

A NEW APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN INDIA

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Before discussing the new approach to tourism, a brief description of India as a tourist destination should be made once again with a view recapitulate what has been mentioned earlier. The factors which give India an added advantage over the other countries are many and varied. These are to be taken into consideration while discussing the new approach.

What are these factors which combine to make India potentially one of the world's most exciting and charming destinations First of all the land itself, stretching as it does from the mighty Himalayas in the north down to Kanyakumari in the south on the one hand and density wooded areas in Assam in the east to the beautiful Western Ghats in the west on the other. This landscape provides a wide range of natural beauty that can be matched only by few other countries in the world. Secondly, India's rich historical and cultural heritage which is more than four thousand years old is matchless in artistic and aesthetic values. The famous monuments of India which have witnessed its historic past, are among the finest creations known to civilized man. Thirdly, the people of India, a seventh of the human race, varied in their ethnic origin, religions and customs, as much as in their faiths, fairs, festivals, and their languages tied together by a common bond of unity, the people who for centuries have been taught to welcome a visitor as a friend. Fourthly, the rich arts and music which have captured the hearts of the people all the world around. And last but not the

least, the new India emerging as a modern country dedicated to democracy, and making commendable progress in agriculture and industry, science and technology, all this is there to see. With all these and many more assets. India is a great attraction not only to a foreign visitor but also to its own people. With a view to accelerating the development of tourist facilities in places of tourist interest both for domestic and foreign tourists, the new Government at the centre decided to call a conference of Ministers of Tourism of State Governments and Union Territories. The Conference which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on August 31, 1977 in New Delhi was attended by all the Ministers of State Governments and Union Territories in-charge of Tourism. The Conference was presided over by the Union Minister of tourism and Civil Aviation. This Conference was preceded by a meeting of State Secretaries, Chairman and Managing Directors- State Tourism Development Boards and Directors of Tourism of all States and Union Territories. The purpose of convening the Conference was:

- (a) to discuss the various programmes and policies for fuller realisation of the tourism potential of the country; and
- (b) to develop a national policy on tourism in consultation with State Governments and to allot the spheres of responsibility culture.

Besides providing facilities for construction of five and four Star Hotels, there is a need in the country for hotels and hostels for middle class tourists both foreign and Indian, said the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister further added that he attached the greatest importance to tourism because it not only strengthened India financially but earned her more friends throughout the world.

The various items on the agenda prepared for discussion by the Conference, cover a wide range of subjects which if implemented properly' will go a long way in developing and strengthening tourism. It may, however, be mentioned here that most of the subjects covered were not new. Some of the

subjects like construction of accommodation for middle and low income group tourists, environmental control, coordination in the matters of publicity and inter- state movement of tourist vehicle have been discussed in the past and implemented. Hospitality to foreign travel writers is being provided since a long time. Tourist Information Centers were opened by some States at railway stations and bus stops and measures have also been taken in connection with elimination of beggars and touts. However, all these subjects were not discussed jointly nor recommendations made in high level conferences like the present- detailed assessment of the infrastructure will also help the planners in forecasting the future tourism demand which is fundamental to perspective planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The general consensus was that at the initial stage of planning, only perspective plans was required to identify and select the various centers for tourism development, tourist centers where was agreed that provided should be included in the plan. It was agreed that various State provided shas wil forward to the Central department of Tourism undertake market surveys perspective state Governments may undertake the of quantity the returns from tourism investment in the areas of revenue earned by the State, employment possibilities and foreign exchange earnings Willhold with each State separately as consultations also region ally with a view to formulating short-term and long-term schemes. The India Tourism Development Corporation and the State Tourism Development Corporations are also to be associated with the discussions. Wherever necessary, the Archaeological Survey of India is also to be involved. It was further suggested that the Central Government should give directives to banks and other financial mstitutions for giving loans on liberal terms to the State Tourism Development Corporations (STDC) for construction of various Facilities for tourists. The provision of communication links to places away from important ports of entry

were also recommended. It was also mentioned that all State capitals should beair-linked by direct flights to Delhi.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM:

Tourism is the world's largest industry. This fact has now been recognized all over the world. Although a 'Smokeless' industry, it has environmental implications. Expanding tourism has the great capacity to pollute the environment as would any smokeridden industry. A few years back, the United Nations organized a conference in Stockholm on Human Environment. This conference symbolized the growing importance that the people of the world attach to maintaining and improving the quality of human life and to enrich the human environment. It is a fact that all over the world man has been using the natural resources without any thought of the future. It is the wrong use of these resources which causes problems. Today ecological pollution, environmental pollution pose a serious threat to life on carth. This is true not only of the areas where there is a great concentration of industries, "but also areas where there is great concentration of tourists tourism development. The tourist has a strong desire to see and experience a place of wonder and beauty in areas in which nature and the surroundings remain essentially unspoiled. Destinations noted for their particular character and beauty should not be reduced to innocuous us urban jungles in order to keep pace with the inflow of visitors.

It was felt that in spite of recognizing the importance of preserving the unique character, atmosphere and natural setting of monuments and other places of tourist interest, no coordinated approach has been evolved to exercise environmental control of tourist centres. The Town and Country Planning Act has been hardly effective even though its provisions extend legal protection to control of environmental balance in tourist and development areas. The Conference recommended evolving a conservation policy within the framework of the

resolution of "World Cultural Heritage, as passed by the UN Conference on Human Rights held in Stockholm. It was felt that any development scheme of a particular area should be determined by the absorption capacity of the area, otherwise the environment would deteriorate and may in the long run create more complications than actually serving the immediate purpose. This is true in the case of maintenance of monuments and development of new tourist areas and resort towns.

Tourist Information Centres at major railway stations and bus stops are a major aid to tourists both overseas as well as local. These centres can provide important and accurate information to the tourists visiting various places by road or rail. Absence of this facility can cause a lot of inconvenience to the tourists. Posting of specially trained guides at these centres can solve some of the problems of the tourists on the spot. These centres can display as well as distribute literature at various places. The Conference recommended that the State Governments who have not yet opened tourist information counters/centres at airports/major railway stations/bus stops should be requested to do so. Suitable space at airports will be provided free to the State Governments concerned. The Central Government will also examine the possibility of opening more information counters wherever necessary.

For effective implementation of any programme, coordination between various agencies responsible for running the programme directly as well as indirectly is basic. Lack of understanding and coordination between various agencies running the programme can cause a lot of hardship. This is more so in the case of tourism. Tourism is essentially a cooperative undertaking in which various bodies have to join together.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It was recommended that the existing Regional Tourism Advisory Councils should be activated to achieve more effective regional coordination. It was agreed that although there was considerable coordination between Central Offices and the State Governments, The various suggestions made in this respect were:

- (a) India Tourism Development Corporation may offer con-sultancy in of tourist bungalows and other small accommodation units courses and depute experts on short-term basis to state

corporations.

- (b) Wherever the State Tourism Development Corporations and India Wheism Development Corporation run sight-seeing tours, the possibility of joint bookings be considered to avoid wasteful duplication.
- (c) The possibility of setting up an Association/Standing Committee of India Tourism Development Corporation and State Tourism Development Corporations on the lines of the Association of State Road Transport Corporations may be considered. Some States also recommended that the India Tourism Development Corporation should participate financially in the equity of State Tourism Development Corporation, and suggested that the setting.

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