

The Voice Of The Nicobari Community

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"The Southern Nicobarese canoe (Reui), unlike its counterparts further north in the Nicobar District, was the most common mode of transport before the tsunami of 2004. The canoe is jointly constructed by various people, and its ownership is within the community and not strictly under individual ownership. Specialists carve out the bow and stern decorative pieces which indicate the origin of the canoe among the villages of Great & Little Nicobar islands. In this picture, four canoes, 3 from Pulo Ulon and one from Pulo Kiyang sail out from Muhincohn beach on Little Nicobar Island in February 2001."

-Contributed by: Manish Chandi

Message

Dear All,

In an information driven society the media plays an important role in furthering communication between the people. This joint effort of the department of Agriculture and Tata Institute of Social Sciences through the Rural Knowledge Centers is an important initiative in ensuring people centered knowledge dissemination. Therefore I wish this newspaper a great success in promoting development programmes for the benefit of the islanders.

I request all the people of Nicobar to express their ideas and concerns through 'Hamara Nicobar'.

Tapan Mandal, IAS
Development Commissioner
A&N Islands

Message

Dear Friends,

I am happy that 'Hamara Nicobar' a community newspaper is being published for the benefit of the community. I am sure that this newspaper would encourage community participation and would provide a platform to the Nicobari community to express their ideas for a people centric development.

Prof. S. Parasuraman
Director
Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Mumbai

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The Lunar Calender



This is a lunar calendar. It was widely used by the people in the Nicobar Islands earlier. It is based on the lunar activity and shows the high tide and the low tide based on the moon's path for a period of one month. The people don't use this calendar anymore. One of the constraints, as told to us by one of the residents of Car Nicobar, is the language used in this calendar. It is the old form of Nicobari language and especially the younger generation finds it difficult to understand.

Kindly comment on this report or give your feedback.

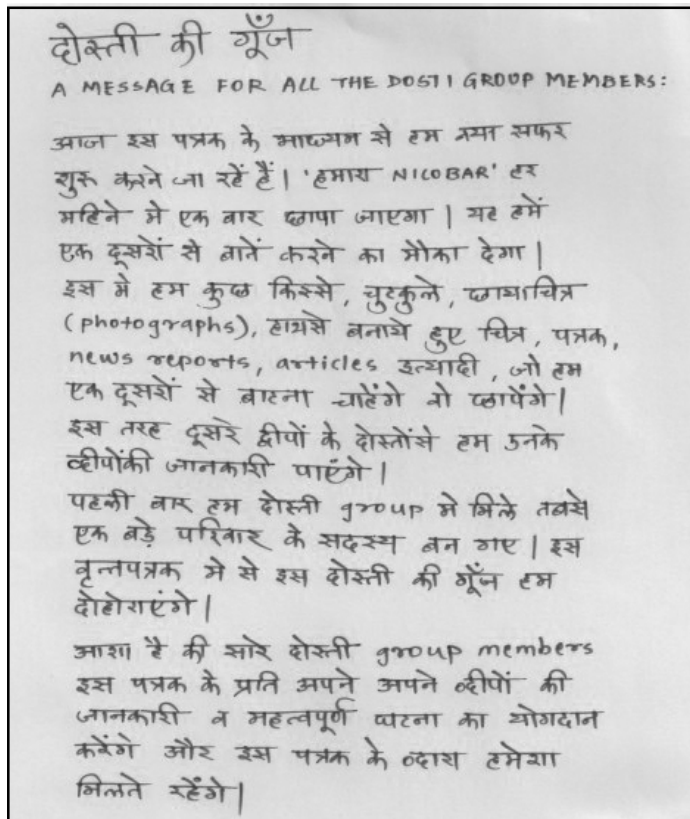
Contact: Phone - 03192 242609
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Port Blair - 744101

Car Nic Begins its Customary Carol Singing Competition once again after Tsunami

On 20th December 2009, Car Nicobar Held a grand carol singing competition among fifteen villages and revived its old custom once again. It started at 9:00am and ended late in the evening. The practice of holding this competition had stopped since the unfortunate Christmas of 2004. People still remember the day when the competition was held last time, on the 25th December 2004. It had taken place in the St. Thomas Cathedral of Mus village. The LG was to attend the function but some official commitment kept him from attending it. Tsunami occurred the next day.

