

INDIA TAKES MEASURES TO MAKE TRAVELING MORE ATTRACTIVE



Ambika Soni, the Minister of Tourism and Culture of India, aims to make tourism a major engine of the economic growth. She wants to enhance it to deal with unemployment and poverty at some level. The policy of the Ministry of Tourism & Culture had a positive effect in the last few years.

During 2001 to 2006 there was presumably some 78% growth in number of foreign visitors to India. The growth in foreign exchange earnings is expected to be some 122% during this period.

For India it is important to promote tourism since it can utilize its natural, human, cultural and technical resources. Tourism can provide jobs for people in rural areas, especially jobs for the young and women. And so the rural tourism is number one speaking of promotion. It offers look at the rural like art, culture and crafts. Its economic value is also high. Another important sector of tourism is the medical tourism that is recently booming in India.

The promotion policy includes e.g. liberalization in aviation sector, rationalization in tax rates in the hospitality sector, tourist friendly visa regime and making land more easily available for construction of hotels.

There is also plan to introduce Advance Passenger Information System at airports to reduce delays in clearance of passengers at the immigration counters. The system is currently tested at Delhi Airport.

To promote safety, all states have to deploy Tourist police at major tourist destinations in the States. In States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, J&K, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi such police force is already working.

The government is also promoting the already existing tourism products (e.g. Taj Mahal or Red Fort) and their development. There is an advertising going on through the Internet and in the print media to show India as an interesting tourist destination.

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