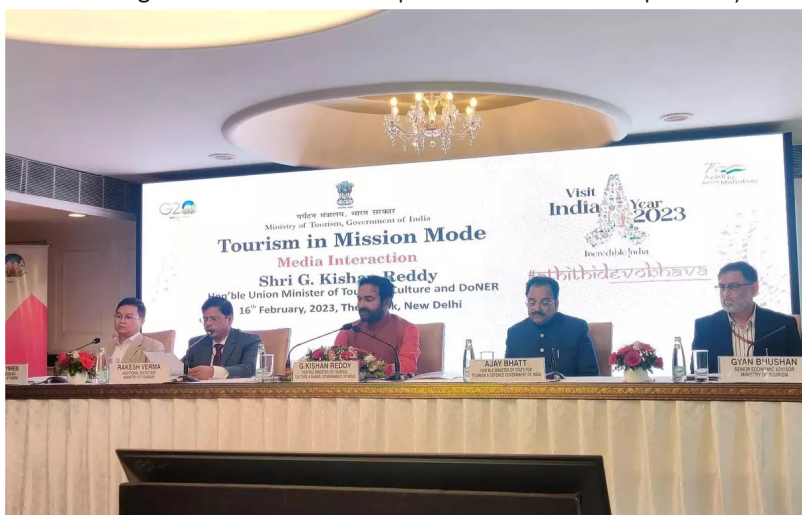


Enhancing Rural Tourism in India: National Best Tourism Village and Rural Homestay Competitions 2024

(The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has launched the National Best Tourism Village and Rural Homestay Competitions 2024 to boost rural economies, preserve cultural authenticity, and promote sustainable development through strategic initiatives and a comprehensive evaluation process.)



(Source: Travel)

In a significant move to boost Rural Tourism and contribute to sustainable development, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has launched the National Best Tourism Village Competition 2024 and the National Best Rural Homestay Competition 2024. These initiatives build on the success of the 2023 edition, where 35 villages were recognized for their excellence in Gold, Silver, and Bronze categories. This news analysis delves into the strategic initiatives, objectives, impact, and the comprehensive evaluation process of these competitions, shedding light on their potential to reshape the landscape of Rural Tourism in India.

Strategic Initiatives for Rural Tourism Development:

1. Comprehensive National Strategy and Roadmap:

The Ministry, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, has rolled out a comprehensive National Strategy and Roadmap for the Development of Rural Tourism in India. This roadmap serves as the guiding document for various initiatives, including the National Best Tourism Village and National Best Rural Homestays Competitions. The strategic initiatives aim to create an environment conducive to the growth of Rural Tourism by actively engaging with governments, industry stakeholders, NGOs, and local communities.

2. Role of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:

Recognizing the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, the Ministry encourages collaboration between governments, industry stakeholders, NGOs, and local communities. Through these competitions, efforts are synergized to strengthen rural economies, fostering healthy competitiveness among villages and homestays. The multi-stakeholder collaboration is seen as a key driver in achieving the sustainable development goals outlined in the National Strategy and Roadmap.

Objectives of the Competitions:



(Source: Mint)

1. Identifying and Rewarding Excellence:

The primary objective of the competitions is to serve as a platform for identifying and rewarding outstanding contributions to Rural Tourism. By categorizing villages and homestays into Gold, Silver, and Bronze, the Ministry aims to incentivize communities and individuals to actively participate in shaping the future of Rural Tourism in India. The recognition serves as a powerful motivator for rural areas to invest in sustainable practices and contribute positively to their communities.

2. Active Community Involvement:

The competitions aim to promote active community involvement in Rural Tourism. By fostering healthy competitiveness, the Ministry believes that communities will be more inclined to preserve cultural authenticity, promote sustainable practices, and actively contribute to the sustainable development goals. The competitions act as a catalyst for rural populations to take ownership of their tourism potential and actively engage in its development.

