

IIM Shillong hosts bikers of North East on Wheels expedition; discusses way forward ideas on rebuilding sustainable tourism

Shillong, April 12, 2022: India's reputed and one of the top management colleges, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong in Meghalaya, on Monday, April 11, 2022, hosted a group of 12 bikers, from the Falcon group, who are part of the nine-day 'North East on Wheels Expedition' launched by the Minister of State for Culture, Meenakashi Lekhi (in the mid of January 2022) in New Delhi to promote the Culture of Northeastern States.

Organised by the Amazing Namaste Foundation, the expedition which ends on **April 17, 2022**, celebrates 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' with Dekho Apna Desh and National Road Safety as its other prime themes. The initiative aims to boost and promote North East India tourism, and help showcase the region and its potential through diverse lenses, while raising awareness among people about road safety measures and rules.

The interaction programme at IIM Shillong, organised by the Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Centre, IIM Shillong, witnessed the presence of institute students, faculty members, and staff from the PGPex department discussions were held on the potential of promoting North East India's tourism through impactful yet exciting cross-cultural event campaigns. Local successful entrepreneurs, prominent personalities, and community leaders were also present for the session.

The bikers, coming from different walks of life and from different parts of the country, unanimously agreed upon the fact that North East has a lot to offer in terms of tourism and cultural diversity. They reiterated their awe for the scenic beauty of the region and the warmth the people of the region had to offer.

In their interaction, they also brought up the issue on road safety and stressed on the need to follow safety instructions and traffic rules, while also being equipped with proper safety gear.

"One has to have the willpower, right temperament, experience and the courage to ride on a journey like this", said one of the bikers.

Speaking at the programme, Prof D.P. Goyal, Director IIM Shillong praised the bikers and the organisers of the expedition for the initiative. He said, "You have to experience something to really know and feel it, and usually the experience is difficult to be put in words. I noticed the bikers facing the same. The experience was so wholesome and spoke for itself, thus rendering them speechless."

"North East India is not just unique but also strategically very important for India's neighbourhood initiatives. We all know tourism is among the industries

that have been hit the most by the global Covid-19 pandemic. Not only tourism is a vital source of revenue, it has the potential to serve as a development ‘tool’ to strengthen supply chains, boost local businesses and even create jobs. And the good part about the North East India region is there’s something for everyone – nature, culture, history, and adventure.”

“Events like this will help further bridge the gap, create awareness and generate interest among people to travel to the North East India and explore the rich and fulfilling experiences it has to offer,” he further added.

Talking about initiatives of IIM Shillong, Prof Goyal spoke about the contributions made by the institute to inculcate in the students the spirit of community building and understanding North Eastern culture through multiple projects that demanded them to interact and work with the locals. He also mentioned the MoU signed with Arunachal Pradesh and other initiatives taken to make IIM Shillong a pan North Eastern institution.

On April 9th, the Chief Minister of Assam, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma in the presence of the Union Minister of Culture, Tourism & DoNER, G Kishan Reddy flagged off the bike expedition from Administrative Staff College Ground, Khanapara, Guwahati.

During the journey, the riders paid tributes to the nation’s heroes, interacted with local communities, and promoted their experiences through social media platforms.