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PROSPECT OF TOURISM PROMOTION AND REVENUE GENERATION IN NORTH EAST INDIA : A LESSON LEARNT IN YUNNAN, CHINA

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Abstract : The history of the globe is one of migration, and the North-eastern region of India is no exception. Linguistically and culturally, Northeast India is one of the most heterogeneous regions of the world and it has been a stage for a plurality of a transitional continuum from community and collectivity to nationality. Northeast India is the home of many tribes, sub-tribes, minority communities and ethno-political collectiveness that have been continuously moving through various formative and developmental phases. The region has around 430 languages and dialects of different language families that are used in a complex and wide ranging ethno and socio- linguistic configuration.

In China Yunnan at a similar level has been an impoverished and landlocked region characterised by an uncongenial terrain for a very long time. In all, Yunnan has 26 different minority groups including the Dais who are of Tai ethnicity and the Tibetans. Sporadically, the province has witnessed secessionist movements as well. (Plant and Huang 2011:3) In several ways, the region of India's Northeast and the province of Yunnan mirror each other in terms of socio-economic and political development. Nevertheless, fact also remains that both the regions are resource rich and have tremendous potentials and scope for economic development.

Beyond cultural similarities, Yunnan and Northeast India currently are also being emphasised as points of focus in bolstering trade and economic ties between India and China, as part of initiatives such as the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar forum for regional cooperation (BCIM) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which aims at greater integration of trade and investment between the four countries. However, to a very large extent benefits of the initiatives and the policies have not trickled down and a lot of scope for betterment remains. The case of the Kolkata-Kunming corridor is no different. While various possibilities for enhancing trade and road connectivity between Yunnan, the Northeast and West Bengal were discussed in 2012, and an action plan also was approved, not much has been done as of December 2014.

Beyond the existing proposals for trade, exchange and mutual benefit, there is another aspect from which India and the North-eastern region in particular could gain. That aspect is that of the promotion of tourism. China has benefited immensely from the display and preservation of the diverse cultures existing in various provinces and the example which stands out the most is that of the *Hakka* structures, or the Yunnan nationalities museum. Similarly, Northeast India has a lot to gain in the form of revenues, if tourism could be better promoted. While the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland is definitely one of the hugest festivals in Asia, but the fact remains that it is held once in a year. While the *Ahom* mounds in Sibsagar await declaration as

UNESCO heritage sites, aspects of North eastern history and culture continue to be dissipated in the sands of time. If a closer look at Yunnan's tourism and revenue gathering methods could be studied in detail and policy recommendations for Northeast Indian historical and cultural sites could be made, then tourism, which already is the fastest growing segment of the traditional services sector, could be of immense utility to the region.

This paper seeks to outline the promotion of tourism in Yunnan and seeks to arrive at lessons that could be utilised for historical and cultural monuments in Northeast India. The sources of information for the paper will include secondary and primary sources in Mandarin, Assamese and English along with interviews conducted with individuals from the Yunnan and Northeast India respectively.

Key Words : Potential, integration, Yunnan, infrastructure, revenues, tourism

Introduction

The linkages between Yunnan and Northeast India date back first to 1228 A.D. when the Tai Prince Sukapha reached the *Brahmaputra* Valley and ruled the area for six centuries till 1826, when the British gained control of the region through the Treaty of *Yandabo* after winning the first Anglo-Burmese War. The kingdom established by the *Ahom* people gave Assam its name. Prince Sukapha was a prince of the *Mong Mao* kingdom of the Tai people in the present day Yunnan Province of China. When he began his journey in 1228, he was accompanied by 9000 followers, comprised mostly of men. After crossing the *Patkai* hills[1], they reached the *Brahmaputra* Valley in 1228 A.D. In his search for a seat, he moved from place to place across the valley. He did not attack the *Morans* and the *Borahis*[2] of the region and befriended them instead. The *Morans* were under the *Badanch* Raja, while the *Borahis* were under *Thakumtha* Raja (Prakash 2007:164). Initially, Sukapha defeated the tribes, but later he adopted conciliation with them. Sukapha established his capital in 1253 A.D. at *Charaideo* near present day *Sivsagar* and began the task of state formation.

