

Status of Tourism development in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts

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Abstract- Tourism refers to travel to a certain place for recreation and this act of such travel contributes immensely to the socio-economic and cultural progress of the society of destination regions. For a newly formed autonomous region like the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD), created after having a turbulent past, development is now a big challenge. The Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) is a decade old Autonomous Council, lying towards the north west of Assam along the Bhutan foothills. Nature has been benevolent towards the region and has endowed it with rich flora and fauna, and beautiful natural surroundings. The rich flora and fauna, natural surroundings and the rich culture of the people inspired by nature, gives testimony to the immense tourism potentiality in BTAD which can help boost the economy. However, in spite of having immense physical and cultural resource, the BTAD could not attract many tourists and tourism has not progressed as expected. There are many reasons behind this which needs to be addressed. This research paper throws light on the trends and prospects as well as the challenges of tourism development along with meaningful suggestions to eradicate these problems to develop tourism, contributing to all round development of the BTAD.

Index Terms- Tourism, Autonomous, flora and fauna, tourism potentiality, Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a psychological need of man that has become a major worldwide industry. It is continuing to grow and the developing economies like India are also experiencing an increased demand for travel. Enveloped in diverse cultural and physical resources, India has every possibility to be a golden star in the world tourism map. But, tourism has not yet developed in India as expected. It is still bleak in its northeastern region including Assam. Within the state of Assam, is the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts, an autonomous council, formed a decade ago after a turbulent past. Now, as a newly formed region, development here seems to be the biggest challenge. However the region lies to the north bank of the Brahmaputra River, to the foothills of Bhutan, where the Manas Biosphere Reserves, rich in flora and fauna, falls. Thus there is an ample opportunity to develop the region, both socially and economically through tourism. But along with potentialities, there are challenges too. To refine the potentiality and develop tourism, one must have an overall look over the situation around and chalk out measures with all the pros and cons so that development that can be sustained be achieved here.

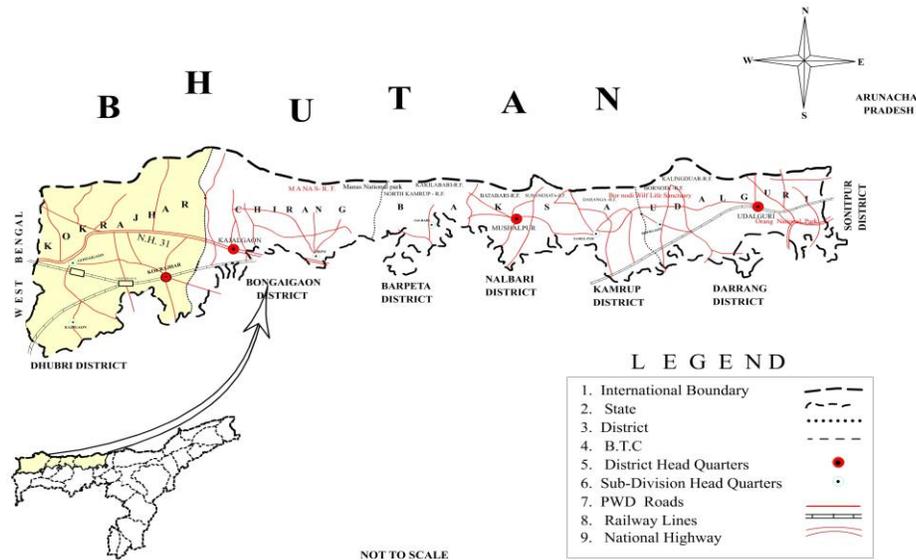
The study area: The Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD)

Bodoland Territorial Areas Districts, is an autonomous region lying between 90°5'E to 92°20'E and between 26° N to 26°55'N. The region has an area of about 8970 sq km and is located on the north bank of Brahmaputra river in Assam in the North-East India by the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. The region is inhabited predominantly by Bodo language speaking ethnic group and Bengalis, Assamese, Rabha, Rajbongshi, Garo, and other indigenous Mongoloid tribes. The BTAD consists of four contiguous districts — [Kokrajhar](#), Chirang, [Baksa](#) and [Udalguri](#).

The Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) is administered by the [Bodoland Territorial Council](#) (BTC) which is a territorial privilege established according to the Memorandum of Settlement of February 10, 2003. This territorial privilege is an outcome of the long struggle by the Bodos in the name of self-determination in late 80's. After a decade long agitation, the Bodos have been granted the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), an autonomous administrative body having within its jurisdiction the present district of [Kokrajhar](#) and three other districts formed from the parts of existing districts of Darrang, Sonitpur, Kamrup, Barpeta, Nalbari, Bongaigaon and Dhubri. After its creation several plans and programs were put forward by the both governmental and nongovernmental organizations as well as individuals for its development. But still development, as expected from a resource rich region is not seen here. Today after a decade of its formation, the region faces the problems of unemployment, poor infrastructure, unrest and some armed struggle by the unsatisfied extremists. Under such a circumstance attaining development seems a great challenge.

With a forest area of about 3539.95 Sq. Km, The Bodoland Territorial Area Districts has most of its area located along the boundary with Bhutan. The entire forest landscape along the Indo- Bhutan Boundary is almost contiguous and its biogeography has Indo- Tibetan, Indo-Malayan and Indo Gangetic influences. The BTAD area is situated in the moderately heavy rainfall area, because of which there is in no dearth of natural beauty, exquisite flora and fauna. The multifarious cultural groups of people with their distinct identity and picturesque cultural legacy, nurtures the wealth of cultural festivals and celebrated with great devotion throughout the year. All this gives testimony for immense potentiality of tourism development in the region which can contribute a lot towards all round development of the region.

Map of the BTAD



II. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Area Districts) popularly known as BTC (Bodoland territorial Council) covering four districts namely, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri runs all along the borders of the Bhutan Himalayan foothills. This green area with unmatched biodiversity is a part of Dooars (Duars), which is a continuous stretch of forests both in West Bengal and Assam. The Assam Dooars is now a part of Bodoland, which has a rich history of trade, war and friendship with Bhutan. The hunting grounds of the Maharajas of Coochbehar, Gauripur and the British were here. Manas Tiger Reserve here is the 'Jewel in the Crown of Bodoland' and dominates most of the landscape. The Bodo people themselves are the greatest interest of the region, who has managed to conserve their rich cultural heritage in its original form. In spite of these great natural and cultural resources, the region was never been in much public eye due to several reasons like almost nil promotion and publicity, its isolation due to lack of infrastructure etc. when on March 2, 1987 the Bodoland Movement for an independent state of Bodoland started, it put a pause to the around development of the region including tourism. During the early 1990s, the Bodo's insurgency had a significant impact on forests and wildlife populations of the forests in this region. The forests were used by the insurgents as hiding places. They practiced in large scale, poaching of rhinos and swamp deer, in particular which severely diminished the stocks of these endangered species, to the point where they are said to be locally extinct. The damage caused by the insurgency is the main reason why the Manas wildlife sanctuary was on the World Heritage Council Danger List since 1992 to 2011. The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was finally established as per the

Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) on February 10, 2003, with the immediate surrender of the BLTF cadres (insurgent group). The total Area of Bodoland is approximately 8,970 square km and there are over 3082 villages in Bodoland. The BTC was given legislative, Administrative, executive and financial powers over 40 subjects including forest and tourism. Since adorned with immense natural resources, the need to develop tourism for contributing to the all round development of this one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country was felt. In this context, thus several plans and programs, both by the governmental and private institutions have been undertaken. After the creation of the BTAD, several projects have been undertaken by the BTC administration. The construction of ecotourism places in Kokrajhar including Gaurang Park and Deeplai beel with public utilities, boating facilities, suspension bridge is a step towards it. These parks are complete and are Government of India sanctioned. The tourism department of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) has also constructed a Bodoland movement cemetery at Debergaon with a total cost of Rs 496 lakh.

