

# **TOURISM POLICY OF ASSAM, 2016**

## **1. Preamble :**

- 1.1 Tourism has emerged as one of the largest industries in the World today. It is an industry which can easily change the economic scenario of a country. Several countries have transformed themselves through tourism and created a global presence in the tourism industry. Tourism is not directed to commercial or population centers but in most cases towards natural and cultural resources. Thus, tourism can contribute significantly where other commercial activities are limited. Developed tourism can bring smiles to every household of a state or a country. Tourist movements have spread across the globe, becoming for many of them an important sector in terms of employment generation and foreign exchange earnings.
- 1.2 As reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Tourism Highlights 2015 Edition, International tourist arrivals grew to 1.1 billion in 2014 from a mere 25 million in 1950. The UNWTO estimate that approximately 1 in every 11 person in the World is employed by the tourism industry. As of 2014, the global tourism industry generated USD 7.6 trillion, constituting 10% of the global GDP.
- 1.3 The economic significance of tourism especially in terms of employment, income generation, foreign exchange and regional development is a major driving force that enables the national and state governments to place tourism most appropriately, in the overall development agenda. The Union Government has recently declared that it would give top priority on the development of five 'T's i.e. Tradition, Talent, Trade, Technology and Tourism for overall development of the nation. Local communities across the tourism destinations are encouraged to minimize leakages and maximum linkages of the industry with a view to reap maximum benefit.
- 1.4 Assam is endowed with plentiful natural and cultural resources which can form the basis for a very lucrative tourism industry, creating employment and generating income not only in the urban centers but also in the rural areas. What has held tourism back in Assam was its insurgency issues, its remoteness, a sense of perceived insecurity and negative publicity of the place. The need of the hour is to market Assam vigorously in order to refurbish its image in the national and international market using latest technological interventions. Assam can become one of the most sought after destinations in the country because of its magnificent tourism products like exotic wildlife, awesome scenic beauty, colorful fairs and festivals, age old historical monuments, lush green tea gardens and golf courses, massive river Brahmaputra and its tributaries, serene and tranquil country side and warm and hospitable people.
- 1.5 Tourism activities in Assam have developed sporadically and in an unplanned manner. Also due to very limited government funds made available to the tourism sector and hesitation of the private sector to invest

due to various issues, tourism promotion and marketing activities have always taken a back seat. Overall public sector tourism is groping in the dark and has been sub-optimally functioning with limited financial and human resource capacity. Also, the private sector feels that the Government does not provide them full support. It is often not enough just to have the right product; there is a felt need that Government should support the tourism sector, provide security and a conducive environment. The private sector should also provide investments and the people of Assam ought to be involved and participate in this development.

1.6 At the community level, the district and local communities often lack awareness and appreciation of their tourism products and development potential. Communications between local communities and the government needs to be encouraged and there is need for collaboration of the community associations within an umbrella association which will make product branding and marketing easier and sustainable.

1.7 The first tourism policy of the State was announced in 2008 underlining the importance of Public Private Partnership which has considerably increased the tourist footfalls to the place. 2014 figures show around 45, 00,000 domestic and 20,000 foreign tourists visiting Assam. This tourism policy paper is aiming at creating a policy framework to move tourism into a major economic sector of Assam increasing the inflow of tourists' at least 2 to 3 fold in the next five years. Assam has special things to offer, but it needs to get the framework in place so as to realize the benefits.

2. **Vision :** Assam becomes a Nationally and Internationally acclaimed all-season Tourist destination for its unique wildlife, bio-diversity and experience of an unexploited wonderland. Tourism is to be one of the main sources of income-generation for the people. It will also be a vibrant and significant contributor to the sustainable development of the State of Assam.

3. **Mission :**

3.1 To bring in maximum footfalls to Assam.

3.2 To promote Assam Tourism with a new approach of vigorous massive campaigning.

3.3 To build a global brand 'Awesome Assam' to attract National and International Tourist.

3.4 In keeping with "Act East Policy" of Central Government, we will have close collaboration with other neighboring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, China & other South East Asian Countries harping on the similarities of these communities with the people of Assam.

3.5 Identify most popular and attractive tourist destinations and develop tourist Infrastructure in an around them.

- 3.6 To encourage Responsible Tourism (RT) in the state with a view to preserving environment eco-systems in keeping with Sustainable Development Goals.
- 3.7 To facilitate extensive involvement of private sector and active participation of local community in all aspects of Tourism promotion.
- 3.8 To create an investment friendly atmosphere for promotion of Tourism by making full use of Ease of Doing Business.
- 3.9 To conduct special skill development Certificate programmes of local youths in Hospitality and for Tourism Sector, the advantage of Government of India's Skill India and 'Hunar Se Rojgar tak' shall be leveraged.
- 3.10 Adopting Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Tourism Sector.
- 3.11 To ensure safety and security of the tourists.
- 3.12 To promote Spiritual Tourism centering on Kamakhya Temple as India's most powerful Shakti- Peeth highlighting Ambubachi Mela.
- 3.13 To promote Wildlife Tourism centering on one-horned Rhinoceros.
- 3.14 To promote Tea Tourism of Assam.
- 3.15 To provide 'Excellence Awards' annually for Tourism.
- 3.16 Promote Film Tourism by developing single Window clearances and providing incentive to film makers.
- 3.17 A special incentive package in the form of logistic support within Assam should be provided to the film producers to kick start their arrivals.
- 3.18 Development of Wayside amenities on Tourism Routes in a PPP mode.