In the 21st century, Northeast India and Yunnan are linked by political and economic initiatives such as the BCIM and the BIMSTEC, etc. The government of India launched the Look East policy in 1992 with a view to usher in development of the North-Eastern region by connecting it with the international neighbourhood. In addition, the initiatives like the BCIM, BIMSTEC and the Kolkata-Kunming corridor aim at greater integration of trade and investment between the four countries. However, the benefits of the initiatives and the policies have not trickled down to a very large extent and there is still lot of scope for betterment.

Within the North-Eastern region, three important border roads have the potential for an overall development of the region. These three roads are—(i) the Stilwell Road; also known as the *Ledo* Road which connects *Ledo* in Assam to *Kunming* in Yunnan; (ii) the *Numaligarh-Moreh* road which connects the three states of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam; (iii) and the *Aizwal-Champhai-Zokhawthar* road which connects Mizoram and Myanmar. If direct overland routes between Northeast India and Yunnan could be opened, then it could reduce

transport costs by at least 30 per cent. It would also tremendously reduce the time required in transporting goods. The bilateral trade between the two in 2012 stood at US$ 66.5 billion (Embassy of the Republic of India in Beijing, 2014). Most of it is conducted by sea and this entails detours of several thousands of kilometres. Indian exports to China are mainly primary goods such as oil seeds, salt, cotton, dairy products, rubber, plastic, etc. Delays in transport end up in soiling and wastage of the goods. If routes between Northeast India and Yunnan could be opened up, India's chance of increasing bilateral trade with China is guaranteed.

Additionally, direct road linkage between Yunnan and India via Myanmar would ensure a journey from Kolkata to Kunming in only three days; a rail connectivity could reduce the journey time further to only 48 hours. Better and improved infrastructure would also enable North-Eastern region to transform into a tourist hub and would facilitate India's integration into the China-Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) tourist circuit.

Tourism : A potent tool for resources accumulation in 21st century China

The section discusses how much the tourism industry has contributed to revenues in China, followed by a section on revenues generated from tourism in Yunnan separately. If we take a quick look at the Tourism sector, statistics show that tourism revenue has grown 12.7 per cent annually in recent years, higher than the national average GDP growth rate of 7.4 per cent (People's Daily, 2001) and tourism as such has become the new growth area for the domestic Chinese economy.

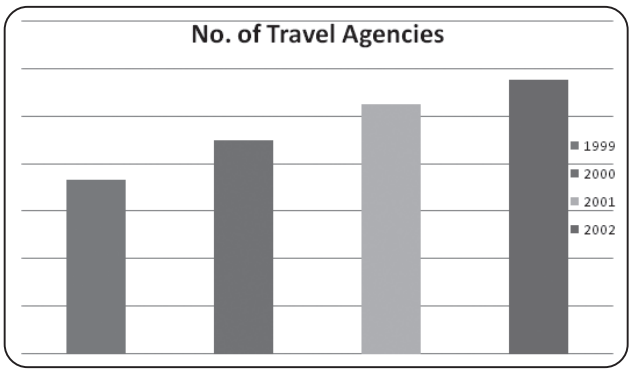
In 2012, the total tourism revenue stood at 2.57 trillion Yuan, an increase of 14 per cent. Domestic tourism markets reported 2.22 trillion Yuan of revenues in 2012, up by 15 per cent year on year. Domestic tourism consumption accounted for about 9 per cent of a resident's total consumption and the tourism sector provided 500,000 new jobs in 2011 (Xinhua, 2013).

Today, the tourism sector is substantially bigger than automotive manufacturing and created nearly as many jobs as in the mining industry of China. According to research undertaken by Oxford Economics, with 62 million direct, indirect and induced jobs, Travel and Tourism supports more jobs than the financial service sector's 48.5 million jobs in China. (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2012) At the beginning of the century, in the year 2000 alone, there were 740 million domestic tourists, which was 100 million more than that of the figure in 1995. At the same time, China's total number of international tourists increased by 14.75 per cent and foreign earnings from international tourism increased by 18.72 per cent between 1982 and 2000. The number of international tourists in China reached 83.48 million in 2000, which was 46 times more than the 1.8 million tourists recorded in 1978. (Liang, Guo and Wang, 2003) Earnings from domestic tourism services were valued at 317.6 billion Yuan, which was 2.3 times that of the figure in 1995.