To develop adventure tourism like rafting along the Sankosh river which has fast River current, the tourism centre has constructed eco tourism centre at Srirampur (entry point to Assam from West) at the estimated cost of 16 lakh rupees. For accommodation provision the BTC government has constructed a tourist lodge at Kokrajhar at the 67 lakh. One tourist lodge each in Ultapani as well as at Choraikhola is also being constructed. The Directorate of Museums has already established District Museum Office at Kokrajahr. There is a plan to construct one museum in each of the district headquarters of the other three

districts of the BTAD. The Museum in Kokrajhar town is almost complete. The BTC administration is encouraging the participation of travel and trade fairs, showcasing the tourism potentiality of the region. Very recently, in the Travel and Tourism Fair, 2013 in Kolkata the representatives of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) set up a stall promoting tourism of the region. Rs 35 crore has been allocated this year (2013) to construct 110 tourist accommodations spread across Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa districts, which will later be handed over to the NGOs to run. The plans comprise a five-star hotel being developed at Manas by an Australian company under FDI, a treetop adventure park in Kokrajhar, a long-range elephant safari being developed by a Swedish Company, trekking routes and paragliding in Kokrajhar.

When the Manas National park completed 100 years of conservation history in 2005, To commemorate this occasion and to promote tourism in Manas National Park along with other tourist spots in the council area, the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) with collaboration with NGOs organized the Centenary celebration in Bansbari from 12th to 15th 2005 which was celebrated with great pomp and show. The closing ceremony was organized in December 2006. Later, The Forest Protection Task Force was formed by the BTAD government along with some Non governmental organizations to keep vigil of the forest resources in its four districts i.e. Chirang, Kokrajhar, Baksa and Udalguri. There are 20-25 young volunteers in every camp, taking shifts to patrol and protect the forest area on foot without much remuneration or surety for future benefits. Very recently, the first five-day Baukhungri festival was organized from 10th April till 14th April 2013 to mark the age old tradition of climbing the Baukhungri hills on the day of Sankranti. This five day festival was considered as a successful leap by the Bodoland Tourism Department as there was a mammoth gathering in all the five days throughout the festival. This festival aimed at promoting tourism wherein demonstration of traditional cultures, indigenous games, ethnic food habits and attires of different communities were highlighted.

Non Governmental Organization efforts-

The efforts made by the non governmental organizations are immense in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. There are several non-governmental institutions operating within the BTAD to develop and uplift the tourism in the BTAD, such as, Aaranyak of Guwahati, the Green Forest Conservation of Kachugaon,, the Green Heart Nature Club of Kokrajhar, the [Natures Foster](#) of Bongaigaon and the New Horizons of Koila Moila.

Each of the organizations focuses on sections of the golden langur range of Assam. Each NGO works with communities adjacent to the Reserve Forests or protected areas to initiate community forest protection and reforestation programs. These NGOs work with village groups under the Joint Forest Management system that began in 1998 in Assam. Each village has been replanting, maintaining and protecting forest adjacent to their village both for the wildlife and for their own future use and benefit. Tree seedlings are grown in village nurseries and then replanted. Villagers are actively protecting their forests by keeping encroaching woodcutters out and even placing signs declaring village ownership. They also contact the Assam Forest

Department to stop the encroachers and inform the authorities if they find any illegal encroachment and deforestation acts taking place.

Another significant NGO, The Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES), a community group, was formed east of the Manas Tiger Reserve in 2003. Some leading NGOs, individual well wishers, tourists and along with BTC, some government undertaking institutions have donated with some kind of logistics and money so as to run the conservation activities of MMES. The MMES is engaged in patrolling and protecting the forests against illegal hunters and developed an ecotourism program. When the BTC supported the Bodoland Forest Protection Force they supported MMES as well. With the support of ABSU, local activist poachers, insurgents and local Bodo youths of surrounding areas got together to relive their more than a century old conservation tradition and formed the MMES. Some local youths are also given training to become travel guides. There is shortage of manpower in the forest department of BTC for patrolling the forest. For this, the MMES has provided about 80 ex poachers as conservation guards from the fringe village of Manas National Park, thus providing them employment. The department of forest BTC is providing MMES a monthly recurring fund of 1500 rupees per head with rupees 900 meant for ration for 30 conservation guards. Now efforts are on to train and help the local villagers in the adjoining village of Khamardwisa to provide home stay facility to the tourists visiting the national park. According to a survey conducted on 55 international and 120 domestic tourists, 45 international tourists and 92 domestic tourists showed interest in being guests to a local family and enjoy homestay facility.

