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वाउ! प्रकृति की गोद है इंडिया

आनंद कुमार सिंह, भागलपुर : 'वाउ, इट्स रियली लैप आफ नेचर। नेवर सीन सच द ब्यूटीफुल प्लेसेस लाइक दीज (वास्तव में यह प्रकृति की गोद है और आज के पहले ऐसे खूबसूरत दृश्य हमने कहीं नहीं देखे)।' पांडव क्रूज से भारत भ्रमण पर निकले विदेशी पर्यटकों के मुंह से अनायास यह बात तब निकल पड़ी जब वे बनारस से कोलकाता जाते समय सोमवार को कहलगांव पहुंचे। इस बीच मुंगेर में 42

तसर सिल्क देख उछल पड़ी ली

भागलपुर : न्यूजीलैंड की ली अपने पति को भागलपुरी सिल्क का दुपट्टा दिखाते हुए उछल पड़ी। महिला सैलानियों ने जब पांडव क्रूज पर मंजूषा चित्रकला और भागलपुरी तसर सिल्क की प्रदर्शनी देखी तो धड़ाधड़ कई साड़ियां और दुपट्टे खरीद लिए। कुर्ता और सलवार सूट का कपड़ा भी खूब बिका। प्रदर्शनी नाबाई से जुड़ी 'असीड' और 'दिशा ग्रामीण विकास मंच' नामक संस्थाओं द्वारा लगाई गई थी। चंदन शुक्ला और मनोज पांडेय ने मौके पर प्रदर्शनी में रखी गई वीजों के बारे में जानकारी भी दी। सैलानियों ने काफी पेंटिंग्स और कपड़े खरीदे।

- ♦ बनारस से कोलकाता की यात्रा के दौरान कहलगांव पहुंचा पांडव क्रूज
- ♦ डाल्फिनों और दुर्लभ पक्षियों के बारे में प्रोजेक्टर से दी गई जानकारी
- ♦ क्रूज पर लगाई गई सिल्क कपड़ों और मंजूषा चित्रकला की प्रदर्शनी

सैलानियों के दल को अरविंद मिश्रा, डा. गोपाल शर्मा और अजीत कुमार सिंह ने क्षेत्र के दुर्लभ जीवों के बारे में प्रोजेक्टर से जानकारी दी। मंदार नेचर क्लब के अरविंद मिश्रा इंडियन बर्ड कंजर्वेशन नेटवर्क के कोऑर्डिनेटर भी हैं। वहीं डा. गोपाल शर्मा जुलाजिकल सर्वे आफ इंडिया, पटना और अजीत कुमार सिंह पटना साइंस कालेज के रिसर्च वर्कर हैं। ये तीनों रविवार रात मुंगेर पहुंच कर क्रूज पर सवार हुए थे।

सबसे पहले जब डा. गोपाल शर्मा ने गांगेय और यहां की नदियों में पाई जाने वाली

■ शेष पृष्ठ 17 पर



They explored a new, colourful India

TOURISTS ONBOARD 'Pandaw' share their experiences with the *Hindustan Times*

Rashmi Gupta

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VARANASI: Journey of the maiden cruise 'Pandaw' was full of excitement for the tourists who explored India in a new way.

A few of the tourists, who were on the cruise vessel from Kolkata to Ghazipur, shared their experience and excitement with the Hindustan Times, on Sunday.

Dimity Davy, a cattle farmer in Australia wearing a khadi kurta that she purchased during her trip, said it was an exciting journey for her as she saw the beauty of real India during the trip. She saw women wearing colourful clothes and working in agricultural farms, something that were really new for her. She said lectures on fauna and flora, emergence of the Ganga, various religions and historical places were organised at the lecture hall of cruise vessel that helped them know and understand things in a better way.

Ingrid, also a cattle farmer in Australia, said they happened to have glimpses of beautiful sights on the Ganga through cruise deck. They also enjoyed thunderstorm, rain and breeze



■ The cruise vessel, which reached Varanasi on Sunday.

HTPHOTO

at the terrace of the vessel. She said she had explored India in a new way that she had never seen in her earlier trips to the country. For Gerry Cropp, a retired professor in the UK, the journey was full of excitement as he visited two ancient universities of international renown, namely Nalanda and Vikramshila along with other monuments at various places, including Sarnath. "After this happening trip to India, when I will read about

India in books, I would be able to closely relate the things and understand them in a better way," he said.

