CHAPTER -2
SIKKIM
A HIMALAYAN PARADISE

"Of journeying the benefits are many: the freshness it brings to the heart, the seeing and hearing of marvelous things, the delight of beholding new cities, the meeting of unknown friends, and the learning of high manners."

- Sadi Gulistan
SIKKIM – A HIMALAYAN PARADISE

In this chapter, the researcher provides an outline of the unique tourism spots of Eastern Paradise Sikkim, a brief about available Tourism Infrastructure and Facilities, and Current Institutional Support and Mechanism towards Tourism Services in the state.

2.1. SIKKIM – THE LAND OF MYSTIC SPLENDOUR

Tourism is the most viable and feeding industry in Sikkim in view of its abundant natural and cultural resources. The government has recognized the importance of tourism and has declared it a thrust sector in its policy documentation. The state, for its spectacular natural reserves, unique cultural and historic amalgamation has tremendous potential for promotion of tourism as a promising industry. Over the past few years, the tourist traffic in this Himalayan state has enlarged manifolds, thereby attributing immense benefits in the private as well as public sectors. The upsurge of tourists in this hilly region has definitely contributed to a major extent in socio-economic upliftment of the locals at large. The natural attractions like panoramic mountain viewpoint, mountainous ranges, valleys, waterfalls, natural lakes, alpine vegetations, historic caves, ethnic villages etc., are the places of special interest for the visitors [Bora and Bora (2005)]. That's why, the accessibility to such attractions including requisite infrastructure building would become imperative for overall promotion of tourism activities in the area. Apparently, the creation of infrastructures at various tourist destinations is a keynote for implementing different tourism strategies and therefore, the engineering cell of the department of tourism formed for the purpose, has been actively involved in overall planning and implementation of specific projects scattered in different parts of the state.
2.1.1. SIGNIFICANT ATTRACTIONS

► GANGTOK – THE CAPITAL TOWN

Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, with its captivating architectural beauty radiates with pagoda-like wooden houses, painted turquoise roofs and gay bazaars. Undoubtedly, modern times have wound their way into this picturesque town, but the gently swaying and elegant costumes of Sikkimese people, their smiling faces, the unhurried pace of their lifestyle and the towering beauty of Kanchenjunga all cast a magic spell on this delightful location in foothills of the grand Himalayas. Perched atop a ridge at a height of 1520 mts lies Gangtok, that serves as a perfect base for exploring the entire state of Sikkim. Endowed with a wealth of exquisite beauty and magical mystery, the host of walkways and delightful sights make it all the more irresistible. The town provides the tourists with possible basic amenities for comfort and pleasure and is reachable by air from Delhi or Kolkata to its nearest airport Bagdogra. It has road connectivity from its adjoining towns of Pelling, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Phuntsoling (Bhutan) and Samthar. Two nearest railway stations are at Siliguri (114 km) and New Jalpaiguri (125 km) stabilizing link to Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati, Lucknow and other important cities in India. The major points of attractions in Gangtok are Tashi View Point, Ganesh Tok, Sa-Ngor-Chotshog Centre, Enchey Monastery, Permanent Flower Show, Handloom and Handicrafts Centre, Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, Saramsa Garden and Hanuman Tok to name a few [Hand Book on Sikkim-The Hidden Paradise]. The best time to visit is March to late May and October to Mid-December with a temperature range between 21°C and 0.48°C. Accommodation is readily available in Gangtok. One may have different varieties ranging from hotels, tourist lodges, tourist resorts, guest houses to tourist cottages in different parts of the town. It is to be noted that foreigners have to obtain Inner Line Permit to visit Sikkim. The same can be obtained from all Indian Missions, Sikkim Tourism Offices in New Delhi, Kolkata, Siliguri and Rangpo Tourist Lodge on the spot, on fulfillment of documentary requirements. [Sikkim Info Book (2005)]
EAST SIKKIM

Enchey Monastery
An important seat of Nyingma order, the Enchey Monastery meaning the Solitary Temple, was originally built with the solace that no other construction would be allowed near it. It is built on the site blessed by Lama Druptob Karpo, a tantric master known for his flying powers. This 200-year-old Monastery has in its premises images of god, goddesses and other religious objects. Every year around January 'Chaam' or religious masked dance is performed with great fanfare for two days. It is situated adjoining the Sinolchu Tourist Lodge, 3 kms from Gangtok Town.

