

PRESS NOTE

Recommendations of the Karnataka Tourism Vision Group (KTVG)

The Government of Karnataka had set up a Tourism Vision group in Oct 2013 consisting of eminent citizens and domain specialists to advise the government on the way ahead for the Tourism sector. The Vision group of over 50 individuals met jointly in over 7 sessions during Oct-Dec 2013.

On Tuesday 21st January 2014, the Vision group report has to be submitted to the Honorable Chief Minister, Govt. of Karnataka Shri. Siddaramaiah, in the presence of Honorable Minister for Higher Education and Tourism, Govt. of Karnataka Shri. R.V Deshpande by the chairman of Vision group Mr. C V Mohandas Pai. The chairman complemented the government for setting up the Vision group and thanks to Honorable Minister of Tourism for his active guidance and assistance.

The Vision group has suggested a road map whereby the tourist traffic is more than doubled to over 210 million tourists annually. There is scope for an additional employment of 43 lakhs over the next decade and involves an investment of about Rs. 73,000 crores (50% private) that can generate Rs. 85,000 crores of incremental revenue for the State. The focus is on providing engaging experiences for four distinct categories of tourists - National, Regional, State and International tourists.

The key recommendations of the Vision group:

- **We should follow guiding principles to achieve the overall Tourism vision**

Current assets should be 'ring fenced' based on the core principle of preserving and nurturing what exists. Holistic experience is important and attention to be paid to the Primary tourist asset, the Supporting asset covering public / private infrastructure (roads, hospitality and amenities), People, Access and Information dissemination. We need to be sensitive to local communities and promote sustainable tourism with safety and hygiene.

- **We could go beyond our current World Heritage sites in Karnataka**

Inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage list brings significant international recognition and tourist traffic. It is worth pursuing applications for the Hoysala region, Srirangapatna and the Deccan Sultanate architecture.

- **Brand Mysore's charm through a Royal City association and leverage the extended regional attraction for wild life and eco-tourism**

We could leverage Mysore's potential brand ('Royal Heritage city') identity. Local historical trails including Srirangapatna and better internal transport arrangements (including parking on the outskirts), Cable car for Chamundi hills can enhance the Mysore tourist experience. It is necessary to have visitors stay overnight while visiting the city and for this entertainment options need to be created. Within the geographic region, Coorg has considerable potential with a greater focus on certified home stays and coffee tourism. Jog falls, Elephant camps beyond Dubare is feasible under eco-tourism and in wildlife

- **Culture, Festivals and Heritage tourism has historical roots in Karnataka. They can be run more professionally with advice from knowledgeable resources**

We could focus on 3 premier events as National events – Mysore Dasara, Hampi Utsav as a bi-annual music festival and Badami for a prestigious dance festival. There could be a set of State events (Kadambotsave, Kittur, Gadag, etc.) and local events run at the District level. There is a need to give the events a distinctive flavour and distinguished, knowledgeable individuals should be tapped as advisors whose inputs are heeded.

- **Coastal tourism potential in Karnataka is currently under leveraged**

We could focus on Mangalore and the restoration of the old town. There is considerable tourist scope along the Netravati river. Karnataka has identified 41 beaches and 11 islands for redefining CRZ norms. The relaxation of distance norms and liberalisation of the bar licences, timings around the beach areas can go a long way to attract private investment for coastal resorts.

- **Considerable potential for Adventure, Medical and Spiritual tourism in the State**

Adventure tourism has huge potential if done right and there is scope to attract private investments. There is need for clarity about insurance liability. The State could participate in setting up an Adventure sports academy. Integrative medicine combining allopathic and alternative medicine along with wellness focus (yoga, ayurveda, spas) could go a long way to attract tourists seeking treatment (cure) and rejuvenation.

- **Urban tourism around Bangalore to tap into its large visitor base and local population is necessary**

Keep the city open longer (till 1 am) if the city has to shed its 'boring' tag; a Museum district near Cubbon park, access to the Turahalli forest range, an Arts and Craft village ('Haat') under a plan to make its public spaces come alive; using the Golden Chariot train in off season as an offbeat culinary location are a few initiatives that could be done. Further, supporting and enabling a few seminal annual arts and culture events (Literature, Music, Theatre in the park) could help position the city as a 'Cool' metropolis.

We have a chance to create a world class MICE facility near Bangalore airport

A 435 acre plot near Bangalore airport offers an opportunity to set up a world class MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) facility effectively making Bangalore the 'Go To' destination for events. A master plan covering 4 million square feet of exhibition space, 150 – 6000 seater conference halls over 600,000 square feet, 10,000 hospitality rooms, an entertainment district, experiential museums has been envisaged (set out in the report). Around this MICE hub, there is scope for promoting Adventure Tourism in Nandi Hills, heritage trails around the Devanahalli fort and wine tours for local and out station visitors. This has the potential to put Bangalore on the international MICE map.

Set up a Cubbon Park Management Authority (CPMA) to secure public spaces

It is suggested that an autonomous body be set up with nominees from the various stakeholders of the Park such as Horticulture, Kannada & Culture, Archaeology, Bal Bhavan,

High Court, Museums, etc. as well as representation from private sector/ civil society. The CPMA shall get a master plan prepared through international bidding process to develop Cubbon Park as a State-of-the-art urban park, restoring all the heritage buildings housed within and putting them to adaptive re-use (as museums for example). CPMA shall work on a self-sustainable model (with initial grant/ annual grant from the State Govt.) and be built on principles like English Heritage / National Trust in the UK.

- **Branding and HR critical**

Getting the core value proposition and the brand identity is critical. Karnataka is one of the few States that is blessed with abundance of Nature (Coasts, Forests, and Wildlife), Heritage and History, Arts and Culture (with the Mysore Dasara as a flagship product) and scope for Urban, Adventure and Wellness tourism. People development, particularly vocational training around hospitality and guides is essential.

- **To achieve this, a State Tourism Governance structure under the CM's leadership imperative**

A CM driven State Tourism Council that sets out overarching policy, goals and monitors progress is required. The Tourism Minister will be co-Chair. There is a need to align the direction of spends and actions of the multiple government agencies involved in delivering a wholesome tourist experience. This Council would have an equal number of Non-Government representatives (eminent citizens, tourism domain experts) as the Government.

The detailed planning and implementation facilitation will be at the decentralised Regional level for the four regions (Bangalore, Mysore, Dakshina and Uttara Karnataka) working under the guidance of a Vision Implementation Group set up under the State Tourism Minister. At the implementation level, there will be a need for a professional team who will coordinate and facilitate roll out of policy goals, tourism promotion and back end implementation. The proposed Karnataka Tourism Promotion and Infrastructure Corporation is visualised as an independent Corporation with public and private contribution that foresees increased private involvement in the Tourism sector. The Tourism department will aid in coordination across relevant government departments and help draw up policy. The regional entity will have local private participation through eminent, interested citizens and industry associations. The District Tourism Councils will continue as currently in vogue.

Mohandas Pai, Chairman of the Vision group said - "Karnataka needs to think big, think like a Nation-State if it is to be among the Top 2 destinations in India. If Karnataka can get its Tourism strategy (and brand promise) right and focus on promotion and excellence in providing a wholesome tourist experience, we believe that it can be among the best destinations in the world. Together we can make it happen".