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PART I—Orders and Notifications by the Governor of West Bengal, the High Court, Government Treasury, etc.

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**Tourism Department**  
**Block- 'A', 3rd floor, N.S. Building,**  
**1, Kiran Sankar Roy Road, Kolkata - 700 001**

NO. 127-TW/ST-179/2015

Dated, Kolkata : 03rd February, 2016

**NOTIFICATION**

WHEREAS, the Governor is of the opinion that it is necessary and expedient to introduce a Tourism policy for holistic development of Tourism in the State;

NOW, THEREFORE, in supersession of all the previous policies in respect of development and promotion of Tourism in the state, the Governor is pleased to approve a new Tourism Policy as under;

1. Short Title

The policy may be called "West Bengal Tourism Policy-2016"

2. Commencement and Duration:

Unless specifically mentioned, it shall come into effect on and from 03<sup>rd</sup> February, 2016, in the whole of West Bengal and shall remain valid till further notification in this regard.

## West Bengal Tourism Policy - 2016

### Introduction :

West Bengal offers a remarkable range of destinations and experiences within a single state. It is a land of contrasts –in climate, vegetation, scenery, and landscape and has a rich diversity of ethnicity, culture, languages and religion. It is a truly unique state because it stretches all the way from the seas to the Himalayas. It has always been a traveller's delight as there are fantastic trips set around the misty and romantic hill stations of Kalimpong and Mirik, diverse wildlife and verdant teagardens of the Dooars, historical monuments and temples of Murshidabad and Bishnupur, wide and splendid beaches of Digha and Mandarmoni and the lush forested islands and meandering rivers of Sunderbans- destinations that are great revelations. One of the culturally richest state in India, it is the home of the Nobel laureates Rabindranath Tagore and Amartya Sen. West Bengal can also take pride in being the birthplaces of the some of the distinguished personalities who are known the world over like Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prasanta mahalanobish, Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramhansa and work places of social reformers and humanists like Sister Nivedita and Mother Teresa. The state has immense tourism potential and this is also reflected in the increase in the tourist footfall over the last few years. This necessitates the formulation of a holistic tourism policy that will focus the key areas of development and the lay down the road map to implement the policy.

### Vision of the Policy

The vision of the Policy is not only to capture a fair share, if not lion share, of Policy domestic and international tourist footfall in the country but also to attain the status of being the most preferred tourist destination in India. For that the three A's on which tourism stands namely-Accessibility, Amenities and Advertising are not only to be properly addressed but a tourism enabling environment is to be created through active involvement of community in general and tourism stakeholders in particulars, which will encourage private players to invest in the sector. This will have a positive impact on tourist footfall, which in turn will give a boost to tourism economy through generation of new livelihood options and employment opportunities.

### Action Plan

In order to achieve the prime objectives of (i) Capturing the fair share of domestic and international tourists and (ii) taking a lead in sustainable development over the next five years, the following plan of action may be adopted.

#### 1. Capturing the Fair Share :

- a) Tourist Arrival – To achieve a growth rate in excess of 10% year to year over the next five years;
- b) Investment – To increase the availability of branded hotel accommodation room in West Bengal to 10,000 by 2020. Also investment will be encouraged in different segments of tourism like wellness tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism and emerging areas like MICE tourism.
- c) Identification of new tourist destinations – New destinations are to be identified with backward and forward linkages and develop these into proper tourism products
- d) Marketing -Greater emphasis on brand building of West Bengal tourism with the new logo and repositioning it effectively in the domestic and international market through a 360 degree promotional campaign.

#### 2. Lead in Sustainable Development :

The Government of West Bengal will aim at making tourism more sustainable and shall respect and abide by the basic tenets of Environment, Social and Economic sustainability.

- a) **Economic Sustainability** – Various strategies will be adopted for optimal use of existing resources to achieve a responsible and beneficial balance in the long term.
- b) **Environment Sustainability**- Emphasis will be on conservation and management of natural resources. Actions are to be taken to minimize air, land and water pollution and preserve bio-diversity and natural heritage through afforestation and preventing indiscriminate felling of trees. Tourism Department will promote eco friendly tourism activities in the state with the support of tourism stakeholders and the local community
- c) **Social Sustainability** – Tourism will be developed through community engagement, generation of local livelihood options and by increasing the quality of employment. Social sustainability is reflected in safety and standards to be maintained around the tourism destinations.

