

## **Chiranjeevi Stresses the need to Enhance Amenities and Facilities at Major Pilgrimage Centres. National Tourism Advisory Council Meets**



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Union Tourism Minister Shri K. Chiranjeevi has said that safety of tourists, particularly for foreign women tourists, is an area of concern. Chairing the meeting of National Tourism Advisory Council here today, he said a few recent incidents, where foreign women tourists were sexually assaulted, have generated widespread negative publicity for India. Shri K. Chiranjeevi said, “As law and order is a State subject, I have written to all Chief Ministers to take effective steps to create conducive and friendly atmosphere for all tourists”.

The Tourism Minister said the Tourism sector in India has witnessed substantial growth in the last decade. The Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during 2012 have reached 6.58 million. The estimated number of domestic tourist visits in 2012 was 1027 million. Shri Chiranjeevi said, “Although the growth of in-bound tourism in India has been higher than the overall growth in the world, the share of India at 0.64% continues to be low. We

have to strive harder to increase this share”.

The Minister was of the opinion that huge size of domestic tourism helps to sustain the Indian tourism industry even when there is negative or low growth in inbound tourism. He said, “We will, therefore, continue to promote domestic tourism also”. Referring to religious tourism he said a substantial component of domestic travel is for pilgrimages. There is a need to enhance amenities and facilities at our major pilgrimage centres. Uttarakhand, which is visited by a large number of pilgrims, has witnessed widespread damage in recent floods. He said, “As you may be aware, Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned a special financial package of Rs. 100 crore for restoration and reconstruction of the affected Government tourist facilities in Uttarakhand. This will be in addition to the Central Financial Assistance of about Rs. 95 crore already sanctioned during the current financial year for developing tourism infrastructure in the State”.

Referring to the role of private sector the Minister said, “We need active involvement of the Corporate Sector , to adopt important tourist sites and monuments under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). To set a precedent, The ITDC has come forward and adopted the Qutub Minar. Now ONGC has come forward to adopt 6 monuments, namely the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Elephanta caves, Ellora caves, Mahabalipuram, and the Golconda Fort. Steps are being taken for formalizing these arrangements. Of now, we have identified about 120 Monuments across India, that can be given for adoption”.

Appreciating the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism, the members gave wide range of suggestions on various topics including , cleanliness and hygiene at Tourist sites, safety of Tourists, particularly women tourists, skill development in Tourism and Hospitality sector and wayside amenities.

Summing up the discussions Shri Parvez Dewan, Secretary (Tourism) said that his Ministry has been working in close cooperation with the private sector for development of tourism in India. He expressed the hope that views emerging out of the discussions held today would help the Ministry as well as the hospitality and travel industry to take longer strides in achieving our common goal of positioning tourism as an engine of economic growth.

NTAC is a ‘Think Tank’ constituted by the Government and comprises experts from various fields, representatives of industry associations like CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, PHDCCI, FHRAI, HAI, IATO, TAAI, ITTA, ADTOI, ATOI, IHHA, ICPB as well as Ministries of Finance, Railways, Culture, External Affairs, Urban Development, Road Transport and Highways and Planning Commission and advises the Government on various aspects of tourism with the objective of promoting domestic and foreign tourism in the country.

