

INDIA NEEDS TO TAKE CRUISE TOURISM MORE SERIOUSLY



India is one of the countries that want to profit from the fast growing cruise tourism. However, this sector of tourism is still somehow new to the Indian government. A cruise committee exists for couple of years but it has not worked that good.

The truth is that the government has declared the ports of Mumbai, Goa, Kochi, Mangalore, and Tuticorin to be cruise destinations. There are the directions to set up cruise terminals by the respective port trusts but the whole project is delayed. In Goa, for example, there is still a problem of selecting a cruise terminal designer. The delay is probably caused by the fact that trade is a priority rather than a cruise terminal for a port. Nevertheless, the industry can bring huge incomes to the Indian economy. It is estimated that the global cruise industry is worth some \$29 billion and it employs approximately 559 000 people world wide. India has only 1% of this rich market but it should change in future.

These problems need to be dealt with. It is important to encourage foreign investors. Private developers should be encouraged and supported by the government. The tax structure should be also revised. It would help the business if there were tax exemptions on fuel, custom duty on liquor and so on. The exemptions should exist at least for the first five years of operation. The cruiser operators should be also offered tax exemptions to acquire cruise vessels from abroad. In future the government should encourage Indian shipbuilding of cruise vessels.

The cruise tourism in India has a vast potential. There are exotic places like islands of Andaman Nicobar, Lakshadweep that could impress many tourists. It is also important to make the cruise tourism accessible to millions of people in the land-locked states of UP, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh.

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