

The **cultural landscape of the Hooghly riverfront, commonly referred to as the "Europe on the Ganges"** is a unique ensemble of colonial trading posts of the **Dutch (Chinsurah), British (Calcutta), French (Chandernagore), Danes (Serampore) and Portuguese (Bandel)** in close proximity to each other; these exceptional centres of maritime trade in the 18th - 19th century witnessed the rise and fall of colonial ambitions. A testimony to the confluence of cultures and starting point of "contemporary Bengali culture", tangible influences of this visible in the form of architecture, town planning, literature, art etc that developed in the region. Representative of the important interchange of human values the area is a physical manifestation of the beginning of the industrial revolution as a landscape dotted with numerous Jute mills. This confluence of cultures encouraged the educational awakening of women, intermingling of faith, development of democratic ideas and a new way of life.

However, post independence, these areas have been reduced to being suburbs to Calcutta (Kolkata), with increasing development pressures. The challenges for these settlements are similar, essentially dereliction and degradation of the built fabric, lack of employment opportunities, poor levels of hygiene, sanitation, lack of basic infrastructure, lack of appreciation of ecology and isolation of creative industries.

The Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal is developing a masterplan for this circuit focusing on the creation of tourism facilities, reuse of the historic buildings, upgradation of the public spaces, illumination and signage. The need of the hour is to develop an **integrated sustainable heritage conservation plan** for the towns that will identify it as a prime heritage centre with tourism focus, improve the environmental quality, provide opportunity to use heritage resources as a source of employment to strengthen local economy, and assist in the revival of the local crafts and building traditions with active local participation.

OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

This ensemble of towns along the Hooghly have great potential to not only be developed as a **tourist site but also showcase that with sensitive heritage integrated development, how communities can be given a chance at a better quality of life while preserving and enhancing its cultural heritage.** There is a great opportunity to demonstrate how the funds available from urban renewal schemes like JNNURM II, District and Local Administration as well as external sources can be judiciously channelized towards the sustainable urban development of the town of Chinsurah. **The Digital Humanities Centre at Presidency University** will complement this effort with an interdisciplinary research project focusing on how Dutch history in Bengal can receive new illumination through a juxtaposition of tangible and intangible heritage such as monuments, texts, charters, linguistic traces and even performative rituals. The aim is to research and record such resonances using digital tools and to integrate them into a website. Such a website will function as an educational toolkit for a variety of purposes, including university-level research, promotion of tourism and even teaching history in schools. Presidency is one of the first institutions in India to apply Digital Humanities research to the preservation of culture, architecture and built-environment and once created, such a resource would also become an integral part of the History curriculum in the university, thus perpetuating wider engagement.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide a platform for a proactive dialogue between the various government institutions, stakeholders and professionals in order to develop a practical and sustainable plan for the urban development of Chinsurah. Dutch experts in the field of city planning and heritage conservation shall interact with local experts and administrators to develop a way forward towards creating sustainable approach towards development.

Dutch in Bengal Heritage, Urban Planning & Academics

STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP

24th & 25th February 2014



Day 01 24th February 2014
Chinsurah & Victoria Memorial

- 8:00- 8: 30 Gather at Dalhousie Square
Leave for Chinsurah (Journey Time 1.5 hrs)
- 10:30– 11:00
Welcome by District Magistrate of Hooghly, *Smt, Manmeet Nanda* (IAS)
- Introduction of the Mutual Cultural Heritage Programme by *Dr Jean-Paul Corten, Netherlands Ministry of Culture*
- Remarks by *Dr Bente Wolff*, Director, Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark
- 11:00– 13:30 **Guided tour of Dutch Heritage in Chinsurah**
by Architects *Aishwarya Tipnis & Manish Chakroborti*
- 13:30–14:00 *Lunch and leave for Kolkatta*
- 16:30-17:00 Arrive at Victoria Memorial
- 17:30-18:45 Talk by *Prof. Paul Meurs* “Chinsura initiative and cultural value of a place” followed by discussion: Mr Partha Ranjan Das, Mr Manish Chakroborti, Ms Aishwarya Tipnis
- 19:00 Light & sound show at Victoria Memorial

Day 02 25th February 2014
Presidency College, Kolkatta

- 10:00– 10:30 *Registration and tea*
- WELCOME**
10:30– 11:00
Welcome by Vice Chancellor, *Prof Malabika Sarkar*
- Words of Welcome by *Namit Shah, Honorary Consul of the Netherlands in Kolkatta*
- Introducing the Shared Cultural Heritage of the Netherlands & India**
Mrs Marielle van Miltenburg, Head, Department of Political Affairs, Public Diplomacy & Culture Netherlands Embassy, New Delhi
- Role of the Heritage Commission of West Bengal**
Shri Partha Ranjan Das, West Bengal Heritage Commission
- Heritage & Cultural Assets of Bengal**
Shri Atri Bhattacharya, IAS, Secretary Information and Culture, West Bengal Government
- Opening of the workshop by
by *Shri A.R. Bardhan, IAS, Principal Secretary for Tourism West Bengal Government*
- 11:15– 11:30 *Tea Break*
- SESSION 1**
11:30– 11:45
Intervening in Historical Surroundings in Planning & Building Level
Prof Paul Meurs, Technical University of the Delft, Netherlands
- 11:45– 12:00
Integrated Conservation
Dr J.P.A.M (Jean-Paul) Corten, Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency, Ministry of Culture
- 12:00– 12:15
Identification of shared cultural heritage: Dutch in Chinsurah
Smt Aishwarya Tipnis, Architect & Conservation Planner
- 12:15– 12:30
Developing a Heritage & Tourism Circuit along the Hooghly
Shri Manish Chakroborti, Conservation Architect
- 12:30– 13:00
Danish Initiative on Heritage Conservation & Urban Planning at Srerampore
Dr Bente Woff, Director, National Museum of Denmark
- 13:00– 14:00 *Lunch*
- SESSION 2**
14:00– 15:45
Ritual, Memory, Transcultural Urbanity: The Dutch and Bengal in Global History *Shri Milinda Banerjee, Dept of History*
- Digitising Memories, Digital Monuments - Preserving History and Heritage through A Digital Humanities Approach** *Dr Souvik Mukherjee, Dept of English*
- Dutch Settlement in Bengal and Its Possible Impact on Bangla Language & Linguistic Culture** *Shri Debapriya Banerjee, Dept of Bengali*
- Dutch Records in Bengal** by *Dr Ananda Bhattacharya, WB State Archives*
- 15:45– 17:00 **Panel Discussion** (Prof Paul Meurs, Dr Jean Paul Corten, Ms Aishwarya Tipnis, Shri Manish Chakroborti and Dr Bente Woff, Shri Partha Ranjan Das)
- 17:00 Concluding Remarks by *Prof Malabika Sarkar*