

UP eyes tourism via 'Ghat Pe Haat' plan

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Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh government has decided to make the most of the union government's 'Ghat Pe Haat' scheme under which cities along the Ganga are to be developed for tourism.

Being anchored by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (Namami Gange), the scheme is part of 'Arth Ganga' under which river conservation is promoted along with development of economic and employment opportunities along the river so that conservation becomes a way of life.

The scheme covers more than two dozen cities across Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal along the 2,520-kilometre-long stretch of the pristine river. The launch of the scheme was announced on World Water Day in March.

Principal secretary, UP Tourism, Mukesh Meshram said: "Since UP is home to the biggest part of Ganga and a number of religiously important cities fall in this stretch, we look forward to make the most of this opportunity. A team of competent officers and experts is working on the proposal demanded by the Namami Gange authorities."

Officials at Namami Gange informed that the idea is to build or beautify about 164 ghats in all the cities besides encouraging farmers to take up natural farming along the river. The plan also includes formation of District Ganga Committees to address all issues related to the river. Weekly markets may be allowed on these ghats which will be maintained and cleaned regularly by the committees in place.

Talking about the tourism potential, Meshram said, "In addition of its religious importance scripted in epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, Ganga is a repository of stories, myths and legends besides being witness to history in several ways. This makes it a natural magnet for tourism purposes. We aim to translate this energy into carefully curated experience."

Officials insist beneficiary states have started working on the idea. Bihar for instance has pledged to promote production and marketing of organic products under their 'State Organic Mission', West Bengal has begun massive plantation drive in the Sundarban area covering more than 15 crore saplings across 10,000 acres of land in three districts.