshop.
• The first action will be going into Myanmar through Manipur to be organized by Mr.R.K.Shivachandra with workshop at Imphal and Myanmar.
• The other action will be arriving Paharpur through Hilly with a workshop organized by Rajsahi University and Joypurhat Municipality as said by Mr.Apurba Sarkar.
• Dr.R.Panth offered the next International Festival of the said countries in cooperation at Nalanda Deemed University in November 2010 to make a basis for confidence building.
• The action with the title of ‘Peace through Tourism’ to be continued as a part of the 150 years of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore with the support of Visva-Bharati Study Circle was proposed by Mr.Sandip Basu Sarbhadhikary.
• The UN bodies including ADB working in the Indian subcontinent will be requested to nurture the agenda of ‘Cross-Border Tourism for Peace’.
• Mr.Ajoy Roy suggested the Natural, Cultural and Economical status Audio Visual documentation of all the border areas.
Delegates, a day before the Workshop
Pre-Workshop village visit at Ballavpurdanga in Shantiniketan, India Tourism & UNDP initiated Rural Tourism site
Inauguration of theme DVD
Other photos during workshop
Action Volunteers of the Workshop