He said 90 per cent of the tourists, including himself, on the cruise suffered stomach infection like diarrhoea though there were doctors and medical team to look after them.

Dr Asim Kumar Das Gupta, an Indian now residing in the UK, said his dreams for a cruise journey to the temple city was

shattered when the cruise got stranded at Ghazipur.

He suggested a few things to make the journey more comfortable. These included an instrument to measure the depth of water as the cruise crew members did not get an idea of the depth of the river water; improved service and hygiene. He added the trip should be extended to 16 days so that they could not miss any site due to paucity of time.

'WE HAD GOOD TIME'



■ Gerry Cropp



■ Ingrid



■ Dimity Davy

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SAILING BACK TO 200-YR-OLD ROUTE

Kolkata-Varanasi Ganga cruise from today

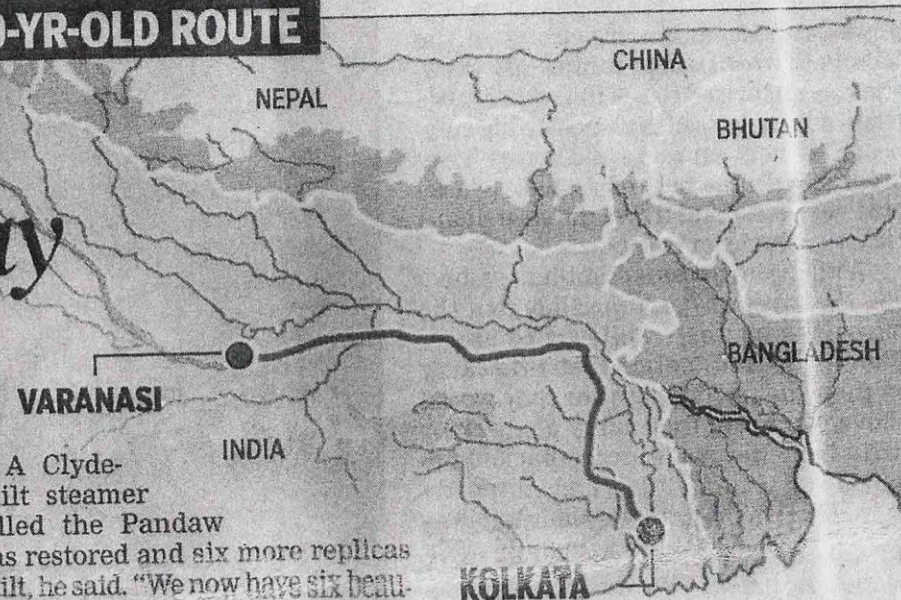
Kolkata: Tourists will now be able to sail through the country's colonial past from Kolkata to Varanasi, with the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDC) launching a 1,280-km cruise on the Ganga from Monday. "This is the first cruise on the Ganges after almost 200 years. Very few journeys can be as interesting as a journey into the colonial past," WBTDC managing director T V N Rao said.

The demand for the cruise is very high and tickets are already booked till 2011, he said. "This will promote many of the less-visited areas of West Bengal among both domestic and foreign tourists. We will also be venturing into the Sundarbans at a

later stage," he added.

The WBTDC has signed an MoU with Pandaw Cruises India Ltd and the cruise would be the company's first venture in the country. Pandaw's parent company operates six cruises in countries like Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia. RV Bengal Pandaw, designed on the lines of a colonial steamer, would take 15 days to sail from Kolkata to Varanasi, Raj Singh, director of Pandaw Cruises India, said. While the tariff for domestic passengers is yet to be decided, foreign tourists will have to pay between Rs 1.2 lakh and Rs 1.8 lakh, Singh said. The first cruise would have 50 passengers on board, mostly foreigners and NRIs.

A Clyde-built steamer called the Pandaw was restored and six more replicas built, he said. "We now have six beautifully crafted Pandaw steamers upholstered in hand-finished brass and teakwood by traditional craftsmen," Singh said. "The secret of our success is that luxury and comfort are discreetly present recreating a colonial and friendly atmosphere," he said. The Pandaw steamers have shallow draught which can sail to areas where other vessels can't. AGENCIES



- It'll take about 15 days to sail from Varanasi to Kolkata
- Tickets already booked till 2011
- First cruise to have 50 people
- Domestic tariff yet to be decided
- Foreigners to pay anywhere between Rs 1.2 lakh and Rs 1.8 lakh