

SHIS NEWS LETTER – OCTOBER 2012

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Published By:

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TOURISM CAN PROVIDE LIVELIHOOD TO FIVE MILLION PEOPLE OF THE SUNDERBANS

- Subhamoy Chatterjee

The Sunderbans, the largest delta in the world, and home to the most expansive mangrove forest can be turned into a tourists' paradise.

The Indian portion of the Sunderbans falls in the North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. It has some 104 islands accessible only through the rivers and creeks.

It has a very large sanctuary for the Royal Bengal Tiger. It is called the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR). Other than the tigers, hordes of wild animals as well as crocodiles, snakes, other reptiles and birds of a wide variety can be seen in the Sunderbans. The Serenity of the atmosphere in contrast with the lurking dangers in the water as well as on the land has made the Sunderbans specially attractive to the tourists.

As of now, tourists are taken to the core area by state government-controlled steamer services. There is a number of installations for the overnight stay of the tourists at places like Sajnekhali, Satjelia, Hasnabad etc. But the facilities are much too little for the number of tourists willing to make it to the Sunderbans. If place like Hasnabad, Ramganga, Dhamakhali, Basanti etc are developed and modern amenities made available to the tourists, the tourism indirectly will prosper, sooner than later. There has to be better communication facilities both up to the riverheads as well as within the island settlements. Pollution-free, battery-operated vehicles may be introduced to keep the atmosphere free of noise and air pollution. It is imperative that a chunk of the educated local young men and women are trained in hospitality management and as professional guides. Some five million people of the Sunderbans will then see a new ray of light in the betterment of their livelihood.



FIGHT TB IN THE NORTH BENGAL HILLS AND THE TARAI

- Rajen Lala

Jaigaon (Jalpaiguri): It was found that a section of the TB patients in the Darjeeling hills and the dooars in Jalpaiguri had been defaulting in taking medicine. Such people were

not only harming themselves, but posing danger to the persons around them. SHIS, in collaboration with Mahila Sishu Sasthya Sachetan Organization (MSSO), had undertaken a drive to identity such defaulters in September, 2012. Several case studies were made at the Kalchini TB Unit. This apart, the two NGOs organized a training camp for the registered medical practitioners (RMP) at the Kalchini Primary Health Centre (PHC). Thirty RMPs participated. Among the resources persons were Dr. Sunil Kumar Ekka (MOTC), Samir Atati (STS), Dr. Nilanjan Mondal (BMOH) as well Subrata Roy (SHIS) and Rajesh Dorji and Ismail Mia (MSSO). RMP Amiya Kumar Barman has been in the forefront of TB awareness campaign. He had been keeping touch with six TB affected persons and making sure that they had been taking medicine regularly. This monitoring helped three of the patients to be cured of the fell disease.



PATIENTS SUFFER AS ROAD CONDITIONS REMAIN AWFUL FOR YEARS

- Sk Soharab Uddin

Poor condition of the arterial roads in North 24 Parganas district has dealt a serious blow to the health care delivery system. One would see patients being taken to Kolkata hospitals from Baduria via Haroa – a distance of 76 Kms instead of to Barasat District hospital, just 35 km away. The reason is that the Taki Road connecting Baduria and Barasat is in bad shape. Equally, the entire 60 km stretch between Barasat and Hasnabad, is full of potholes and not fit for motor vehicles. Powers that be must think hard to whether a critical patient can withstand an extra journey of 41 kms to Kolkata just because he cannot be taken to Barasat. We are not mentioning the extra costs towards fuel for such avoidable journey, even though that hurts the poor people badly.