A liberalisation of trade in services allows more specialisation and scale economy due to expanded market size. Developing countries such as China clearly have comparative advantages in labour intensive sectors such as construction industries and tourism sector. If trade in services are further liberalised, more constructive gains could clearly be achieved. The tourism sector of China already has exhibited the potential services liberalisation can produce.

In terms of employment, as stated previously, the sector of tourism has immense potentials.

The following graph shows the increase in the number of travel agencies in China, which is taken as an indicator of the development of tourism services. As a result of the growth in the number of agencies, the number of employment increased significantly as well.



Graph 1: Increase in number of travel agencies in China during 1999-2002
Data Source(s): China Statistical Year Books, 2000-08

Tourism has become the new growth area for the Chinese economy in recent years. In 2005, the country's travel and tourism accounted for 4.3 per cent of the global market share (World Watch Institute, 2005). China is also referred to as the 'holiday economy', given the impact its tourism industry has had in the recent past. As a result of the increase in disposable income because of reforms and opening up, the tourism industry benefited the most, which in turn has benefited the economy. Largely up to 1978, the country was closed to all except few selected foreign visitors. Deng Xiaoping decided to promote tourism to earn foreign exchange, as a result of which construction of hotels and guest houses began (and it was beneficial for the construction industry as well). Expansion of airline traffic facilitated the process, and over 250 cities and countries were opened to foreign visitors by the mid 1980s. In 1985, about 1.4 million foreigners visited China, which clearly exhibited the potential that the industry had.

As stated in the initial part of the paper, because of the advantages China has in labour intensive industries, the Chinese economy clearly benefits from labour intensive sectors such as those of construction and tourism are concerned. After China's WTO accession in 2000, foreign service providers were allowed to set up joint ventures and cooperatives in business units approved by the State Council (Mattoo 2003: 215). Also, foreign parties were allowed to hold majority equity in joint venture travel agencies. By the end of 2003, the government approved 10 foreign invested travel agencies with a total investment of US$ 8.47 million to operate in the country. As such, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into the tourism sector promoted the growth of tourism and spurred consumption. By 2007, FDI in China's tourism industry accounted for 25 per cent of the total tourist capital in China, covering several segments like hotel services, travel agencies, etc. (Xi 2010: 18).

Tourism and related services were out of the first ones to liberalise and grasp the

advantages of the 1978 reforms. It is observed that the 12 coastal regions benefited much more than interior regions even in the initial period of 1979 to 1990 (Cheng 1982: 27). According to statistics released by the National Tourism Administration, China (2009), the regions that received the maximum inbound tourists were Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Beijing, Fujian, Shandong, Yunnan, and Liaoning. All these are coastal regions receiving the maximum volumes of FDI with the exception of Yunnan. However, this is set to change with Yunnan's plans on promoting an accessible tourism zone in the Greater Mekong sub-region, and visa abolition agreement plans within the region.

Tourism in Yunnan

The benefit of the economic 'miracle' that has characterised coastal regions in China has not yet trickled down to Kunming, precisely because of its geographical location and terrain. The strategies for the economic development of Yunnan, as stated by the provincial government are based on its five pillar industries. Yunnan's focus lies in the development of the tourism, mineral, tobacco, power and hydro-electric industry. Yunnan, often presents itself as a 'green' province with a 'green economy', by emphasizing on the development of tourism. The effects of tourism as a pillar industry and its position and function in the overall economy have been gradually strengthened in the last decade. As such, the tourism industry is exerting a significant influence on the provincial industry and on the service industry— thereby becoming a focal point for economic growth in the province.

In the Western region of China, Yunnan receives the largest number of tourists. This can be attributed to the investment that Yunnan has made in building the infrastructure of its tourism industry. As such, Yunnan has the highest number of star grade hotels, even though it is yet to have any significant international hotel chain or five star hotels. Tourism in the province has also stimulated the development of other services, which has contributed to the growth of the tertiary sector, and in 2012, the contribution of the tertiary sector in Yunnan stood at 40 per cent of its GDP. In 2012, the number of overseas tourists increased by 16 per cent, which generated a foreign exchange earnings of US$ 1947 million, while the number of overnight domestic tourists reached 107 million, which brought in a revenue of 124.5 billion Yuan (Yunnan Statistical Yearbook, 2013).

