

## Mawlynnong: ASIA'S CLEANEST VILLAGE

Mawlynnong village in Meghalaya revolves around eco-tourism. As of 2014, it had about 95 households and its literacy rate was 100 per cent. The village is also well known for its sanitation and cleanliness. The waste is collected in dustbins made of bamboo. It is directed to a pit and then used as manure. Regular awareness programmes are also conducted within the vicinity. Awareness about sanitation is created in local schools through various initiatives of Rural Tourism projects and the concept of cleanliness is inculcated among villagers.

Apart from being exceptionally clean and well organized with flower beds and trees, one can see environment-friendly tree houses, trekking to the nearby waterfall, border trekking and bamboo huts from where one can get a view of Bangladesh.

### ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

The role of the village community has been very crucial when counting the accomplishments of Mawlynnong. The Government has played the part of a facilitator with its financial support. The village has a strong *darbar* system which can be equated with local level institutions/panchayats that are present in other parts of the country. Major decisions are taken at general *darbar* meetings. Deputy Commissioner Sanjay Goyal says, "There are a few vibrant and active registered societies which have taken initiatives in this regard and the Government has supported these initiatives."

Mawlynnong made its mark of being the cleanest village long before Goyal assumed office as Deputy Commissioner. After commencing his tenure, one of the biggest challenges for the Commissioner was to sustain

Mawlynnong village located in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya has been christened as "Asia's cleanest village". *Bureaucracy Today* speaks to Sanjay Goyal who took charge as Deputy Commissioner of the East Khasi Hills region in early 2012.

By Meghna Chukkath



SANJAY GOYAL, Deputy Commissioner, East Khasi Hills district

achievements of this village without compromising with its local tradition and culture. "I have held regular meetings with the village executive committee and its elders to impress upon them the need to maintain the unique selling point of the village," says the 2004-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya Cadre.

### RURAL TOURISM PROJECT

Recently the Government of India sanctioned a Rural Tourism Project and through this, the village has taken up capacity building and awareness programmes as well as other activities. The youth of Mawlynnong keep themselves involved in all activities and the village has taken responsibility to ensure that the households

are involved in almost every activity thus also linking them to the tourism sector. Connecting the cleanliness to the village economy has helped Mawlynnong to a great extent, according to the Deputy Commissioner. Though there is no such village at present with similar accomplishments, there are quite a few which would fall in the same category. "These villages are now trying to make their mark. In fact, there are two nearby villages which can be clubbed in the same category and we are now trying to make Mawlynnong a complete circuit by giving different options to visitors focusing on eco-tourism," adds Goyal.

To maintain its status of being the cleanest village there are various awareness programmes conducted in Mawlynnong. The "Zero Litter Campaign" is one of the initiatives of the district administration to sensitise the general public on the issues of sanitation, hygiene and cleanliness. The main players in this initiative are children who have been assigned the task to form "Zero Litter Clubs" in their schools. Every school has adopted various tourist destinations and venues and they conduct rallies to sensitise not only villagers but also tourists. ■

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20/04/15