

Gogoi to dedicate India's first Hospital Ship



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Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi will conduct the formal dedication ceremony of India's first Hospital Ship, an initiative of the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research and the North Eastern Council, on May 24 at Pandu, Guwahati, in the presence of his cabinet colleagues and senior officials of the North Eastern Council, NRHM and the Govt. of Assam.

With a steady improvement in Assam's health record and other basic indices, this represents another major step forward for sustained and sustainable health care in the Brahmaputra Valley.

The Ship is a work in progress and the Chief Minister is expected to dedicate its services, when complete, to the sustained health care of lakhs of people along the Brahmaputra in Assam and the NER.

The Hospital Ship (Floating Hospital) is the first of its kind in India, although C-NES, which is known of its path-breaking innovative initiatives, runs 15 boat clinics in 13 districts of Assam in partnership with the National Rural Health Mission, Government of Assam. The Ship was conceived by C-NES' Managing Trustee Sanjoy Hazarika, designed by engineers in Kolkata and Guwahati with inputs from health professionals and has received a building grant from the North Eastern Council, Government of India. There are few such Hospital Ships on river courses in the world.

"When complete, the ship will provide specialized services on the river to island communities, particularly health care services to mothers and children, including safe institutionalized deliveries, as well as conduct operations," says Mr. Hazarika, C-NES' Managing Trustee, who praised the NEC for supporting the idea.

The 130-foot-long vessel would be on three levels when complete and equipped with a modern Operation Theater, diagnostic facilities like portable X-Ray, portable ultra sound, laboratory, recovery and delivery rooms, sterilizer room, laundry room and separate wards for male and female with 5 beds each, Cabins for medical personnel and specialists as well as other staff including crew members will be in place. Recreation, kitchen and dining areas have been designed.

M/S P. Das & Company has been engaged to build the ship and construction is going on at their shipyard in Pandu, Guwahati.

C-NES, established in 2000 with offices at Guwahati and New Delhi, has worked tirelessly in the fields of health care delivery, education, conservation and livelihood generation for under privileged communities, especially those living in the *chars/ saporis* along the Brahmaputra and elsewhere in Assam and the NER.

The communities living on the islands of the Brahmaputra are a prime focus area of the organizations work along with a number of other projects implemented in the state since C-NES' inception. At present C-NES works in 13 districts with 15 Boat Clinic units in partnership with the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM, GoA). Policymakers at the national level and international scholars and researchers regard this innovative initiative as a trailblazer in the field of PPP, reaching out to the poor and marginalized. Over ten lakh people have been positively impacted through this partnership, making it a model of sustained and sustainable health care. In addition, the Population Foundation of India is also supporting work in five districts to enhance the family planning outreach of the boat clinics.

Venue for the Hospital Ship dedication ceremony is- Shipyard of M/S P Das & Company, behind Pandu River Police Station (near Saraighat Bridge), Pandu, Guwahati

Time- Between 11.30- 11.45 am

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