Tsomgo Lake
Tsomgo lake is only 40kms, from Gangtok town and is situated at an altitude of 12,210 ft. The drive from Gangtok takes about 2½ hours by bus. The lake is about 1 km long and oval in shape, 50ft. deep and is regarded extremely holy. It is also a home of Brahmin ducks besides stopover for various migratory birds.

Handloom and Handicrafts centre
It is now known as the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handlooms and Government Institute of Cottage Industries as well. Started during the time of Chogyals of Sikkim, as a venture to protect and propagate the craft and skills of local and village artisans, the centre has become a major attraction for the people visiting Sikkim where traditional handcrafts, furniture, handloom carpets and other products are easily viewable.

Permanent Flower Show
White Hall, close by the White Memorial Hall and just below the Palace Ridge Park is the Flower Show Hall. In recent years, this show has become quite popular and famous as there are flower exhibitions throughout the year in accordance with the seasons and the flowers in bloom.
Do-Drul Chorten (Stupa)
The Do-Drul Chorten or Stupa was built by the Venerable Trulshi Rimpoche, head of the Nyingma order of Tibetan Buddhism in 1945. Inside this stupa, there are complete mandala sets of Dorjee Phurba (Bajra Kilaya), a set of Kan-gyur Relics (Holy Books), complete 'Zung'(mantras) and other religious objects. Around this Chorten, which is one of the most important stupas in Sikkim, are 10 Mani-Lhakor (Prayer Heels). These prayer wheels are turned by the devout Buddhist while chanting "Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus", to invoke the Bodhisattva. The Chorten is surrounded by Chorten Lakhang, where there are two huge statues of Guru Rimpoche (Guru Padmasambhava).

Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology (SRIT)
Formerly known as Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, after the Late Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal whose brainchild it was, the Sikkim Research Institute of Technology(SRIT), has since become one of the most prestigious depository of Tibetan literature, rare manuscripts, paintings, thangkas, statues, religious objects and other works of art and history. Today, it is a renowned worldwide centre for study of Buddhist philosophy and religion.

Water Garden
Water Garden at Martam Khola is on the 31-A National Highway, some 16 kms South of Gangtok. It is an ideal spot for picnic with a small swimming pool for children.

Tashi Viewpoint
This place is around 8 kms from Gangtok and one has to be here by 5 a.m. to see the magnificent Kanchenjunga. This mountain, the third highest in the world, lies across Sikkim on its western border with Nepal and visitors have to be lucky enough that there is no fog across the state to have a view of the same.
**Saramsa Garden**
About 14 kms from Gangtok is the Saramsa Garden, the home of Sikkim's most exotic orchids and other rare tropical and temperate plants. Established and maintained by the department of forest, it is an excellent recreation and picnic spot.

**Rumtek**
About 45 minutes drive from Gangtok and 24 kms away, is the Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre, the seat of Kagyu order, one of the 4 major Tibetan Buddhist sects. Since late 1960s, after the arrival of His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, the centre houses some of the world's most unique religious scriptures and rare objects. Traditional in design, it is almost a replica of the original Kagyu Monastery located in Tsurphu, Tibet.

**Sa-Ngor-Chotshog Centre**
It is a Tibetan refugee monastic institution established in 1961 by his Eminence Luding Khen Rimpoche, Head of Ngorpa, sub-sect of the Sakya Order, with the blessing of His Holiness Sakya Trizin and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This is the only monastery of Sakya Order of Tibetan Buddhism in Sikkim. It is located on a beautiful hill-top, just 5 kms away from Gangtok.

**Ganesh Tok**
It is a very small temple of Ganesh, a God worshipped by Hindus. It is on a hillock on Gangtok-Nathula Road. A Sikkim Government Nursery is just nearby.

