

Shahabuddin Mohammad Gani\*

### Abstract

*A topic seldom discussed in public, the paper explores the effect of continuity of executives and planners in the management of tourism in India. First among the third world countries, the Government of India undertook, to shoulder the responsibilities of promoting, developing and managing tourism in the country through a full fledged Ministry. Under its direction the state governments also followed the same pattern of management of tourism in their respective states. Senior officers are drawn from coveted services to manage tourism. They come to tourism outfit for short tenure and by the time they have understood the problems, are shifted to other department. The experience gathered thus, goes with them with no benefit to tourism. Tourism has become highly competitive with almost all the countries on this globe market their tourist destinations. Frequent transfers of executives out of the department adversely affects the continuity of plans, policies and strategies of marketing. Every new incumbent sees tourism differently. 'resulting in failure to contribute to the growth of tourism industry. The highly fragile hospitality and aviation industry requires to be nurtured very carefully. The government downplayed the private sector and almost stymied its growth for nearly half a century. The bureaucracy is so structured that one can not share the authority if one does not belong to the coveted services. Generalists and politicians find it difficult to develop a strategy of Market Driven development in tourism sector. During the last fifty years, ministers and the bureaucracy have praised tourism endlessly only to bury it like Mark Anthony buried Caesar. Most of the successful countries have autonomous tourism authorities to manage tourism. Perhaps the kind of continuity maintained in the economic ministry could be tried with the Ministry of Tourism and in State Governments.*

*\*Retired as Deputy Director General of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The author can be reached at sm\_gani@hotmail.com*

# Continuity Factor in Governments' Management of Tourism

In many countries, the national government plays an important role in Travel and Tourism. Many national governments own and operate airlines as well as national rail systems. Some also own and manage hotels, motels, resorts and other tourist facilities. In addition, most national governments establish tourism goals, gather statistical data, regulate tourist facilities, develop infrastructure and advertise nationally and internationally to promote tourism.

India happens to be the first country in the third world where the government decided to develop and promote tourism. Likewise every state in India created the Department of Tourism and appointed Ministers and Commissioners and Directors to manage tourism in respective states.

As early as 1946, the British Government of India appointed a committee under the chairmanship of John

Sergeant to suggest means to promote tourism. He submitted an interim report in May 1949. The final report never saw the light of the day, hijacked by the turbulent phase that surrounded the Partition.

Nevertheless, a tourism branch was created in the ministry of transport in 1949. Over the years, several promotional offices were opened in foreign countries and regional tourist offices in metro cities. The government thus played an active role. A separate tourism department was created in March 1957. To assist the department, a tourism development council was formed with state governments, airlines, hotels, travel agents, historians and archaeologists. But somewhere along the line the government lost its way.

It downplayed the private sector and stymied its growth. In some states the bureaucracy felt below its dignity to talk to hoteliers and tour operators. Besides, the posts of D-G, additional directors-general, directors and managing directors in state departments and corporations are drawn from other departments. They serve their terms of a few years, identify one or two priority areas, and then retire. The experience gained is thus of no use as those who succeed them usually start with a new set of priorities. It is no different than those blind men trying to figure out an elephant. (incidentally, the tourism department's logo, too, is an elephant). Each person looks at tourism differently. As a result, they fail to contribute to the development of tourism, a responsibility committed by the government. Instead, the role of officers below the rank of additional director-general, who continue for several years, could be better utilized by attracting motivated youngsters with opportunities for adequate training.

Sanction of a project is a one-time action, but monitoring their progress requires enhanced resources. Contrary to the suggestions of the Planning Commission, the investment gets spread all over the entire state, which is too inadequate. It could, instead have been concentrated around major attractions for the desired impact.

A number of projects sanctioned during a tourism director's tenure are considered his personal

achievements. The successor in the post generally does not consider, giving these projects the same importance.

The planning of infrastructure and development projects is decided on political considerations, primarily without regard to actual tourist requirement.

The Government of India had mooted the idea of a coordination committee for the integrated development of tourism at the state level with ministers in charge of finance tourism, transport, culture, environment, PWD and urban development to ensure successful implementation of tourism projects. Instead of contributing jointly to tourism, the other departments expected funds from tourism department to implement tourism-related projects in their area. Finance departments perpetually consider tourism as glamour expenditure rather than looking at its potential to generate employment.

The latest exercise by the dept. of tourism, inviting investments in the tourism sector, did not create any stir among investors as the central department had no say in providing land for such projects. Repeated requests to earmark land for building hotels were ignored by the state governments. They did not adhere to building hotels in potential destinations. They have their own priorities.

There are certain activities that the government cannot do alone : tourism being one. In no country has the government succeeded in promoting tourism on its own. It is always the joint effort of the private sector and the government. Tourism involves so many activities in the private and public sectors that several government agencies have to be invited to achieve the objectives.

In our federal structure, coordination between the state and Centre is inevitable. Countries intending to develop tourism have tried several systems of co-ordination. The proposal for developing Special Tourism Areas could not take off because of lack of coordination between different departments.

In Indian, during the Sixties, the Tourism Development Council was set up with

representatives from the states and the industry. Later, a Cabinet sub-committee was set up for a brief period. A committee was also appointed to develop tourism in the country.

