

JAMMU & KASHMIR'S TOURISM DAMAGED BY TALIBAN



Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir's tourism suffered because of rumors about Taliban's presence here, claim the states' officials. Now the state tries to win tourists' confidence back.

According to Omar Abdullah, the Chief Minister of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir **reports about Taliban presence in Kashmir are just rumors which, nevertheless, hurt the state's tourism industry.** Also Tourism Minister Rigzin Jora refused these reports as rumors.

The situation worsened by the statements by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Union Home Ministry and Defense about the presence of militants in the state. Tourism Minister Nuwang Rigzin Jora claims international media exaggerated the story which has significantly damaged local tourism industry e.g. the hotel occupancy rates dropped to 10-15 per cent at one point. **Tourism is vital for the Indian state and therefore it is trying to win back tourists' confidence.**

The industry provides jobs for numerous citizens of the state and it has been suffering long because of the instability in the region. According to the Chief Minister it is time now to rebuild the industry to meet international standards and to offset all the loses it suffered in past.

The J&K officials would like to make the state a year round tourism destination. Omar Abdullah claims that an increased inflow of tourists will increase the number of flights in the state resulting in an overall boost for the economy. Tourists should be attracted e.g. by intensive marketing campaigns.

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