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State wants Matheran to be a tourist hub

State Tourism Minister Surveys Matheran Hill Station With Plans To Attract Tourists, Assures Budgetary Provision For Infrastructure In The Town

George Mendonca

Matheran: As part of his plan to enhance and boost tourism industry across the state, after completing the survey of Kolhapur and Pune districts, the PWD and state minister for tourism Chhagan Bhujbal was in Raigad district on February 4 to conduct a survey of the Matheran Municipal Council area, especially the eco-sensitive Matheran hill. Minister Bhujbal intended to avail first hand information of the present geographical condition of the most sought-after getaway in Raigad district, which has been allegedly receiving a lukewarm response from tourists due to lack of proper approach road and the inconvenience caused due to absence of a ropeway, which otherwise would have enabled speedy transportation of tourists to reach the various tourist points atop the hill.

After inspecting the four-lane road development work from Kalyan to Karjat being undertaken by the MMRDA, the tourism minister inspected the ropeway project site stretching from Bhutavali village to Garbet and walking further till Madhavji point on the hill that is the ropeway's destination point. Accompanying the minister were MLA Suresh Lad, ropeway project's representative Vinaychand Kothari and Matheran municipal councillor Ajay Sawant.

Addressing the media, Bhujbal said, "The state tourism ministry shall leave no stone unturned in providing the best of basic infrastructure facilities for transforming Matheran into a sought-after hill station in Raigad. To augment the tourism industry by attracting more tourists, Rs7 crore shall be allocated by the PWD for construction of roads from Matheran-Neral to various tourist points atop the hill. The PWD has already undertaken road developments works on the stretches of road from Matheran-Neral till Kalamb, Kashele, Bhivpuri station and Kadav."

Bhujbal added that once the PWD ministry receives a proposal from Matheran municipal council pertaining to development and beautification of the tourist



Pics: K C Singh

DEVELOPING MATHERAN: PWD and state minister for tourism Chhagan Bhujbal said that once the PWD ministry receives a proposal from Matheran municipal council pertaining to development and beautification of the tourist points atop the hill, it will be accepted without any delay



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"The ropeway project work has been sanctioned by the PWD. Accordingly, the state shall co-operate in enabling to undertake work of the approach road to the ropeway's base camp. Once the ropeway operation starts, it will be an added attraction for tourists, who shall have another option for reaching the hilltop," he added.

According to Bhujbal, in order to attract tourists even after sunset, the MMC has demanded starting a laser show for their entertainment. Once the proposal is submitted, the state and MTDC shall extend their support for its implementation. The tourism department has already allocated Rs6.50 crore to the MMC for the water supply project. Hence, for availing more funds, the local civic body needs to

follow up the matter with various state departments as well. "With this development, in future, we expect around 12 lakh tourists visiting the hill station," he said.

Ropeway Pvt Ltd's representative Vinaychand Kothari said, "The state has given a go-ahead to the ropeway project, after submitting the project report within six months, the actual work shall begin. We have obtained the mandatory 20 NOCs required for the project's operation, we have also obtained the mandatory NOC from the national board of wildlife. The ropeway's mechanism is a foreign-based technology that shall cost around Rs150 crore. Hence, if necessary, we shall even implement the project as a joint venture with a reputed private company. We are determined to accomplish the project at any cost, only for facilitating tourists."