



# The Sentinel

*of this land, for its people*

## Tripura's bamboo park experiment

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AGARTALA: India's first bamboo park has been set up in Tripura to boost industries in the North-East region, while the maiden multi-purpose 'Bashgram' (bamboo village) came up in the state to push eco-tourism and attract tourists, yoga enthusiasts and nature lovers.

'Bashgram', created in western Tripura's Katlamara just along the India-Bangladesh border after development of nine acres of barren land by some youths led by bamboo architect cum expert Manna Roy, has already attracted thousands of tourists, including foreigners and environmentalists, from across the country.

A well-equipped yoga centre, Class-X level school with hostel facilities, playground, several ponds with sufficient flora and fauna, bamboo-made cottages, bamboo pathways and bridges, various eco-friendly utilities and facilities are available in the lush green 'Bashgram', which is being gradually developed since 2017. Over 14 species of bamboo and many other natural plants, vegetation, herbs, shrubs, flowers, make 'Bashgram' truly a natural abode.

Roy said that a museum would soon be set up in 'Bashgram' (45 km north of Agartala) and all types of endangered, obsolete, old and new materials made of bamboo would be displayed in the museum.

"In our society bamboo knives were earlier used to cut the umbilical cord after a baby was born and bamboo was also used during the last rites after a man or woman died. Bamboo is used in numerous ways in every aspect of human life. A variety of foods made of bamboo resources are also very

delicious and popular in the societies of the North-eastern states. Hence, bamboo is an integral part of our life and death," Roy said.

He said that the main concept behind developing 'Bashgram' is to properly and effectively use local and rural resources with value addition and without hampering nature.

"We have so far invested Rs 60 lakh to develop 'Bashgram' and we have not taken any money from the Government or any bank. Our ultimate mission for 'Bashgram' was to develop a world-class medical cum eco tourism hub using the locally available resources. Through training and inspiration we have also planned to empower the local bamboo artisans, specially the women," Roy said, adding that they would try to provide care and treatment through 'naturotherapy' using natural resources.

A big watch tower in 'Bashgram' enables the visitors to witness the scenic beauty of the nearby tea gardens and areas on the other side of the India-Bangladesh border.

Tripura, neighbouring Mizoram and other North-eastern states are cultivating various species of bamboo in abundance, with about 28% of India's bamboo forests being located in the North-East. 1,250 bamboo species are found throughout the world and India has 145 of them. Bamboo forests in India occupy approximately 10.03 million hectares, and comprise about 12% of the total forest area of the country. Bamboo is also known as "green gold" in the mountainous North-eastern region.

In 2009, the [Tripura](#) government had developed India's first Bamboo Park at the Bodhjungle Nagar Industrial Growth Centre in western Tripura at a cost of Rs 30 crore on 135 acres of land to help expand bamboo-based industries. Officials of Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) said, "Many entrepreneurs established factories out of which one big industry has been set up for producing bamboo flooring tiles (Bamboowood), bamboo laminated board, furniture made of laminated bamboo and round bamboo, partition walls and home design materials, which are very attractive."

Recently artisans of Tripura have developed useful bamboo products like water bottles, baskets, cricket bats, mobile stands beside a variety of ornamental items. Tripura is making all-out efforts to recover its lost glory and dominate India's agarbatti industry, as the sector until recently was controlled by Vietnam and China. According to officials of TIDC, the state's production of bamboo sticks for the country's agarbatti industry fell from 29,000 MT in 2010 to 1,241 MT in 2017 as Vietnam (49%) and China (47%) supplied 96% of India's total requirement of 70,000 MT round bamboo sticks per year.

The officials said that taking advantage of the free trade regime and easy and cost-effective waterway transport, Vietnam and China dominated India's agarbatti industry for many years by supplying the basic raw materials in bulk quantities. In 2019, the Central Government increased the customs duty to 25 per cent and all bamboo products were included in the restricted list, ensuring hurdles for other countries when it comes to supplying bamboo incense sticks.

Officials said that earlier Tripura's artisans produced the [bamboo](#) sticks by hand, but a few years back the State Government helped them to procure a user-friendly machine to make the sticks. Currently, Tripura is producing 2,500 MT bamboo sticks and within the next few years the production would increase to 12,000 MT. Gradually, the production would increase as 14 new bamboo sticks manufacturing units with modern machines would soon come up across the State. (IANS)

Source:<https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/tripura-news/tripuras-bamboo-park-experiment-571173>