Impact on Lesser-Explored Regions:

1. Tangible Impact on Rural Economies:

Beyond mere recognition, the competitions aim to have a tangible impact on lesser-explored regions. By boosting tourism in these areas, the initiative seeks to create a ripple effect, generating economic opportunities for local businesses and residents. The influx of tourists is expected to stimulate the local economy, creating jobs and fostering entrepreneurship in rural communities.

2. Preserving Cultural Authenticity:

One of the critical impacts of these competitions is the preservation of cultural authenticity. As tourism grows in lesser-explored regions, there is an increased emphasis on preserving local culture and heritage. The competitions encourage villages and homestays to showcase their cultural and natural assets, fostering a sense of pride and responsibility among the residents.

3. Promoting Sustainable and Responsible Tourism:

Sustainability lies at the core of these competitions. By recognizing and rewarding villages and homestays that demonstrate a commitment to economic, social, and environmental sustainability,

the Ministry aims to promote responsible tourism practices. This, in turn, can serve as a model for other regions, encouraging widespread adoption of sustainable tourism practices across the country.

Central Nodal Agency for Effective Implementation:



(Source: Northern Gazette)

1. Role of CNA RT & RH:

To ensure the effective implementation of the initiatives for Rural Tourism, the Ministry has established the Central Nodal Agency for Rural Tourism and Rural Homestays (CNA RT & RH). This agency plays a pivotal role in conducting capacity-building sessions for states, creating Master Trainers who can propagate the competitions at the grassroots level. The centralization of efforts through CNA RT & RH ensures a standardized approach to the competitions and facilitates seamless communication between different stakeholders.

2. Capacity Building at State Level:

A critical aspect of the implementation strategy is the capacity building at the state level. The CNA RT & RH conducts sessions to create Master Trainers who can, in turn, disseminate information about the competitions at the village level. This cascading approach ensures that the competitions reach every corner of the country, giving an equal opportunity to diverse rural communities to participate.

Application Details and Timeline:



(Source: ET Travel)

1. Accessible Application Portal:

The competitions were officially launched on World Tourism Day, 27th September 2023. The application portal, crucial for the submission of entries, has been made accessible through www.rural.tourism.gov.in. This user-friendly platform allows interested villages and homestays to apply conveniently, ensuring broad participation from across the country.

2. Application Period and Submission Guidelines:

The application period spans from 15th November to 31st December 2023. During this time, villages and homestays meeting the eligibility criteria can submit their applications online. The Ministry emphasizes that only duly filled and submitted online applications will be considered for evaluation, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the submission guidelines.

Comprehensive Evaluation Process:

1. Eligibility Criteria:

To participate in the competitions, villages and homestays must meet specific eligibility criteria, including low population density, location proximity to famous places or tourist destinations, involvement in traditional activities, and a history of community values or past achievements. The stringent criteria ensure that only deserving participants move forward in the evaluation process.

2. District Level Evaluation:

The evaluation process begins at the district level, where committees are constituted to assess the entries. These committees, advised to have members from the district tourism board and administration, follow marking guidelines to determine the top three villages that qualify for the state level evaluation. The district level evaluation aims to filter out the most deserving candidates based on predetermined criteria.

3. State Level Evaluation:

Following the district level evaluation, the process moves to the state level, where committees with



members from State Tourism Boards and development corporations assess the top three villages forwarded by each district. The state level evaluation further refines the selection, ensuring that only the best candidates move on to the national level.

4. National Level Evaluation:

At the national level, a committee is constituted to carry out the final evaluation. The best tourism villages of India are announced and awarded based on the cumulative assessment of all state-level entries. The national level evaluation is the culmination of the rigorous process, and winning villages are recognized for their outstanding contributions to Rural Tourism.

The National Best Tourism Village Competition 2024 and the National Best Rural Homestay Competition 2024 stand as landmark initiatives by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to transform the landscape of Rural Tourism. With strategic initiatives, clear objectives, and a comprehensive evaluation process, these competitions aim not only to recognize excellence but also to drive positive change, rural development, and community well-being. As the application period progresses, the nation eagerly awaits the unveiling of the best tourism villages that will shape the narrative of Rural Tourism in India for years to come.

