

Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project
Preparation of an Integrated Eco-Tourism Development Plan
for Sagar Island in West Bengal and Provision of Supervision Support
during implementation of the Plan



POSITION PAPER
ON ARCHITECTURE & SPATIAL ANALYSIS

*ANNEX 2: VISITORS INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION CENTER IN
GANGASAGAR MELA*

March 2013



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SAGAR VISITORS INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION CENTRE (VIEC) FOR SUNDARBAN AFFAIRS, ICZM WORLD BANK PROJECT.

1. Project Request

Following the meeting with Bankim Hazra - Chairman of Gangasagar Mela, a museum was requested for the Gangasagar Mela for the pilgrims, and other visitors as part of the World Bank funded project.

The basis of this was that the site is the major annual pilgrimage for India, and that educational support was needed for the festival period, and also for the remainder of the year information for visitors.

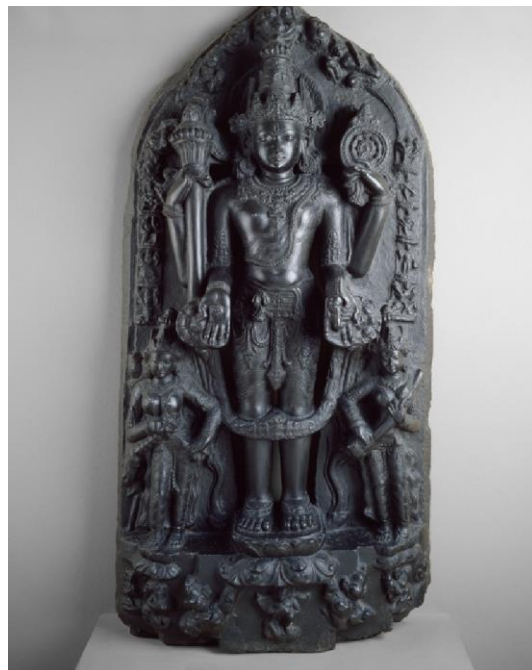
Research was carried out by the project team during the Gangasagar Mela period to determine the need for this, and this is identified in their separate social reports.

As the other major component in the World Bank project is the environmental development of the Gangasagar Mela site and the Eco Tourism development of the region, the Sagar VIEC was also considered to have a role in promoting these aims to assist in the sites protection and development as a part of India's natural beauty, and identification of Ecotourism activities to support the development of the local economy of the resident population throughout the year.

Fig#1: Pilgrims at Gangasaga , 2013



Fig#2: Hedges Vishnu 8-11th C Sagar Island found in 1683 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



2. Project Realisation

2.1 Possible Location

Inspection was made of the Gangasagar Mela site during the festival period, and the large crowds make the majority of the area unsuitable for a VIEC, but two sites were identified with a potential. The first adjacent to a natural flood creek of the Ganga river supported local wildlife, and was situated close by the main Kapil Muni temple site, and the Sundarban Affairs Offices. It was also adjacent to and could be developed with the government owned Larica Hotel. The tidal creek kept away the massed crowds from the site, while providing access to local wildlife, and mangroves. Its position between Road 3 and 4 also ensured that it was passed by the arriving pilgrims and so could be noticed and visited

Fig#5: Hypothetic location of the Museum



during their stay as they would be aware of its existence. The site has good views across the Gangasagar Mela camp site from the upper level, and the Ganga River and Bay of Bengal beyond. It is sheltered on the North and East side by a belt of trees. The site is not used for pilgrim accommodation during the festival as it has a creek on two sides, and has no access to current service areas.

The second potential site lay to the north and rear of the Youth of Hostel, along Road 3 and opposite the Zila Parisad Inspection Bungalow. It also had good proximity to the Kapil Muni centre, and access to tidal water for an ecological area. It was more exposed as the tree belt lay to the South, and the

Fig#4: View of VIEC Site and Mela Ground



views of the site were more restricted. It is used for support accommodation during the festival.

2.2 Project Concept

It was proposed that the project would contain three elements:

A. Visitor Interpretation and Education Centre containing

- History exhibitions of Gangasagar Mela and Pilgrimage in India
- Environmental and Ecotourism exhibitions on the Gangasagar Mela area, and the Sundarban coast and islands.
- Education room with multipurpose, including teaching and meditation

B. Children's Gardens with exhibits related to local wild life, and environment.

- Wild animals and birds
- Marine life and fishing
- Trees and flora

C. Open air theatre for cultural events

- Musical recitals
- Theatre
- Poetry recitation

Fig#5: Different perspectives of the museum / interpretation centre



Fig#6: Mela events



2.3 Proposed Buildings

The compact and triangular nature of the site, combined with the need to provide views across the Sagar Mela area, suggested a three-story construction. This height of construction already existed adjacent to the site in the Tourism Hotel, and Sundarban Offices and so was not out of keeping. The materials suggested would be timber to keep in sympathy with the ecological theme of the buildings, and also local traditions of building.

