

RAJYA SABHA

***SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE**

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

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

OBSERVATION BY THE CHAIR

1. MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I have an appeal to make in view of the reports coming from certain States that the virus pandemic is spreading. So, I only appeal to all the Members of Parliament who are here, who are there in their respective fields to be extra careful. I know that you are all public representatives, You can't live in isolation. At the same time while dealing with people, meeting them or going to your constituency or other areas, be careful. Strictly follow the advice given by the Healthy Ministry, Home Ministry, Central Government as well as the guidelines issued by the State Governments concerned from time to time and see to it that they are followed. My appeal is not only to you, but also to the people in general. The Members of Parliament should take interest to see that the people are guided properly. We are seeing that though the severity has come down, but the cases are spreading here and there. It is because the people in their respective areas are not following discipline. This is a very, very important aspect. We should not allow the situation to deteriorate. We are all happy, the world is happy, the country is happy, people are happy. We have been able to contain it, and we were hoping that we would totally succeed. Meanwhile, these

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reports are coming. So, please take care to see that you follow guidelines and secondly, see to it and guide people that they also follow the guidelines issued by the Central and State Governments from time to time. The vaccination process is on. I request all the Members and their family members who are eligible, to take vaccination this weekend, in their respective places and see to it that the eligible people also volunteer to take the vaccine.

2. MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, as I could go through the notices to raise issues for which permission is given liberally, it seems that Members have run out of the issues. So they are trying to invent or search for some issues. I can only caution them and tell them that they have got every liberty to raise issues. I am here to facilitate bringing of important issues to the notice of the Government through this House. But the point is this. One, you may also get a doubt why certain Members are getting opportunity the second time. Some got permission yesterday and they have got permission today also. The reason is that as I run out of the issues, which are eligible for admission, and then there is an issue, which is really worth raising, though it is the second chance to the concerned Member, I am giving it to them without compromising on my basic rule. If there are many Members, then definitely it will go according to the priority on the basis of the eligibility of the issue and on the merit of the issue. If fewer Members have asked for Zero Hour Submissions or Special Mentions, you might have seen that we have combined Zero Hour Submissions and Special Mentions and we are giving permission even to raise Special Mentions instead of placing them on the Table of the House. I am allowing Members to raise it in the House, so that it gets the attention of the Government. That is the practical problem. I only suggest this to the Members. Please see to it that your Zero Hour issues are issues of larger public interest and current in nature and also on a specific issue. The second point is that we have seen it today and even earlier also that some Members tend to drag Governments and then make criticism. What I am saying is that you can definitely refer to an incident. But making allegation against a State Government which is not here to defend itself and even against the Central

Government because we have not given it to the concerned Minister to respond here, it is not going to solve any problem. The third issue about which I would like to tell the Members is this. Some Members are developing a habit of making running commentary while sitting. That is not going to solve any problem. Any solution can be found only if you bring it through proper system to the notice of the Chairman. If the Chairman thinks it fit or if it is appropriate to accept, then permission would be given. Otherwise, you may raise your voice loudly for a minute but that will not be helpful because the media is not going to cover it and the record will not include the same. So, I only request the Members to bear with the Chair's advice and follow the rules and regulations and procedure so that we can have maximum opportunities. One more issue just now came to my mind. If a Member makes a submission and if the Minister wants to respond and the Minister indicates to me, only then can I permit. If the Member wants clarification and the Minister is not responding, I cannot permit it. As per the rule, clarification is not mandatory. If the Minister wants to clarify and if there is time, the Chair will be more than happy to allow the Minister to give clarification and allow the Member to get the clarification. This has to be kept in mind. Once I receive a notice, I go through it and then find out whether the issue can be raised in the present form and in the present Session. Then, you will get an opportunity. Keep that in mind. So, you will have to bear with me. Nowadays, I have developed a new system. Whenever there is opportunity and time available, I go through names of the Members on Zero Hour submissions as well as Special Mentions and if those Members are present in the House, then I call them and give them an opportunity. So, that has to be understood.

MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

1. Need to Implement the Recharge Plan for Jawai Dam in Western Rajasthan

SHRI OM PRAKASH MATHUR: I want to make my point about the recharge of Jawai Dam, the largest dam in western Rajasthan. This dam was completed in 1957, but it has been filled only eight to ten times in all these years. This is irrigating about 40 thousand hectares of land in 40 villages. We have demanded that additional water of the Sabarmati river should be brought to the Jawai dam. Its DPR was also almost prepared and Rs 12 crore was also sanctioned but till date it was not paid any attention. Jawai Dam is the lifeline of not only western Rajasthan but for the entire Marwar. Now, more than one million population of about 40 villages is getting drinking water from it. Recently 500 more villages have been added to it, but the land of farmers remains dry even today. Therefore, I would urge the government to complete the Jawai recharge scheme at the earliest.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