#### **4. Objectives:**

- 4.1 To make Assam a tourist Hub for North East India.
- 4.2 To market Assam as a hot destination for the tourists from East & South East Asian Countries.
- 4.3 To leverage innovative forms of Tourism such as Cruises, Ethnic Tourism, Tea & Golf, leisure Tourism, Transit Tourism, Adventure Tourism and Monsoon Tourism.

- 4.4 To develop positive, Tourist friendly and reciprocative culture among local tour operators, guides and hospitality providers.
- 4.5 To upgrade skill, quality and professionalism of all service providers connected with tourism.
- 4.6 To develop tourism packages to cater to various types of tourists and market them through global and local tour operators.
- 4.7 Popularizing local and community hosts to promote Bed and Breakfast, cottages on stilts accommodation all across the Tourist spots/destinations.
- 4.8 Developing Assam into an all season tourist destination.
- 4.9 To focus on benefits for the Community from tourism.
- 4.10 To create enabling environment for investment.

## **5. Strategies:**

### **5.1 Assam Tourism website.**

- 5.1.1 An interactive and fully comprehensive website of Assam Tourism will be launched wherein all required information for any prospective domestic or international tourist will be readily available at the click of the mouse. The website will contain linkages to all sorts of information and bookings including Hotels, Air Travel, Rail & Road, Bus, Home Stays, Bed & Breakfast accommodation, Restaurants, Details of Tourist destinations, packages, Fairs and events, Route maps etc. It will have the facility for two way interactions with all stakeholders such as Tourists, Tour Guides and Tour operators. Hoteliers, Restaurateurs etc to collect feedback information on Do's and Don'ts, weather and local cultures will also be hosted to guide the prospective tourists.
- 5.1.2 A vigorous campaigning through social media such as Facebook, You-Tube, Twitter, Blogging sites will be launched to attract the younger up-coming generation of Tourists. A special cell for maintenance & updating of information will be created for sustainability.
- 5.1.3 Regular Meet with the National and International Tour Operators Association & Hoteliers & Restaurateurs Association will be organized. Fam tours will also be organized regularly.

### **5.2 Building Brand**

- 5.2.1 In spite of having tremendous tourism potential, Assam has not yet

aggressively marketed itself. A comprehensive marketing strategy will be chalked out in consultation with professional agencies. A brand image of Assam as “Awesome Assam” will be created portraying the states uniqueness and exotic beauty. The brand name will be translated to Hindi and other National and International languages.

- 5.2.2 A renowned celebrity will be roped in as brand Ambassador of “Awesome Assam”.
- 5.2.3 A blitz-Krieg National & International Promotional Campaign shall be launched to build “Awesome Assam brand through newspapers life style magazines, in-flight magazines, TV advertisements, Talk shows, Road shows, Travel marts and Tourism stalls and kiosks etc.

### **5.3 Assam-A Tourist hub for North East India.**

- 5.3.1 Assam is the gateway to the North Eastern states. Geographically and culturally the states have interdependent relationship. A total NE perspective in tourism planning, where the strength of each state complement each other is beneficial to all and is a constructive way forward for tourism promotion. Assam will play a proactive role to develop such a wide view of tourism promotion through coordination among the states in creating zonal and regional circuits.
- 5.3.2 Most of the tourists travelling to other seven sister states have to transit through Guwahati. Half/full day City tour packages by ATDC and private operators will be an incentive for the travellers to extend their duration of stay which in turn will boost the local economy.

### **5.4 Wildlife Tourism**

- 5.4.1 An attractive feature of the Assam’s forests is its colourful wildlife. Some of the species are exclusive to the state. Assam is famous as the home of one-horned rhinoceros which is its unique selling point apart from the fauna.
- 5.4.2 Though most of the domestic and international tourists are drawn towards Kaziranga and this heritage site has got best tourist facilities with private participation, yet the Government will develop infrastructure around individual Wildlife sanctuaries such as Manas, Pabitora, Orang, Pani Dihing, Barail and Nameri at Dibru-Saikhowa across Assam to accommodate tourists and resort to aggressive marketing to position Assam as Wildlife destination of the world. The Quality of Tourist facilities will be improved and proper tourist information centers will be established in each place.

### **5.5 Spiritual Tourism**

- 5.5.1 After wildlife, it is the spiritual tourism which attracts pilgrim tourists to Assam. Centering on the most famous Shakti-peeth, Kamakhya Temple atop

Nilachal hill top in Guwahati city, the religious/ spiritual tourism can catapult Assam into a major spiritual tourism destination in the country. Assam is known among the pilgrims and domestic tourists as a wonderland soaked in Shakti-pooja, mysticism, tantric practice, mythology and black magic of Mayong with Kamakhya as the epicenter. This advantage shall be turned into revenue spinning machine and local employment creation by right interventions.

- 5.5.2 Kamakhya Temple perched on top of picturesque Nilachal Hill in the middle of city is surrounded by numerous minor temples dotting the hill. Its unique position in Indian mythology and convenient geographical location attracts thousands of pilgrim tourists to the Nilachal Hill. Therefore a brand Nilachal will be developed in the next five years in an integrated manner utilizing Government of India funds under PRASAD scheme. The Government will endeavour to help put in place best practices for the Management of the Temple.
- 5.5.3 An annual four day Ambubasi Mela at Kamakhya temple during the month of June has come to be known as Mahakumbh of the East where lakhs of people and sadhus congregate. This shall be highlighted in publicity campaigns in domestic tourist circuits with an appropriate tagline giving forceful punch to spiritual tourism.
- 5.5.4 Hajo is another centre where people from three religions- Hindu, Muslim and Buddhists converge for pilgrimage. It has always been symbol of communal harmony for the country and will continue to be projected as such. Hajo will also be linked with Guwahati city tour/ day tour.
- 5.5.5 “Sankardev Trail” or “Vaishnav- Trail”- projecting Vaishnavite cultural proliferation in Assam will be developed in Barpeta-Bordua-Majuli. A number of Museums depicting the life of the great saint & reformer and development of neo-vaishnavism will be set up with the help of the Government. A number of local souvenirs, local handicrafts and cuisines will be developed and managed by the Local entrepreneurs.
- 5.5.7 Efforts shall be directed for preparing Buddhist circuit in the State to woo large number of Buddhist pilgrims.

