

30th April, 2014

To
Dr. Rajesh Kumar, IAS
Principal Secretary (T)
Govt. of Manipur.

CC: **Mr. R. K. Nimai**
Secretary to Hon'ble Governor
Govt. of Manipur
Raj Bhawan, Imphal

White Paper – Conclusions and Suggestions

Manipur Ecotourism Conclave 7th & 8th April, 2014

The following is an attempt to assimilate the various suggestions made by the speakers in their speeches and the participants in the open house, and present a **WHITE PAPER** as a suggestion to the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of Manipur, to incorporate in the State Tourism Policy.

Whereas all participants had elaborated a great deal on each aspect, it is our intention to be brief and precise and look at the broad policy suggestions that were made covering the various elements of Tourism.

1. **A NODAL, HIGH POWERED BOARD** should be immediately formed, comprising of various government departments which are critical for tourism promotion and also comprising of several experts relevant to the various elements of Tourism in the State. This body may be chaired by the Chief Secretary and comprise of the following.

- a. Principal Secretary Tourism – Product Development and Marketing
- b. Secretary Finance – Incentives and Subsidies
- c. Secretary Urban Development – Infrastructure
- d. Secretary Education – Creation of Human capital and skills development
- e. Secretary Home - Law & Order
- f. Secretary Culture & Rural Development - Community Involvement
- g. Expert on Lake and Waterways Management
- h. Architect Expert on Building Codes (Ensure Vernacular Architecture, Restoration of Heritage Assets etc.)

- i. Experts on Waste Management & Energy and Water Conservation. It will be key objective to create a code of conduct in this aspect.
- j. Expert on Culture, Art, Craft
- k. Expert on Heritage Tourism & General Tourism, both Domestic & International

This Board will directly look into creation of infrastructure and push the Rail connection. This Board may operate on the basis of **SUB-COMMITTEES** to be formed for the following purposes, which will make recommendations to the board. Board members may also be members of the sub-committees. Following are the suggested sub-committees.

1. Ecotourism Sub-committees:

- a. Wildlife Sanctuaries, National Parks, Nature Gardens, Orchidarium (Orchid Lab), Caves, Waterfalls, Biking, Jeep Safaris, Skiing, Rafting, etc.
- b. Implement the **STCI** code for responsible tourism
- c. Code for Trekking to be formulated
- d. Setting Standards & Certification
- e. Rescue, safety, First Aid
- f. Codify Routes
- g. Name Peaks – Give them a personality
- h. Develop a nature garden near Imphal
- i. Develop Dos & Dents
- j. Work on carrying capacity

2. Lakes & Waterways Tourism: This subcommittee will essentially establish and implement the norms for in and around lakes and waterways. In this connection the **CODE FOR WATER BASED TOURISM ESTABLISHED BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM**, Government of India must be adopted by the state and apart from this a separate department to be set up comprising of a **MONITORING LABORATORY** to ensure there are no pollutants, affluents, silting and weeding damaging the lake. A tourism zone shall be created around the lake & local community be settled & trained to directly benefit from this tourism.

Water sports to be introduced through PPP. Proper hydrology needs to be implemented. No building or construction or residential unit (houseboat) will be allowed to come up in and on the lake except at the distance specified in the codes, outside the no construction zone. All tourism assets around the lake will have to comply with vernacular architecture.

The lakes & waterways expert shall be a member of this committee.

In this case it was specially mentioned that we must learn from the mistakes of the Dal Lake in Srinagar which has reduced from **25 sq kms** to about **12 sq kms** in **50 years** due to liquid and solid waste, chemicals, phosphorous, nitrogen, weeds, silt etc.

A report on Loktak Lake from Mr. Kundangar is enclosed.

3. Heritage, Culture & Art & Craft: This sub-committee will formulate suggestion to promote the Built & Tangible Heritage of the State. Among the Heritage Assets are:

- a. War Cemetery / War Memorial
- b. INA Museum
- c. Kangla Fort
- d. Women's Market (Ema Market)
- e. India's oldest Airfield
- f. Dance & Music
- g. Martial Art
- h. Govind Temple
- i. Local Art and Craft
- j. Knowledge of local medicine etc.

