

# Shri G. Kishan Reddy chairs the meeting of Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Tourism Administrations in Kashi(Varanasi ) today

## Action Plan for “Year of Tourism Development in the SCO Space in 2023” adopted

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Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India chaired the Meeting of Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Tourism Administrations held in ‘Kashi’ (Varanasi) on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The meeting was attended by H.E. Yerzhan Yerkinbayev, Vice Minister of Culture and Sports, Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, H.E. Lu Ying Chuan, Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of Republic of China, H.E. Samat Bekturovich Shatmanov, Deputy Minister of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy, Government of Kyrgyz Republic and H.E. Azamov Ulugbek Axmatovich, First Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of Republic of Uzbekistan in person and through online mode by H.E. Vladimir Evgenyovich Ilyichev, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development, Federation of Russia, H.E. Muminzod Kamoliddin, Chairman of the Tourism Development Committee, Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and H.E. Aun Chaudhry, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism and Sports, Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The meeting was also attended by Senior Officials from Departments of Tourism from the SCO member countries, Representatives from Secretariat of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

The SCO Tourism Ministers finalised and approved the Joint Action Plan prepared for implementing the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on the Development of Cooperation in Tourism. The approved Joint Action Plan has the following prioritised components -

- Promotion of the SCO tourism brand.
- Promotion of the cultural heritage of the SCO Member States in tourism.
- Sharing and Exchange of information and digital technologies in tourism.
- Promotion of mutual cooperation in medical and health tourism.
- Improving the quality of services.



As per the agreed Joint Action Plan, the member countries will undertake various activities such as SCO tourism exhibition, SCO Food Festival, Webinar & Seminar on tourism, conference and expert session on promotion and development of tourism in the region.

The meeting also adopted the Action Plan for “Year of Tourism Development in the SCO Space in 2023.” This document identified a list of activities and events to promote and showcase Tourism products of SCO member States.

A Joint Statement by the Head of the Tourism Administrations of the SCO member countries was also issued post the meeting. The Meeting of Heads of SCO Tourism Administrations was preceded by two Expert Working Group (EWG) meetings held under the Chairmanship of India. The 1<sup>st</sup> EWG meeting was held online on 31.01.2023 whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the EWG was held in physical mode on 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in ‘Kashi’ (Varanasi).

'Kashi' has been declared as the First Tourism & Cultural Capital of SCO. This recognition will bring the city to a greater prominence in the global tourist map. The initiative will garner more attention by highlighting the spiritualism, mysticism, learning of Kashi which is also the cradle of Indian civilization. The next meeting of the SCO Heads of Tourism Administrations will be held in Kazakhstan in 2024.

Four bilateral meetings of India with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan were also held on the sidelines of the Meeting of the Heads of SCO Tourism administrations.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization founded on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai. The SCO currently comprises Eight Member States (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).

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