2. Need to Ensure Proper Data Analysis for OBCs in Census 2021

SHRI RAJEEV SATAV: The OBC census has been demanded for many years. The government had also assured in 2018 to get the Census of OBCs done. But the OBC column has been removed from the census. Reasonable benefits to OBCs can be provided only after their census is done. Therefore, the government is urged that the government should immediately think for conducting OBC census.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

3. Problems being Faced by Spice Exporters

SHRI G.V.L. NARASIMHA RAO: During nine months of COVID, in 2020, our spices exports have increased by 20 per cent. Several exporters encountered difficulties with regard to settlement of

payments as some unscrupulous people in some countries create difficulties. So, the Ministry of External Affairs and the concerned Missions in the respective countries should come forward to lend assistance to them by way of settling disputes as per the existing local mechanism in those countries. Restrictions are imposed in some countries on imports from our country but not on the imports from other countries on similar product. So, this kind of double standards actually deprive our farmers from getting right value for their produce and deprive exporters to export to high-value market like Mexico. Therefore, I request both the Ministries to take note of this and set up a helpdesk in every Mission where our exporters can approach for redressal of their problems related to payments.

(Shri Subhash Chandra Singh, Dr. Amar Patnaik, Dr. Sasmit Patra and Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti associated.)

4. Need to Reduce GST on Cancer Treatment Drugs

SHRI SUJEET KUMAR: Cancer has become a major health concern in our country. In fact, it is the second major cause of death, after heart disease. It impacts the people belonging to the lower socio-economic strata of our society. The proportion of expenditures, directly paid by the patients with a lower-medium income, is very high. There is an urgent need for lowering the prices of cancer drugs in our country to make these life-saving drugs available and affordable to the patients belonging to the poor segments of the society. One of the identified ways to reduce the prices of cancer drugs is through deduction of GST on cancer drugs. Before the GST regime, in most of the States, the cancer drugs were exempted from the excise duties, the custom duties, and VAT. But, today, in the GST regime, most of the drugs used for cancer treatment are falling under 12 per cent GST slab. I would like to request the GST Council to consider this justified demand for reducing the GST on the cancer drugs.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

5. Need to Allow Admissions for Academic Year 2020-21 in Respect of Diploma in Elementary Education without Treating it as Zero Year

SHRIMATI SEEMA DWIVEDI: All schools and colleges remained closed in 2020 during Corona period and their classes run online, but D.El.Ed. Students of the school were deprived of it due to not conducting the entrance examination during the corona period. The closure of colleges and schools across the country in the year 2020-21 had an impact on the lives of both teachers and students. 2020-21 session has become zero in schools under the Diploma in Elementary Education causing problems for students and teachers. There is no admission of students in these colleges, due to which the fees have not been deposited in the colleges and the teachers have not been able to get salary. I want to request the government that D.El.Ed. Colleges will have admission for the year 2021-22 but the admission which has not been done in the year 2020-21, should be included separately in the year 2021-22.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

6. Increasing Cases of Phone Tapping in Various Parts of Country

SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV: As per the Constitution of India, no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure of law. No person's telephone can be tapped without rules. Telephones of citizens of India are being tapped. Not only they are being tapped, but the Indian Telegraph Act is being violated. This right of 6 crore people of Rajasthan is being violated. In this country every citizen has the right to live a respectable life. I want to request that the right to privacy of citizens of the country should be protected. Illegally tapping of People's telephone should be stopped.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

7. Problem of Mobile Network in Odisha

***SHRIMATI MAMATA MOHANTA:** I wish to draw attention to the issue of mobile networks and Internet in most of the rural areas in my state Odisha. There are 30 districts in Odisha and most of the districts are facing the problem of mobile phone network. Nowadays, mobile networks and Internet are very important. Online classes are being held all over the country due to Corona. In my district of Mayurbhanj, we have network problems in different villages including most Blocks. So I urge the government to look into the issue and act accordingly. If the installation works of mobile towers are taken up on priority basis, the public will be benefitted.

(Several Hon'ble Members associated.)

8. Large Number of Pending Prohibition Cases Causing Delay in Disposal of Other Cases in Bihar

SHRI A.D. SINGH: Policy on Prohibition has impacted the Judiciary in a very negative manner in Bihar. As on February of this year, 2,90,000 cases are pending in the lower courts; 5,600 cases are pending in the High Court for bail. It is all related to prohibition. The delay in judicial decisions has a very bad impact on the society and on the law and order situation. The people are losing faith on the system. There is growing despair and desperation among the people of Bihar. The sedition law is not being implemented in my State. I want that normal cases should not be delayed because of the prohibition cases. This part of the law should not impact the speedy disbursement of justice for other civil and criminal cases.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

* Spoke in Odia.