During the 2005 centenary celebration of Manas National Park many villages on the fringe of the Manas National Park were greatly enthused by the excellent work being done by MMES in protecting the National Park. The villagers of Ultapani and Labanyapur, who participated in the celebration, got very much inspired and understood the importance of conserving their forests and they formed an organization by the name of "Biodiversity Conservation Society". The voluntary organization initially got itself involved in community awareness, primary health programs, cattle vaccination programs as well as village development works through participation of the villagers. The "Biodiversity Conservation Society" (BCS) initiated their primary activity of protecting the forest by involving the local youth and villagers for conservations of the rich flora and fauna of the area. Considering the necessity of organized patrolling for protection of the biodiversity of the area, urgency was felt to form a volunteer protection group at Ultapani involving the village youths of the locality. In 2007 they started a forest protection camp with 50 volunteers. Due to their persistent efforts illegal wood felling drastically decreased from 400 per month to about 30 per month. The improved health of the forest has ensured resurgence in wildlife population, elephants are now seen roaming about freely and recently there have also been quite a few tiger sightings.

About 2 kms away from main Koilamoila market (Kalamati area) is the Forest Protection Task Force camp maintained by New Horizon, a community-based conservation Non Governmental Organization. New Horizon has been engaged in some awareness programs through community meetings,

children groups, and sometimes at individual level. The Task Force periodically seizes equipments used by the woodcutters/poachers during their regular patrolling. However, during the last few years, individuals and groups from all different parts of the world like WWF have started supporting some of the Task Force groups in BTAD area with small grants for uniform, shoes, ration, equipment, torch, etc. Today there are 19 NGOs that are offshoots of the community tourism initiative. Because of their initiative, poachers have now become protectors. Since they know the forests like the back of their hand, most of them act as expert guides at the park.

It is worth mentioning that, the community based forest & wildlife restoration program has convinced the authority for the Removal of 'in Danger' tag from Manas National Park which was a dark spot in the name of this National park since 1992 to 2011.

III. EXISTING AND POTENTIAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN THE BTC AREA

With immense tourist spots in the region, the BTC region has one National Park, i.e., Manas National Park and two Wild life sanctuaries, i.e., the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary and the Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary. Besides, there are other attractions and potential attractions like the Ultapani, Kalamati, Kochugaon Reserve Forest, Jamduar, Jalimukh, Deeplai-beel, Bogamati, Bhairavkunda and religious places like the Mahamaya, Sngahat temples.

1. Manas National Park

The world famous, Manas National Park is the only national park in India with five conservation status. Declared a world heritage site on 1985, the National park has also the pride of being a Project Tiger Reserve, an Elephant Reserve, an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a Biosphere Reserve. It is the most visited place within the Bodoland Territorial Area districts. The Manas National park, stretches partly in Baksa and Chirang district, to the foothills of the Bhutan Himalayas. The enchanting Manas river flows into the National Park from the gorges of Bhutan forming spectacular site at Mathanguri lying just at the border of India and Bhutan.

2. Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary:

The Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is a hilly tract and it lies to the south west of Kokrajhar along the border with Dhubri district. With an area of 45.65 sq.km the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is the only Wildlife sanctuary in the world for the Golden Langurs, held sacred by the people in the Himalayan region. The sites of interest in and around Chakrashila are: Sikhri-Sikla, Jarnagra, Baukhungri peak, Dangdufur, Deeplai Beel, Bhalukjhora, Nayekgaon Rubber Garden (Golden Langur viewing). The sanctuary has an accommodation facility at Choraikhola which is about 7 km from the Kokrajhar town.

3. Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary:

Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary with an area of 28.22 sq km, lies within the buffer zone of the Manas Tiger Reserve and is located in Udalguri district. Pigmy hog, elephant, gaur or Indian Bison, Slow Loris, Tiger, Leopard, Capped Langur, Sambar, Barking

Deer, Hog Deer, Peacock, Hispid hare and 4 species of Hornbill are the main attraction of this wild life sanctuary. The Barnadi wildlife sanctuary is 70 km from Mangaldai and 120 km from Tezpur.