In addition to strengthening the service industry, tourism in the province has made significant contribution to the adjustment of the industrial structure and furthered opening up to the outside world. Thus the revenues generated have been used towards eliminating poverty, and to ease the pressure of unemployment in Yunnan. Therefore, tourism is the most important prong for development in the province. Since the implementation of China's new tourism law in October 2013, more tourism companies and agencies are establishing alliance under the aegis of Yunnan provincial tourism authority to strengthen cooperation between tourism companies, operators and airlines.

There are 14 national or provisional scenic spots for display of civilisation, 10 national scenic spots or places of historical interest, one national holiday resort, which ranks third in the country, 48 other scenic spots and six provincial tourist holiday resorts. All these places

are with a total area of 13,000 square kilometres, making up 3.3 per cent of the total area of the province. In total, there are 1344 key places listed as units of preservation of cultural or historical vestiges. As a result of continuous improvement and perfection of the overall transport system and tourism services, the province has attained a comparative advantage over other provinces in China's Western region. As such, the solid foundation for the development of tourism in Yunnan was an important objective of the 10th Five Year Plan (FYP 2001-2005). It continues to be an important theme even in the 12th FYP (2011-2015). Besides listing of cultural and historical sites and relics for reservation, the State formulates various preferential policies for the development of the tourism sector, which include tourism national debt, opening up to the outside world, taxation and finance, loans and investment, construction of adequate infrastructure and biological environment.

Also in addition to these steps domestically, the province seeks to rope in the cooperation of neighbouring countries to promote tourism. The province also sought India's cooperation for mutual promotion of tourism between Yunnan and India. On September 24, 2014 a delegation of the Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Commission, led by DuanYueqin, the Director General, visited India and requested cooperation from India for tourism promotion. According to Duan, Yunnan offers a range of tourism products for Indians, as it boasts of snow-capped mountains, tropical forests, hill stations, adventure destinations, festivals, Buddhist attractions, etc. The Yunnan Provincial Tourism Development Commission also plans to organise a familiarisation trip for Indian travel trade and media to promote the region (Punnackattu 2014).

India had a scope even during this particular meet to promote tourism in North-East India, since the region shares certain similarities and more with the province of Yunnan. So far, this scope was not capitalised upon. As such North-East India has an immense scope for revenue generation through tourism promotion and benefit from it in the ways Yunnan is getting benefitted. However, a lot remains to be done. The following sections discuss the present and prevailing nature of tourism in North-East India.

Lessons to be learnt from Yunnan

As a first step to improve its own economic stature, Yunnan has been using its cultural and ethnic diversity to develop tourism and has been also attempting to project the province as China's gateway to South and Southeast Asia. If India could learn from the Yunnan experience and tourism in Northeast India which has largely been left untouched by tourism, revenues that could bolster economic development of the region could be capitalised upon. Also, while trade between the regions is emphasised, the ways to ensure the absence of a prolonged trade deficit, which has been characteristic of Sino-Indian overall trade in the last decade, could also be sought and mutual benefits could actually be arrived at. For example, the case of Hong Kong markets in Siliguri or China Towns in several parts of North-East India is not new. However, the cases of Indian markets promoting goods produced in Northeast India are not heard of at all. If tourism and trade promotion between the two is

conceived of, then handicrafts from the North-Eastern region could also form a component of Indian exports to China.

Yunnan and Northeast India share several similarities. The difference lies in the way Yunnan has used its political and cultural heritage to bolster tourism and trade revenues, particularly because of its geographical location. But Northeast India, despite having similar abundant cultural and historical legacy has not been able to capitalise on it and use tourism – the most lucrative segment of traditional services to its own economic benefit.