9. Need to route all Major Trains Passing via Cuttack in Odisha

***SHRI SUBHASH CHANDRA SINGH:** I would like to speak about some issues of Odisha. Cuttack is not just district. Cuttack is a hub of Odisha, a judicial hub, an educational centre of the State and a commercial centre. Many trains ply via Cuttack but some of the important trains do not go to Cuttack. Even the intercity trains are not routed via Cuttack. There are four major trains that go to Gujarat but none of them goes via Cuttack. As a result of that, most of the plumbers and labourers have to go to Bhubaneswar to catch their trains. A new and second railway station at Naraj has become operational, but it is yet to be developed. No trains have their halt at that station. I urge upon the Government to modernize Cuttack railway station and redevelop the railway station at Naraj. All the major trains may be run via this station.

(Dr. Sasmit Patra, Dr. Amar Patnaik, Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti, Shri Prashanta Nanda and Shri Sujeet Kumar associated.)

10. Problems being Faced by Tourism Sector in Agra

SHRI HARDWAR DUBEY: Today there is a great need to promote the tourism industry and provide more and more facilities to the tourists. The Taj Mahal is one of the seven wonders of the world. Millions of tourists come to Agra every day to see the Taj Mahal. The country earns foreign exchange from it. There is a birthplace of Lord Krishna in Mathura district, 50 km from here. Mathura also attracts millions of tourists. Tourists come to Bharatpur to see birds, 50 km from there. 'Khanwa Ka Maidan' is also very important as Rana Sanga and Babur fought in 1527 here. I also demand that this place also be made a tourist place.

(Shri Subhash Chandra Singh, Dr. Fauzia Khan, Shri Syed Zafar Islam, Dr. Sasmit Patra and Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti associated.)

* Spoke in Odia.

11. Need to Include Obesity and Asthma in Category of Co-Morbidity Conditions for Covid-19 Vaccination

SHRIMATI PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI: Vaccination campaigns include people over 45 years of age with other co-morbidities. Asthma and obesity are not in co-morbidity guidelines. I request the government to issue co-morbidity guidelines so that maximum number of people can benefit from it. Apart from this, the Sadhu Samaj should also be given priority in the vaccination campaign.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

12. Need to Enact Strict Law to Stop Adulteration of Milk

SHRI JUGALSINH MATHURJI LOKHANDWALA: I want to raise the issue of adulteration in milk. The immunity of people decreases due to consumption of adulterated milk, as a result thereof people are getting infected with many diseases. I request the government that stringent punishment be given to those who indulge in adulterants of milk.

(Dr. Amee Yajnik, Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti, Dr. Sasmit Patra, Shri Ramkumar Verma and Shrimati Sampatiya Uikey associated.)

13. Concern over Poor Families Returning to Traditional Fuels due to L.P.G. Price Rise

SHRI AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH: Domestic LPG prices have increased drastically during the last few months. This is causing a lot of difficulty to the poor people. Now gas subsidy is also not been deposited in the people's account. Most people are adopting traditional sources of fuel.

Need for Financial and Medical Aid for Children Suffering from Spinal Muscular Atrophy[#]

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN), responding to the matter, said: The hon. Member stated that there is only one medicine to treat this disease. It costs about Rs.16 crore. He also stated that there is a tax component of Rs.7 crore on it. All the life-saving drugs imported for personal use are exempt from basic customs duty. Therefore, import of stated medicine for personal use for treatment of spinal muscular atrophy is entitled to this concession. Ad hoc exemptions from the IGST have been allowed for such imports on a case to case basis where a request is received. These exemptions are subsequently placed before the GST Council.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

1. Demand for Doubling and Electrification of Railway Line from Manmad to Nanded

DR. FAUZIA KHAN: Marathwada is a backward area of Maharashtra State. The rail route from Manmad to Nanded is required to be electrified apart from the work of doubling of railway line. This route connects the State of Andhra Pradesh and goes through the agrarian areas. It is a very busy route with high freight and interstate trains. So, this line should be doubled and electrified.

(Dr. Sasmit Patra, Shri Rajeev Satav and Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti associated.)

[#] Raised by Shri Vivek K. Tankha on 17.03.2021

2. Demand for Approving the Proposal of Chhattisgarh Government for Assistance in the Processing and Marketing of Horticulture and Forest Products

SHRIMATI CHHAYA VERMA: In the Vananchal region of Chhattisgarh, farmers are not getting fair price due to lack of proper processing and sale of medicinal and horticulture crops. The Government of Chhattisgarh has also requested the Centre in this regard. Therefore, I demand that Chhattisgarh be supported by the Centre for proper processing and sale of medicinal and horticulture crops.