**Nathula**
56 kms from Gangtok is a 'Nathula' Pas at an altitude of 14,200 ft. bordering between India and China in the Tibetan Plateau. It is one of the highest motorable roads and richly covered by varieties of alpine flora and fauna. A tranquil place to visit. Nathula is open only for Indian nationals on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The visitors have to get a permit to visit the place by applying to the tourism department through a registered tour operator.
WEST SIKKIM

Pemayangtse Monastery

Pemayangtse Monastery is one of the oldest monasteries in the state. Originally established by Lhatsun Chempo, one of the revered Lamas to have performed the consecration ceremony of the first Chogyal (Religious Monarch) of Sikkim. This ancient monastery belongs to Nyingma Buddhism and has been considered as one of the premier monasteries in Sikkim, having been entrusted with the task to carry out all religious functions of the erstwhile monarch. The monastery, located on a hill top at an altitude of 6840 ft. commands a magnificent panoramic view of the Himalayan ranges with surrounding hills and countryside.

Khecheopalri Lake

Khecheopalri Lake is considered to be one of the sacred lakes of Sikkim both by the Buddhist and the Hindus. The lake remains hidden in rich forest cover. It is believed that birds do not permit even a single leaf to float on the lake surface. There is a motorable road from Pemayangtse right up to the lake area. For those interested in spending a night or two in the peaceful environment, a trekker's hut has been provided by the tourism department. The hut is presently managed by a local person and provides comfortable stay with a taste of local Sikkimese-Nepalese cuisines. There is also a pilgrim's hut managed by the department for providing accommodation to the people who come on pilgrimage tours.

Pelling

A three-and-a-half hour drive to the west of Gangtok lies Pelling. Though it is not as lively or happening as Gangtok, Pelling is a quiet little town with a rustic feel, magnificent views and pleasant walks all around. The views of Kanchenjunga from Pelling are simply magnificent and on a clear day one can see this peak and many others towering high above the town. But over the last few years, Pelling has developed into a hub of tourism activities in west Sikkim. Till as recently as 1996, it was a non descript village with a few houses which has undergone a sudden metamorphosis. Up class hotels and fast foods centers offering continental, Sikkimese and South Indian dishes have mushroomed in the town.
Soreng
Soreng is a picturesque village with beautiful landscape which is about 3 hrs drive from Pelling and 4 hrs from Melli. A trek to Jhandi Danra from Soreng is a must to see the various species of flowers and birds.

Yuksam
This was the first capital of Sikkim, where according to historical records, the first Chogyal of the Kingdom of Sikkim was consecrated in 1641 AD by three learned lamas. The evidence of the consecration ceremony is still intact in Norbugang Chorten in the form of stone seats and a foot print of the Head Lama on the stone. Since the history of Sikkim began from this place, these areas are now considered sacred by the people of Sikkim. Yuksam is served by all weather road from Pemayangtse, which is at a distance of 32 kms. The trek to Dzongri and to the base camp of the famous Mt. Khangchen-Dzonga begins here.

Sanga-Choling Monastery
This monastery is situated on a ridge above Pelling. Built in 1697 AD, it is considered to be the oldest monastery in Sikkim. In order to reach this, one has to be prepared to spend at least 40 minutes walking up the steep hilly slope that leads through rich forest covers.

Tashiding Monastery
This monastery is constructed on top of a heart shaped hill with the back drop of sacred Mt. Khangchen-Dzonga. According to Buddhist scriptures, Guru Padma Sambhava blessed the sacred land of Sikkim in 8th century AD from the spot. The monastery, however, was built in the 18th Century AD by Ngadak Sempa Chempo, one of the three lamas who had performed the consecration ceremony of the first Chogyal. Tashiding is also famous for the most holy chorten known as 'Thong-Wa-rang-Dol' which literally means 'Saviours by mere sight'. It is believed that the mere act of beholding it is supposed to wash away all the sins of the devotees. Another important feature in tashiding is the sacred water festival popularly knwon as 'Bhumchu'. Every year, on 14th and 15th day of the first Lunar month, the Bhumchu Ceremony is celebrated.
NORTH SIKKIM

Guru-Dongmar Lake
Guru-Dongmar Lake is considered as one of the sacred lakes of this state both by the Buddhist and the Hindus. The lake remains milky in color throughout and it is believed that Guru Padmasambhava had touched the lake while he visited Tibet from this area.

Yumthang
Yumthang, at an elevation of 11,800 ft and 140 kms from Gangtok is a paradise for nature lovers with a fascinating blend of flora and fauna and breathtaking scenic grandeur. The valley is also the home of Singbha Rhododendron Sanctuary with 24 species of Rhododendrons. Yumthang 'Tsa-Chu' or the hot spring of the left bank of Lachung Chu is immensely popular for its curative properties and healing power.