The newly revived custom symbolizes the fresh and positive beginning. As one of the Car Nicobar residents puts it, "Ab Halath Theek Ho gaya."

- Staff Reporter



Message from Prof. Janki Andharia

"The idea of community newspaper first came up in 2007 from the need expressed by the Nicobari tribals in the islands who felt that sharing of information and ideas was very weak between Port Blair and them. This is an excellent beginning and I do hope that this newspaper will be a valuable platform for people in the Nicobar islands to express their aspirations, struggles and triumphs in small but significant ways. I also hope that this newspaper will help democratize decision making in the A & N islands- a process that remains largely neglected over decades".

Prof. Janki Andharia,
Centre for Disaster Management and
Team leader, TISS A&NI Project (2005-09).

A Brief Introduction of TISS in ANI

TISS has been involved in the Andaman and Nicobar islands since the tsunami of 26th December 2004. In order to assess how TISS could support communities affected by the tsunami, field visits were made to the tsunami affected places. The island of Katchal was decided to be the island of focus. The TISS team conducted meetings with the captains to explore the situation in relief camps, specifically focusing on the aged, the sick, women and children. The information was shared with the Special Relief Officer in the briefing meetings each night. This marked the initiation of TISS team's interaction with the Nicobarese.

One senior member from the TISS team followed up on requirements of the islands at the highest level with the Chief Secretary and with the Army General. On the request made to TISS by SRO to supplement the work carried out by his staff, one of the most significant tasks was that of enumeration of the dead, the missing and the

survivors. With no teachers left in the island schools, local girls and boys were encouraged to serve as quasi-teachers on a temporary basis. Profiling of the communities for development interventions was taken up by TISS since rehabilitation approach needs to be different for different communities.

TISS team undertook 'A Preliminary Livelihood Study' in collaboration with the National Institute of Disaster Management and the University of Pondicherry. The research teams were on the islands during March and April 2005. The study was carried out on the entire Nicobar Group of Islands. Thus having consistently worked on the islands for several months, the ANI administration was in principle open to a meaningful collaboration with TISS. In dialogue with the administration and the Tribal Councils developed an idea of capacity building of local communities in Sustainable Development.

A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 25th July 2005 between TISS, Andaman and Nicobar Administration and Action Aid India to offer a Certificate/ Diploma course on Sustainable Development for People on the islands. According to the MOU TISS trained three batches of students covering Andaman and Nicobar Islands over next two years. Post this training program TISS continues to work among the communities by means of Rural Knowledge Centres. The use of media such as wall magazines, posters, videos, newsletters is an integral part of information dissemination through these centres. The centres are to serve as the nodes for collecting, securing and archiving local knowledge along with information from the government. This newsletter is an activity undertaken as a part of the effort of the work that Rural Knowledge Centres are doing.

MoU Signed With Admn. for strengthening RKC's in Nicobars



A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the A & N Administration and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai on 6th November, 2009 to strengthen the Rural Knowledge Centres (RKC's) in the Nicobar group of Islands. The MoU was signed by Shri M.A. Salam, Director of

Agriculture, representing the Andaman & Nicobar Administration, and Prof. Surinder Jaswal, Project Director of the Andaman Nicobar Chapter, representing Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). The MoU was signed in the presence of the Development Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Agriculture),

Shri Tapan Mandal, at the Secretariat.

The establishment of Rural Knowledge Centres (RKC's) was a result of the action plan submitted by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation to the Administration after the tsunami. The main objective of the RKC's was to harness the power of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to promote economic and social empowerment of the rural populations, which is based on the principle of "Reaching the un-reached and voicing the voice less".

A bi-party MoU was signed between the Department of Agriculture and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai for managing and developing the Rural Knowledge Centres in Nicobar District on 22nd August 2008 for one year,

validity of which expired on 21st August, 2009. Now a fresh MoU between the A & N Administration and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences was signed on 6th November, 2009 for a period of two years.

In this collaboration, the Administration is to provide basic infrastructure at all locations in the Nicobar group of Islands. TISS will engage a supporting staff at each RKC for the next two years. The further role of the TISS is to strengthen the RKC's, starting from developing an operational concept for implementing it in the most effective way to benefit the people as per their need, including livelihood regeneration.