## 5.6 **Ethnic Tourism**

- 5.6.1 Assam has been a unique place on earth for the cultural and ethnic diversities. The state is a home land of various ethnic tribes and groups, each having its own cultural heritage. Each of these tribes possesses some unique features in its socio-cultural life including customs, religious belief, language, culture, dress, way of life, festivals, food habits, songs and dances which are different from others.
- 5.6.2 Ethnic Tourist circuits will be developed to attract the tourists from all over the world. The ethnic socio-cultural and religious festivals will be organized

where Songs and dances, display of colourful dresses, tasting of innumerable varieties of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes is the main feature.

- 5.6.3 Foreign tourists in India are driven by the desire to see something different where curiosity is the ultimate factor. The travelers choose to experience firsthand practices of another culture, and may involve performances, presentations and attractions portraying or presented by indigenous communities. In a broader perspective, it includes cultural, heritage, anthropological, tribal, village and similar forms of tourism. Ethnic tourism, will be properly planned, managed and promoted as sustainable form of tourism and also utilized as a tool for the preservation and conservation of culture and heritage as well as for poverty alleviation.

## **5.7 Tea & Golf Tourism.**

- 5.7.1. Since discovery of tea in 1823, tea-gardens have become an integral part of Assam's landscape. Each of these thousands of lush green tea gardens in Assam is a treasure house of exotic beauty of nature with colourful people and their enchanting songs and dances, sprawling bungalows, and residential facilities. Many of these tea gardens have polo fields and golf courses. There are as many as thirty air strips and helipads maintained by the tea garden management. These facilities can be included within attractive Tourist packages.

- 5.7.2 Therefore, coordination with the management of the tea gardens can effectively do a lot in promoting tea tourism in the state. Tourism Department will engage and persuade some of the willing tea gardens to be a partner in tea tourism packages.

- 5.7.3 There are about 20 key golf courses located mostly within the compact areas of tea gardens. These offer a unique opportunity to develop golf tourism in the state. Most of the courses are located near the airstrips and helipads maintained by the tea garden management. In recent years, domestic and foreign tourists are coming to play golf in different golf courses, and a good number of them use these air strips and helipads.

- 5.7.4 Golf tourism will also be integrated with eco and tea tourism.

## **5.8 River Tourism**

- 5.8.1 The State of Assam has an extensive river network. Brahmaputra is intrinsic to the socio-cultural life in Assam. Assam has immense opportunities to develop river tourism and water leisure activities. Colourful canal barges, boating, luxury cruisers, motor boats, dolphin shows, under water-world, water sports and lighters, para sailing, river rafting, water amusements and more. River tourism in Assam could be a great way to spend holidays. International standard of luxury cruises can be a great driver to draw more domestic and international tourist traffic to Assam.

- 5.8.2 Ethnic tourism on both banks of river with infrastructure and on-shore

linkages for night halts from Guwahati to Majuli will be put in place by promoting ethnic tourism.

5.8.3 Recently the endangered Gangetic river Dolphin has been voted the “City Animal” of Guwahati and it can be spotted in large numbers in the Kulsi at Kukurmara. In the vicinity of Kulsi, Mirza and Bijoynagar are famous for rural household weaving and of use natural dyes, while the Industrial Complex at Chatabari houses, a unit which prepares tree free handmade paper and paper handicrafts from elephant dung and local plant wastes. This can be developed as river cum ethnic tourist circuit.

5.8.4 Government will promote river taxi services between the North and South banks at Brahmaputra at places of touristic interest.

## **5.9 Transit Tourism**

5.9.1 For many of the tourists, particularly for foreigners, Guwahati is not only a tourist destination but also is perceived as a halt or the entry-point to the north eastern states. It is a city from where one could connect to other parts of Assam or get in and out of the northeast. On an average, a tourist spends about 2 days in transit which could be turned as a great opportunity to promote Guwahati City based Tourism titled as ‘**One day in Guwahati**’ or ‘**Two days in Guwahati**’.

5.9.2 Apart from Tourist spot visits in the day time, Government will also promote Night Life in and around Guwahati city like nightclubs, malls, pubs, bars, sports bar and indoor gaming etc through the Private Sector.

## **5.10 Adventure Tourism**

5.10.1 The enchanting blue hills and speedy rivers of Assam provide an enormous scope for the development of water based adventure tourism. Recently, some of the adventure sports activities like rock-climbing, trekking, para-sailing, water sports, river rafting and angling are promoted by the Department of Tourism. Tourism Department will join hands with Adventure Institute of Sports Department to design various adventure activities at tourist sites catering to tourists in particular. This will generate a lot of employment opportunities for local youths.

## **5.11 Monsoon & Leisure Tourism**

5.11.1 Assam has early onset of Monsoon, generally beginning from 15<sup>th</sup> of May, compared to most other parts of India where Monsoon arrives only in late June or early July. Maximum day temperatures remain around a comfortable 27-34 degrees centigrade with plenty of rain when the large part of western India simmers under successive heat waves with temperatures soaring as high as 38-45 degrees. The comparatively cooler climate and fulsome rains coupled with summer vacations in other parts of the country is a major

advantage for Assam to attract domestic travellers. ‘The Monsoon Country’ tag and proximity to Cherrapunjee, the wettest place on earth and discounts in luxury hotels, cottages, homestays and huts-on-stilts will obliterate seasonality in Assam Tourism and generate revenue throughout the year.

5.11.2 Foreign tourists from cold countries of the west (Europe, Scandinavia, North America) and East Asian countries (China, Japan, Korea) are naturally mesmerized with the tropical evergreen rain-forests soaked in heavy monsoon and covered by thick clouds. Tea gardens with unparalleled landscape with full greenery during monsoon and wildlife cottages/ homestays/ houses-on-stilts stay with pitter patter of rains will attract the international tourists. It will be packaged suitably and targeted to right set of prospective tourist.

5.11.3 Leisure tourism activities during on or off season will be developed in the state through private sector participation which includes Gaming Centers, Nightclubs, Discotheques, Five Star Resorts, Malls, Pubs, Sports bars, Adventure Parks, Amusement parks, Yoga and Ayurvedic Spas, Bird watching, Angling, Fairs & Festivals etc.

## **5.12 Eco Tourism**

5.12.1 Eco-tourism is also a new concept, developed around the idea of travelling to places of natural beauty, moving around and staying with the places of nature for a couple of days. It has the twin objectives of conserving environment and improving the welfare of the local people. Assam has immense scope for eco-tourism. The state is virtually free from industrial pollution. Its green forests, blue hills, enchanting rivers are the basis on which eco-friendly tourism can be developed. For that a host of matters to be properly addressed are:

- Development of good approach roads to the spots of tourist attraction and eco-camping.
- Creation of infra- structural facilities like good quality tents, cottages-on-stilts with provisions for food and other logistics
- River cruising, water sports, bird watching towers.

## **5.13 Medical Tourism**

5.13.1 The rapidly growing healthcare sector in state capital Guwahati has gradually started to attract international patients not only from neighboring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh but also from far-off countries, especially African nations. The domestic patients from other North Eastern states had already started flocking to Guwahati from a decade back. From a place of primary healthcare centers, dispensaries and clinics, the city has now expanded itself into a hub of critical care, multi-specialty and super-specialty centers. Health sector experts attribute this emerging trend to low-cost treatment, quality healthcare infrastructure and availability of skilled doctors.

5.13.2 With many super-specialty hospitals in Government and private sector, Guwahati is fast becoming a preferred destination for domestic and foreign patients. In this new scenario, the State can look forward to a steady flow of international patients.

5.13.3 State can inject a dose of conventional transit tourism to a patient's itinerary by taking the patients and escorts in and around Guwahati for a day or two. Tourism department will tie-up with such hospitals travel desks and lure these medical tourists to the city tour packages run by ATDC and private tour operators.

#### **5.14 Mining Tourism**

5.14.1 The history of coal mining in the region of Assam dates back to the later part of the 19th century by the erstwhile Assam Railway and Trading Company (AR&T). Many countries including the Switzerland, US, Chile, Brazil, have mining tourism, which is quite popular amongst the tourists. Assam will also develop Mine Tourism in the eastern Coal fields and oil fields of the State.

#### **5.15 Promotion of Film Tourism**

5.15.1 Single Window Clearance System to film makers, serial producers, documentary makers etc shall be ensured through Tourism website to facilitate fast track clearance of all required approvals/ permissions for film shooting in Assam.

5.15.2 Assam shall motivate reputed filmmakers of Hindi and other regional languages for film shooting in Assam. A special incentive package in the form subsidies shall be provided.

5.15.3 Assam Tourism shall organize Regional, National and International Film festivals in suitable Tourist destinations to promote Film Tourism.

5.15.4 Assam tourism shall also invite Cine awards and Tele-Serial awards to Assam by giving financial and tax incentives.

#### **5.16 Identification of tourist destinations /spots and circuits.**

5.16.1 For each individual category of tourism such as Nature & Wildlife, Spiritual, Tea & Golf, Eco, Ethnic, Monsoon, Adventure etc different Tourist destinations and tourist circuits shall be identified. For example, Jatinga valley and Majuli can be destinations for Ethnic Tourism.

5.16.2 Once the sites and circuits are so identified and categorized, phase wise planned development will be drawn up. The funding will be arranged primarily from State Annual budget, Centrally Sponsored Schemes and externally aided projects for bigger projects. Panchayat funds can be used

for local development of areas having community involvement.

## **5.17 Development of Tourism infrastructure.**

- 5.17.1 A tourist is central to entire scheme of Tourism activities. A tourism destination must deliver quality service, environment and customer satisfaction to a tourist. Our endeavor should be to deliver a feel good experience to all categories of tourists which can be achieved only by providing quality basic amenities at the destinations. This shall include services in hotels, restaurants, places of interests, up-keep and maintenance.
- 5.17.2 Keeping above in view, the major infrastructure deficit at identified destinations shall be attended on a priority basis. Since multiple line departments such as local municipalities, Public Health Engineering, PWD, Water-supply, Electricity and Waste management will be involved, the Tourism Development Mission will co-ordinate all the matters among various segments of Tourism Sector and for development and promotion of tourism in the State.
- 5.17.3 To enable the Tourism Department to conceive new projects as per requirement at various tourist sites, a Task force on Infrastructure development with MD., ATDC as Chairman shall be formed taking members from Tourism Industry and representatives of other line Departments.
- 5.17.4 A District Level Tourism Committee under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner of district shall work to ensure co-ordination among the working executives of line departments and also look after community involvement.
- 5.17.5 The Tourism Department will depend on the local self-government such as Panchayat or Town Committees/Municipalities in ensuring day to day upkeep and maintenance, cleanliness and hygiene, promotion of local cuisines, culture & handicrafts in Tourist localities. The department shall form a Local Management Committee (LMC) with Panchayat members, Local NGO's, Self-help groups, local stakeholders and Tourist Wardens.
- 5.17.6 New amenities to be developed at various tourism destinations shall go through rigorous process of site selection, sustainability & local architecture. Public /Private Partnership shall be encouraged wherever feasible.