4. Kalamati:

Located in Chirang district, Kalamati literally means 'black soil' and it is an integral part of Manas Reserve Forests in the western buffer zone of Manas National Park. The place is called so because of its salty, mineral rich black soil that attracts Elephants, Gaurs and Sambars, Dhole, hispid hare to lick this natural salty soil. The forest here comes alive in spring with the flowering of trees. Just 3km from Kalamati is Golthek point, the orange collection point, which is a potential tourist spot.

Kalamati is located at a distance of about 39 km via Bijni and 24 km. via Chapaguri from Bongaigaon, the nearest railway station.

5. Ultapani :

The Ultapani reserve forest lies in the western part of the Manas Biosphere Reserve in Assam, is one of the best place in India for observing butterfly and orchid as well as golden langur, the great pied and wreathed hornbill and peacocks. The BTAD also boasts of Ultapani, home to more than 300 species of butterflies. The region derives its name from the fact that unlike other rivers on the north bank of Brahmaputra, the river here flows from west to east. Ultapani is about 45 Kms from Kokrajhar towards north via Jharbari.

6. Kochugaon Reserve Forest:

It is a famous reserve forest of timber treasure of Vintage Sal trees. The famous attraction of this spot is the historical remains of the steam engine along with the shed and the tram line that has been now abandoned. Animal sighting include Elephant, Golden Langur, Spotted Deer, Wild Dog, Yellow throated Marten, Peafowl, etc. Kochugaon Reserve Forest can be reached from Kokrajhar which is at a distance of about 45kms.

7. Jamduar :

Jamduar is the tri junction of Bhutan, Assam and West Bengal. A place with magnificent scenic beauty of the river Sankos with good prospect for river rafting. The region lies geographically at Bhutan but visited by the many Indian visitors for picnic. Jamduar is about 90 kms from Kokrajhar and can be reached by private taxis and cabs.

8. Mahamaya temple:

Mahamaya Dham or Mahamaya, Temple regarded as one of the greatest Shakti Pithas for Hindu Pilgrims is located at Bogribari. One can have a cab or taxi from Kokrajhar to reach the Mahamaya temple.

9. Mahamaya Sngahat temple:

This temple is situated at a few kilometers away from the main Mahamaya Temple. It is located near the river and is believed that Goddess Mahamaya used to take bath here. The temple is beautifully crafted and there is a place of worship for all Hindu Gods and Goddess.

10. Onthai gwlaio:

Onthai gwlaio, is a religious place of the bodos, located in Chandrapara near the bank of river Gwraung. It can be approached from Kokrajhar town in a cab or a taxi available in Kokrajhar town.

11. Bhairabkunda:

This picnic spot is located at a distance of 22 Kms from Udalguri town by road, on the Indo Bhutan border with enormous beauty surrounded by hills, rivers and greenery. It is also an important pilgrim destination for "Shiva" devotees, who flung to the temple which geographically lies at the Bhutan territory but visited by Indians to offer prayers.

12. Bogamati:

Bogamati located at the foothills between the hills ranges of Indo- Bhutan border, along the Bornadi river flowing downhill, is a popular spot for picnic. The Bogamati area is located in the Indo-Bhutan border 30 km off Goreswar. A Buddha statue is under construction at Bogamati, which constructed with a view to attract the people from Bhutan.

13. Jalimukh:

Jalimukh, a beautiful picturesque spot in Bhutan border is 10 km form Nonoi Forest Range. This way from the range office to Jalimukh takes one through dark and deep forests of the Kalingduar reserve forest with all the tall trees and creepers. Sometimes wild animal can also be sighted and there are narrow and small streams with ice cold waters on all the way to Jalimukh which is very refreshing.

14. Deeplaibeel:

It is about 30 mins drive from Kokrajhar town. The Beel is home to a large number of migratory and resident birds and different species of amphibians; like fish, dolphin etc. there is a beautiful park with a hanging bridge built there by the BTC authority. One can also enjoy Boat-rides in this beel.

