

India role in achieving the national objectives



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India has the right ingredients and potential for the development of the tourism industry. It has a varied and interesting fare to offer to tourists. We have in India, hill resorts of Kashmir-the heaven on earth, Kulu and Manali-the valley of Gods, the Ajanta and Ellora caves, the majestic Taj Mahal, erotic sculptures of Khajuraho, the Buddhist stupas of Sanchi, Sun Temple of Konark, Hawa Mahal of Jaipur, beautiful sea beaches of Goa and Kovalam, etc. Tourism has emerged as an instrument for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. During 2003-2004, direct employment in the tourism sector was estimated to be 21.

54 million. Tourism also promotes national integration and international understanding and gives support to local handicrafts and cultural activities. Tourism in India has grown substantially over the last three decades. Foreign tourist arrivals in India recorded an increase of 13.2 per cent during the year 2005 as compared to the year 2004. India's share in the world tourism market during the year 2005 was 0.49 per cent, as against 0.44 per cent in 2004.

Foreign exchange earnings during the year 2005 were Rs. 25,172 crore as against Rs. 21,828 crore in 2004. During the year 2004, about 366 million domestic tourist visits were made and for the year 2005 it was estimated at 382 million visits.

Domestic tourism plays a vital role in achieving the national objectives of promoting social and cultural cohesion and national integration. its contribution to the generation of employment is very high. With the increase in income levels and emergence of a powerful middle class, the potential for

domestic tourism has grown substantially during the last few years. In order to further accelerate the development of tourism in the country the thrusts during the Ninth Five Year Plan are: (a) development Of infrastructure; (b) product development and diversification; (c) development of eco-adventure sports and wildlife tourism; (d) exploring new source markets- (e) Environmental protection and cultural preservation of national heritage- (f) launching of national image building and marketing plans in key markets; (g) providing inexpensive accommodation in different tourist centres; (h) streamlining of facilitation procedures at airports; (i) human resource development; (j) creating awareness and public participation; and (k) facilitating private sector participation in the development of infrastructure, etc. India's efforts to promote tourism have been monumental. Besides promoting India through the electronic media for the first time, the tourism department has also helped in organising festivals of India abroad and smaller promotional programmes for travel agents, tour operators and the media.

A festival of India was organised in Germany from September 1991. Similar festivals were earlier held in U. S. A., U.

K., U. S. S. R., Sweden and France. The Department of Tourism has been following a two dimensional policy of strengthening the infrastructure at home and undertaking promotional activities abroad to attract more tourists. A third dimension has recently been added in the form of the development of domestic tourism.

By and large, the schemes intended primarily for international tourism are in the Central sector and those meant for domestic tourism are included in the State sector. With a view to diversifying tourist attractions, development of beach and mountain resorts has been taken in hand. A new approach to the planning and development of tourist infrastructural facilities was given by introducing the concept of "travel circuits" whereby facilities would be developed at tourist centres falling along identified travel circuits. By way of promoting tourism abroad, publicity is being done through tourist offices located in North America Europe, Australia and Asia. The Department of Tourism has constructed "Forest Lodges" in the bird sanctuary at Bharatpur and the wildlife sanctuaries at Kaziranga, Sasang if Jaldapara and Dandeli. To promote youth tourists "youth hostels" have bee"