

RAJYA SABHA

***SUPPLEMENT
TO
SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE**

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Friday, March 19, 2021 / Phalguna 28, 1942 (Saka)

**DISCUSSION ON THE WORKING OF THE MINISTRY OF
TOURISM - *Contd.***

SHRIMATI VANDANA CHAVAN: Out of various Ministries, the Ministry of Tourism must be one of the most delightful and sacred Ministries. It involves different flavors of art, crafts, dance, festivals, food, culture, history, heritage, traditions, nature, adventure and also showcasing modernity. I would like to draw attention towards the stark reality that is happening at the moment in the tourism industry. It is the plight of travel agents and companies who are facing troubles after the COVID times. These are very serious issues. When the lockdown was declared, tours obviously were cancelled. Customers started asking the travel agents for refunds. There are a lot of litigations now in the consumer courts in this regard. The Travel Agents Association has expressed pain and deep frustration over their plight. I have received their representation on 6th August, 2020. These requests are very relevant for consideration by the Government. They want coordination between States and Centre for development of tourism, post-Covid. An official status of industry be conferred to the tourism sector. If nothing is done in this direction, the tourism industry in our

* This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.

country will face large-scale bankruptcies, business closures, job losses. Steps should be taken in this direction with the right earnest. The World Economic Forum has come up with a road map, post Covid, as to how they would move forward to revive the tourism sector. I don't see it happening in our country. I don't see any steps being taken. I may be wrong if it is happening. I was also surprised to note that the Central Government employees get a home town Leave Travel Allowance once in two years and an all-India Leave Travel Allowance once in four years. The Government needs to encourage people to travel because this is what will revive the economy. Therefore I suggest the government that these LTC norms should be reconsidered and the Central Government employees should be given LTC on 'every year, anywhere' basis. The railway employees are given passes when they are in service, after retirement, and after death also to their families. So, this should be extended to the Central Government employees also.

SHRIMATI PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI: The Ministry of Tourism is given very less in this budget. According to NITI Aayog, there is a need to bring foreign tourists up to 3 per cent in the country. According to the World Economic Forum, India ranked 34 in the Annual Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index. Many countries issue advisories about India's law and order and women's safety. In the month of September, I wrote to the Finance Ministry that the National Restaurants Association of India and the Event and Hospitality Industry are badly hit. These industries employ five crore people. Nearly thirty lakh employees have lost their jobs. In fact, tourism infrastructure and its development are important to develop the industry. However, that hasn't come through as the under-utilization of fund shows. In spite of Covid, the State of Maharashtra has been ranked No. 1 for bringing in policy measures that improve tourism in the state. And, the Government of Maharashtra came up with a 'beach shack policy' to ensure that the coastline that we have will promote tourism and create more jobs. The Government of Maharashtra has also come up with a comprehensive policy so as to encourage agro-tourism. 'Caravan Policy' has also been introduced in the state. So, I request the Government to expedite the ASI approvals to put up tourism amenities in and along the sites such as Raigad Fort, Sindhudurg Fort and Murud-Janjira Fort. There are pending proposals lying with the Ministry for the development of

Elephanta Caves. So, that should be expedited. And, I would also want inclusion of Maharashtra in Buddhist Circuit by the Ministry. I would also request the Minister to consider giving 'UNESCO World Heritage status tag' to the unique sea forts of Maharashtra. We have also sought larger projects under Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD Schemes of Government of India. My only suggestion would be to implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee and give tourism the priority which the economic recovery of the country deserves.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI PRAHALAD SINGH PATEL),

replying to the discussion, said: I thank all the hon'ble Members of Parliament who participated in this discussion and expressed their views. The tourism sector got badly affected due to Corona pandemic. During the early months of Corona spread, no idea was coming to mind to improve the tourism sector. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of the country has shown his greatness in showing the path of bringing improvement in this sector during the Corona period. Under these adverse circumstances of tourism, I would like to greet my stakeholders - hoteliers, tour and travellers, guides and the people associated with them because they continue to stand with the country even after such a huge economic loss. As regards, Indian tourism, circumstances have changed, we have to keep up with those changes. Tourism runs on the perception. The Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India is a stakeholder. The problem facing the industry today is that it does not have the money to pay electricity bills, does not have the ability to pay water tax, property tax. This issue is with the state. The Prime Minister of the country had said from the ramparts of the Red Fort, "Dekho Apna Desh", that slogan has come as a boon for us in the middle of this corona today. Ever since I became a Minister, I have discussed twice with the state Tourism Ministers- once before the outbreak of Corona pandemic and once during the Corona period. I want to tell you that every time the stakeholders said something, they got help from the Ministry of Finance. One change I see is that metropolises are in crisis. Those which were once our priority, were the center of attraction, are deteriorating and the biggest problem and challenge is for the hotel industry. These are changing times and we have to address these challenges that lie before us. I think

that when we join the debate on the Ministry of Tourism, we have to decide that we are all stakeholders. Here, I have noted down the things that people have suggested. The government will go ahead keeping these suggestions in view and we will find solutions for those challenges. Perhaps it has also come before the Standing Committee that at the time when Corona entered this country, all the foreign tourists who were here, did not think it safe to go to their country, rather they felt it was safe to stay in India. This amply suggests what is the trust of the people towards India. Now that trust is with our Ayurveda, with Aayush, for the hospitality of our hotels. How can we forget about Yoga? How can we forget about our medicine and vaccine? The world's perception about the country has definitely changed after Corona. And this change provides boost to the Indian tourism. I am convinced that ready to change that the number of foreign tourists in this country will double in 2024. States have 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme' and 'Prasad Scheme'. The Government of India has decided that as soon as the state completes one scheme, it will be funded for another. Uttar Pradesh has done the same thing and they will get the money. Through ASI we have identified 19 important sites. We will provide world class facilities there. Monuments that have the facility of light and sound programmes will remain open till 9 p.m. and with the permission of the district administration will remain open till 10 p.m. The memorial to which more than one lakh foreign tourists will visit, if they are not comfortable there in Hindi and English, then we will put Chinese language for their language. After a month there will be a website in all the languages of the country. This website will mention hotels, guest houses and public facilities available on that route. I want that we should get such suggestions and we should give constructive suggestions in the meetings of our Standing Committees. Vaccine is not politics, we have not done any business with vaccines. We have done charity. In this asymmetrical situation, the country's scientists, the country's leadership and the country has stood together in solidarity. I would like to thank the country for the way domestic tourists have encouraged the Indian tourism. As far as guides are concerned, there was a dispute of regional guides for the last 6 years. I resolved it and after that we started the tourist facilitator course, in which more than five and a half thousand people were registered. We have a total of 3,772 monuments registered at this time, but that number is more than

10 thousand in the country. There are huge and grand temples in the south, which belong to BC, then we had art and culture. We should have proud on it. Tourism has also acted as an exchange of knowledge. Structure construction in the West began in the year 55. The excavation of Dholavira has proved that Dholavira is very old in the archaeology of the world. We have everything that world wants to see but when tourists come, we should meet their needs. If they want to stay in a homestay in a changed environment, then we must have that facility as well. For the last four months, our small destinations are also not empty. We came from 65th place in 2014 to 34th place in five years. We have fixed a target to achieve first place in 2024. There are challenges and difficulties in this, we will overcome those difficulties easily. I thank that no member has made any criticism. I would like to thank all the members for taking participation in this discussion.

Discussion concluded.

Desh Deepak Verma,
Secretary-General.

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**ERRATA TO SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE
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Page No.	Line No.	Correction
443	16	Read 'Temple of South' for 'of South Temple'
446	23	Read 'looked' for 'look'.