A Match Made in Meghalaya
Catalyzing international partnerships for Ecosystem Restoration & Sustainable Tourism

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A Brief Overview of India International Cherry Blossom Festival

• India International Cherry Blossom Festival (the World’s only Autumn Cherry Blossom Festival) is a 4-day long Sustainable Tourism initiative of IBSD to celebrate the autumn flowering of the Wild Himalayan Cherry (*Prunus cerasoides* D. Don)

• Held in Shillong, Meghalaya and Mao, Manipur over 4 years (2017-2019). A large number of visitors (1,00,000 in Shillong and 30,000 in Mao) every year, across the nation and the world.

• The Cherry Blossom Festival has held various activities like Art and Photography contest, Cultural show, with stalls of different indigenous cuisine, Handicrafts, etc. to stimulate the local economy and showcase the unique arts, culture and cuisine of the region.
Broader impact of the Cherry Blossom Festival in promoting international co-operation and publicity for the region

As part of the 4th Edition of the India International Cherry Blossom Festival 2019, a Bilateral Summit between the Republic of Korea and the Government of Meghalaya was held at the State Convention Centre, Shillong in 16 November. Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India Mr. Shin Bong-Kil, led the delegates representing the Republic of Korea whereas the Government of Meghalaya was represented by Shri James P. K. Sangma, Minister in charge, Home, Power etc. and Shri. Lahkmen Rymbui, Minister in charge, Forest & Environment, Education etc.
The Cherry Blossom Festival provides a unique cultural immersion experience in the backdrop of the blossoms with the use of sustainable infrastructure.

Stalls were built of bamboo and straws as a part of the festival to promote sustainable tourism.

A glimpse of Colours of North-East India

Display of Indigenous cuisine during the festival from different corners of North-East India.
Sales of Stall Owners during the 2018-2019 Editions of the India International Cherry Blossom Festival

Average daily sales ranging from Rs. 4040-18,510 with highest sales on Day 4 of the 4 day festival that ends on a Saturday

Total Stalls= 90 in 2018 and 120 in 2019

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<th>STALL TYPES</th>
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<td>4040.48</td>
<td>5279.68</td>
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</table>

Total Stalls= 90 in 2018 and 120 in 2019
Total Ticket Sales at Ward’s Lake (one of the venues) during the 4 day festival in 2019

Number of the participants including cameras= 42288

Income Generated from the Sale of Tickets= Rs. 4,22,880 over 4 days
International Summits that were part of the Festival

As part of the 4th Edition of the India International Cherry Blossom Festival, a Bilateral Summit between the Republic of Korea and the Government of Meghalaya was held at the State Convention Centre, Shillong in 16 November 2019.

The main focus of the summit was to exchange ideas on Socio-Economic Partnerships and in strengthening ties between the Republic of Korea and the state of Meghalaya in key areas such as Waste management, Power & Energy Generation, Restoration of Environment particularly in areas affected by coal mining, Cultural relations, Tourism etc.

Dialogue with States” focuses on various cooperation between Japan and Indian States. The dialogue with Meghalaya was held on 14 November 2018 as part of the 3rd India International Cherry Blossom Festival.

Ambassador Hiramatsu introduced the achievements of PM Modi’s visit to Japan as well as cooperation between Japan and Meghalaya in connectivity, forest resource management, disaster management and people-to-people/cultural exchanges in his speech, “They discussed the possibility of future cooperation between Japan and Meghalaya.
Genesis of the India International Cherry Blossom Festival Shillong

Dr. Mukul. M. Sangma, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya in his speech, launched the Cherry Blossom Festival Initiative on 14th May, 2015 at Ward’s Lake

India’s first Cherry Blossom Festival was launched in 2016 in sync with the Government of Meghalaya’s push for “Destination Meghalaya”.

Ceremonial planting by Dr. Mukul. M. Sangma, Hon’ble Minister Chief Minister on the 14th of May 2015 at Ward’s Lake
Achievements

- Shillong made a mark as the only International Cherry Blossom Festival celebrated during Autumn and has placed Meghalaya on the global tourist map.
- Over 10,000 Cherry Blossom Saplings have been planted over the last 5 years

Action on the Sustainable Development Goals

- **8 Decent Work and Economic Growth**
  - Promoted Arts & Culture & Cuisine of the Region
  - Boosted Sales during the Festival

- **15 Life on Land**
  - >10,000 saplings planted across Khasi Hills

- **16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**
  - Developed a robust team of Central and State Govt agencies
  - Promoted inter state and international cultural exchanges

- **17 Partnerships for the Goals**
  - Catalyzed international partnerships with Japan and South Korea
  - Domestic partnerships with State Governments, NEC, ICSSR, LG India
National attention by the PM

Although India International Cherry Blossom Festival is cancelled due to COVID-19, the beautiful flowers have caught the eyes of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Cherry Blossoms, also known as Prunus ceramides covers the whole of east and west Khasi hills. These gorgeous flowers normally grow in the wild but can be spotted across the state of Meghalaya during this time of the year. PM Modi mentioned about these vibrant cherry blossom flowers during his latest 'Mann Ki Baat' programme. Modi said in his Sunday's Mann Ki Baat Programme on All India Radio (AIR), "We are stepping into (the) winters. The Internet is replete with pictures of Cherry Blossom flowers, but they are not from Japan, but from India's Shillong." Modi also said that the Cherry Blossoms have further enhanced the beauty of Meghalaya. Had it not been because of the global pandemic, the city of Shillong would have been loaded with tourists from across the country as well as the world. People from various parts of the world come to Shillong during November and December to witness the hues of white and pink strewn across every street corner. In the 71st Mann Ki Baat programme of PM Modi, he said how the pandemic has brought the people closer to nature. Nature never takes a halt.

November 30, 2020
Other eco-restoration activities

Conservatory of native endangered Orchids at IBSD Shillong Orchidarium

Future objectives (with BSJ)-
- Mass multiplication of Selected varieties
- Hybridisation to create New orchid hybrids
- Restoring wild Populations (with Forest Department)
Acknowledgements

- Director, IBSD
- Department of Biotechnology, Govt of India
- Govt of Meghalaya
- Dr. Maneesha Vinodini Ramesh, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kerala, India
- Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kerala, India

Prunus cerasoides (Wild Himalayan Cherry)