

Need to recognize Gangasagar Mela observed in Sagar Island, West Bengal as a National Mela-Laid

SHRIMATI JUNE MALIAH (MEDINIPUR): According to mythological, archaeological and historical evidences, Gangasagar Mela is the largest and oldest annual religious congregation of our country. It has been held at Sagar Island continuously for the last three millennia. It is a place on Sunderban delta where river Ganga meets the sea and a small temple with holy sage Kapil Muni, sage Bhagirath and the Ganga exists. The legend is associated with the story of King Bhagirath who performed penance and brought the sacred river Ganga from heaven to earth to free the souls of his ancestors, 60,000 sons of King Sagar, who were cursed by Maharishi Kapil Muni and turned to ashes. River-goddess Ganga descended here making Gangasagar a revered place to worship, perform rituals and seek spiritual solace. It is said that on Makar Sankranti, the Ganga reached the sage's 'Ashram' (hermitage) at Sagardweep and the condemned were liberated. Every year, in mid-January, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, millions of Hindu devotees from all over India and abroad assemble at the Sagar Island. It is believed that a holy dip in the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal will lead to atonement for earthly sins and the achievement of Moksha or salvation. Thus, the event has deep-rooted mythological and astrological significance, with this Mela itself together with Kapil Muni and the Sagar Island having been mentioned in the ancient Indian epics such the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Kalidasa Raghuvamsham. As it is totally isolated from the mainland, all pilgrims are bound to cross the river Muriganga to reach the island, making it the only pilgrimage in India, which is accessible solely through waterways. There is urgent need for a bridge over Muriganga, for which detailed project report (DPR) has been completed by state Government at an estimated cost of Rs. 1500 crore. Intangible Cultural Heritage of India National Inventory can refer to "Social practices, rituals and festive events", making Gangasagar Mela eligible to be included in the list of National Melas like the festivals such as Deepavali, Chhat Puja and Kumbh Mela. Hence, I am seeking attention of Government of India to recognize Gangasagar Mela as a national Mela/a fair of national importance and placement of fund for this purpose.