15. Kokrajhar town and its surrounding:

The Kokrajhar town itself is a cultural centre. It is the capital of the BTAD with the assembly as well as many important offices and headquarters present here with a good network of transport and communication. The town itself with its surrounding can be established as a tourist circuit with Gaurang park on the bank of Gaurang river towards its north west outskirt, the State museum with a good collection of culture and tradition of the Bodos, towards the north west, The Kalicharan Brahma Mandir situated almost at the heart of the town and the Deeplai beel and the florican garden just about at 30 minutes driving distance from it. Besides, as a cultural center, the Kherai and Bwisagu festivals in Kokrajhar, attract huge cultural enthusiasts every year. In the Kokrajhar District Sports Ground, there is a great cultural function organized during Bwisagu. The local handicrafts are also an attraction here which can be acquired by the tourists in the shops and emporium like the BRAWFED (Bodoland Regional Apex Weavers and Artisans Co-operative Federation).

Culture

The Bodos are the largest tribes of Assam and largest in number in the BTAD with a very colorful culture. The famous Bagurumba and Kherai festivals enthral everyone's heart and mind in Bodoland. The Kherai and Bwisagu festivals attract a huge cultural enthusiasts every year. During the bwisagu festival that is in mid April, there is a great cultural function organized in the Kokrajhar District Sports Ground.

Weaving has always been an important part of the culture of the Bodos. It occupies a prominent position not only for its bearing on the economy of the people but also for its profound influence on their culture, tradition, customs and religious beliefs. It is unique in the sense that perhaps nowhere in the country a whole community pursues the weaving so universally.

Bodos Kachari tribal people are known for their marvelous craft art and skills. By developing this skill into a serious culture would help encourage the weavers to earn precious revenue and improve the socio-economic condition of the people at large. This needs proper training and education of the weavers. The Handloom & Textiles Department of the BTC has attempted to make this sector organized by imparting modern techniques, introduce latest machinery and pump in sufficient funds to significantly increase productivity and earn precious revenue. The aim is to increase socio-economic development of the weaker section especially women by focusing on empowerment, trainings, holding of exhibitions/fairs/handloom melas, thus also promoting cultural ecotourism. The BRAWFED (Bodoland Regional Apex Weavers and Artisans Co-operative Federation) was established with the opening of emporium in 9th August 2010 in Kokrajhar in collaboration with Development Commissioner, Ministry of Textile , Government of India. They encourage the local weavers and handicraft artists and make them economically viable through their art and also to preserve the culture of the Bodo community. One can get many traditional Bodo dokhna, jwmgra , shawls, aronais etc., bamboo furniture, things for decorations etc all woven and made by traditional weavers and artists. Similar emporiums are to open in Delhi, Guwahati and Mushalpur.

IV. TREND OF INFLOW OF TOURISTS IN MANAS NATIONAL PARK

Other than the Manas National Park, inflow of tourist is almost negligible in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. However during the recent times, tourists' inflow has seen some positive trend in other places also like the Ultapani, Chakrashila Wild life Sanctuary. The trend of tourist inflow in the Manas National Park is as follows-

Sl.no.	Tourist data Year	Tourist data month	Indian	foreign
1	1997	November & December	612	07
2	1998	January & February	618	12
3	1999	January to June	621	Nil
4	2000	January to December	232	1
5	2001	January to December	1005	Nil
6	2002	January & February	3219	Nil

7	2003	October & November	300	21
8	2004	January to April	215	88
9	2005	January to December	13648	234
10	2006	January to December	2029	289
11	2007	January to December	1089	69
12	2008	January to December	2127	239
13	2009	January to December	6109	19
14	2010	January to December	435	118
15	2010-11	September 2010 to January 2011	7022	115

Source: Bansbari Range Office

Revenue earned by Manas National park :

Year	Revenue collection (in Rupees)
2007-2008	743890
2008-2009	1318435
2009-2010	1696766

Source: Economic Survey Assam, 2011-12

V. PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

With the rich forests here, home to several wild animals, a few of them being unique to this area only and the rich and vibrant culture, BTC has so much to offer to the tourists. However, In spite of so many tourist attractions and potential tourist attractions, not many tourists, visit this region. Reasons are many. Some of the glaring reasons are-

1. Sense of insecurity among the tourists.
2. Poor or negligible campaign about tourism in the region.
3. Minimum investment by the government in tourism sector in this region.
4. Inadequate infrastructure.
5. Lack of accommodation for the tourists.
6. Poor maintenance of the tourist places.
7. Lack of travel agencies in the region.
8. Lack of tour guides.
9. Lack of tourist information or query cells.
10. Severe biotic interferences in the forest regions.
11. Lack of consciousness among the people about the tourism potentiality of the region and that it can be a sustainable source of their livelihood.