In his brief address, after taking note of the activities to be carried by TISS through RKC's, the Development

Commissioner expressed his appreciation for the work being done by TISS and the collaboration with the Administration. Shri M.A. Salam, Director Agriculture, assured all support to TISS in the efforts to help the Administration in strengthening the RKC's while Prof. Jaswal provided assurance to the Administration that the TISS will do its best to help the people of the Nicobar District.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Dr. Krishnamurthy, Director, Fisheries; Dr. B. Mahato, Director, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services; Shri. Dharmada Sundaray, Project Coordinator, TISS, Port Blair and Shri M.M. Hassan, Agriculture Officer.

Training Prog. On Operation, Maintenance & Repair of Fishing Boats Organised At Kamorta



Kamorta: A Vocational Training Programme on operation, maintenance & repair of fishing boats was held at Kmoarta through National Council for Vocational Training (Govt. of India Body). Altogether forty-one trainees from various villages in Nancowrie participated in the training programme.

The module of the training was divided in to two parts; theory and practical. Resource person from Fisheries Sub Station Nancowrie and Mechanical Section of the APWD, Kamorta were used to provide best hand on practice for the trainees.

The objectives of the training programme are to

provide employable skill in the field of marine engine so that the trainees particularly the school dropouts can start earning a livelihood. Also by virtue of this training any eventuality due to engine failure during fishing voyage could be rectified as many of the trainees regularly goes for fishing in the sea.

Activities of Animal Husbandry Sector at Kamorta, Nancowry

At Kamorta the main emphasis of Animal Husbandry Department is to provide training to the unemployed youth and encourage them to adopt poultry, goat/pig farming. This is aimed to generate self employment, which in turn will improve their socio-economic conditions and at the same time increase the production of meat and egg to cater to the requirement of the local population.

With this point of view 11 no. training programmes were organized in different villages to self help groups. There are 4 SHGs in poultry (small scale), 2 in goatery and 1 in piggery. During the month of Nov- Dec 2009, 468 Vanaraja birds, 2 guinea fowls, 2 goats (kid) and 2 piglet were distributed on full cost basis to 34 individuals /groups (including SHG).

To provide improved variety of animals and birds to the local tribals and also to impart training on scientific livestock and poultry management practice, a composite livestock farm is being established at Chotta Enaka. The construction work of which has already been taken up by APWD and is expected to be ready in 4-6 months. This farm will consist of various components like hatchery unit, poultry farm, piggery farm, goatery and dairy. This farm when ready will fulfill the needs and long pending demand of the tribals of Central Nicobar.

Dr. M. Sujata
Veterinary Assistant Surgeon
Veterinary Department
KAMORTA

Ban on Use of Polythene Bags In the Islands

The A&N Pollution Control Committee has banned polythene carry bags measuring less than 70 micron thickness in the entire A&N Islands owing to its harmful effect on island's eco-system and people. The shopkeepers, wholesale dealers of polythene carry bags, vendors, grocery merchants, hotel & restaurant owners and general public have been warned not to use such poly bags and have been directed to deposit all the polythene carry bags in their stock which are less than 70 micron thickness, in the office of Pollution Control Committee, Department of Science and Technology, A&N Administration, Dollygunj for safe disposal.

Meanwhile, the general people have also advised to avoid the use of polythene carry bags. The violation of the directions issued by the A&N Administration in this regard is punishable under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the cooperation to save the pristine ecosystem of these islands have been urged.

No octroi on export of local products

On the eve of the new-year 2010, Port Blair Municipal Council has resolved to provide a tax relief to the local farmers and artisans by exempting the locally grown and produced articles from payment of Octroi tax on their export to mainland. Following this resolution, the administration will be requested to issue an amendment in The Octroi Tax Byelaws 1999. The decision shall come into force from the date of the notification.

No Octroi will then be levied on the export of rubber, raw rubber, copra, beetle nut, cashew nut, cane, shark fins, fish, crab, prawns, dry fish, animal skin and bones. This would promote the export of these products which are grown and produced in the Islands. It will make these products more competitive in the market. It will go a long way in improving the financial position of farmers and local artisans.

COMMUNICATE

- Chandra Bhushan Kumar, IAS (Deputy Commissioner for Nicobars from October 1998 to March 2000)

Sometimes you wonder 'what binds people of Nicobars with India'? I was confronted with this question just after my posting as Deputy Commissioner, Nicobars in October 1998. 'What is your idea of India for this tiny and remote place'- Late Arvind N. Das asked me in presence of our senior Mr Lalit Sharma in an evening conversation! I was vague in my reply, but was willing to do some new things!

Interaction with tribal council (Late J.B.Daniel, the then Secretary), Robert Lucas, the then Education Officer for the islands and other committed officers led to bringing out a monthly informative magazine. It was easy pick viewing the literacy rate, good library and the quality time in the emerald

islands. The magazine had various sections- states of India, history, cinema, old census details (1882 onwards) and folklores of islands, government schemes, opportunities, sports, first aid etc. Robert used to write about basics of Nicobarese language every month. More than two hundred copies we used to publish, which were sent to all the island councils, schools in the islands, tribal representatives. Also, some copies used to reach Lt Governor and other senior officers at Port Blair. I hope Nicobar District library still has the copies (It would be nice to put it on district website). With the support of committed editorial team and hard working typist Prashanth, the District Administration

published fourteen issues of 'SPANDAN'! It did not continue further, may be, not much incentive was created at that point of time! I stayed for seventeen months in Nicobars!

I am really happy to note that a community newspaper is being launched in Nicobars. Expression eases out tension and helps in creating conducive atmosphere for harnessing positive energy. Tsunami has left many scars. A peaceful and loving community got affected with this extreme disaster. I witnessed this impact during my one month duty of relief officer in Nancowry islands. It has been testing time for the people since then. But, every disaster throws new opportunities! It is time to move on with new hope and vigour. I congratulate all on this noble venture and wish good fortune!

Livelihood Options for the Nicobarese Community

An interview with Ayesha Majid, Chairman, Tribal Council Nancowry

Five years after the Tsunami hit South Asia, the rehabilitation Process is nearing completion in the most islands. Permanent shelters are being readied and many villages have already shifted into the accommodations built by the ANI Administration. Community leaders, administration officials and NGOs are keeping a watchful eye on the process and many express a sense of concern over the systemic shifts that have taken effect within the societal structure of the Nicobarese. One major concern for all is how the community will sustain itself when the government stops ration after five long years. A staff reporter for **Hamara Nicobar** spoke to Ayesha Majid, the Tribal Council Chief, Nancowry on the various options being explored with the people. The conversation was later translated in English.

Staff Reporter: Observers on the Islands are expressing concern over what will happen to the tribal community after they shift into the permanent shelters.

Ayesha Majid: There are many who feel that we will not be able to bring back the community and co-operative structure that once made Nancowry a major trading

centre, but that is not my belief. With a little bit of guidance and effort on the part of Tribal leaders we will see to it that the livelihood of the community is secure even after the government stops tsunami rations.

Staff Reporter: What options are left with the tribals to earn a livelihood?

Ayesha Majid: The tribal council is in talks with the administration to explore options such as copra, fisheries, fruits and lemon grass. Some options vary from island to island, but there are many resources and enough of a market in Port Blair and in Mainland to ensure a good livelihood for all if it is explored in a sustainable manner.

Staff Reporter: Many will say that the work culture of the tribal community cannot go hand in hand with the market system outside of the Islands.

Ayesha Majid: One major reason for the failure of many of the departmental schemes relating to livelihoods is the lack of understanding of the tribal customs and culture. The community always shared work and their payment was in the form of food or other items for daily use. People here are used to a certain lifestyle and hence a top-down approach

will not work. Schemes must be taken up after talking with the people at all the levels and that is what we are working towards now along with the administration.

Staff Reporter: People still point to the failure of MML Co-operative as an example for why such options do not work on the island.

Ayesha Majid: What happened in the past has happened. We cannot keep thinking about that. People should also note its achievements before its failure. The cooperative also failed because of the lack of knowledge about the functioning of cooperative societies. Now I am confident that when people come together we will see a people centred model of growth on the islands.

Staff Reporter: What is your message for the people?

Ayesha Majid: I believe that when people come together for their own benefit, there can be fair model of growth. There may be many problems in the beginning such as finances, appropriate land, transport markets, but those can be easily overcome. There are many doubts in the minds of people but I feel strongly that the people will become one for the common good.