(Dr. Fauzia Khan, Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti, Dr. Sasmit Patra, Dr. Amar Patnaik and Shri Rajmani Patel associated.)

3. Demand for Launching Special Drive for Compassionate Appointments within a Fixed Time-Frame in Government Departments

CH. SUKHRAM SINGH YADAV: When a government employee dies during his service period, his family becomes destitute. There is a provision to give employment to any person of such family on compassionate ground, but it is painful that due to some reasons, employment is not being given on compassionate ground now. I demand that such appointments be made by all departments within a certain time limit by running special campaigns and until that compassionate appointment is made, the family should be paid allowance.

(Dr. Fauzia Khan, Dr. Amar Patnaik, Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti, Dr. Sasmit Patra, and Shri Vishambhar Prasad Nishad associated.)

4. Demand to Approve Conservation Plan for Historical Excavation Site at Navratangarh in Jharkhand

SHRI SAMIR ORAON: Many statues and architectural relics have been found during excavations at Navaratangarh in Jharkhand. The Archaeological Department of India is trying to declare it a national heritage for its preservation. There is also the famous Kapilnath temple here. Therefore, for the conservation of Navratnagadh, the detailed conservation plan should be approved by the Archaeological Department of India as soon as possible.

(Prof. Manoj Kumar Jha, Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti, Dr. Amar Patnaik and Dr. Sasmit Patra associated.)

5. Demand for Stop Disinvestment in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant

SHRI AYODHYA RAMI REDDY: The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is the main source of employment for the people of Andhra Pradesh. We must preserve better performing PSUs rather than disinvesting them. We can support the loss-making PSUs by using modern management methods and technology. I urge the government to stop disinvestment of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

6. Demand to Declare Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project as National Project

SHRI NEERAJ DANGI: The availability of ground water is very less in Rajasthan. In view of the crisis of drinking water, in the year 2017, the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project was sent to the Central Water Commission for its approval. With this project, water will be available in 13 districts of Rajasthan up to 2051. Therefore, this project should be implemented quickly by giving it the status of a national project.

(Dr. Fauzia Khan, Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti, Dr. Sasmit Patra and Shri Shaktisinh Gohil associated.)

DISCUSSION ON THE WORKING OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM

SHRI K.R. SURESH REDDY, initiating the discussion, said: The Ministry of Tourism seems to be worst affected due to Covid. Unfortunately, the support which the Ministry was expecting did not reflect in the Budget. According to NITI Aayog and the Standing Committee Reports, Tourism sector contributes five per cent to the GDP, accounts for 12.9 per cent of jobs leading to 8.8 crore direct and indirect jobs in our country. In this perspective, look at this year's Budget allocation to this Ministry, which is Rs. 2,027 crores and which roughly comes to 0.06 per cent of the Expenditure Budget. This is a total mismatch. The main Budget emphasised heavily on disinvestment, monetisation, innovation, and, of course, we see new initiatives like bringing 'Drinking Water' into the Ministry of Health. Similarly, time has come for the Ministry of Tourism to take such initiatives because the coming years will definitely be a big boom and we have to be ready to face this. On the lines of initiatives which the Ministry of Health took for taking in the 'Drinking Water', time has come for the Ministry of Tourism also to link up with other ministries, which benefit out of tourism, be it Railways, be it Jal Shakti, be it Medical and Health, and so many other departments. So, the Ministry should get integrated into such other ministries. This would enhance the tourism potential. It would also help the concerned ministry in generating revenue and also exploiting the full potential of tourism in our country. Of course, this cannot be achieved by the Minister alone. He needs the support of the Cabinet. If this is done, it would really be path-breaking. The Government should promote tourism and make the Prime Minister the face of tourism so that the Department can benefit. But it is an opportunity for the Ministry to take advantage of the kind of potential which is available there. I am sorry to say that the revival incentives which the Ministry had offered to the tourism industry, are not enough. Most of the tourism related people, be it tourist guides, be it tour operators, are washed off. They are not even existing to avail these facilities. The time has come when you have to provide liquidity. Various tourism associations have also given some recommendations for economic support and for policy support.

In the Minister's reply, I would like him to reflect on the initiatives they have taken on those recommendations. The NITI Aayog has suggested that foreign tourists which are only 1.23 per cent may be increased to 3 per cent. As I suggested, the Standing Committee Report, the NITI Aayog's comments and reports are something the Ministry needs to look into. We have the Bhadrachalam temple in Telangana. I request the Minister to give the sanction to the proposal sent by the Government of Telangana for this. And the Yadadri temple which is coming up in Telangana is something which needs to be supported by the Government of India.