Phensang Monastery
This monastery is situated on the gentle slope stretching from Kabi to Phodong with perhaps one of the best landscapes in the region. The Phensang Monastery, under the Nyingmapa Buddhist Order, was built in 1721 during the time of Jigme Pawo. It was gutted by fire in 1947 and rebuilt in 1948 through the efforts of the lamas. The annual festival of Chaam is performed on 29th day of the tenth month of the Lunar Calendar (Tibetan Calendar).

Lachung
A Bhutia village with a unique local self-governing body called Zumsa that substitutes the Panchayat. Lachung has emerged as a tourist destination with the soaring popularity of Yumthang Valley which is just 25 kms away. The village, spreads out on either side of Lachung Chu, has managed to retain its unique culture and tradition. The Lachung Monastery on the slope opposite to the highway is a focal point of all religious function of local inhabitants. To get a glimpse of religious functions performed on auspicious occasion, a visit to the monastery should form part of the tour itinerary.
Namchi
Namchi, meaning 'Sky High', nestled among the hills at an elevation of 5,500 ft commands panoramic view of the snow-capped mountains and vast stretches of valley. A top Samdruptse hilltop near Namchi, recently erected is the world’s tallest statue of Guru Padmasambhava, the patron saint of both Hindus and Buddhist.

Temi Tea Garden
The one and only tea garden existing in the state produces one of the top quality teas in international market. The tea garden is spread out on a gently hill slope originating from the Tendong Hill and provides a magnificent view of the surrounding villages. The visit to the factory could be an eye opener for those wanting to know more about tea processing methods.

Ravangla
At the base of Menam Hill is Ravangla, a small township and transit to various tourist destinations in South and West Sikkim. It is also an upcoming tourist spot and transit point for trekkers to Menam Hill and Borong. There are accommodation facilities and numerous short nature trails. A trek down to the sacred cave 'Sher Chok Bephu', one of the four holiest caves in Sikkim, would be a memorable experience.

Menam Hills
Menam Hill towers above Tendong Hill on the other side overlooking the Ravangla Bazar settlement. Situated at an altitude of 10,300 ft the scenic view from this height is, perhaps, unmatched in this part of the world. Mt. Khangchendzonga and its surrounding ranges looms above the dwarf the richly forested and rugged hill. On a clear sunny day, it is possible to see the plains of Bengal spanning across Kalimpong and Darjeeling Hills in the south, right across the Indo-China border towards the north. A short distance away is the legendary Bhaley Bhunga, a kind of rocky spur which juts out from the ridge top and remains suspended in air above Yangang village.
2.1.2. UNIQUE TOURISM INTEREST

► HELI SERVICE AS A HEIGHT OF LUXURY
For the more discerning traveler, Sikkim Tourism is proud to have Helicopter Service from Gangtok in Sikkim to Bagdogra in West Bengal and back. The five-seater Helicopter offers an exclusive mode of transportation not merely to enable connecting flight, but also to see Sikkim from an entirely new view. One can watch the majesty of Himalayan peaks from close up like never before. Special mountain flights are also conducted over West Sikkim and North Sikkim for a bird’s eye view of the monasteries and exotic valley of flowers. All passengers on these sight seeing flights are awarded official certificate of participation by Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC) as souvenirs.

► GANGTOK ROPEWAY
It takes the passengers to the highest point of the city of Gangtok covering distance of about one kilometer in only seven minutes. One can truly enjoy the panoramic view and thrilling rise as the Ropeway goes over the city.

► TREKKING
Trekking is adventure in the Himalayan state of Sikkim. There are a variety of trekking routes in four districts of the state. Notable amongst them are Monastic Trek, Rhododendron Trek, Khang-Chen-Dzonga Trek, Singalila Trek, Samartek Trek, Kosturi Orar Trek, Phambongla Short Trek and Central Pendam Gari Trek.