### Implementation of Policy

For proper implementation of the plan, emphasis should be on the following nine strategic areas :

- i) Development of Primary Tourism Circuits through identification of new destinations and backward and forward linkages with the well known hotspots
- ii) Development of Primary Tourism Products through infrastructural support , branding, publicity and involvement of tourism stakeholders
- iii) Development of Tourism Infrastructure as well as basic infrastructure such as roads, drinking water, power hygiene, transport and solid waste management and accommodation facilities
- iv) Development of Annual Event Calendar as a medium to show case tourism spot lights.
- v) Formulation of a separate policy for Home stay tourism, whereby both tourists, owners and the locals can benefit.
- vi) Identification of Incentives for attracting tourists.
- vii) Promotion of West Bengal Tourism in the domestic and the international market through a 360 degree media campaign.
- viii) Development of MICE Industry Comprising Meeting, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibition commonly known as business tourism.
- (ix) Facilitation of PPP model for attracting investment in tourism sector

### Primary Tourist Circuit

West Bengal is probably the only state in India that can provide extremes in experiences, from the snow capped peaks of Himalayas to the unique mangrove eco system of the Sunderbans, historical monuments of Murshidabad to the exquisite terracotta work on the temples of Bishnupur, lush green forests and wild life of the Dooars to the serene and pleasant beaches of Digha and Bakkhali, glimpses of colonial architecture in the trade settlements along the river Ganges and to top it all Kolkata , the megacity, a blend of tradition and modernity. Keeping in view the geographical diversity of the state, 6( six) primary tourist circuits have been identified which are as follows:

- 1) Darjeeling Himalayas
- 2) Dooars foothills
- 3) Bengal Heritage
- 4) Coastal Bengal
- 5) Kolkata
- 6) Sundarbans Mangrove

### Primary Tourism Products :

Emphasis should be on developing the following primary tourism products through setting up the required infrastructure and amenities and generating the demand by identifying the right market and target group and undertaking widespread publicity and promotional measures

1. Nature & Wild Life
2. History & Heritage Tourism
3. Eco and rural tourism
4. Sports, adventure and activity tourism
5. Cruise tourism
6. Plantation tourism
7. Business and MICE tourism

### Infrastructure Development :

West Bengal, its natural diversity, rich heritage & culture, culinary variety and and above all the charm of Kolkata draws a substantial number of tourists through out the year. However accessibility and infrastructure sometimes tend to be major impediments for a hassle free experience. To overcome this problem, focus will be on providing complete infrastructural support at the 6( six) identified Primary Tourist Circuits.

- i. Road connectivity: Improved accessibility including last mile connectivity is a pre-requisite for development of a tourist destination. This facilitates a hassle free and smooth travel to the nearby tourist destinations during short holidays and weekends. The Government shall, therefore ensure that 6( six) identified Primary Tourist Circuits are easily accessible from the nearest airports and the railheads.
- ii. Wayside amenities: To facilitate a smooth and hassle free journey by road , wayside facilities will be developed along the major thoroughfares connecting the important and most frequented tourist destinations of the state.
- iii. Electricity: Uninterruptible power supply without any voltage dips is to be ensured at the tourist destinations
- iv. Waste Disposal System: Promotion of sustainable tourism implies existence of a waste management infrastructure. Sustainable solid waste management principles of equity, effectiveness and efficiency are to be put in practice. The hotel managements of the tourist places are to be convinced about the improved solid waste management to ensure cleanliness. Local authorities be it in rural or urban areas have to play a key role in putting a sound and effective waste management system in practice.
- v. Tourist Reception/Facilitation Centre: Initiative is to be taken to set up TRC/TFC at important points of contact with the tourists like airports, major railway stations and at some important tourist destinations. These centres will provide tourism related information to the visitors..

### Annual Event Calendar

The Department will develop an annual calendar as a medium to showcase Calendar activities that can result in increased tourist footfall in the state. The following Annual events will be highlighted and promoted in the domestic and the International circuit