BTC, before its creation, has experienced a violent past. There are still several political issues making news in many negative ways. Such things bring a sense of insecurity among the people about the region. It is also seen that there is a very poor campaign and publicity about the tourism of this region. As a result, people outside Assam or even many people within Assam outside BTC are not much aware of any tourist attraction except the Manas National Park in the BTAD. Investment in tourism

sector by the government is minimum. Hence, there are inadequate tourism facilities like accommodation. For instance, tourists visiting the Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary do not have any nearby resort or other accommodation facility to stay. Barnadi National Park is in fact one of the least maintained Wild life Sanctuary in Assam. This is one of the impacts of improper implementation of plans and programs that the government undertakes. There is a need for proper tourism information cell which can provide adequate information about the different tourist spots here. In addition, there is also the problem of lack of any local travel agency or travel and tour guide here. People in this region are actually still not very conscious about the tourism potentiality here and how tourism can be the source of their livelihood. Incidentally, there have been immense biotic interferences like the constant felling of trees and large scale encroachment in the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary posing a serious threat to the home of the Golden Langur and other wild species. The Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary faces similar problem of encroachment. These are the main reasons why these Wildlife Sanctuaries are not able to attract tourist in large scale in spite of huge potentialities.

VI. SUGGESTIONS TO DEVELOP TOURISM IN BTAD

After evaluating the potentialities and problems of tourism development in BTAD, the following solutions are out forward:

1. There is high need for formulation of need based tourism policy. The state government, BTC government and private agencies should join hands in the process of tourism planning and policy making for the region.
2. Intensive campaign should be carried out by the government and private agencies through the print and electronic media and by active participation in regional, national and international tourism fairs showcasing and projecting the richness and positive image of the region.
3. There is a need for establishment of more accommodations. As such, more hotels, and resorts and guest houses should be set up nearby the tourist spots.
4. The governmental and non governmental organizations should encourage travel agencies and tourist information centers well equipped with adequate facilities and trained staffs offering information round the clock
5. There should be training of the local youths to become tourist guides, thus providing employment to the local youths.
6. There should be vehicles exclusively maintained by the tourism department or other private organizations for tourism purposes including the sight seeing. Rental cycling and motor bike facilities can also be provided which are popular especially among the foreign tourists. Such cycling ventures can give the tourists chance to have a glimpse of the local tribal lifestyle.
7. Considering the rich natural environment of the region, ecotourism practices should be initiates and encouraged. As ecotourism needs less economic investment, it may prove to be quite suitable in the context of present economic position of the region.

8. There should be education and training of the local villagers near and around the National park and Wildlife Sanctuaries or reserve forests about the importance of forests and Wildlife and then their involvement in conservation activities.
9. Cultural tourism should also be promoted by encouraging the handicraft and weaving with proper training and education and holding of exhibitions/fairs/handloom melas etc.
10. Lastly, and very importantly, research in the field of tourism in BTAD is the need of time. It is very necessary to understand the trend, potentiality, problems, prospects, demands of tourism in this region.

VII. CONCLUSION

Tourism brings peace. Tourism brings about interaction between the visiting tourist and the host people. This exchange and understanding of culture can eradicate a lot of misconceptions in the mind of both sides. The BTAD being formed only a decade ago has a lot of challenges before it. To overcome such challenges and ensure development, tourism can be a great source. However, in spite of immense potentiality, tourism could not be developed here as expected. Some steps are undertaken and ventured by the governmental and nongovernmental organizations regarding infrastructures and investments. There are as many as 19 NGOs that are active in this region, educating the people about environment awareness through many community conservation programs. Hence, though having a long way to go, there are hopes of bright future for tourism here in BTAD.



Golden langur in Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary



Manas National Park



Mahamaya temple



Bodo woman weaving

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