



Hub of religious tourism has global designs

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Kurukshetra is the great land where Lord Krishna delivered the sermon of Srimad Bhagwat Gita to Arjuna during the Mahabharata war. It is this association with Mahabharata that has made Kurukshetra a popular religious tourist destination and a place of pilgrimage.

Even during this age of modern and hi-tech living, people staunchly believe in the principles of *dharm*, *sanskar*, *punya* and *daan*. Thus, devotees keep on visiting Kurukshetra for spiritual and religious reasons. With a view to developing it as a hub of religious tourism, the state government is making efforts to attract tourists from all over the world to this holy place.

The solar eclipse fair and the annual Gita Jayanti Kurukshetra Mahotsav draw lakhs of people from all over the country. The state government with the help of district administration makes adequate arrangements for the smooth conduct of these events. Both the holy tanks, Brahmarsarovar and Sannihit Sarovar, where lakhs of devotees take bath, and do *pooja archana* and *daan*, are well maintained.

In order to promote Kurukshetra as an international tourist spot, the state government, through district administration, has chalked out some short, medium and long-term strategic schemes.

According to Mr Mandip Singh Brar;

Deputy Commissioner, Kurukshetra, a new guide map for Kurukshetra had been developed by the district administration on the pattern of London city map in order to make it tourist-friendly. This would immensely help tourists and pilgrims entering Kurukshetra.

KURUKSHETRA'S WEBSITE

In addition, a website www.kurukshetra.nic.in has been launched which contains all the information pertaining to Kurukshetra. This is very useful for tourists in finding the places of interest in the district. The district administration has also advised all the hotels to start online bookings.

The Governor, Mr Jagannath Jagannath Pahadia, has approved two golf carts on Brahmarsarovar. This facility will help senior citizens in completing the parikarma of the Brahmarsarovar with ease.

Recently, Deputy Commissioner Mandip Singh Brar inaugurated the VIP block of Jat Dharamshala, Kurukshetra, which is built at the cost of Rs 1 crore. The block has 70 air-conditioned VIP rooms having facility of LCD, telephone cum intercom etc. Apart from this, the Jat Dharamshala has about 600 general rooms for the tourists and pilgrims.

A proposal to establish a tourist information centre at Pipli has already been sent to the state government and

is likely to be approved soon. Thus, Pipli would become the starting point of the journey to the tourist destination of Kurukshetra.

For the upgradation of Kurukshetra as an international tourist destination, there are plans of introducing hop-on hop-off buses from Pipli to the holy city and other places of tourist interest.

Recently, Tirumula Tirupati Devsathanam Shri Venkateshwar Swami Balaji temple's foundation stone ceremony was held on the holy bank of Brahmarsarovar. Governor Jagannath Pahadia and Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda performed the ceremony. This temple would be constructed over an area of 5.52 acres at an estimated cost of Rs 30 crore.

On this occasion, while addressing the function, Mr Hooda said, "The state government aims at developing district Kurukshetra not only as a spiritual and tourist centre of international level, but also a centre of science and technology."

After coming up the Balaji temple, lakhs of pilgrims and tourists from all over the world are likely to visit Kurukshetra which would give a further boost to tourism activities in the district. Efforts are also on to set up other religious institutions, such as ISKCON and Akshardham, in the district. ■

The writer is DIPRO, Kurukshetra