- 1) IPL – IPL is a yearly pan Indian cricket tournament and Kolkata Knight Riders, associated with the city of Kolkata, can act as the focal point over which tourism can be promoted. Tourism Department can utilize the brand of KKR to popularize Kolkata as a tourist destination.
- 2) ISL – The state has recently entered the Indian Super League with its very own team which is ‘Atletico De Kolkata’. Similar to the IPL, the ISL can be used as a platform to highlight the city of Kolkata, which is known the world over for it’s passion for football.
- 3) Durga Puja – A major event that is synonymous with Bengal, Durga Puja has a strong cultural appeal and evokes nostalgia among the Bengali NRI’s. The festival has immense tourism potential is to be promoted as the must visit festival during autumn.
- 4) Kolkata Christmas Festival on Park Street – An annual event held during the last two weeks of December at Park street & Allen Park has the potential to emerge as the winter carnival with music, food, and lights. Focus would be on to braodbase the festival through forward and backward integration with the other tourism stakeholders like aviation industry, hotel industry and travel/tour industry.
- 5) Ganga Sagar Mela- Considered the next biggest religious mela after Kumbh , this festival draws large number of pilgrims from across the country in the second week of January, during ‘Makar Sankranti’. It will be the endeavour of the Government to promote Gangasagar mela by devising attractive packages and also promote Sagar Island as a beach destination for year round visit.
- 6) Any other stand alone event that may be developed in consultation with the tourism stakeholders and marketed efficiently , keeping in consideration the cultural traditions of the state and emerging trends in the tourism industry

### Home Stay Tourism

The concept of Homestay tourism is gradually becoming popular among the tourists, who want to have an authentic experience of local culture, cuisine and hospitality. Defined as tourism where the tourist stays at the homes of the locals, it allows the traveler not just to see the destination but to actually feel and live it. Homestays involve relationships between the tourists and the owner of the house, which both of them cherish.

For conservation of natural resources and environment, maintenance of heritage structures and monuments and to ensure safety and security of the tourists and delivery of quality services, certain regulations and guidelines should be in place . An unregulated homestay operation can lead to security, quality and pricing issues for the end users which can have severe negative repercussions for all Homestay operators and also the state of West Bengal. The Tourism Department shall therefore, formulate a comprehensive Home Stay policy taking all the aspects of ownership. scale, size , registration. promotion and booking facility etc.

**Incentives to Tourism units:**

West Bengal Tourism Department has incorporated few changes to the existing West Bengal Incentive Scheme, 2008, keeping in consideration the changing scenario of the tourism sector and the new scheme West Bengal Incentive scheme, 2015 has come into force from 7th January, 2015.

**Eligible Tourism Project/Units :** The following Tourism projects should be eligible for incentives under the policy provided they have not applied or taken the benefit of similar incentives under any other policy/scheme of the State Government :

- Hotels of star categories
- Hotels graded by State Government
- Heritage Hotels, Resorts, Health Farms and Health & Wellness spa
- Wayside and public amenities at tourist sites
- Theme based Entertainment centre, Amusement Park, Aquarium, Aqua Park
- Art and Craft Villages, Craft and souvenir shops at tourist sites excluding manufacturing, development of souvenirs and artisan hubs
- Golf Courses
- Camping, Caravan, Tents and other temporary accommodation facilities developed for tourism purposes
- Aerial Ropeways
- Convention Centers
- Adventure Tourism Projects
- Cruise Boats, Houseboats
- Eco-Tourism Projects
- Wildlife Safari
- Other Projects approved by the Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal or Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

**Availability of Land:** Land is one of the most critical inputs for setting up tourism projects. Tourism Department will, in consultation with the Land, Land Revenue Department, the Urban Development Department and the district authorities, identify and earmark lands that can be made available for tourism-related projects.

**Single window system for permission:** In order to expedite implementation of tourism projects and to ensure speedy grant of permissions and clearances, one inter-departmental Secretaries Committees will be set up depending on the nature of the different projects.

**Incentives to the Tourism stakeholders:**

Department of Tourism after holding a series of meeting with the tourism Stakeholders like tour and travel associations, hotelier associations have Identified the following areas where incentivisation is required to draw more tourists to this state:

1. Marketing support to recognized service providers to the tourists
2. Brochure support for publicity and dissemination of information
3. Organization of FAM trips involving both reputed domestic and international tour operators, travel writers, media personnel.

**Showcasing the tourism potential**

The immense tourism potential of the state needs to properly showcased in the domestic and the international market through an effective communication plan and by using all the available media platforms.

In 2015 , West Bengal Tourism has undergone a makeover with launching of the New logo and tagline: “ Experience Bengal – the sweetest part of India”. In sync with the revised logo , a completely new of creatives are being prepared for a 360 degree advertising in TV, FM, Print, Outdoor and digital medium for branding and repositioning of West Bengal tourism in the domestic and the international market.