It was suggested that the Kangla Fort area be transformed into a grand tourism experience and asset with

- a. Sound and Light Show
- b. Tribal Art & Craft promotion centre & museum i.e., Tumkul Pottery, Bamboo Art
- c. Food court with local cuisine – (Black Rice)
- d. An Amphi Theater for performance of music, dance & local arts.
- e. Centre to promote local herbal medicine – orthopedic herbs
- f. Convert the cottage into Heritage hotel
- g. Have regular polo event in the first Polo ground in the world.
- h. Have a responsible tourism interpretation centre.

- i. Create a boating & walking experience around the moat

This committee should also lay down guidelines to ensure that tourism products in ecosensitive areas adopt to vernacular architectural designs.

This committee will also draw up guidelines for setting up a Tribal Tourism circuit & home stay with total community involvement and also showcase the diverse culture of Nagas/ Kukis/ Ao/ Tumkul/ Khasi/ tribes & their assets like indigenous medicine, crafts etc.

The State government must come out with a policy of approving and promoting '**HOME STAYS**' in village and tribal areas including those around Loktak Lake along trekking routes & nature and wild life parks and tribal village centres.

4. Architecture & Design Classification Committee: The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India norms for all tourism service providers must be implemented specially all aspects of safety, security, hygiene, sanitation, garbage segregation & disposal, pollution, energy & water conservation & vernacular designs, parking etc. to be addressed. A criteria for all hotels for energy conservation & water management to be developed.

Suggestions:

1. Festival & Events:

A calendar of Events must be prepared and promoted, possibly in conjunction with other North East States. However, there certainly should be a **MAJOR POLO EVENT** created with a legend built around it of being a royal sport played by Kings.

2. Itineraries:

Proper three or four days itineraries should be set up for tourists so as to give them a proper experience. Tour buses of the best kind must be used for this purpose, with fixed choice of itineraries. This may include a '**WAR ROUTE**' Tour.

3. Education:

A Hotel & Tourism Management Institute must be commissioned to create the Human Infrastructure.

A general half hour curriculum must be introduced in all schools between classes 5 to 10 to cover topics like hygiene & sanitation, waste segregation, management & disposal, energy & water conservation, etc.

One art/craft should be made compulsory for every child.

Every Saturday there should be a social service program (Clean An Area) for ½ day for all students.

Training of Guides is a key objective.

4. OATH FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SAFE & HONORABLE TOURISM must be displayed, adopted & implemented by all tourism service providers to be ensured by the Department of Tourism.

5. Provide INCENTIVES FOR INVESTORS in Tourism Assets through PPP. A system of incentives and subsidies can be evolved by the board. Some suggestions are:

- a. Investment Subsidy
- b. Interest on loans subsidy
- c. Power generation subsidy
- d. Tax holiday for 5 years
- e. Skilled manpower & training subsidy

A key area would be to incentivize setting up of **SPAS AND NATURAL HEALTH ORIENTED RESORTS**.

6. Encourage MEDICAL TOURISM by encouraging collaboration with a National brand which has international certification.

7. CONSTITUTE A NORTH EAST TOURISM BOARD with other sister States under the patronage of the **NORTH EAST COUNCIL** & evolve joint marketing plan of key assets of each state on a 7/14/21 day itinerary & also to have a combined **NORTH EAST FESTIVAL IN DELHI** & consider a **NORTH EAST AIRLINE** for inter connectivity.

8. Have the IMPHAL AIRPORT declared an **INTERNATIONAL** Airport & adopt a **LOOK EAST POLICY**. Encourage Tourism from the Far East & Myanmar which is now also connected by road, apart from Domestic Tourism Packages.

9. It was generally felt that we may NOT currently focus on MICE & GOLF tourism. MICE will cause a lot of pressure on the environment until the carrying capacities are implemented. Golf Tourism, apart from causing pressure on natural resources also is difficult and expensive to maintain. So it may not be currently feasible.

10. Wine/ Beer/ Alcohol may be served to foreigners and those with permits in licenced bar lounges in certified Hotels as in other states.

11. Develop Hill Destinations & Water Parks.

The focus should be on developing **LOW IMPACT, LOW MATERIAL INTENSITY, LOW RESOURCE INTENSITY TOURISM**. Prevent high rise in Natural Environment. Merge with local culture & surroundings. Mobilize the local youth for sustainable development & provide employment to locals.

With Warm Regards,

Rakesh Mathur
Honorary Secretary
Ecotourism Society of India

Encl:

1. Mr. Kundangar's Report on Loktak Lake
2. Annexure – I
3. Annexure - II