

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
TOURISM
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:241
ANSWERED ON:07.02.2014
DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST TOURISM
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Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has identified the potential of Buddhist tourism in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has identified certain Buddhist circuits for development of Buddhist tourism in the country, particularly in Bihar;
- (c) if so, the details thereof along with the progress made thereunder and the funds allocated and sanctioned therefor, State/UT-wise; and
- (d) the further measures taken by the Government for development and promotion of Buddhist tourism in the country during the 12th Plan along with rail/road linkages and other infrastructural facilities provided for development of these circuits?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TOURISM (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) (DR. K. CHIRANJEEVI)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.+241 ANSWERED ON 07.02.2014 REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST TOURISM.

(a): Yes, Madam. The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) attempts to identify integrated tourism circuits based on India's unique civilization, heritage, and culture including Buddhist Tourism in partnership with States, the private sector and other agencies.

(b): The Ministry of Tourism has identified following three circuits to be developed as Buddhist Circuits in the country with the help of Central Government/State Government/Private stake holders:

Circuit 1: The Dharmayatra or the Sacred Circuit - This will be a 5 to 7 days circuit and will include visits to Gaya (Bodhgaya), Varanasi (Sarnath), Kushinagar, Piparva (Kapilvastu) with a day trip to Lumbini in Nepal.

Circuit 2: Extended Dharmayatra or Extended Sacred Circuit or Retracing Buddha's Footsteps - This will be a 10 to 15 day circuit and will include visits to Bodhgaya (Nalanda, Rajgir, Barabar caves, Pragbodhi Hill, Gaya), Patna (Vaishali, Lauriya Nandangarh, Lauriya Areraj, Kesariya, Patna Museum), Varanasi (Sarnath), Kushinagar, Piparva (Kapilvastu, Shrivasti, Sankisa) with a day trip to Lumbini in Nepal.

Circuit 3: Buddhist Heritage Trails (State Circuits).

i. Jammu and Kashmir - Ladakh, Srinagar (Harwan, Parihaspora) and Jammu (Ambaran). ii. Himachal Pradesh - Dharamshala, Spiti, Kinnaur and Lahaul. iii. Punjab - Sanghon. iv. Haryana - Jind (Assan), Yamunanagar(Sugh). v. Maharashtra -Aurangabad (Ajanta, Ellora, Pithalkora Caves), Pune (Karla Caves), Mumbai (Kanheri Caves), Pune (Bhaja Caves) and Nashik (Pandavleni Caves). vi. Andhra Pradesh - Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, Vizag (Borra Caves, Salihundum Caves). vii. Madhya Pradesh - Sanchi, Satdhara, Andher, Sonari, Murulkurd. viii. Odisha (Dhuli, Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udaygiri, Langudi, Khandagiri). ix. Chhattisgarh - Sirpur. x. West Bengal - Kolkata (Indian Museum) xi. Sikkim - Rumtek, Enchay and other Monasteries. xii. Arunachal Pradesh -Tawang and Bomdila. While identifying the designated circuits, efforts have been made to plug infrastructure gaps viz- rail/road linkages and provide better amenities to tourists.

(c): The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) for tourism projects, including projects for Buddhist sites, based on the proposals received from State Governments/UT Administrations which are complete in all respects as per the Scheme Guidelines, inter-se priority and subject to availability of funds. The development, promotion and implementation of tourism projects, is primarily the responsibility of the respective State Government/Union Territory Administration (UT). The State-wise details of projects sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism at various tourist sites including Buddhist sites, during 2012-13 and 2013-14 (till 31.12.2013) are given at Annexure-I & Annexure-II.

(d): A loan agreement for an amount equivalent to Japanese Yen 7331 million was signed in the year 2003 with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Phase II of Ajanta Ellora Conservation and Tourism Development Project. The validity of this loan period has been extended till July 2014.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the Departments of Tourism of the Governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and

International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group) have entered into an agreement to cooperate in upgrading the quality of services and goods provided for tourists along the Buddhist Circuits in UP and Bihar. Under this agreement, the signatories are designing a strategy aimed at a broader integrated Buddhist Circuit Tourism Development Project, for both Buddhist pilgrims and those wishing to experience the essence of Buddhist heritage.

To showcase India's advantage in having several Buddhist sites and to make a new initiative in the emerging area of spiritual tourism, Ministry of Tourism regularly organizes Buddhist Conclaves and Conferences. A three day International Conclave on Buddhism and Spiritual Tourism was organized by the Ministry of Tourism in Delhi followed by a visit to Bodh Gaya, from February 17-19, 2004. An International Buddhist Heritage Conference was organized in Nalanda, on February 6-7, 2010 followed by tours to Bodh Gaya. The theme for the Conference was "Experience Buddhism in the land of Origin". The International Buddhist Conclave was organized by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar from 29th September to 1st October, 2012 at Varanasi and Bodh Gaya.