MAWLYNNONG is a small eco-tourism village in the East Khasi Hills of Meghalaya bordering Bangladesh. It is renowned as the cleanest village in Asia. Villagers here play a crucial role in maintaining the ambience of the clean village – and they adopted the habit of cleanliness as a tradition not as an imposed activity.

Tidying up the village is a regular activity for everyone from the tiny tots to the toothless grannies. The village is known for its cleanliness and practice of conserving the rich ecosystem.

The village was declared as the cleanest village in Asia in 2003 and cleanest village in India in 2005 by Discover India magazine. As there is a lack of medical facilities, cleanliness is the only way to prevent the spread of diseases.

Paths are lined with flowers, which contribute to the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Bamboo is an important part of the local economy in any part of the North East hence bamboo houses, bamboo handicrafts, etc. are common to the village. Beautifully woven bamboo-dustbins by the villagers can easily be seen in every corner of the village. The waste collected is separated as organic and inorganic waste. Separate compost pits have been developed by villagers in various pockets of the village for organic and inorganic waste. The organic or biodegradable waste is directed to a pit, which can then be used
as a manure or fertiliser in farms and cultivation.

Almost every leaf fallen from the tree and every piece of litter is immediately dumped into the bamboo-dustbins. One can easily find signboards instructing visitors to keep the place clean. Use of plastic bags and smoking is banned while rainwater harvesting is adopted by all villagers.

Children in the village are taught about sanitation at an early age to keep the surrounding clean and green. They have been taught innovative and eco-friendly methods of harvesting rain water in natural stone basins. Villagers place a large rock with a cavity in its centre outside their houses to collect rain water.

Apart from their routine activities, they voluntarily perform activities like sweeping the roads and lanes, watering the plants and cleaning the drain, and planting trees on a regular basis.

The main occupation of the villagers is agriculture. They cultivate and derive their income from betel nut, broom corn, black pepper, berries, bay leaf and delicious fruits like oranges, lemon, pineapple and the local soshang fruit. The locals make wooden artefacts from bamboo trees, and sell them as decorative items also. Another interesting feature is the “Sky View”, which is a 85-90 ft high bamboo structure created with bamboo and natural ropes offering an amazing view of the Bangladesh plains.

Residents of the village are eco-friendly and are encouraged to use traditional natural materials like bamboo, rather than concrete, for building their houses. Workshops are also conducted by the village council to make people aware of the harmful effects of global warming.

The village has other interesting places also such as a natural balancing rock, living root bridges – an extension of Ficus elastica tree (rubber tree), forming a natural living bridge across streams, symbolising a living example of sustainable engineering.

The villagers have toilets in their houses and practice good sanitation habits. They also have a clear vision of cleanliness and follow efficient and sustainable ways of preserving the rich natural environment.