## **5.18 Community involvement in Tourism**

- 5.18.1 Participation and the acceptance of local community is the key to make Tourism a success. Tourism development at any destination should first benefit the local community in terms of economic and social gains. The

economic objective of Tourism industry is basically generating employment opportunities for the local population. Increased incomes will help local people to enjoy better standard of life which will have an enabling effect on the community to live in harmony with their surroundings.

- 5.18.2 The Department will run awareness programmes on Responsible Tourism among the populace living in the vicinity with help of Local Management Committees.
- 5.18.3 The Department will also facilitate Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) through IIE and Employment Generation Mission (EGM) to develop local entrepreneurs.
- 5.18.4 The department shall do a mapping of Local Handicrafts, Art work etc which are fast disappearing and would like to restore and promote among the new generation artisans as such preventing its extinction.
- 5.18.5 In respect of general ambience around Touristic properties and in picnic spots, the day to day management such as cleanliness, hygiene, maintenance, waste management, pollution of water-bodies and monitoring of pay and use toilets, safety and security of Tourists in the locality shall all come under the purview of Local Management Committees (LMC). The Committee will be headed by local panchayat President/ Ward Councilor etc as it will have to coordinate with many Govt Departments, Service providers and Private Operators. Tourist Wardens and other local members will be drawn from stake holders. The committee shall mobilize “Local Volunteers” from among the student community/stake holders.
- 5.18.6 Tourist Information Officers (TIOs) and Assistant Tourist Information Officers (ATIO’s) shall be appropriately re-designated and will be given special responsibilities and powers to act as Tourist Warden.

## **5.19 Skill Development**

- 5.19.1 There is a large gap between demand and supply of skilled manpower in the tourism sector. A detailed study on HRD in tourism sector in Assam is required to highlight the education system in travel, tourism and hospitality.  
Attempts would be made to facilitate common standards, uniformity and harmony in curriculum, faculty qualification and education delivery. •  
Attempts would be directed towards making the hospitality and tourism sector a popular career option by providing skills that can bring attractive wage offers.
- 5.19.2 Local youths including women, differently-abled and Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe category shall be trained in skill development courses. The training will be imparted in tourism, adventure, food processing, bakery,

beautician courses, tailoring, gardening, plumbing, electrician, driving, tourist guides, life guards, security guards, Computer Operators, booking, ticketing, marketing, front desk management and Hospitality through recognized Management Institutes including IIE, IIHM, IHM, Food Craft Institutes, DDU-Grammen Kaushalya Yojana scheme, Employment Guarantee Mission, Hunar se Rozgaar Tak etc.

5.19.3 Tourism Department shall give financial assistance in the form of reimbursement of course fees for the selected courses upto 100%. The criteria for selection and financial assistance will be decided by the Government.

5.19.4 Trained Tourist Guides hailing from the local area shall be provided a monthly stipend from Director, Tourism. Department will formulate detailed criteria and guidelines.

## 5.20 **Local Transport Improvement**

5.20.1 Transport from airport, railway stations, bus stations or any other point of disembarkation upto the tourist destination and between the destinations is the most crucial factor from tourist point of view.

5.20.2 Safe, secure and reliable Transport Services are of outmost importance. Pre-paid and meter taxi services to the destinations shall be regulated through transport department. The taxis may carry the logo of tourism department once all standards and certifications are made.

5.20.3 Certification process for tourist drivers shall be made mandatory. The drivers, handymen shall be trained to behave appropriately with tourists and can also work as tourist guides. Special training programme for the drivers in the Airport must be organized on a regular basis.

5.20.4 Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) will also be persuaded to ply AC/ Non AC good conditioned buses between tourist destinations.

5.20.5 Government shall promote investment in transport services to places which are difficult to access like riverine islands (Majuli), hillocks, and hills. Such services could be river taxis, helicopters, hovercrafts, ropeways etc.

## 5.21 **Development of Wayside amenities.**

5.21.1 Development of modern wayside amenities with public conveniences at interval of about 40 kms in major roads and also at the tourist destinations is the need of the hour. These facilities should consist of food joints with local /ethnic /continental cuisines, grocery shop, medical stores, coffee shops, play area for children and good, clean lavatories etc. This would be developed in PPP mode with incentive to the entrepreneurs.

- 5.21.2 In addition, the Department shall also ensure that wash room facilities are available on pay & use basis at each tourist destinations and maintained by local committee. Zero tolerance policy on cleanliness of toilets will be implemented. Fines and cancellation of licenses of the business establishments for not maintaining cleanliness will be imposed as penalty.
- 5.21.3 Further each petrol pumps on major roads leading to popular tourist destinations will be compulsorily required to provide basic wayside facility (toilets, tourist maps display of tourist emergency helpline No), for tourists.
- 5.21.4 Development and maintenance of Signages and Road-Maps throughout Assam will be taken up on priority.
- 5.21.5 Swachh Bharat Mission guidelines will be enforced by the local management committee to maintain absolute cleanliness at all tourist sites and destinations.