Entrance

The entrance of the museum was designed to be also a Theatre space for the open air events envisaged in the programme, it meant also that the building could be utilized for organizing groups on their arrival at the site. The space under the theatre would be used for craft sales and Ecotourism office. This will share the cost of running the museum with the Ecotourism facilities. The site would be separated from the raised paths by a low wall, similar to those enclosing the adjacent sites, this demarks the area while allowing passers by to see the gardens and museums events.

Main Buildings

The main building would be on three floors connected on the exterior by ramps on two sides to allow large groups to move up and down independently, and with a spiral stair for small groups on the inside.

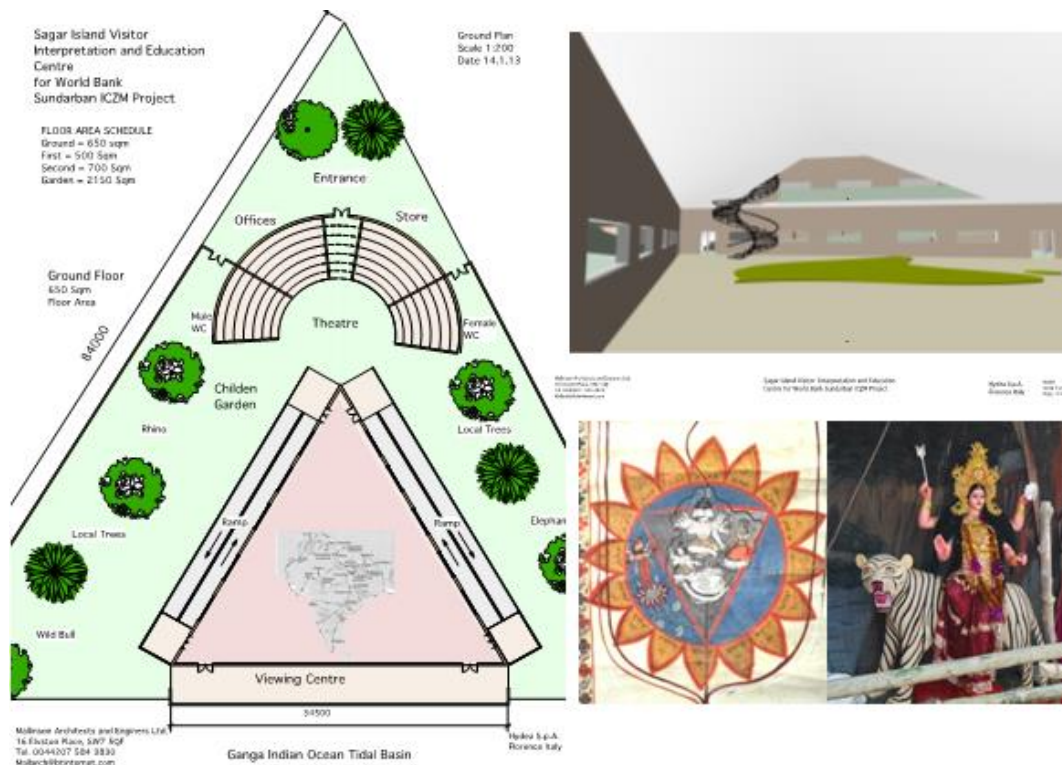


The ground and first floor both 4m high would be open to each other, and create a central 8m high space, naturally ventilated from window on all three sides. The ground floor windows would be high up for security and provide space for the exhibits below.

