

Twin islands in Pathankot set to boost tourism

Environment Ministry gives nod to develop Kalara and Palangi as eco-hotspots

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The district is all set to get a major fillip in the tourism sector with the Union Ministry for Forests, Environment and Climate Change giving the long-awaited signal to develop the twin islands of Kalara and Palangi, located in the midst of the Ranjit Sagar Dam Lake, as world class tourist spots.

Dr Sanjeev Tiwari, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), confirmed the development and added that the ball was now in the court of the Punjab Infrastructure Development Board (PIDB).

A senior officer said the PIDB was in the process of finalising a global tender after which work would commence. The project, which will be replete with water sports facilities, is expected to bring the city's sagging economy back on the tracks.

It was conceived in 2014 when the then Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal ferried top hospitality honchos to the lake in a chartered flight from New Delhi.

The red carpet was rolled out, crores were spent from the state exchequer, but beyond that the venture failed to move ahead as the Union Forest Ministry took its own time to give its nod. In 2017, during his Independence Day speech in Gurdaspur, Capt Amarinder Singh tried to plug the gaps by announcing a fiscal package.

However, everything remained in the realms of speculation as the Forest Ministry wanted to ensure that no damage would be caused to the ecosystem during the setting up of the mega venture.

Locals, however, remain sceptical. They claim that till the Ranjit Sagar Dam Lake is provided proper connectivity, the venture will remain a mirage.

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