## **5.22 Audit of quality of Destinations:**

- 5.22.1 Feedback from the tourist about their experience is very important as it can help to understand the customer satisfaction about the facilities and quality of services. The feedback will also write suggestions from the tourists to understand the points of further improvement of tourist destinations and spots. Tourism Department with the help of its field staff or other independent agencies will conduct feedback surveys at major tourist spots and destinations periodically. Based on the information collected through feedback service, the department shall take corrective steps to address the concerns of tourists and visitors at various levels such as by local maintenance committee, District Tourism Management Committee or State level Task force on infrastructure development.

## **5.23 Managing Resources for Tourism:**

- 5.23.1 Wildlife Tourism is the most important component of our State. Assam is known worldwide among domestic and International tourists for its bio-diversity and wildlife. It is imperative that the tourism Department is totally dependent on Forest and Environment Department for Wildlife Tourism. Hence, Tourism Department will take steps to augment eco-friendly initiatives of Forest Department to provide Tourists a wholesome experience while earning revenues with involvement of local community.
- 5.23.2 The success of Spiritual tourism centered on Kamakhya Temple, Ambubashi Mela, Hajo, Siva Doul in Sivasagar etc depends upon the involvement of local Self Government Boards. Hence, Tourism Department will work in tandem with the local bodies and other departments to increase tourist experience at the local level.

- 5.23.3 Adventure Tourism is linked with the Sports Department. Tourism Department will work in close co-ordination with the Adventure Institute of Sports Department to improve Tourist facilities and existing resources.
- 5.23.4 Assam has beautiful water bodies locally called beels which have been used for tourism activities in and around it. In Assam many of the inland wetlands such as Deepor Beel, Chandubi, Samaguri Beel, Sivasagar tank etc are all ecologically vulnerable and need preservation along with promotion of Tourism to generate revenues. Tourist activities such as boating, angling and eco-camping in and around these water bodies will continue to be promoted by Tourism Department in close co-ordination with Fishing Department & local Entrepreneurs. Steps will be taken to prevent (a) garbage dumping (b) permanent constructions on the fringe (c) use of plastics (d) use of coloured plastic boats (e) pollution. Simultaneously eco-friendly measures will be adopted to preserve the beauty and aesthetic value of the lakes.
- 5.23.5 Tourism Department will set standards for homestays, Bed and Breakfast accommodation; houses on stilts for tourist, Souvenirs Shops in the destination etc.
- 5.23.6 Department will persuade local Self Governments to construct local haats for promotion of handicrafts, Souvenirs of local cuisines at prominent tourist destinations.
- 5.23.7 To ensure uninterrupted electricity supply at tourist destinations, coordination with Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) will be taken up.
- 5.24 Tourist centric approach.**
- 5.24.1 A 24x7 centralized Tourist Helpline Number shall be activated for tourist information, safety and security in multiple languages. This helpline number will be displayed prominently in all Tourists spots and also on the way side amenities.
- 5.24.2 Home Department will be persuaded to set up tourist Police Stations and Tourist Police patrolling at important tourist destinations.
- 5.24.3 All tourist places, Taxi stands, Bus Stations, Railway stations, Restaurants, Shops, Parlours frequented by tourist shall be asked to install CCTV compulsorily by the local police.
- 5.24.4 Tourist Wardens will be appointed in Tourist destinations to ensure safety and security of the tourist. The mobile numbers of Tourist Wardens shall be displayed along with the tourist helpline numbers in their respective jurisdiction.

- 5.24.5 Event based experiential Tourism will be promoted around fairs and festivals of Assam.
- 5.24.6 Interactive website along with Social media shall be the backbone of modern and tech-savvy travellers who will have all necessary information on their smartphones.
- 5.24.7 Special emphasis will be laid on access for differently abled, infirm & aged visitors by using ramps, escalators and special guide assistance.

## **5.25 Enhancing local experience of tourist.**

- 5.25.1 It is well known that a good experience of a tourist will get converted into higher footfalls of tourists and repeat visits. It is utmost important to give the tourist a fairy tale experience during his/her stay in Assam. A tourist's experience can be enhanced manifold if there are facilities to give him a feel of local culture, a taste of local cuisines, easily available local souvenirs and handicrafts. Like many other States, Assam shall develop some local traditional Dress shoot points. The traditional dress and jewelry shall be on hire which will generate revenue for local people.
- 5.25.2 Assam is known for its unique culture, climate and cuisines, hospitable people which is quite different from rest of India. This uniqueness can be reiterated by the service providers for the domestic tourists. Tour Operators Association, Assam (TOAA) shall be involved to develop modules and their members participate in such trainings and workshops.
- 5.25.3 Department will encourage the Hoteliers and Restaurateurs to provide local cuisines to be served in traditional styles. Department shall support and persuade Hotel Management institute (IIHM), Six mile, upcoming IHM, Jorhat and Food Craft Institute at Samaguri to start variety of culinary course in authentic traditional dishes. Local youths shall be trained as Chefs and cooks.
- 5.25.4 Local Souvenirs and Handicrafts play an important role not only for promotion of Tourism by word of mouth but also add to revenue generation and local employment. The Tourism department will encourage ARTFED, JAGARAN, and other local self -help groups of Artisans to open Souvenir and Handicraft shops at all prominent destinations. Panchayat and Local Bodies shall allow spaces at concessional rates to the Artisans to open these out-lets.
- 5.25.5 Local Management Committees shall be asked to organize cultural troupes from the neighboring villages to showcase folk culture in hotels, resorts, public places. Cultural Department in collaboration with tourism department shall mobilize cultural troupes to stage weekend shows in selected locations in tourist destinations. Local musical institutes shall be roped in for the purpose. This shall not only enhance a tourist's local experience but also be a regular source of income to the artists.

