

# Heliport tourism plan

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New Delhi, Aug. 13: If Arunachal Pradesh governor General J.J. Singh has his way, tourists will be hopping into helicopters to visit the state's scenic spots.

Singh's idea of "heliport tourism" has apparently impressed Union tourism minister Kumari Selja, who has promised Rs 5 crore to set up a heliport destination as a pilot project.

The first helicopter is expected to fly a group of dozen-odd tourists to Mechuka in West Siang district. Mechuka, often compared to Switzerland, can become the pilot project for Singh's concept of "soulful tourism".



Arunachal Pradesh governor General JJ Singh with Union tourism minister Kumari Selja in Delhi on Thursday

A helicopter will bring in 16-20 tourists to places like Mechuka and Geishing where they will stay in wooden huts

for three to five days. They will then be replaced by another set, the governor has conceptualised.

The retired general has been passionately promoting Arunachal's natural resources and tourism potential, on which he was an authority even while serving in the army.

He plans a workshop in Itanagar, in collaboration with the cane and bamboo technology centre in Guwahati, from August 23 to 26. It will discuss building bamboo huts at tourist spots to save time and money.

Singh has got a bamboo hut built on the Raj Bhavan premises to promote the new construction material and demonstrate the speed of construction. The hut was built in 12 days flat.

"The governor has also asked for streamlining of the inner-line permit system for the state, especially for the Tirap and Changlang districts," an aide said.

To go to Arunachal and a few other northeastern states, Indian tourists need an inner-line permit from local authorities.

Foreign tourists require the restricted area permit or protected area permit. Delhi is considering relaxing the norms for tourists.

The governor has also suggested a rafting contest sometime between November and February, to which the tourism minister has agreed.

Karnataka too has a plan for heliport tourism, sources said.