i) Ground Floor

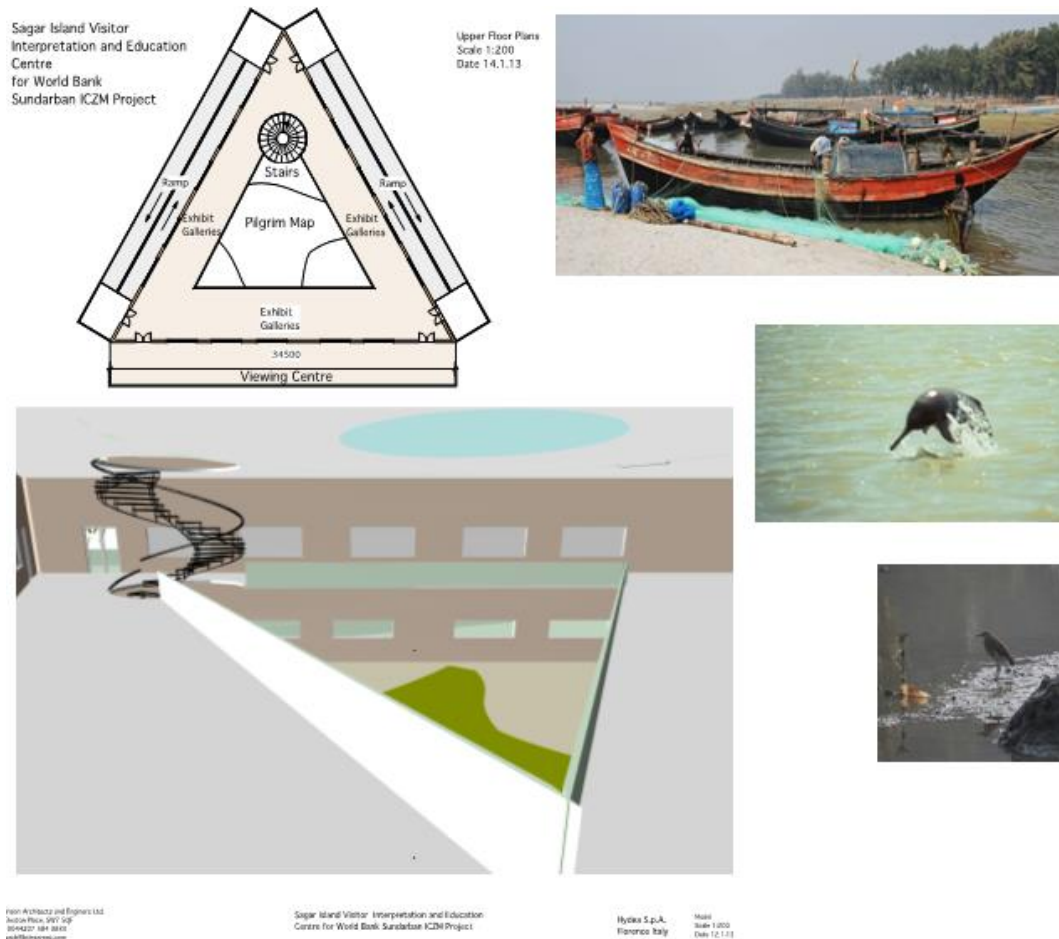
The ground floor would contain a large open room, with a floor map carved in marble of India. It would show the principle pilgrimage sites, and also the routes linking them together.

The exhibition would be on the surrounding walls, the windows would be high enough to permit total wall usage, and would include a panorama of the Gangasagar Mela site at its full capacity, which otherwise is only visible when the festival is on. The exhibits would contain description of the stories and images of the characters associate with the stories from different periods of Indian History, so providing both a sense of the diversity and development of the culture. The languages of the exhibition would be Hindi, Bengali and English. They would include examples of products made for the festival, and information on where the pilgrims came from and the importance of the festival to them.



ii) First Floor

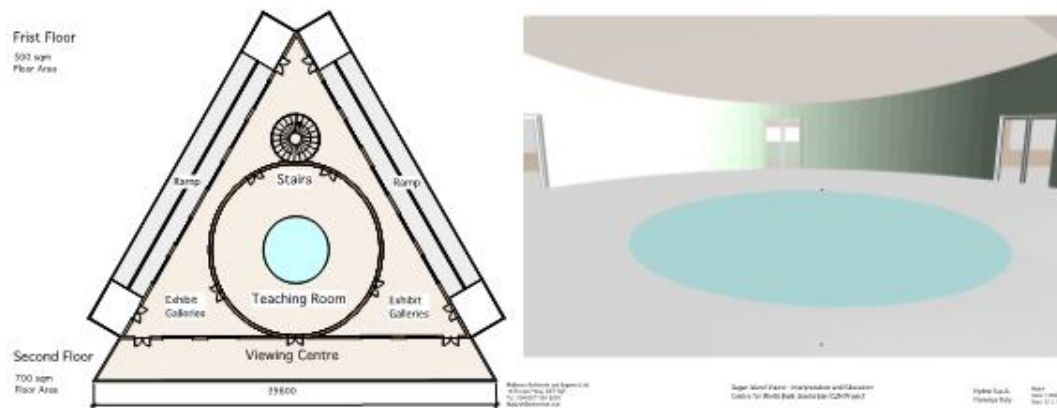
The first floor exhibits would be arranged along the balcony and windows, allowing the exterior landscape to be described while viewing it, and examining the variety of environmental issues, the local flora and fauna, and the issues of looking after the enormous area of the Sagar Mela. The wildlife in the children's gardens could also be referenced. The exhibits around the balcony would look at the map of India, and provide a larger context for discussing the issues of environment, the pollution of the Ganga river, urban development and modernization. The external balcony towards the creek will have descriptions of the birds and animals of the mangroves visible, and also the life of the beach and the visible surrounding areas.