**The task before the Department would be to:**

- i) Undertake a market research to understand the perception of the prospective tourists on the tourism potential of West Bengal and the necessary interventions needed to improve it.
- ii) Identify the right market segment and the target group
- iii) Evolve an effective campaign strategy for direct communication with the target group
- iv) Take up a 360 degree promotional campaign through all the mediums.
- v) Undertake an evaluation programme to assess the impact of the campaign after it is over.
- vi) Effectively use the social media by making it more responsive and interactive
- vii) Put more emphasis on promotion through digital platform through constant updation of the departmental website by making it more user friendly and posting new contents, photographs, latest updates etc.
- viii) Develop a mobile app with interactive features to stay tuned to the changing technology and to respond to the growing demand of the new generation of tourists.
- ix) Participate in all major international and domestic trade and travel events to increase the visibility of West Bengal
- x) Coordinate with the tourism stakeholders like hoteliers, tour operators and the transportation sector for better integration of services and facilities
- xi) Disseminate tourism related information through the Embassies and High Commissions of the countries which have their offices in the state

**Development of MICE Industry Segment**

The MICE Industry comprises Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions and is commonly referred to as 'Business Tourism'. Being of high yield in respect to leisure tourism, the MICE industry has become increasingly popular and is amongst the faster growing sections of the international tourism market. This form of tourism is driven by business needs, as meetings and conferences act as a forum for sharing of information, education, marketing ideas and staff motivation.

MICE industry can be facilitated by setting up state of the art convention centres which can cater to domestic and international clients. Incentivising the industry will attract private investment in areas which has the potential to become MICE destination. PPP model will be preferred where Govt. will support by providing the land on lease terms and setting up the associated infrastructure against a revenue sharing arrangement.

**PPP Model**

Public private partnership involves collaboration between Government and Private sector to build up a project that will ultimately lead to development of an area or region. In tourism industry, PPP projects address the tourism infrastructure of an area which has the potential to become a tourism Destination. These projects require massive investments and provide a certain standard to the tourists and generate employment opportunities for the local residents.

Tourism Department is actively encouraging this model in the state and at present there are 3(three) projects in different phases of implementation, one in Gajoldoba in Dooars, Jharkhali in Sunderbans and Sabuj Dwip in Hooghly. As per the norms of the model, Govt. is laying down the necessary infrastructure like road connectivity, drainage, power, water supply etc in all these locations to facilitate investment by the private players in setting up resorts/hotels and other tourism related infrastructure/ facilities.

It would be the endeavour of the Department to identify new locations in the state and different segments of tourists where this model could be replicated.

**Development of Human Resources in Tourism and Hospitality**

There is a very noticeable gap between demand and supply of skilled manpower in the tourism sector. To bridge this gap, training programmes under Hunar Se Rozgar Tak will be conducted in phases.

There is a strong need for creating awareness among the people regarding the employment prospects in the travel, tourism and hospitality sector.

The Department will focus on capacity building of the taxi/ auto drivers in association with Transport departments in Kolkata and West Bengal Police and different industry associations.

Good quality trained guides, well conversant in English and other foreign languages besides Bengali and Nepali are an essential component of tourism. The Department will carry out training programmes for guides in association with the tourism stakeholders by maintaining a certain standard.

#### **Integration of Technical institutes with tourism**

Vocational training providers and industrial training institute are offering skill based courses in identified trades. These institutes will be encouraged to offer more tourism related courses, like Front office, Food & Beverages, House keeping etc. The Tourism Department will work closely with the Technical Education Department in this regard.

The Government institutes and aided private institutes offering tourism courses will be encouraged to offer skill oriented courses in tourism to unemployed youths by tapping funds from local self governments and departments like BCW and Youth Welfare etc.

In order to address the scarcity of qualified faculty in tourism and hospitality, short term courses will be offered to experienced industry personnel.

There is a significant potential for inbound tourism from China with the introduction of the direct daily flight from Kunming to Kolkata. The opportunity can be fully utilized if there are adequate number of Chinese speaking guides. To address this issue, department will organize and support short term Chinese language courses for creation of a pool of Chinese speaking guides in association with the tourism stakeholders.

#### **Conclusion**

Interdepartmental Coordination is required for proper implementation of the policy. An empowered Committee shall be set up under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary comprising of Principal Secretary, Finance, Tourism, Forests and Environment, Culture and other stakeholders like Airport Authority of India IRCTC, GTA etc to resolve such matters that may require interdepartmental coordination. The empowered committee will oversee the implementation of the policy in right earnest

By order of the Governor,

A.R BARDHAN

Principal Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal.