

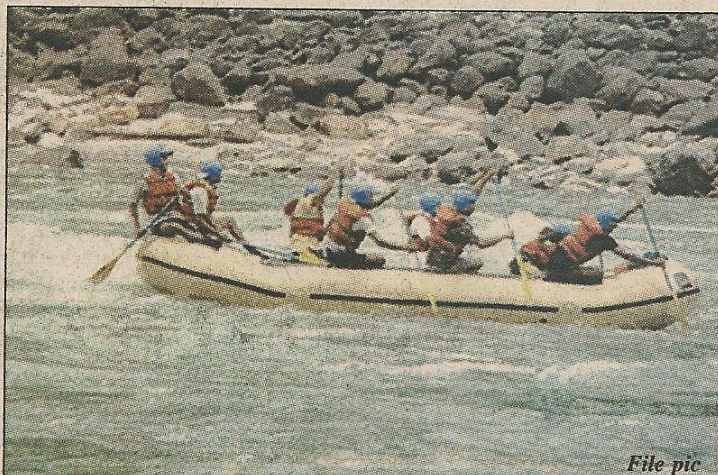
Siang to host 7th nat'l rafting c'ship

By Special Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Mar 12: The Arunachal Pradesh Tour Operators' Association (APTOA) in collaboration with the Indian Rafting Foundation (IRF) and the state tourism department will conduct the 7th National Rafting Championship in the majestic Siang river from March 28-April 4 next.

Fifteen teams from various states including host Arunachal Pradesh will participate in the adventure event with *Arunachal Front* as the media partner, according to APTOA president John Panya.

Besides the Army's national rafting team, representing its adventure wing, teams from the Indian Air Force, the ITBP, the BSF, the SSB, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, MLRC, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, J&K police, Punjab and Haryana will roar down the challenging rapids in the eight-day event, sponsored by union tourism ministry.

India was put on the international white water map after the Great Brahmaputra Descent - the descent of a 180-km stretch of the Brahmaputra or Siang, the first non-military expedition on the river and the first commercial foray in November 2002, while commemorating the



File pic

International Year of Eco-Tourism.

A preparatory camp from March 16 to 24 for the Arunachal team will be organized at Pasighat on March 16 next with Glenn Merrick an expert coach, said tourism secretary Bandhana Deori, who will flag off the camp and conduct the reconnaissance trip with the technical expert.

The 103 members will be living in a tented-village and enjoy the local hospitality and cuisines, part of rural tourism promotion, Deori said.

While MLA Alo Libang will flag off the event at Yingkiong on April 1, it will be flagged in by Governor Gen (Retd) JJ Singh on April 4.

Situated on the banks of Siang, Yingkiong in Upper Siang and Dite Dime in East Siang will be the venues from where the teams will tussle out in four river rafting disciplines, including canoe sprint, canoe slalom, head-to-head and marathon, are

planned for the competition.

The sprint and head-to-head parallel sprint will be held near Yingkiong on April 1, slalom rounds at Dite Dime on April 2, while the down river race (marathon) would be held between Yingkiong and Karko on April 3 and friendship run the next day.

"If the rivers of Arunachal Pradesh can be exploited like the rivers of Uttarakhand and Ladakh, adventure tourism would flourish generating employment avenues for local youths," says Nino Dai, executive member of APTOA and partner of RiverIndia.

The Brahmaputra enters India in the far eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh after traveling hundreds of miles across Tibet as the Tsangpo from its birthplace near the holy lake of Mansarovar. The Tsangpo is at its worst just before it enters India at Gelling. An incredible flow of 2 million cubic feet per second slices

through a fabled gorge section called the "Big Bend," dropping about 150 ft per mile. At the border, the fury of the Tsangpo, descending from the eastern Himalayas, is controlled but no less potent. This formidable force is now called the Siang, rated among the top five free-flowing rivers of the world for rafting and kayaking..

The Brahmaputra was documented for a 52 min film for National Geographic Society (NGS), and covered extensively by *Paddler* magazine, the *New York Times*, *Action Asia*, *Outlook Traveller* and several other international publications.

After Roland Stevenson traveled to the Siang in the fall of 2005, RiverIndia.com, now an award-winning Himalayan travel company, was started to encourage culturally-immersive whitewater rafting, kayaking, and fishing expeditions that emphasize the ecological protection of the rivers. With the company's efforts in November 2007, the NGS selected Aquaterra Adventures on its list of the world's best adventure travel outfitters in the first Authoritative Rating of Adventure Tour Operators, selected and conducted in a global survey of adventure travel outfitters.