

## **The Arunachal Times**

### **Enhancing tourism in Arunachal will create many jobs**

Arunachal Pradesh has the potential to be a major tourist destination. There are many pristine and exotic destinations which can captivate both national and international tourists. If planned and developed properly, Arunachal has the potential to compete with Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim as the preferred tourist destination.

Picturesque Mechuka, scenic Ziro valley, lovely landscape of Bomdila, Dirang, Tawang...snow laden Mayudia...Namdapha Sanctuary are all endowed with natural beauty. Tourists can explore the thrill of white water rafting and angling on the Siang, Subansiri, Dibang, Kameng and Lohit rivers and its tributaries. Travellers could also experience the rejuvenating mountain trekking in the virgin areas of Pemako.

There are other important historical sites like 14th century Malinithan, the medieval Ita Fort, Parsuram Kund of Mahabharat era where Parsuram washed away his sins, the land of Bhismaknagar and the beautiful Rukmini who was whisked away in marriage by Lord Krishna, the 400 years old second largest monastery of the Buddhists.

A typical package for a tourist could include sightseeing, adventure sports, river rafting/ angling, trekking, visit to tribal house/village, tribal dance with bonfire etc. Even golf tourism could be explored.

Increase in tourism will create many jobs in fields directly related to tourism like hotels, restaurants, transportation, adventure sports etc. There would be many more jobs created in forward and backward linkages. In addition, the state would also earn revenue.

The major obstacle to development of tourism in Arunachal is the dilapidated infrastructure. As per Arunachal Pradesh official website there are 12 Tourist Circuits. The roads along all these 12 circuits are in bad condition. Except for few, these dilapidated roads are not new roads. Roads to Bomdila/ Tawang, Aalo, Yingkiong/ Tuting, Roing/ Mayudia/ Anini have been in existence/ under repair/ construction for many decades now. After travelling for 10-16 hrs on potholed, narrow, mountainous, winding roads, a tourist would be left with no energy and enthusiasm to explore the place. Railways connect only two towns in Arunachal. There are no operational airports in the state. Due to the lack

of railways and airports, tourists have no choice but to travel by these bad roads.

There are inadequate numbers of hotels, restaurants and resorts in these places. The existing ones are also of poor standard. There is frequent failure of electricity leading to lack of geysers, internet, air conditioners etc. There is a general lack of tourist guides, maps of the area, souvenir shops, vehicle repair facilities, ATMs etc.

The way forward is to ensure all weather roads to these exotic tourist destinations like Bomdila/ Tawang, Aalo/ Mechuka, Pasighat/ Yingkiong/ Tuting, Roing/ Mayudia/ Anini etc. The other step is to quickly operationalise the ALGs at Pasighat, Aalo, Mechuka, Tezu and the Heliport at Tawang for operations by medium size civil aircraft. Once the tourists start flowing in, automatically supporting infrastructure like hotels, restaurants, resorts will come up.

To ease the inner line woes for tourists, like being done for Visas in many countries, inner line permits and protected area permits should be made available on arrival at all the entry points of these identified 12 Tourist Circuits.

Like hydro power, tourism has the potential to transform the image and economic status of Arunachal Pradesh. With proper planning, push for infrastructure and a little vision, could we hope to see a boom in the tourism sector?