SHRI SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA: India has always been very important from tourism and cultural point of view. Tourism accounted for five per cent of the total GDP for 2018-19. This sector generates 13 per cent of employment. In 2014, when the Government came to power, the country was ranked 65th in terms of tourism, but in 2019 we reached 34th rank. The way the Government of India has focused on tourism, very soon we will achieve the first rank in the whole world. Our budget for the tourism sector has increased in the last five years. In the budget of 2021-22, Rs. 2,026.77 crore has been allocated for the tourism sector. This year, the Government of India has increased it by 61 per cent. An amount of Rs. 950 crores has been provided for infrastructural reforms in tourism. This will greatly benefit tourists from home and abroad. This Government has given a lot fillip to air connectivity. Also, with increasing rail connectivity, people are doing more pilgrimage. Today trains are packed to capacity. All types of people, whether the poor or the rich, are associated with the tourism sector and are benefiting from it. Today people from other countries are coming to India to protect themselves from Covid-19 and thereby promoting tourism in India. This has been our biggest achievement. Today, Uttar Pradesh is becoming a hot tourist destination. You must have seen that the foundation stone of Shri Ram Temple was discussed all over the world. Now, with grandeur of Ayodhya growing, people are attracted towards it. Now the grand corridor from the Ganges to the Kashi Vishwanath temple is fully ready. That is why the number of tourists in India has increased. In 2019, 10.89 million foreign tourists had visited India and

the number of domestic tourists stood at 1,854.9 million. In 2019, we received foreign exchange worth Rs. 2 lakh, 10 thousand, 981 crore from tourism. According to the Indian Tourism Statistics Report, in 2019 Uttar Pradesh ranked first in terms of attracting domestic tourists, while Uttar Pradesh stood third in attracting foreign tourists. Now when the Ram temple is built there, tourism will naturally increase further. Now a large number of people are also going to Goa, Kerala. Today foreigners want to see Jammu and Kashmir. Now the people of the country are visiting Jammu and Kashmir. Our Government has contributed significantly to transform Jammu and Kashmir. The attraction will increase towards Gujarat after the construction of the world's largest statue of Sardar Patel and the world's largest stadium in the state. We have many pilgrimages here - Shri Badrinath, Shri Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Hemkund Sahib, Somnath of Gujarat, Dwarka, Jagannath Temple of Odisha, Konark Sun Temple, Chilka Lake, Rameswaram of South Temples, Kanyakumari, Tirupati Balaji, Sai Temple in Maharashtra, Kamakhya Temple in Assam, Deoghar of Jharkhand, Sarnath Temple in Varanasi, Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Vindhyachal Temple, Bodhi Gaya of Gaya and Tarakeswar Nath and Kali Temple in Bengal. These are all preferred pilgrim destinations. It is true that India has achieved a unique place in the field of tourism. I would like to thank the Government for this because it is taking India towards development through culture and tourism. There are countless temples from South India to North India, which have a history of thousands of years. More attention should be paid to Bateshwar as there is a cluster of 200 temples there. It is my request to the Hon. Minister that if that place is developed, then it can become a very big destination of pilgrimage. The views expressed to promote tourism must be systematically promoted and disseminated. India may figure at rank one in this field if it is advertised to promote Indian culture and tourism.

SHRI G.C. CHANDRASHEKHAR: Travel makes the man wiser and the country he visits richer. Hence, our focus on tourism is most important. But the current Budget allocation is 19 per cent lesser than that of last year. The Government has announced some new

schemes and some of the important programmes are under review. To promote the domestic tourism, the Government has introduced the PRASAD Scheme in 2015. But, only 11 out of 26 projects have been completed. Tourism is the second largest foreign exchange earners in India. The tourism industry employs more than 75 million skilled and unskilled people. Tourism is largest service industry in India which contributes 10 per cent of national GDP. Indian tourism industry accounted for Rs. 16.91 lakh crores and 9 per cent of the total employment in India. But, this industry has been hit badly by Corona and there is an estimated revenue loss of Rs. 95,000 crores in both organized and unorganized sectors of this industry. The Indian Domestic Travelers and FTAs witnessed a significant decline in 2020. Tour operators and agencies and hotels are expected to incur heavy loss. So, Government needs to adopt the new tourism strategy with PPP model. I propose to establish a regulatory body which will monitor the products and services for the international and domestic tourists. Under 'UDAN' Scheme, India has a potential for air connectivity across the States. Charter tourism should be encouraged by simplifying the process. I also propose to have a single window process of permission to the charter flight. We need to create SEZ for tourism in and around tourist destinations. I propose that hotels, restaurants and resorts across the country be included in the Concurrent List. Moreover, MAT waiver at least for next one year is required. The Government of India should consider reduction in GST rate on room tariff and specified services provided by tour operators and travel agents. Also, tax holiday should be introduced for a specified period to safeguard the interest and revival of such service providers. Also, online tax aggregators are required for tax collection at source. The unorganized sector workers need to be taken care immediately. The Governments across the world are trying to review back visitors from domestic and international markets. Some countries have effectively mitigated the impact of the pandemic and have reduced the VAT on all modes of transport. I hope the Central Government will revive and help to save the industry.

SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN: The COVID pandemic has affected people and businesses worldwide triggering a global economic crisis. Tourism and hospitality businesses are profoundly affected by Covid-19. The travel and tourism industry's employment loss is predicted to be 100 million worldwide and almost half of them are in India. The pandemic has not only affected economically but also socially. The tourism industry is the most dynamic sector that benefits many other sectors and those sectors have also been badly affected due to this pandemic. There is a drop of international tourists by about 80 per cent which has led to severe financial problems. India is a major destination for many international tourists, creating several employment opportunities and generating enormous taxes. The Indian tourism industry has created about 87.5 million jobs with 12.75 per cent of total employment thereby contributing INR 194 billion to India's GDP. Tourism and its allied sectors is a major source of revenue and employment in our country. The Government needs to allocate more funds and spend them judiciously to promote tourism sector in the coming years. Tourism forecasting is one of the significant areas of research. It needs to be encouraged by both the Centre and the States. The Governments across the world are trying to woo back visitors from domestic and international markets. It is necessary to measure the losses caused due to pandemic so that policies can be redesigned to manage tourism activities. Therefore, the Government of India and the State Governments must try to get accurate forecasting of the number of foreign tourists. The Government needs to focus on each one of the five elements - Access, Accommodation, Attractions, Activities, and Amenities - with utmost care. I urge upon the Government to devote more time and energy to design schemes and allocate generous funds to make tourism and its allied industries survive and also to thrive.

SHRI SUJEET KUMAR: Tourism is a major engine of economic growth globally and in our country it is an important source of employment and earning foreign exchange. Tourism contributes about five per cent of India's GDP and accounts for about 12 per cent of the jobs that are created in the country. But due to COVID-19, the year 2020 has been one of the worst years for tourism industry. The

Ministry has been allocated 19 per cent less fund compared to the previous year's allocation. Allocation to the Ministry has consistently been lesser than the projected requirement and demand which is undesirable. The Government should have announced tourism sector-specific package under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package and save, at least, 30-35 million jobs which are at the risk of extinction. Foreign tourist arrivals in the country is not very encouraging. We have 40 UNESCO World Heritage sites, 6th largest number of sites in the world. However, India's rank in Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum is only 34th. The NITI Aayog has targeted to increase the international tourist arrivals to India to 3 per cent of the total global tourists. But, with the poor tourism infrastructure available, it seems not to be achieved. Connectivity is another key issue. Railways can play a crucial role in promoting tourism in India because of its wide reach. To me, there should be representation for tourism in the Railway Board to frame tourism-related policies. In case of connectivity by road and air, closer coordination must be established with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The Ministry of Tourism has identified 50 important tourist destinations where road connectivity must be established. Only 21 of 46 tourism sector routes included under the UDAN-3 Scheme have been operationalized. I request that these aspects may be look into. Dhanu Yatra, an ethnic, theatrical presentation of Krishna Leela should be recognized as a National Festival. An institute of hotel management should be established in Western Odisha, either at Sambalpur or Rourkela, to meet the growing needs of the hotel industry for quality manpower. Sant Kabhi Bheema Bhoi's place of work, Joranda and Sonapur, should be developed to attract world attention. The site of Puspagiri and Parimalgiri Universities, Ratnagiri-Lalitgiri-Udaigiri clusters should be developed to attract more number of Buddhist tourists and, a Central University for the study of Buddhist religion and philosophy should be established. I would like to request the hon. Minister to accord National Maritime Heritage Festival status to the Bali Yatra held to commemorate the glorious tradition and rich maritime history of the seafarers of the erstwhile kingdom of Kalinga.

SHRI K.C. RAMAMURTHY: Tourism is one such sector which really impacts the economy. Now, India is at 34th position in the World Tourism Index. Domestic tourist visits have increased substantially. The idea behind the hon. Prime Minister's appeal to the people of this country of visiting, at least, 15 tourist destinations across India is to improve the domestic tourism sector. India's 'natural' advantage of having different seasons in different parts of the country has to be exploited in attracting tourists round the year. Tourism plans and packages, State-wise, have to be prepared and widely propagated across various countries. A separate programme for adventure tourism needs to be chalked out. We should chalk out a plan to see that the mining tourism is also developed. 'Cruise tourism' can also be exploited very well in view of India having a vast coastline. 'Eco tourism and Film tourism' are areas where there is a lot of potential. Domestic production houses need to be given incentives to shoot within the country. I request the Minister of Tourism to help Karnataka in promoting coastal tourism in the State in a big way as it has immense potential for development of coastal tourism. The services of seaplanes may be introduced in this area which would definitely attract large tourist population. To highlight the eco-tourism facilities available in Karnataka, sufficient publicity needs to be given. I also request the Government of India to jointly develop the mythologically sacred and important pilgrimage site of Anjanadri Hills. One of the challenges which the Ministry of Tourism is facing is the lack of infrastructure, hotels, connectivity, transportation, maintenance of sites and facilities at tourist destinations. The Government of India and the State Governments should draw up a separate plan for this. Wherever possible, Three Star hotels, by Government or through public participation, should be started in all the tourist destinations. If 'industry' status is given to hotels, restaurants, resorts, etc., it would help in promoting the tourism sector. While infrastructure projects are planned, the important aspects of connectivity of tourist spots need to be taken into consideration. The coordination between various ministries, agencies, States, UTs and Industry to promote tourism is also a big challenge. I suggest creation of an umbrella body with representatives from Ministry,