Tribal Council & Village Captains of Kamorta & Nancowrie Meet

A meeting of the tribal council and village captains of Kamorta and Nancowrie was called on the 9th of December 2009. The meeting was presided over by chair person Aysha Majid which discussed on various issues for the development of Central Nicobars.



Captain's Report

James S. Paul, Captain, Champin Village

Only a few minutes by ferry from Kamorta Jetty is situated the village of Champin. Rehabilitation work has been progressing smoothly in the village and residents are gearing up to move in their newly constructed houses.

"Moving about in our village is not a simple task", says Captain James S. Paul. "There is no paved road in this village and once it rains any movement is a major problem".

The most affected are the school going children in the village as they have to reach their school early in the morning with clean uniforms. The dirt road makes this almost impossible to do. Even transporting rations to the inner shelters is difficult as walking here while carrying heavy loads is uncomfortable.

"Our request to the authorities is that at least a foot path be put in place to ensure a clean and comfortable walk for the residents", states the Captain.



Picture shows a road at Champin Village, Nancowry Island

Andrew, 1st Captain Upper Katchal

Mr. Andrew 1st Captain of Upper Katchal (East-Bay Katchal) shares his concerns on the various issues identified for development in the village. The Captain states that "although there has been improvement in our conditions after the Tsunami and considerable support provided by the administration, some areas still require attention from concerned authorities".

"People are waiting to shift into the permanent shelters but an adequate capacity Gen Set is yet to be installed", the Captain stated.

At present five hours of power supply is being supplied to the temporary shelters, which is a very big inconvenience to us, especially during summer' says a resident. Permanent shelters for 18 families from Upper Katchal have been constructed in E-Wall, which is connected to Upper Katchal only by boat.

"This is a matter of great inconvenience to them as their land, relations and basis belongings are all in Upper Katchal", reports Captain Andrew. "The only use of the permanent shelters in E-Wall would be if somebody from our village needs to visit the Medical at Katchal", Andrew added.

Activities of Agriculture Department

The Agriculture Department in its bid to empower the farming community of Nancowry group of islands have organized training programmes on Bee Keeping and High Value Agriculture, Organic Manure (Vermi-compost). The aim of the programmes was also encourage self sustenance through agriculture and to motivate the tribal farmers for maximum use of organic cultivation.

During the training programme the department distributed various agricultural inputs among the interested farmers to fulfill the local requirements and sell the surplus produce at Kamorta market. Some of the inputs distributed are as follows:

- 1. Seeds – 35 Kg.
- 2. PVC Coated Wire Mesh: 2105 Rmt.
- 3. Seedling – 1753 Nos.
- 4. Bio Pesticide NTK – 58 Kg.
- 5. Bio Fertilizer (Neem Cake) – 1700 Kg.

It was encouraging to see that the tribal farmers themselves are coming forward to plant different type of fruit plants at their existing coconut plantations. To protect their cultivated vegetables and to establish kitchen garden the farmers are coming forward to purchase wire mesh from the disposal centre.

- Report: S.B.Singh
Asst. Director Agriculture,
Nancowrie

My Experience with the Nicobarese

- Dharmananda Sundaray

I came to these islands in the year 2005 and got an opportunity to work in Nicobar group with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. I was very much fascinated to go to Nicobar and tried to collect literature to know more about the people, their culture, system, practices etc. I also tried to talk to people who have been working in the Nicobars for years.

Although I could collect a lot of information about the Nicobarese, but one thing that bothered me was a common statement which I heard in the Andamans; “These Nicobarese are one among the laziest people”. But when I finally ventured into the Nicobar Islands, to my surprise I realized that the Nicobarese were one of the most hardworking and organized community in the world.

I remember; I was on official a tour to Chowra Island.

The sea was choppy and the Ship was anchored near the Jetty. No passengers were able to disembark as the motorized dinghy was not able to come near the anchored ship. I was wondering what would be the next. Will the ship return back to Nancowry?

At this time three young men appeared from nowhere in a canoe, fighting the waves and merciless weather. They had come to shift the passengers and their belongings to the shore, risking their lives. I was stunned but when I enquired from other passenger I learnt that such an act was a common scene in the Chowra Islands.

There are so many other examples which I saw in the Nicobars which kept me wondering. I often thought to myself, “Why do the so called developed community call the Nicobarese Lazy?”