As stated earlier, both Yunnan and North-Eastern region of India are similar in terms of their socio-economic and cultural heritage. North-East India is the home of many tribes, sub-tribes, minority communities and ethno-political collectiveness that have been continuously moving through various formative and developmental phases. The region has around 430 languages and dialects of different languages that are used in a complex and wide ranging ethno and socio-linguistic configuration. Yunnan, on the other hand, has 26 different minority groups including the Dais who are of Tai ethnicity and the Tibetans. Sporadically, the province has witnessed secessionist movements as well. (Wang 2013: 97)

Yunnan has an abundance of natural resources and the pillar industries of the province are concentrated in agriculture, development of bio resources, tourism, mining and hydro-electric power production. The key economic challenges faced by the province include an economy solely driven by investment from outside and low potentials for internal generation of investment. Mismatch between the industrial sector and employees' skill base arises, given the fact that the majority of the populace is still employed in the agriculture sector. Added to these, is the problem of low urbanisation rates. Additionally, income is not equitably spread across sectors and the social security system is weak. Public services including transport, postal services, radio broadcasting, etc. are still insufficient. Up to 2008, there were 5.5 million people living in rural and remote areas of Yunnan. However, one of the lucrative sectors which have benefited the economy of Yunnan is that of tourism. In the first half of 2012, the total revenue of the province increased by 24.6 per cent year on year, and by the end of the first quarter in June, the whole province received 4.091 million entries from overseas, and the revenue amounted to US$ 920 million. The number of domestic tourists increased by 20.8 per cent to roughly about 96 million, and the total revenue was US$ 11 billion, showing a growth rate of 24.1 per cent. (Yunnan Provincial Tourism Administration, 2012).

Yunnan as such has been trying consistently to increase revenue from tourism for its economic development. In January 2014, it announced that 300 million Yuan (US$ 48 million) would be invested to promote tourism in the province (Wang, 2014). As such, a unified tourism brand is being promoted for the province. The plans are that, Yunnan will focus efforts on promoting an accessible tourism zone in the Greater Mekong sub-region, and visa abolition agreements will be concluded within the region. Additionally, efforts shall be on developing cross border tourism products and promoting routes linking the Indo-Chinese peninsula, the Middle East and the South Asian regions. Through such arrangements, Yunnan

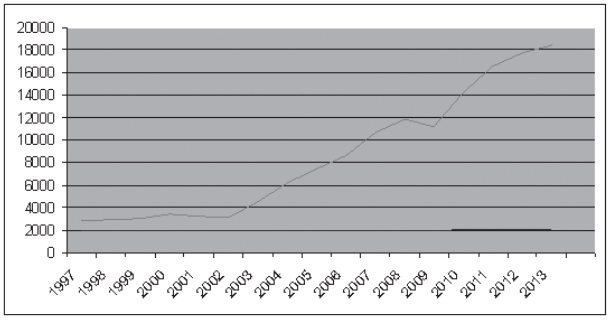
shall be created as a trans-national and a regional international tourism distribution centre.

As such, tourism on the whole has been immensely beneficial to China. According to the World Trade and Tourism Council, in China, 64.4 million people directly or indirectly were employed in tourism sector in the year 2013; and this was an increase from a figure of 63.8 million people in 2012. In 2013, the industry contributed US$ 850 billion to the China's economy, which was a 9.2 per cent of the nation's total Gross Domestic Product (Chen, 2014).

Prospects of Tourism in Northeast India

Northeast India is one of the most heterogeneous linguistic and cultural regions of the world, and has been a stage for plurality of a transitional continuum from community and collectivity to nationality. The economies of the eight North-Eastern States are simple, agriculture based and highly dependent on the rest of the country for several basic needs. Agricultural surplus is close to non-existent. Besides these, limited capital formation and entrepreneurial skills further proves to be a challenge for the region. Handicrafts are on a decline and are in dire need of modern design, marketing and inputs. Issues of power, transportation, infrastructure, finance and services are daunting challenges in the region as well.