► DANCES OF SIKKIM
Folk dances and songs are an ingrained part of Sikkimese culture. Most of the dances relate to the beauty of natural surroundings, some depict the harvest season and others are performed for good luck and prosperity. Many of the musical instruments that accompany the dances are unique to Sikkim. The popular dances in this regard include Nepali Folk Dance Maruni, Nepali Folk Dance Tamang Selo, Lepcha Folk Dance Zo-Mal-Lok, Bhutia Folk Dance Tashi Sabdo and Tibetan Yak Dance etc. Again the state’s famous mask dances
provide a spectacle, perhaps nowhere to be experienced in the entire world. Performed by lamas in Gompa courtyard to celebrate religious festivals, these dances demonstrate perfect footwork and grace.

► THE KALCHAKRA PUJA
The ultimate aim of attaining Nirvana or Buddhahood is known as the Kalchakra Puja. The Dalai Lama is presently the ultimate authority in teachings of Kalchakri Puja, which His Holiness performs to initiate the disciples. His Holiness holds the Kalchakra Mass Initiation Puja usually once in three years attracting devotees from all over the world.

► IMAGES AND SYMBOLS
Monasteries and many buildings in Sikkim are richly decorated with symbols and icons. These symbols are painted or embossed on the walls or on Tankas. These paintings may depict the life of Buddha or some Tibetan saint, the Wheel of Life or a deity surrounded by lesser deities.

► WHEEL OF LIFE
The wheel of life is one of the purest Buddhist emblems. This emblem can be seen in the entrance of almost all monasteries in the state. This emblem is also widely depicted on Thankas or religious scrolls. The circular form of this wheel symbolizes the ceaseless worldly existence. This wheel is held in the clutches of a monster with its claws and teeth and signifies passionate clinging of the people to exist in this world. The hub of the wheel contains a cock, a snake and a pig. The cock signifies lust or desire, the snake signifies anger and the pig symbolizes ignorance and stupidity. These are shown in center of the wheel as it is said that they are the root cause of the trouble on earth.

Now, having clue about the wonderful attractions as depicted above, the study will proceed to have an overview of tourism infrastructural facilities available in the state.
2.2. TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

2.2.1. ACCOMMODATION UNITS

The number of accommodation units in Sikkim particularly that of budget category has been increasing at a speedy rate. The field visit done by the present researcher indicates a total capacity of 1934 beds in 93 hotels and 269 beds in 119 guesthouses. However, the data received from Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association (SHRA) which may be treated as more authentic since 90% of the establishments, operating hotels or restaurant business, are members of this association and thus signify that there are at the moment 267 hotels, providing 7569 beds in Sikkim. Out of these, about 55% are located in the capital town of Gangtok. The break-up of hotel accommodation in the state is given in Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN / AREA</th>
<th>NUMBER OF HOTELS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF BEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Sikkim</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>5499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangtok, Mazitar,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangpo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sikkim</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelling, Yuksom,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayzing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sikkim</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachung, Chungthang,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhik</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sikkim</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabongla, Namchi,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorthang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>7569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self compilation through field visit
► STAR HOTELS
Out of the above, the number of hotels which have officially received Star Categorization are five. Namely, Hotel Norkhill (4*), Hotel Tashi Delek (4*), Hotel Royal Plaza (4*), Hotel Tibet (3*) and Central Hotel (3*). The other hotels which are also of star category standard are Chumbi Residency in Gangtok and Hotel Mount Pandim in Pemayangtse, West Sikkim.

► HOTEL TARIFF RANGE
The price range of hotels in Sikkim during peak season varies as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price range per night</th>
<th>% of Hotels in the range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 150 to 200</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 250 to 400</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 500 to 800</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 900 to 3000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association (SHRA)

The above ranges shall vary in recent times considering the inflationary tendencies in the economy. The researcher, therefore considers it just a mere estimate only. Again, the peak season months for East, West and South Sikkim has been assumed as 150 days corresponding to the months of mid-March to mid-June and September and October. For North Sikkim, peak season months are March to April and September to October translating into 120 peak season days.

► OCCUPANCY RATE
The occupancy rate of accommodation units varies from hotel to hotel depending on individual unit's management efficiency, particularly in the area of marketing. For instance, hotels which are managed more professionally are reportedly having average occupancy rate of more than 40%, but hotels which depend purely on tourist season and have no marketing programme are reported to have an average annual occupancy of 25%. Table 2.2 reflects the average stay of tourists in four districts of the state.
Table 2.2.