5.25.6 For children and young tourists, joy rides on elephant back, horse riding, tonga rides, puppet shows, magic shows may be encouraged by liaisoning with local management committees.

## **5.26 Promotion of Environment Friendly Practices.**

5.26.1 In order to save water bodies from encroachment and pollution, the Government has recently passed the Guwahati Water bodies (Preservation and Conservation) Act 2008. The Government shall ensure strict enforcement of the provisions of this act to make water bodies of tourist importance such as Deepor beel and Charan beel free from nuisance.

5.26.2 Department will ban the use of disposable plastic bags, plastics cups, plates etc completely at Tourist places. Shopkeepers will be sensitized through local Volunteers of the Local Management Committees to use ecofriendly items such as paper bags and earthen wares.

## **5.27 Sanitation & Cleanliness**

5.27.1 Local Management Committees shall ensure proper placement of public dust bins and private dust bins in shops and business establishments. Fines shall be imposed as penalty.

5.27.2 Tourist places will have pay & use clean toilets at all required places. The Local Management committees will out- source these facilities.

5.27.3 Bio-toilets from government fund will be installed at places where regular toilets are not possible.

5.27.4 Road Side Eateries at tourist spots in Assam are poor in hygiene. Therefore a minimum standard of cleanliness and hygiene will be set by providing a code/ rules backed by law for proper enforcement.

## **5.28 Tourism goes hand in hand with Ease of Doing Business.**

5.28.1 To encourage Private Sector investment in tourism related projects, a web based online single window application will be set up in co-ordination with other departments to enable fast, transparent and easy approvals.

5.28.2 A single window clearance system will be developed to facilitate fast track clearance of all required approvals/permission for film shooting in Assam.

## **5.29 Ownership and Proactive role of State Government/Tourism Department.**

5.29.1 The Tourism Department shall not only facilitate tourism promotion but take full onus and pro-actively participate in matters like Brand Building, Publicity campaign, IT initiatives, market research, destination development, promotion of fairs and festivals, skill development and income generation of the people.

5.29.2 Budget provisions shall be reasonably enhanced for the tourism sector.

**5.30 Active collaboration with Central Govt and proper implementation of Central Schemes.**

5.30.1 Tourism Development needs multispectral and multi-pronged approach. Hence Tourism Department shall actively collaborate with Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Skill Development, Ministry of External Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce, NITI Ayog, Archeological Survey of India and other ministries.

**5.31 Public Private Participation (PPP) in Tourism**

5.31.1 Existing tourism infrastructure manned by ATDC/Assam Tourism shall be given to Private sector for operation and management. The unviable options shall be closed.

5.31.2 Wayside Amenities such as Information Kiosks, Souvenir Shops, Public toilets, dhabas on tourism routes and at tourism destinations shall be developed in PPP mode.

5.31.3 Bed & Breakfast and Homestay owners shall be encouraged to use the Tourism Website portal which will lend them authenticity and enhance their bookings.

5.31.4 Development of River Cruise, On-shore infrastructure on Brahmaputra, Golf Course-cum-Resort and Convention Centre.

5.31.5 To capture the vibrant spirit of Assam and to ensure perfect ethnic experience, miniature village concept on the lines of “Chokhi Dhani” in Rajasthan wherein all traditional culture, art , crafts, food, gifts, souvenirs, folk songs and dances will be developed in places like Sonapur & Kaziranga. Government will identify suitable piece of land and develop such mega projects in PPP mode.

**5.32 Standardization and Certification**

5.32.1 To promote sustainable development of the tourism industry and to prevent unplanned mushroom growth of tourism related activities, the State Government will put in place a regulatory mechanism.

5.32.2 Government will formulate a compulsory system of certification of the services in tourism. The regulations will lay down standards for various services and government facilities and incentives will be extended only to those who fulfill the norms. The accredited hotels, restaurants, road-side eateries, souvenir shops, handicraft shops, taxis, buses will be allowed to use the logo of Assam Tourism on payment of royalty.

### **5.33 Tourist Wardens at Tourist Destinations**

5.33.1 Several instances are noticed when the Domestic or Foreign Tourists are cheated, fleeced, harassed or misbehaved by the local service providers. In order to prevent such incidents, Assistant Tourist Information Officers and Tourist Information Officers shall also be entrusted with special powers to act as Tourist Wardens of tourist destinations.

5.33.2 Tourist Wardens shall be in constant touch with the local administration local police and tourist police. He will also be responsible to immediately address Tourist grievances and complaints under his jurisdiction.

5.33.3 Tourist Wardens will also conduct awareness programmes from time to time among the local community in maintaining the destination hassle-free.

5.33.4 Tourist Warden's mobile number shall be prominently displayed in tourist spots as Tourist assistance no along with toll free helpline numbers. A fixed amount as monthly reimbursement shall be paid to them including POL.

### **5.34 Annual Excellence Awards**

5.34.1 To recognize and encourage excellence in tourism services and tourism products in the state, Tourism department shall institute annual Excellence Awards for the following categories-

- Best Entrepreneur
- Best woman entrepreneur
- Best start up
- Best innovative tourism project
- Best ethnic cuisine maker Award
- Best maintained Tourism Asset Award
- Best maintained wayside amenity Award
- Cleanest Tourist Destination Award
- Cleanest Roadside eatery
- Best ICT enabled Tourism Project
- Best Tourist Warden Award
- Best LMC Award
- Best Tourist Guide Award
- Best tour operators award
- Best tourism photo-journalist Award

- Best Travel Agency Award
- Best Souvenir Shop Award
- Best Tourism Volunteers Award.

