



Indian policy on tourism and ASEAN

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Abstract

The tourism sector, which has high inter-industry and cross-country linkages, is well suited to be the leading sector to accelerate regional economic growth and integration. International and domestic tourism are leading economic activities in the world today. Tourism has been known to generate goods and services directly and indirectly, attract foreign currency, stimulate employment, and provide opportunities for investment. ASEAN Member Countries aim to establish an integrated ASEAN Tourism Investment Zone (ATIZ) as a cornerstone of its regional tourism investment thrust. The regional tourism investment thrust involves identifying tourism areas that are attractive for joint investment promotion, developing joint action programs to overcome impediments and attract investors, and formulating strategies to promote ASEAN as a single tourism investment destination. The ultimate goal is to achieve full integration of the tourism sector across all ASEAN Member Countries through liberalization, facilitation and promotion measures, moving towards an ASEAN Economic Community. This paper discusses the role and impact of ASEAN on tourism. This paper also highlights the problems and the new plans and continuous efforts of ASEAN to boost the tourism.

Keywords: tourism, ATIZ (ASEAN tourism investment zone), ASEAN (association of south East Asian nations), liberalization

Introduction

Tourism as an economic term in India was emerged only after Second Five year Plan (1956). Initially going on a pilgrimage or visiting your friends and relatives is what was meant to be Tourism in India. It was only after October 1966 when India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) was setup and India was promoted as a tourist destination not only for pilgrimage or visiting friends and relatives but as a holiday destination. The main important objective of ITDC was rendering proper consultancy services and promotes Tourism in India for developmental purpose. In 1982, the Indian Government approved the National Tourism Policy which gave a six point plan for Tourism development of Swagat, Suchana, Suvidha, Suraksha, Sahyog and Samrachana.

The main aim of this policy was to promote balanced socio-economic development, promote and preserve the rich heritage and culture of India and also create employment opportunities. Later on, Government of India initiated took several measures like the National Committee on Tourism was set up in 1988, setting up of the Tourism Finance Corporation in 1989 to finance tourism projects, the National Action Plan in 1992, the 1996 National Strategy for Promotion of Tourism and a new Tourism Policy in 1997 have all aimed to promote the fast growth of Indian Tourism sector. As a result of this, The Fourth Meeting of ASEAN and India Tourism Ministers (4th M-ATM+India) was held on 21 January 2013 in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2013 (ATF 2013). The Ministers were pleased to note the strengthened tourism exchange between ASEAN and India during the year 2012. In 2011, the number of tourist arrivals between ASEAN and India recorded steady growth, with the total number of tourist arrivals from India to ASEAN recording 2.7 million arrivals and ASEAN to

India 521,755 arrivals in 2011.

The Ministers signed the Protocol to amend the Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and India on Strengthening Tourism Cooperation, which would further strengthen the tourism collaboration between ASEAN and India national tourism organizations. The Ministers were pleased with the implementation progress of the MOU in 2012, through the following projects and activities:

- India organizing Familiarization trip for travel writers from ASEAN Member States.
- India sending 25 members delegation of teachers and faculty members from hospitality institutes to Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.
- India inviting 48 delegates from ASEAN Member States for international Buddhist Conclave held in Varanasi and Bodhgaya in September-October 2012.
- India inviting 131 journalists, photographers, tour operators, travel agents and opinion makers from ASEAN countries in the year 2012.
- India inviting 42 delegates from ASEAN Member States for International Tourism Mart 2013 being held in Guwahati, Assam from 18-20 January 2013.

It is very important for India to Look towards it North East states which have tremendous natural beauty which can boost tourism in India and through this India can look towards Look East Policy through North East as some of the members of ASEAN are our neighboring countries. Through Connectivity through the North-eastern states became a priority for India not only for development and integration of the region to mainland but also for foreign policy, providing a new dimension to the Look East Policy (LEP). A well connected North-East region will help India in transportation of heavy

trade goods to be carried out conveniently through neighboring countries like Myanmar and other ASEAN countries. The extension of railroad network and up gradation of key infrastructure like power supply and telecommunications, etc will go a long way in meeting requirements like ability to act urgently to cross-border extremists' threats and to combat drugs trafficking through the Golden Triangle. Thus, the region requires urgent attention through infrastructure development, investment opportunities, and employment availability; and an emboldened connection with rest of the India on political and cultural grounds. As we have discussed above that few of the members nations of ASEAN are our neighbors, so the well connectivity of roads and transport can give a boom to India as well as the tourism to ASEAN. The ongoing upgrade of the Imphal and Agartala airports will ease the pressure on the region's lone international airport in Guwahati; this would then be serviced by the proposed airstrips across the North-East. The Greenfield airport, being built near Gangtok in Sikkim will further strengthen border infrastructure and also expected to bring more tourists to the state, further adding to one of its most important source of income.

When we talk about tourism the first important thing come to our mind is about the political conditions of the country, if the political conditions are not good then it will be very difficult for the tourist to plan their visits to that particular country. In the present time Indian is having some issues regarding Rohingyas muslims of Myanmar, there is a urgent need to sort out these political troubles as soon as possible as this can create a disturbance in the cordial relations between the two countries.

There is a need for generation of faith between people from North-East and rest of India in order to bridge the historical gaps and culturally assimilate the region. However, social discard and apathy of North-eastern people is on increase with each racial attack on them in other parts of India. It would require a massive cultural drive from all the sections of media and popular representative fields to promote talent from this region and increase their visibility in mainstream. The recently increased popularity of sportspersons from the region is a positive development, which was possible only after creation of basic sports infrastructure in the region, particularly Manipur and Sikkim.

Consequently, Government has also initiated some bilateral projects and has also become party to some multilateral projects, aimed at enhancing connectivity between the North-East and Southeast Asia. The important ongoing and potential infrastructure projects in this regard are BCIM corridor, Moreh -Tamu--Kalewa Road, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Trans Asian Highway, India-Myanmar rail linkages, Kaladan Multimodal project, the Stilwell road, Myanmar-India-Bangladesh gas and/or oil pipeline, Tamanthi Hydroelectricity project and optical fiber network between North-East India and Southeast Asia.

In the last I would like to say that an idea enhancing connectivity between North-East and South-East Asia is a welcome step and has the potential to change the socio-economic landscape of the region.

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