The beauty and the biodiversity of the region can be channelized the way it has been done in Yunnan. The North-Eastern region contains more than one-third of the country's total biodiversity, and is one of the 18 hotspots of the world. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, "The region has at least 7500 flowering plants, 700 orchids, 58 bamboos, 64 citrus, 28 conifers, 500 mosses, 700 ferns and 728 lichen species. The region is equally rich in faunal diversity. An estimated 3624 species of insects, 50 molluscs, 236 fishes, 64 amphibians, 137 reptiles, 541 birds and 160 mammalian species have been identified so far. The region is also rich in terms of genetic and ecosystem diversity. Some of the important gene pools of citrus, banana and rice are reported to have originated from this region. The ecosystem diversity of the region ranges from tropical ecosystems to alpine ecosystems in the Himalayan ranges and also includes wetlands, flood plains, riverine and aquatic ecosystems" (Tourism Master Plan for North-eastern Region, 2012).



Graph 2: Foreign exchange earnings from tourism (Unit: US$ millions)

Sources: *Reserve Bank of India, 1997-2010; and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India*

India has immense potentials for tourism, and as predicted by the World Tourism Organisation, India will be a leader in using tourism as an employment generator. Since 1990s, a lot of foreign earnings have been generated and benefited the Indian economy on the whole. The following graph shows the increase in foreign revenue earnings from 1997- 2013.

Foreign exchange earnings through tourism in India, went up from a figure of merely US$ 2889 million in 1997 to US$ 18445 million in 2013. Tourism being a multi-sectoral activity, has the capacity to stimulate different sectors of the economy. Being a labour intensive sector, it opens up avenues for various employment opportunities, and can even be beneficial in environmental conservation, cultural enrichment, development of rural areas, etc.

As far as Northeast India is concerned, there are several factors that make it attractive for tourism. It is a variegated cultural mosaic of people and races, and an ethnic tapestry of shades and hues. Primitive cultures of the Neolithic age co-exist with modern and post-modern lifestyles of the 21st century. Additionally, it shares borders with China, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar. All these endowments could be utilised for making the region a prospective hub of international tourism, trade and commerce.

However, tourism infrastructure is a major deficiency in the North-eastern region of India. Except for a few cities and destinations accommodation facilities are a major challenge— both in terms of quality and availability. Way side amenity centres are non-existent on the government approved tourist circuits. Tour and travel services still will have to improve a lot. Availability of internet services and ATMs becomes another arduous challenge in promoting tourism in North-eastern region. It is observed that not all the North-eastern states have specific tourism policies. The tourism policies of Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya cover focus areas as well as incentives while the tourism policies of Sikkim and Tripura have covered only focus areas. Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram have not formed any tourism policies yet.

If an observation of the states visited most by tourists is considered, then the concentration is in Assam and Sikkim only. This could be attributed to the existence of a specific tourism policy in the two states, their own tourist spots, and as they serve as gateways to other regions. Over the years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of tourist arrivals in the region.

However, the number of foreign tourists' arrivals is negligent compared to the number of domestic tourist arrivals. In 2005, the number of foreign tourist arrivals in the Northeast India was 37,380 only, while the number of domestic tourists was 35, 15, 792. In 2010, the number of foreign tourist arrivals was 50,950, while the number for domestic tourist arrivals was 61, 66, 269.

The percentage of foreign tourist arrivals in the North-eastern region in 2013 was 0.82 per cent of the total number of tourists in the region which is negligible in comparison to the other circuits in the country. A time period when the number of tourists increases in the

region is during December at the time of the Hornbill festival in Kisama, Kohima, of Nagaland state. The following section discusses the Hornbill festival tourist season and explores the possibilities to increase tourist presence in the region for such other cultural festivals as well.

The Hornbill Festival in Kisama, Nagaland

The Hornbills festival is organised by the State Tourism and Art & Culture Departments every year in Nagaland. The festival showcases a mélange of cultural displays in the heritage village of Kisama. The festival usually takes place between December 1st and 7th every year. The festival is an attempt to lay a better understanding of the people and the cultures of Nagaland and for the visitors it means an opportunity to experience songs, dances, food and customs of Nagaland.