5.34.2 The Department will come out with detailed guidelines for selection of awardees.

### **5.35 ICT Measures in Tourism**

5.35.1 The Govt shall promote ICT enabled technologies through mobile applications, social networking sites, tourism blogs and virtual tourism under Digital India Programme.

5.35.2 Major Tourist destinations will be equipped with CCTV cameras, wi-fi services and mobile based services to ensure tourist safety and security as of paramount importance.

### **5.36 Exemption of Tourism Sector from Bandhs/ Strikes**

5.36.1 Assam has an unpleasant history of bandh culture which has always been affecting the tourism sector adversely. Tourism Department will initiate discussions with all political parties and unions to exempt tourism sectors from bandhs. Stringent measures to be taken by the district administration in this regard to ensure free movement of tourists.

### **5.37 Connecting Highways to South East Asian Nations**

5.37.1 In tune with ACT EAST policy of the Government of India and to exploit fully the opportunities for tourism expansion opened up by the Trans-Asian Highway, particular attention will be given to connect the destinations by good all weather road links from this highway. The road connectivity of the North-West of South East Asia (i.e. Assam) to South-East Asian countries via Myanmar and Thailand to Singapore, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam will open floodgate for the tourists from these countries.

5.37.2 A direct flight from Tokyo-Seoul-Beijing-Guwahati shall be enough to bring loads of tourists from Japan, South Korea and China.

## **6. Incentives:**

6.1 Tourism shall be accorded industry status in Assam and all facilities & incentives applicable to Industries shall be available to Tourism Industry.

6.2 The scheme for providing financial assistance/contributions as subsidy/seed money to unemployed youths of Assam by ATDC will continue. The provisions under this scheme to purchase tourist vehicles or setting up

tourism projects shall be revised.

- 6.3 Financial grant to Hindi Cinema makers to the tune of Rs 1 crore per film if more than 50 percent of it is shot in the state. If the film storyline is based on Assam's culture, tourism and heritage as central theme additional Rs 25 Lakhs grant will be given. Another Rs 10 lakhs grant will be given if the post-production work is also done in Assam. For regional film-makers, the grants shall be admissible at the rate of 25% of the Hindi cinema makers.
- 6.4 Grant-in-Aid to Private Entrepreneurs, Societies and NGOs etc for organizing Fairs & Festivals shall be given.
- 6.5 A policy shall be made to pay stipend / remuneration to empanelled Tourist Guides on regular basis so that more people take it up as a profession. They shall be trained free of cost and licensed on basis of training assessment.
- 6.6 Free Counseling at Tourism Incubation Centre at ATDC for promotion of tourist business and entrepreneurship.
- 6.7 Fees Reimbursement to trainees for selected hospitality courses.
- 6.8 Free Entrepreneurship Development Programmes to beneficiaries of Government subsidized schemes and others.
- 6.9 Residential Electricity rates for Bed & Breakfast and Homestay schemes

#### **6.10 Subsidies**

- 6.10.1 The Government of Assam shall take up with Government of India to revive the now suspended North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP) 2007 or put in place any other similar scheme immediately so that the service sector including hotels (Two star and above category), Adventure and leisure sports, ropeways training institutes for Hotel management and Food Crafts are able to avail benefits under this policy. The benefits in terms of income tax exemption, Capital investment subsidy, interest subsidy and comprehensive insurance are too attractive for the private investors.
- 6.10.2 In addition to above, the State Govt proposes to provide the following incentives to units in the Tourism sector.
- (i) For new units with minimum investment of Rs 50 Lakhs in the notified Tourist locations, reimbursement of VAT upto 25% of tax paid during the financial year subject to a ceiling of Rs 20 Lakhs annually. (New units include river cruise, transportation services, any tourism product to be

considered as such by the Government).

(ii) For new hotels with minimum investment of Rs 50 Lakhs in the notified Tourist locations, reimbursement of luxury tax upto 25% of the tax paid during financial year subject to ceiling of Rs 20 Lakhs.

(iii) A capital investment subsidy at the rate of 30% of capital investment subject to a ceiling of Rs 1 crore shall be available for Tourist lodges, Hotels, Resorts, Houseboats and Floating Restaurants below two star categories and located in tourism areas.

(iv) 25% of the cost payable to Assam State Power Distribution Company Ltd (APDCL) for drawal of power line to the eligible units including the cost of transformer subject to a ceiling of Rs 10 lakhs

(v) 75% of the cost of construction of approach road to the premises of eligible units shall be reimbursed in the form of a subsidy subject to a ceiling of Rs 10 lakhs.

(vi) Private Sector will be encouraged to proactively participate and invest in tourist places in the Tourism Sector. A special incentive will be offered as additional 10% capital grant upto Rs.25 lakhs for investment in remote/potential tourist destination of Assam.

(vii) Amusement & Entertainment tax will be exempted for River Cruise tourism products

(viii) Alternate power generation charges to be paid to APDCL (power generation by Diesel Generator sets of 15 KVA and above) shall be exempted for tourist resorts in notified areas and river cruise vessels.

(xi) For private properties in Tourism sector, both existing and new, 25% of investment on renewal sources of energy will be reimbursed subject to maximum of Rs 10 lakhs.

## **7. Implementation Tools:**

7.1 For implementation of the above policy, Government can institute any of the mechanisms as follows. It can also institute any other appropriate mechanism as and when necessary.

- (i) Free Counseling Centre at ATDC for tourism related business.
- (ii) Inter-Departmental Tourism co-ordination committee.
- (iii) Task Force for Destination Infrastructure.
- (iv) Inter departmental Film Tourism Committee.
- (v) State Level Assam Tourism Council

- (vi) District Level Tourism Management Committee
- (vii) Local Management Committees (LMC) for tourism
- (viii) Tourist Wardens