The Estimates Committee of Parliament had, during the '60s, suggested that "an effective and efficient central organization has to be set up to formulate well thought-out proposals for the development of tourism in the country with proper coordination and liaison between the Central organization and the state tourist organizations and the business community, involved in promotion of tourism."

The Indian Institute of Public Administration in a report submitted in July 1970 had recommended "the creation of an independent tourism organization under a Tourism Board, which would have autonomy of operation. But its chief executive with top professional competence would retain the rank of secretary in the ministry of tourism & civil aviation to handle coordination with ministries of the government of India and with state governments, ensuring thereby that the incumbent has both, sufficient flexibility, and the authority vested in him."

UNDP in 1969-70 had also suggested creation of an autonomous National Tourism Commission in India with adequate financial and administrative powers. The Younus Committee in the '80s also recommended formation of an independent Tourism Board to manage tourism in India. A tourism Board was once appointed with purely advisory function. However, over the years the tourism development council, the secretaries committee and the tourism board have been forgotten. Effective coordination machinery could never be formed.

The only link between the Centre and the state tourism department is the distribution of about Rs. 20 crore earmarked for developing tourism projects in 30 states with projects cost ranging from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 50 lakh and preference given to the tourism minister's constituencies.

Britain, Ireland, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand and Japan have appointed autonomous tourism organizations, which are statutory bodies set up by

an act of Parliament. In Australia and New Zealand they have non-statutory national tourism commissions. The Netherlands, Switzerland and Scandinavia have semi-official organizations subsidized by government. The problem of the tourism organizations is in the keeping of proper balance between the development and marketing. In tourism, promotion has to be selective, building on strength rather than on weakness.

The United States of America, receives nearly 74 million tourists, the second highest number in the world, takes a limited role in management of tourism. The official United States government travel office was the United States Travel and Tourism Administration which was responsible for marketing U.S. tourism abroad. However, Congress never provided sufficient funds for it to do its job properly. The U.S Travel and Tourism Administration went out of business by 1996. The important work of promoting Travel to the United States was taken over by the Travel Industry Association (TIA), a non-profit organization. It comprises of over 1000 member organizations, including various state travel offices, hotel and restaurant organizations, airlines, travel agents and Convention and Visitors' Bureau. If funds programmes designed to attract foreign visitors to the U.S and engages in research, lobbying and training.

At the local level, most American cities and regional areas have Chambers of Commerce, which promote tourism. City governments normally have Convention and Visitors bureaus that promote travel to the city. In some cities, the convention and visitors bureaus are funded by a tax added to the hotel bills in the city. Elsewhere, their operating costs are met by funds contributed by tourism related businesses and matching grants from local or state governments.

In the last 50 years, ministers and the bureaucracy in India and in states have praised tourism endlessly before proceeding to bury it like Mark Anthony buried Caesar.

The tourism department made several recommendations, policies and plans, even national action plans (1992). However, no action was taken on these plans by the very department that produced

them. Either, they were unprofessionally prepared or found unworthy of implementation. And the successors in the department only allowed it to gather dust, while starting work on fresh plans. The state government is ever ready to announce new tourism policies. Now that the tourism department is planning an eco-tourism policy, can we expect them to relax the total ban on beach tourism at selected beaches considered viable for tourism?

The government has taken the responsibility of policy-making, regulation and monitoring of travel and hotel industry, publicity and promotion, collection of statistics and its analysis. Generalists can successfully perform the first two items, but publicity and promotion, better known as 'marketing', is best left to professionals with experience.

There are several international organizations like WTO and PATA who offer valuable outputs for tourism development through various conferences, workshops and meetings in different countries. But who represents in different countries. But who represents the tourism department at these meetings ? They are officials who retire or get posted elsewhere before they can implement the experience gained at these deliberations.

Truly, such personnel have no stake in the tourism industry. It is a fact, though very unpalatable, that lack of continuity means lack of professionalism. While delivering the 12<sup>th</sup> Somnath Chib Memorial Lecture in new Delhi in 1995 the then Indonesian Minister of Tourism Mr. Joop Ave emphatically said "India has to decide, if it wants tourism". According to him, continuity in the government set up is essential for healthy growth of tourism. He informed that while India had several tourism Director Generals over the past 12 years, Indonesia had only few. To put his point across he cited the case of a foreign travel expert who had attended an

international conference in India. The gentleman was surprised to find a different Director General hosting, when he returned 3 years later to attend another conference. On both occasions the newly appointed DG expressed before the international audience that he was new to this department and is getting to understand tourism.

Indian bureaucracy is so structured that one cannot share the authority if one does not belong to the coveted service.

There are instances when highly qualified officers trained at a high cost are posted for a year or two as MDs of state tourism corporations. Any hotel professional with 10 to 15 years of experience could have done a better job. One must note that all Public Sector Undertakings headed by civil servants have failed, so is the fate of tourism too.

Continuity in tourism in the government is the only topic, that is not being discussed at any forum. Perhaps the kind of continuity maintained in the economic ministries could also be tried with the tourism department.

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