In 2014, on December 1, the first day of the Hornbill festival, more than 500 foreign tourists and about 3,00,000 domestic tourists visited Kisama for the Hornbill festival. The state government of Nagaland has been facilitating locals to earn from the festival. In 2013, the locals earned a total of 25, 00, 00, 000 rupees (The Telegraph, 2014). In order to promote tourism, the state department in 2014 has added another item for the tourists, which is a visit to the interior parts of the state. The arrangement is called the Great Hornbill Adventure Trail (GHAT), and tourists will be able to visit districts like Peren, Zunheboto and Phek. This will boost sales of handicrafts to tourists besides bringing in revenues for the transport industry as well. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his speech at the Hornbill festival on December 1, 2015 stated that the Hornbill festival will definitely improve the tourism of Nagaland and the people of Nagaland would definitely benefit from the growth. However, the fact is that the Hornbill festival takes place only once in a year. While it definitely can improve tourism in the region, fact remains that other tourist circuits in the region also need to be promoted and improved.

Out of ten vendors selling various cultural artefacts at the Hornbill festival in 2013, nine said that their revenues see at least 70 per cent increase during the festival. Six out of the ten respondents lived outside Kohima, and agreed that the sale of handicrafts was on a decline, and tourism promotion in the entire state is a necessity and needs to be expanded beyond the period of the Hornbill festival. The vendors from Dimapur, who had better connectivity to cities like Guwahati and Kolkata, said that low earnings in Dimapur was always somehow compensated by sales of their handicrafts in cities like Guwahati and Kolkata. However, they agreed that transportation costs were a concern, and it would be better if sales in their own places of origin could be increased.

As such, the eight states in North-East India have various festivals during different months of the year. However, due to the lack of knowledge and the lack of adequate transport facilities, the tool of tourism has not been fully utilised to garner revenues for the North-Eastern region. However, if certain lessons could be drawn not just from the case of tourism

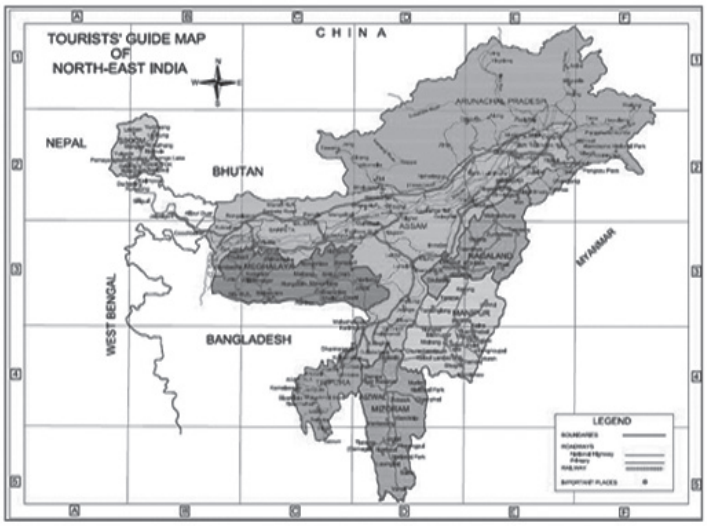
in the other parts of the country, but also from the case of Yunnan, better economic growth of the region could be aimed at. The concluding section discusses a few of the problems associated with tourism in North-East India, and tries to draw a few lessons from the Yunnan experience with tourism and revenue generation, and puts forth recommendations that could help the Northeast attract more tourism revenues.

Conclusion

Starting from infrastructure facilities to low promotion of tourism for the region, Northeast India suffers from several constraints in the process of increasing its gains from tourism— these nevertheless are addressable constraints and can be done away with. There is a need to change the way history is taught at the school levels so that the history of Northeast India is also included, and knowledge of the region begins at the school level itself. The knowledge of the region will lead to long term outcome in the form of desire for travel/ visits to the places, or even the desire to tap the untapped resources in the region, to invest in industries in the region, etc. In history textbooks at the school level, a quick glance at the Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) syllabus, tells us that while there is a great deal of emphasis on colonial history, or even international history for that matter, the histories of the entire region of North-East India is completely ignored. Even within the context of uprisings against the British, no mention of any state or any leader from Northeast India finds a mention while fact remains that the World War II Museum is located in Kohima, Nagaland. Similar is the case with the Central Board of Secondary Examination (CBSE) syllabus. The Battle of Kohima was the turning point of the Japanese offense inside India in 1944 and is often referred to as the Stalingrad of the East and according to British Army, the decisive battles of Imphal and Kohima during World War II were the greatest battles fought in the history of the British Army. However, there is absolute ignorance about these battles when it comes to discussions on India's struggle against imperialism within India itself. Until and unless extensive research on the syllabus beginning at the school level is emphasised, India's Northeast will remain excluded from common Indian imagination. A number of properties in the region are either already UNESCO world heritage sites or are on the tentative list. Examples include the Kaziranga National Park, the Manas wildlife sanctuary, the river island of Majuli— all in Assam; the Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh; and the Kangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim. However, due to the lack of awareness about the region, tourism in the mentioned places is not adequate. Additionally, more research and studies need to be undertaken on the historical, cultural and natural sites of the regions so that more nominations for world heritage sites from India could be filed at UNESCO.