States, UTs and Industry to make plans, policies and coordinated efforts between various agencies. There should be active involvement of the local population, right from a Panchayat member to the Parliament in all the important tourist sites' protection, preservation and maintenance. I suggest that tourism and hospitality may be included in the Concurrent List to make laws which would help in pushing domestic and international tourism in the country. There should be a uniform slab of taxation for this sector. Promotion campaigns should focus mainly on the age group of 25 to 44, which constitute 40 per cent of total foreign tourist population.

SHRI T.K.S. ELANGO VAN: In the Tourism Industry throughout the world there is problem and they are affected because of the COVID pandemic, but this is the period where the Government can plan for betterment of Tourism Sector. The most dangerous issue is attack on tourists, thefts and cases of sexual abuse with women tourists. There is issue of environmental sustainability where India is at 128th position out of 140 countries. This is where the Government has to take care. The State Government should be involved in promoting tourism as they know more about these places. All our Embassies the world over should have pamphlets on the tourism spots in our country. Only, then, people will come to know that there are so many tourist attractions in this country.

SHRI AYODHYA RAMI REDDY: India is the third largest destination in terms of investment and tourism globally. It is unfortunate that the tourism sector has been one of the most severely impacted sectors of the economy in the wake of Covid pandemic. The priority for the Central and State Governments in these challenging times is to address the issues and challenges faced by this sector. It is indeed the responsibility of the Government at this point of time to handhold tourism sector which is an important pillar of our economy through policy interventions. In this respect, it is also important to see what other countries have done to revive this industry. The Government has already taken a few measures in this regard, but more comprehensive and long-term measures are needed to support this stressed sector. It is essential to pinpoint lessons learnt and prepare a roadmap to respond to future shocks to build resilience in the sector.

Another area of major concern is of issues relating to cleanliness. Though Swachh Bharat has created some awareness, it is important to continue with the drive on a continuous basis to keep this momentum. To create sustainable economic and friendly tourism in the country, it is important to create sound infrastructure and other facilities. Coordination and cooperation among States, Central Government and also local bodies is also very important. With concerted effort of all stakeholders, we can definitely revive this important segment which is the livelihood of many. Come out with the right models which the country can emulate. The state of Andhra Pradesh is promoting PPP investments in the area of tourism. With a clear vision of the Chief Minister, we are moving in the right direction. We need the support of the Government of India to take this development forward and develop Andhra Pradesh as a tourist hub in the years to come.

SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: We are talking mostly of religious tourism here and about old monuments. They were built by our ancestors. I want to know what new thing we have done? The future of tourism needs a lot of stimulus, a lot of support from the Government. We have all kinds of tourism. We have wildlife tourism. We have medical tourism. We have pilgrimage tourism. We have ecotourism. We have cultural tourism. We have wellness tourism. I want to talk about cultural and entertainment tourism which is a very important part in today's time. Indians are very fond of traveling. If you see, our domestic tourism is also very good. I talk about international tourism. People used to come from abroad to see Kashmir. But, the notion prevailing there that there is a threat to lives, there is no security, has to be fixed. Other countries do not have as many natural heritage sites as there are in India. We are very proud of it, but we also have to see how these sites are maintained and whether adequate facilities are there. There is a great need to pay attention to these things. Many tourists do not come from outside because these facilities are not available at our tourist destinations.

SHRI RAM CHANDRA PRASAD SINGH: Tourism is mainly - traveling, going from one place to another and going there to know your country and if someone goes abroad, then to know the foreign country, to know their culture, to know their food varieties.

