Preface

Tourism is seen now as a “sunshine” sector all over the world. While the last few decades have seen a spurt in the tourism activity across various continents due to several contributing factors, the economic importance of the tourism sector has surely been continuously on the rise. The data released by different global bodies including the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) indicate significant contribution from tourism to countries’ GDP and foreign exchange reserves. Tourism has been accorded the status of an industry in many countries of the world. The inflow of foreign tourists to countries has accelerated the demand for certain economic production and distribution activities. Tourism has emerged as an industry next in importance only to information technology in the services sector.

In India, the economic liberalisation and the consequent deepening of trade and investment relations with several countries of the globe of late provided an impetus to foreign tourist arrivals. The advances in information and communication technology and the growth, in particular, of the aviation sector, among others, served to create further congenial conditions for tourism-growth. Given the potential that prevailed in India in terms of the country’s possession of a diversified tourism product-base and also given the congenialities created by the objective conditions, it therefore needs to be seen to what extent the country was proactive enough to capture tourism opportunities in a noteworthy manner.

Against the above backdrop, the present study focuses the trend and pattern of tourist inflows to India from the East Asian countries. India’s recent economic and political engagements with her neighbouring East Asian countries articulated via the Look East Policy combined with such
factors as the country’s geographical proximity and the age-old cultural ties with these countries in fact created an ideal setting for incremental to and fro tourist flows between the two regions. What we have shown in this report is that these great potentialities have throughout remained by and large unrealised. A modest attempt has been in the study to delineate the variables that explain the observed pattern and trend of tourist inflows to India from selected East Asian countries.

The journey from the beginning to the completion of this study had been full of challenges, but the experiences were rewarding.

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Silchar
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(Samit Chowdhury)