AVERAGE STAY OF TOURISTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>DOMESTIC TOURISTS</th>
<th>FOREIGN TOURISTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>4-5 days</td>
<td>3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>1-5 days</td>
<td>1-5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>1 day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>2-3 days</td>
<td>2-3 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association (SHRA)

2.2.2 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND CONNECTIVITY

Sikkim depends entirely upon the road transportation system for movement of goods and people from one place to another within or outside the state. There is no other means of transport like railways, waterway except helicopter service, which is also based on weather conditions. The road network is the sole medium of transportation in the state whose importance needs no further emphasis. But the state was in dearth of an adequate public transportation system till 1944 when a Truck department was created which was subsequently renamed as Sikkim Nationalized Transport (SNT) in 1955. Presently, the bulk of passenger and goods traffic in Sikkim are being carried by SNT which has 12 depots-cum-ticket booking offices within the state and one at Siliguri (West Bengal). In addition, there are four private ticket booking agents at other places in the state and one at Kalimpong (West Bengal). As on 31 March 2005, as been reported to the present researcher that SNT had 101 buses and 114 trucks of which 86 buses and 108 trucks were on road. Coming to the highways and roads, at the time when first seven five year plan was launched well before Sikkim became a part of India, there were only 19kms of rough road from Rangpo to Gangtok and ten kilometers of road around the capital. Apart from these, there were mule tracks, which served as trade routes to Tibet. With the advent of developmental works and the increase in population, the need for wider roads with smooth curves was necessary so that heavy vehicles can also ply on it for transportation of essential commodities and people could travel from one place to another at reasonable rate. The achievement of this objective involved widening of narrow
roads and the construction of new ways to bring about inter village connectivity and to reach remote and inaccessible corners of the state. The importance of road communication for all round development along with augmentation of tourism industry in the state is second to none. Road communication is directly linked with the growth of tourism and overall development in other fields as well. The following table presents an overview of the existing road connectivity in Sikkim.

Table 2.3
ROAD CONNECTIVITY IN SIKKIM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EAST DISTRICT</th>
<th>WEST DISTRICT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gangtok - Siliguri</td>
<td>Gyalshing - Uttarey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangtok - Gyalshing via Rabong</td>
<td>Gyalshing - Jorethang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangpo - Rorathang via Damthang</td>
<td>Gyalshing - Tashiding via Legship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangtok - Namchi</td>
<td>Soreng - Sombaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makha - Lingmoo</td>
<td>Nayabazar - Sombaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singtam - Yangyang via Mangley</td>
<td>Gyalshing - Tashiding via Yuksom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nayabazar - Uttarey via Kaluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nayabazar - Rinchenpong via Reshi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NORTH DISTRICT</th>
<th>SOUTH DISTRICT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mangan - Chungthang</td>
<td>Rabong - Yangang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangan - Dikchu via Dzongu</td>
<td>Jorethang - Melli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chungthang - Lachen</td>
<td>Namchi - Rabong via Damthang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangan - Singtam via Dikchu</td>
<td>Namchi - Melli via Kitam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self compilation from official information

Having regard to the importance of road network in overall economic development of the state in general and the need for connectivity for the augmentation of tourism in particular, it is of the considered view for allocation of adequate funds and timely release of the same will go a long way in improving construction / replacement / repair of roads at various stages and locations as been reflected in Table 2.3.
2.2.3 POWER

The sustained and quality supply of power is an important element in tourism development. Frequent power failure, fluctuations etc. lead to irritation to the tourists and visitors. An attempt has been made here to examine the power situation in the state and the future plans to expand the capacity as well as improving the distribution network. The state now has an installed capacity of 39.20 MW as shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4
INSTALLED CAPACITY IN POWER PROJECTS (MW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO</th>
<th>PROJECTS</th>
<th>INSTALLED CAPACITY (MW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ronglichu (Stage-I) Jali Power House</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lower Lagyap Hydel Project</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ronglichu (Stage-II)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rimbi (Stage-I)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rimbi (Stage-II)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rohtak Micro Hydel Scheme</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lachen Micro Hydel</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lachung Micro Hydel</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mayongchu HEP</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Upper Rongnichu</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kalei Khola HEP</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Diesel Power House, Gangtok</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Diesel Power House</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>39.20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Power, Government of Sikkim, Gangtok

