

Front Page > Odisha > Story

Chilika in for master plan boost

BIBHUTI BARIK



In lap of nature: The Chilika lake. Telegraph picture

Bhubaneswar, Aug. 18: A master plan to boost tourism in and around the Chilika lake, which has made it to Unesco's tentative list of world heritage sites, is on the anvil.

The plan for the water body and its adjoining areas would be prepared under the Centre-sponsored Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project.

Among other things, the plan will have guidelines on land use and development of local arts and craft to draw tourists to the area. Chilika Development Authority chief executive Ajit Kumar Pattanaik said IPE Global, a consultancy firm with expertise in heritage conservation and tourism management, would draft the master plan at a cost of over Rs 2 crore.

"Work on the plan has begun," said Pattanaik.

The basic objective of the project is to make stay in the lake area more exciting for tourists for whom the major attraction till now has been boating. Now, adventure sports, trekking and other exploratory activities might be added to the itinerary of tourists coming to the lake, so that they stay there longer.

Tourism minister Ashok Chandra Panda said: "We already have more than 20 well-known tourist destinations in and around the Chilika, and the master plan will work through the Chilika Development Authority in co-ordination with other line departments, so that the communities around the lake will also benefit."

Speaking at a consultation to discuss the possible features of the master plan, Panda hinted at the use of modern tools such as satellite imaging and biodiversity documentation.

Tourism secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee said the ecological guidelines already existed under the coastal zone management project. "For holistic tourism development, the master plan will spell out a working formula, so that a platform of international standard can be developed in and around the lagoon without compromising its biodiversity and the local communities," he said.

While the phase one of the master plan will include preparation of an outline of a regional responsible tourism plan for the Chilika and its adjoining areas, in the second phase, investment opportunities in 10 major priority tourism zones in the lake area would be dealt with.

The priority zones will include eco-lodges, hotels of star categories, resorts, heritage hotels, art and craft villages, souvenir shops, sports facilities and camping areas.

"It is a nice idea, but the master plan should also take care of transgressors and greedy entrepreneurs," said Bhubaneswar resident Bijay Mishra.

"While there is so much talk of tourism development in the Chilika, places such as the Tampara lake should also be included in the plan. It is a beautiful freshwater lake near the historic Pota Gada," said Chhatrapur resident R.C. Patnaik.