

Kumartuli Ghat, one of city's oldest, set to get greenery boost & viewing decks in pre-Durga Puja revamp

Subhro.Niyogi@timesofindia.com

Kolkata: North Kolkata is set to get its first riverside promenade by Durga Puja this Oct. While the British developed Princep Ghat near the Princep Monument as a riverside recreational zone, north Kolkata had various significant ghats for ritualistic practices but no promenade for the public.

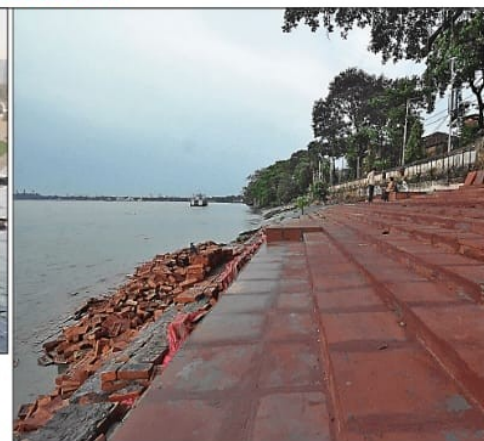
That is set to change with father-son architect duo Anjan and Saptarshi Mitra charting out the transformation of a 300m stretch of the Hooghly bank between Kumartuli Ghat and Champatala Ghat into a public recreational space. Around half the work in the Rs 10 crore Kolkata Port Trust (Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port Trust) transformative project, funded by the Adani Group company Adani Port Special Economic Zone, is complete and the Mitras plan to complete the rest within the next four-and-a-half months.

"Kumartuli Ghat lies behind the idol-making hub. Hence, it is obscured from public view. Locals have used it for generations to bathe and conduct other rituals. But citizens, including residents of north Kolkata, aren't aware of its presence. We are restoring this social and cultural space for the city and the river and hope it will attract the new ge-

₹10CR RIVERSIDE PROMENADE PROJECT



An artist's impression of how Kumartuli ghat would look after the restoration; (R) the ghats are being restored so that they can be a tourists' attraction



Binab Bhattacharjee

➤ Stretching over 300m from Kumartuli ghat to Champatala ghat, the project seeks to re-establish this historic relationship by reconnecting artisanal

activities, daily rituals and community life of Kumartuli with the riverfront
➤ The initiative includes the restoration of the heritage ghat structures,

conservation of natural heritage, temples and shrines, and the revival of the sacred ambience
➤ The ghats are being restored and retrofitted using traditional wisdom,

with measures for effective bank protection, improved ritual platforms, the reintroduction of public rituals, cultural events and passive recreational spaces

neration that currently does not have any links with the river. It should also be an attraction for tourists and visitors taking a ferry ride," explained Anjan.

Apart from restoring the two heritage structures at Kumartuli Ghat

and Champatala Ghat, several small temples that exist are being restored. The ghat steps that got damaged over centuries of use are being repaired. An overhang is being constructed to bridge a 100m gap between the two ghats. A walkway is

being created along with a space for cultural programmes and other activities.

"Ecological restoration forms a key component of the proposal through the reintroduction of a green embankment and riverine native

plantations, including sacred groves inspired by Vrindavan. New public amenities such as informal stalls, food courts, souvenir and image display areas, community toilet facilities and upper-level viewing decks are being strategically incorporated to improve liveability and visitor experience," explained Saptarshi.

Adani Group adviser Sanjay Thade said the project was the group's first CSR activity in the east. "We have done up ghats in Varanasi and Ahmedabad. The Kumartuli initiative envisions the revival of the historic riverfront of north Kolkata as a memorable public destination along the river Ganges. We are trying to create a vibrant space with kiosks selling handicrafts and food. It will be properly illuminated. The history of the ghat will also be depicted," he said.

The initiative further incorporates facilities for boating, first aid, public safety and surveillance systems to ensure a secure and well-managed public environment. "The public-private partnership is aimed at transforming the cultural landmark through heritage-compliant redevelopment, with due regard to environmental sustainability and civic responsibility," said an official of Kolkata Port.