Mr. Donald Samuel, Vice CTC of Katchal once said, “This

is our island, we know better and also have the capacity to judge what is good or bad for us”.

“Many persons from outside, without sufficient understanding of our culture, feelings, practice, try to impose their ideas upon us. And when we refuse, they say we are lazy?”.

It is indeed true that the Nicobarese lead a very simple and social life. From whatever least knowledge I have through my work in the Nicobars, today I am determined and would like to tell my so-called developed community, ‘Simplicity does not mean ignorant’. The Nicobarese are one of the well organized communities on earth. We should rather learn from their culture before we decide to impose our ideas on them. If we really want development, it is possible only through mutual consensus and proper understanding of the situation.

Dear all, how do you like this newsletter? Would you like to respond to any of the content or would you like to contribute with your pictures or articles or drawings or letters? ‘Hamara Nicobar’ is envisaged to be your space. Please contribute to it on the following address:

Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
Vaishnu Sai Niwas,
RGT Road, Port Blair
Pin: 744101, Phone: 03192 242609

Captain's Report

Alfred Moses, II Captain,
Mus, Car Nicobar

Ship Touching Chaora, Teresa
Katchal from Car Nicobar
at least once in a week.
As many Govt. Servant be
long to C/N are serving
here. It is much required
is serious patient may
likely to be taken to
C/N / P/D
A. Moses
ALFRED MOSES
II CAPT.
Mus C/N

The place in the ship
for the cattle and the
animal is being used
for some other purpose.
The tribal are now
not allowed to bring
the cattle on ship.
In previous time they
were allowed to bring
the cattle from
anywhere. This is a
big problem. Kindly
look into the matter.

Thank You. A. Moses
ALFRED MOSES
II CAPT.
Mus VILLAGE
CAR NICOBAR

Nicobari Names of the Villages
in Car Nicobar

1. Hanyonich	Mus
2. Totcha	Kinmai
3. Pancha	Small Lapathy
4. Jayanti	Big Lapathy
5. Pumpay	Chukchucha
6. Hanchu	Tapoioing
7. Otrahoon	Kinos
8. Haran	Arong
9. Tosip	Sawai
10. Sapeha	Kakana
11. Ke-re-ro	Perka
12. Ureka	Malacca
13. Tee top	Tee top
14. Timlo	Tamalu
15. Saraki	Kinyuka



On the occasion of Saint's Day a pig fight was held at Meenakshi Ramnagar village at Katchal Island.



Wrestling competition organized on the occasion of Hodi Festival at Car Nicobar during May 2009.



Volley Ball match held on the occasion of Saint's Day at Minakshi Ramnagar, Katchal during Oct. 2009.

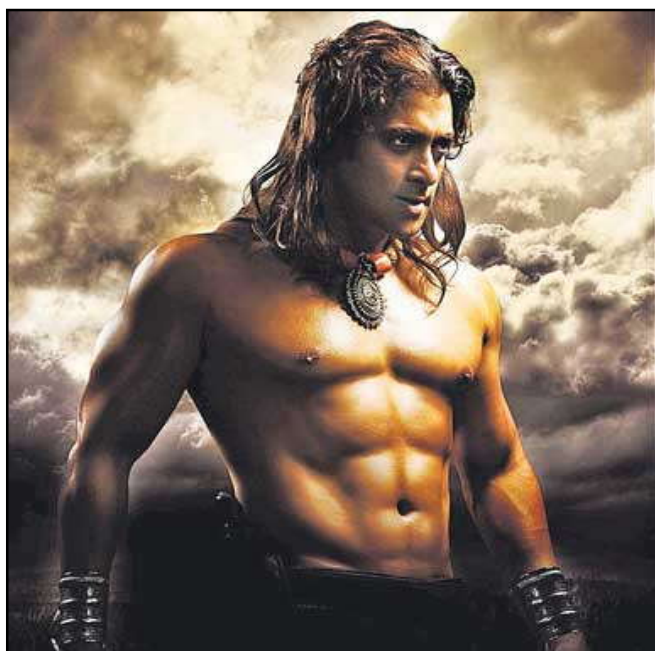


Canoe Race held at Chowra Island in 2008

BOLLYWOOD MOVIES



Kareena Kapoor is seen in a dance scene in the film '3 Idiots'.



Actor Salman Khan in the movie 'Veer'