Though the power sector has consistently received relatively higher share in the plan outlay i.e. 9.2% in the First Plan (1954-61), 10% in Fifth Plan (1974-9) and 19.4 % in Ninth Plan (1997-2002) amounting to Rs 2840 million in last 24 years, the rate of increase in power output has not kept pace with rapidly increasing demand which at present is of the order of 15-20 percent per year. The estimated peak shortfall has increased almost three fold from 5.7 MW in 1988-99 to 14.03 MW in 1997-98. The annual growth rate
of this shortfall (12.32%) has been almost double (6.85%) that of installed capacity. Coming to the Tenth Five Year Plan, the various schemes spilled over for implementation were Peurey Micro-hyder Scheme (2x100 K.W), Lachungchu Stage-II (2x1.5 MW) and Mangley Hydel Project (2x500 K.W). Again, the proposed new generation schemes to be developed with subsidy support for the capacity addition in Tenth Five Year Plan were Reli chu, RongE chu, Ringyang chu, Chatten chu, Rongli chu-II, Taram chu and Roy Chu micro hydel projects. Some of them have already been executed and few are in the process of implementation as been reported to the researcher.

► SIKKIM POWER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION INITIATIVES

Projects proposed to be developed by Sikkim Power Development Corporation (SPDC) are of the following kinds (Table 2.5):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO</th>
<th>PROJECTS</th>
<th>CAPACITY (MW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rolep HEP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kalong HEP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chakhungchu HEP</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tolungchu HEP</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lower Chuchachen</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>DliupiDanra</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bakchacliu</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ka1cz-ll</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Sikkim Power Development Corporation, Gangtok*
RENovation SCHEMES

The researcher observes that the department is not in a position to attend to the routine maintenance and periodical renovation on all the installations owned by it due to the reasons like unproductive expenses on wages and salaries and huge pending liabilities. The existing power stations are not generating even partly due to inadequate funds for purchase of spares and carried out repairs and renovations. Accordingly, the government has issued instruction to the department to complete the ongoing works speedily together with renovation and re-strengthening of the power stations in operation. The scheme aims at restoring the installed capacities of generating units and in some cases maximizing the capacities of old power plants through renovation, modernization and strengthening of structures. The department has to take up renovation of some old power plants like Lower Lagyap Hydel Project (2x6 MW), Power stations on Rongnichu Cascade (13 MW), Mayongchu Hydroelectric Project (2x2MW), Lachung Micro-Hydel (2x100 KW), Chatten Micro-Hydel Scheme (2x50 KW) that are in operation for a couple of years in depreciated capacities.

As such, the concerned authorities in Sikkim has drawn up well-conceived plans for (a) augmenting power generation and distribution (b) proper maintenance of the system (c) regional balances in power generating and distribution. The present researcher is inclined to suggest that the utmost priority should be given to up-gradation and modernization of old plants. He also feels that a timely and effective implementation of various schemes will certainly help in creating a sustainable tourism base in the state of Sikkim. Any slippage will have a very deleterious effect on economy of the state and its efforts on promoting tourism in long run.
2.2.4. CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT TOWARDS TOURISM

For promotion and growth of tourism, many associations/institutions seem to be playing a vital role in Sikkim. Parent unit amongst these is the department of tourism which is the administrative authority for development of a viable tourism base in the state. It is headed by a principal secretary and a team of officials and staff as is the practice elsewhere in the country. The department is responsible for planning and formulating overall policy, implementation of different schemes and execution of projects for sustainable tourism development at various levels. When interacted with the officials, it has been found that the department at present is having the under-mentioned institutional arrangement [Several Issues of Annual Reports (2000 to 2007)]

► ADMINISTRATIVE SET UP

The administrative set up has its head office at Gangtok and out-station offices at Darjeeling, Siliguri, Kolkata and New Delhi. Tourist Information Centers are located at Namchi, Pelling, Jorethang, Melli, Rangpo, Ravangla, Lachen, Badgora and New Jalpaiguri. A new Tourist Information Centre has also been opened at Darjeeling in West Bengal. There is total decentralization of power for effective administration of tourism activities in the state. The overall job in this regard has been divided amongst the following sections:

(i) Administrative Section
(ii) Accounts Section
(iii) Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) Section
(iv) Statistical Section
(v) Tours and Travel Section
(vi) Civil Aviation Section
(i) The Administrative Section deals with general office administration and personnel management of the department besides the policy matters.
(ii) The Accounts Section deals with financial management of the department.
(iii) The Centrally Sponsored Schemes Section deals with all schematic plans under the normal state budget and CSS project.
(iv) The Statistical Section of the department looks after collection and dissemination of statistical data and information.
(v) The Tours and Travels Section deals with No Objection Certificates (NOC) for registration of hotels and travel agencies and their recognition and also issue of permit to tourists visiting some protected areas in the state.
(vi) The Civil Aviation Section manages the Helicopter Service introduced in the state in November 1998.

► INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY WING

The Information and Publicity Wing has a crucial role to play to project Sikkim as a unique destination. This objective is slowly but surely being achieved through the dissemination of information, promotional activities and marketing campaign. The department has produced different brochures on various tourist attractions in the state. Improving and updating of information carried by these brochures is another important function of the concerned cell in the tourism department. This is being done each year in order to provide up to date information to the visitors.

► ADVENTURE WING

Sikkim is a popular adventure destination. The existence of the world's third highest peak along with a host of yet virgin peaks lure many adventure seekers to the state. Most of the visitors come to Sikkim to enjoy adventure activities like trekking, mountain biking, white water rafting, para gliding and lot more. The number of domestic adventure lovers are also rising by leaps and bonds particularly trekking and white water rafting. Heard adventure activity like Bunji Jumping in Sikkim is also on the pipeline. Thus, the activities of this wing include review of existing facilities and introducing new and interesting routes / trails besides maintaining and upgrading services like Trekkers Huts and Trails.
Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC) was set up in 1998-1999 to promote a new thrust to tourism development activities in the state. The primary objective behind formation of STDC inter alia was to create, take over and manage different tourist facilities like hotels, restaurants, helicopter service and surface transport. Currently various properties are being managed by STDC, important amongst which are Hotel Mount Pandim, Siniolchu Tourist Lodge, Rangpo Tourist Lodge, Blue Sheep Restaurant, Bagdogra Guest House, Movables of Hotel Mayur and the Helicopter services operating in the state.

The Institute of Hotel Management, Gangtok was set up in the year 1990 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in association with Government of Sikkim with the aim of expanding and promoting hospitality education and also to fill the manpower requirement in Hotel and Hospitality sector. The institute provides job-oriented and professional higher education to the students of Arts, Science & Commerce according to demand of the industry. At present the institute is running from a rented building at Tadong and it will be shifted soon to its own campus at Sajong, Rumtek which is under construction. The institute has produced more than 1500 professionals till date and they are well placed in different hospitality sectors all over the country and abroad.

There are a number of local / small community based organizations actively involved in providing support services and preservation of tourism destinations in the state. Many of the tourists visiting Sikkim seek help of the experts of these establishments for availing various tourism related services. To name a few amongst these are All Sikkim Monasteries Association (ASMAN), Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association (SHRA), Travel Agent's Association of Sikkim (TAAS), Dzongu Ecotourism Committee (DETC), Green Circle (GC), Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), Human Development Foundation
of Sikkim (HDFS), Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC), Khecheopalri Holy Lake Welfare Committee (KHLWC), Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Commitee (SIBLCA) and Sikkim Development Foundation (SDF). Time to time, they organise number of activities like training the tourist guides, preservation of bio-diversity, accommodation arrangements and escorting visitors visiting different adventurous spots of the state.

2.2.5. MISCELLANEOUS FACILITIES

The capital town of Gangtok is considered to have the basic amenities in the form of Clubs, Cinema Halls, Banking arrangement and the medical facilities as well. At present, the town is in possession of four clubs, one cinema hall and branches of major scheduled commercial banks along with 3 health care units. Though these can fill in basic needs of the visitors into the state, there is increasing demand for expansion of these facilities in near future.

As such, the aforesaid discussion with a glance over current infrastructural mechanism clearly portrays Sikkim as a Himalayan Paradise and consequently, the specific objective (i) as indicated in Chapter 1 is getting fulfilled.
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