iii) Second Floor

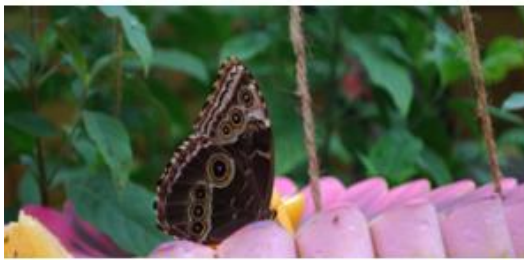
The top floor will contain a circular 18m diameter domed room suitable for a variety of purposes, both environmental teaching and religious mediation classes. This addresses a perceived need for both, while sharing the resources. The space can also be provided with Audio Visual films for visitors, and the domed roof potential used for wide screen imagining of the festival out of season should this be required.

The top floor balcony and exhibit area would serve to provide views of the Ganga River and Bay of Bengal, and the large Mela Camp Site, it would during the festival give a sense of the huge congregation that visits the area, and following the environmental improvements to the site also show the achievements of the World Bank beautification and ecological sustainable work to improve the Sagar Mela camp. The exhibits associated would illustrate this and highlight the achievement of the World Bank and Sundarban Affairs Offices works.



Children Gardens

The garden areas surrounding are designed to attract younger visitors to the museum, and bring with them their parents and guardians. The planting would be of attractive local varieties of plants and flowers, and also herbs and fruiting shrubs to attract local birds and animals. Large sculpted true to life images of famous wildlife species could be displayed, which would be referenced in the cultural and scientific exhibits inside the main Visitor Centre.



3. Gangasagar Mela Visitor Centre - Accounts

1. Potential Income:

- 1.1 Visitor Numbers –
 - 1.1.1 Mela Visitors
1,000 an Hour x 8 hrs x 5 days
Total = 40,000
 - 1.1.2 Non Mela
 - 1.1.2.1 Minor Festivals = 10,000
 - 1.1.2.2 Weekends = 50 x 1,000 = 50,000
 - 1.1.2.3 Holiday Season = 40 x 500 = 200,000
 - 1.1.2.4 Local Totals = 300,000 a year
 - 1.1.2.5 Foreign = 3,000 a year
 - 1.1.3 Local Income – 300,000 x 10 R = 3,000,000 = \$67,000
 - 1.1.4 Foreign Income 3,000 x 150 R = 450,000 = \$10,000
- 1.2 Publication Sales –
 - 1.2.1 Guide Books R15 x 50,000 = 750,000 = \$16,750
- 1.3 Other Income –
 - 1.3.1 Gift Shop Rental – 6 months x 2,000R = \$264
 - 1.3.2 Theatre Events – 35,000 x 10 R = \$7,800
- 1.4 Total Income = \$101,814

2.0 Potential Expenditures

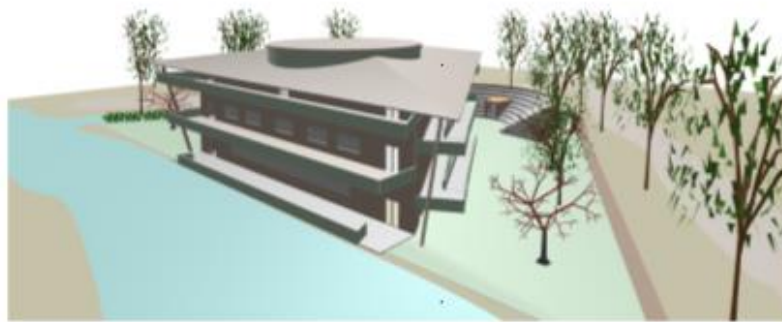
- 2.1 Salary for Director = \$30,000
- 2.2 Salary for Staff = \$30,000
- 2.3 Materials purchase = \$5,000
- 2.4 Depreciation = \$20,000
- 2.5 Totals Costs = \$85,000

3.0 Profit and Loss Account

- 3.1 Museum Potential Income = \$16,000
- 3.2 Construction Cost Lend = \$200,000
- 3.3 Payback Lend = 14 Years.

4. Conclusion

The World Bank project has the potential to create a small Visitor Interpretation and Education Centre of and about the Gangasagar Mela event and site. It would be about 19,913 sqft (1,850 sqm) in internal floor area, and provide a variety of information and education services for the site. It could be constructed in 15 months in time for the 2015 Sagar Mela



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