You get acquainted with all these things in tourism. Our country has a glorious history and there are many tourist places in our country. I come from Bihar and you know the history of Bihar that it has been the land of knowledge. Be it Nalanda University, Vikramashila University, Odantpuri University, Telhada University, they have all been centers of knowledge where people used to come from abroad. Along with this, it was also the center of power. You know that the Magadha Empire lasted there for thousands of years, which at that time had a vast territory. So, we certainly have a lot of potential for tourism. If we go to Bhagalpur and Munger, we will see that there is a dolphin in the Ganges, which we all discuss. All the Buddhists come to Gaya. When they come there, they get peace. There are many people who believe in our Hindu religion all over the country and the world. They come there to pay homage to their ancestors. Rajgir is also an important site. Apart from this, we have Ramayana circuit there, we have Buddhist circuit, Jain circuit and Kanwariya path. If you approve the proposal that our Bihar government has sent, then surely the chances of tourism in Bihar will get a boost and it will also contribute to progress of the state and, in turn, of the country.

SHRIMATI JHARNA DAS BAIDYA: The hospitality and tourism sector was severely impacted by the pandemic causing a sharp decline in business and employment. One of the things which I would like to point out is that having borders with five countries, the North-east has a huge potential for various kinds of tourisms.

SHRI A.D. SINGH: In the year 2019, China received about 150 million tourists, France received about 200 million tourists and the numbers that we have is abysmally low. What is the reason? The reason is that we have not been able to sell our tourism properly abroad and we have a lack of infrastructure. There is a lack of local transport. Tourism is one area where we can generate lakhs of jobs. For this, we have to increase the Budget of tourism sector at least ten times of what it is today. In case we want to earn foreign exchange, we have to create infrastructure. There is a need of a balancing between historian, folk teller, tourists, experts and policy makers to make a holistic tourist policy. Coming back to my State of Bihar, there are rich Buddhist places in Bihar, in Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and

Kushinagar. We can have a Buddhist tourist circuit in Bihar. Sita's birthplace is there. Rajgir is there. There are many Buddhist and Jainism spots which have not been adequately popularized.

SHRI NARAIN DASS GUPTA: There are pilgrimage sites of different religions in our country. The pilgrimage site of our Sikhism is Hemkund Sahib, the Golden Temple. I believe that if the budget we allot, is spent completely, then it will not take long for us to reach the first place in the tourism sector. Along with this, I would also like to mention that there is a lot of potential in medical tourism in India. We have very good doctors here. There was a time when people of our country used to go to other countries for treatment, but now things have completely changed. Most of the people who come from our neighbouring countries come to us for treatment. So, I would like to say that we have a lot of potential in medical tourism here. Guide is not available for tourists coming from outside here. For this also, we should open training centres. We should make desks in our embassies abroad so that people coming for medical treatment and pilgrimage should get information and facilities.

SHRIMATI CHHAYA VERMA: India is a country of spiritual tourism. There are many types of tourism that exist in India. Tourism is the largest service industry in India, but its contribution to GDP is steadily decreasing. The tourism sector has come to a complete standstill in the Corona period. Rail is a very good means of transport but the cost of rail travel has doubled. Statues of great men should be installed in all the states, like the statue of Iron Man Sardar Patel ji so that tourism of all states can be boosted and their revenue will increase. In view of the earnings in the tourism sector, some private companies are engaged in grabbing the heritage sites. Privatization of heritage sites is underway. The worth visiting places of the states should be brought under the tourism circuit and they should be developed. Our Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh has identified the Ram Vanagman Path and made necessary budget allocation for it. The government should help the state by bringing this work under the 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme'. There is a temple of Kaushalya Mata in Chhattisgarh, which is the maternal place of Lord Shri Ram. The state government is developing that place as a tourist

destination. The state government recently celebrated World Tribal Day, which was discussed and appreciated everywhere. There are many famous tourist places and pilgrimage sites in Chhattisgarh that need to be protected and developed. Due to their development, people will also get employment and the state will also prosper.

SHRI BRIJLAL KHABRI: The tourism sector provides employment to 13 per cent people. The livelihood of the people of Agra depends on tourism. Uttar Pradesh has two major circuits. The first is the Ramayana circuit. A grand statue of Lord Rama, 251 meters high, is being built on the banks of the Saryu River by the Chief Minister of the state. It will be the largest statue in the world. Ayodhya will be a center of attraction not only in the country, but also abroad. The second is the Buddhist circuit, which is related to Lord Buddha. Wherever Lord Buddha went, the whole area comes under the Buddhist circuit. Banaras is emerging as a world tourist destination. The Government of Uttar Pradesh renamed Pipparahwa as Kapilavastu in 1988, which is also a Legislative Assembly constituency. Apart from this, the Ministry of Railways has contemplated laying a new railway line from Basti to Kapilvastu. The Railway Minister is requested to connect Kapilvastu, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, with the railway line. With the development of Kapilavastu, tourists coming to Lumbini, Nepal will stay at Kapilavastu. Air connectivity and rail connectivity should be provided to Kapilavastu.

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****Supplement covering rest of the proceedings is being issued separately.