Infrastructure is a pressing issue, and the region is in desperate need of connectivity with the rest of the country. At the Hornbill Festival this year (2015), Prime Minister Mr. Modi stated that the region is located in one of the 25 hot biodiversity areas of the world

and that must be protected through sustainable development. Additionally, he stated that the region is the best tourism destination; all that is needed is rail, road and air connectivity. Even in the case of the Hornbill festival in Kisama, tourists either from within the country or abroad have to first reach either the Dimapur airport or the Guwahati airport, after which arduous road journeys to Kohima have to be undertaken.



Map 1: Tourist places in North-East India

Beyond infrastructure creation, the promotion of the region as a hot tourist circuit also needs to be thought of. Additionally, the region being surrounded by international neighbours, connectivity to the neighbouring countries through air, land and water routes have to be created, to facilitate exchange of trade, services and tourism. It would be also beneficial if a North-East Tourist Development Corporation is created in order to plan and promote the domestic and international tourism in the region. The potent tool of advertisement for promotion of the Northeast is also urgently required. As stated by the report of Planning Commission of India (1997) to the Prime Minister, "North-East tourism must be well advertised through tourist offices, travel agencies and airlines in all states and abroad". For this purpose, there is a need to enlist tourist sites as well. Map 1 shows the important places of interest in the region. But the fact remains that most of these places are unknown, which reduces the tourism potentials of the place.

The next problem which needs to be addressed to increase tourist revenues in the region is that of acquiring inner line permits (ILP) for domestic tourists to visit certain regions of Northeast India. Inner line permit is an official travel document issued by the Government to allow inward travel of Indian citizens into a "restricted" area for a limited period[3] The document is an off shoot of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations of 1873, which protected

the British Crown's interests in oil, tea and elephant trade, by prohibiting people from entering these "protected areas" to prevent them from establishing any commercial ventures that could compete with the Crown's own agents. The rationale behind independent government of India using these inner line permits is the protection of tribal culture in Northeast India. However, the fact remains that the region remains deprived of growth and development and to introduce integration with the development of the rest of the country, it is essential to facilitate movement of people, trade and goods. Restrictive regimes such as those of inner line permits need a serious reconsideration in the 21st century.

Additionally, after a certain basic minimum level of economic development has been reached in the region, taking cues from the Yunnan experience, a possible call on neighbouring countries for tourism cooperation can be imagined, along with visa abolition programmes for the citizens of select countries. Also, preferential policies for the development of tourism, such as investment and loans, finance and taxation and opening up to the rest of the country and neighbouring countries could be thought of. The mission as put forth in the Results-Framework Document (RFD) for the Ministry of Tourism, 2014-15 is to attain a level of 11.24 million foreign tourist arrivals and 1450 million tourist visits in India by the year 2016-17 (Ministry of Tourism 2014). A stepping up of tourism in Northeast India would definitely be beneficial not just for the region itself, but for the entire Indian economy on the whole.

Notes

[1] Currently, the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya lie on the Patkai range.

[2] The Morans and Borahis were petty tribes of Bodo affinities.

[3] Foreigners require a 'restricted area permit' to visit Arunachal Pradesh. The states of Assam, Tripura,Manipur, and Mizoram do not require permits. The requirement of a restricted area permit to visit Nagaland has been done away with as well. However, according to the new rules introduced in January 2011, foreigners from certain stated states have to register themselves at the local Foreigners Registration Office of the district they visit within 24 hours of their arrival. Citizens of Pakistan and China need to seek approval from the Home Ministry to visit these states.

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