

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF TOURISM

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3338
ANSWERED ON 21.08.2025

PRASHAD AND SWEDESH DARSHAN SCHEMES

3338 DR. ASHOK KUMAR MITTAL:

Will the Minister of **TOURISM** be pleased to state:

- (a) the reasons for India's inability to significantly increase its share in international tourist arrivals, which remains below 2 per cent globally;
- (b) the reasons for the slow implementation and underutilisation of funds in flagship schemes like Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD;
- (c) the reasons for not taking effective steps to reduce the high GST on tourism services, which renders India an expensive destination;
- (d) Government's strategy to address the critical issues of safety, particularly for women tourists, and hygiene at tourist destinations; and
- (e) the reasons why most of the destinations developed under these schemes have failed to attract significant private investment?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM

(SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT)

(a): International Tourist Arrivals depend on several factors such as connectivity, infrastructure, visa facilitation, global marketing, safety perception, purpose of travel (leisure, business, medical, education, etc.), affordability, and overall visitor experience. The Ministry of Tourism has been making continuous efforts to increase arrivals through measures such as improved air connectivity, expansion of the e-visa regime, strengthening of tourism infrastructure, and focused global marketing campaigns. According to the latest UNWTO Barometer, India was ranked 20th globally in terms of International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) in 2024, recording 20.57 million ITAs compared to 17.91 million in 2019. Consequently, India's global share of ITAs increased from 1.22% in 2019 to 1.40% in 2024 indicating a positive trajectory.

(b): Implementation of the projects sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes are undertaken by the concerned Implementing Agencies primarily State / UT implementing agencies. The land issues, clearances/ NOCs, administrative matters, adoption to TSA Model 1 etc. are some of the reasons for slow implementation and less utilization of funds in some projects.

(c): On the basis of the recommendations made by the GST Council in the past, the following steps have been taken in relation to the tourism industry with a view to reduce high GST and create uniformity in the tax structure:

- i. The rate of GST applicable on hotel rooms above Rs.7,500 has been reduced from 28% to 18%.
- ii. The rate of GST applicable on hotel rooms of Rs.7,500 and below has been streamlined at a uniform rate of 12%.
- iii. A uniform rate of GST on restaurants of 5%, without input tax credit, has been implemented irrespective of whether the restaurants are air-conditioned or not.

(d): Security of tourists is essentially a State Government subject. However, the Ministry of Tourism has taken up the matter with all State Governments/Union Territory (UT) Administrations for setting up of dedicated Tourism Police. With the efforts of Ministry of Tourism, the State Governments /UT Administrations of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh have deployed tourist police in one form or the other.

The Ministry of Tourism has set up a 24x7 Multi-Lingual Tourist Info-Helpline on the toll free number 1800111363 or on a short code 1363 in 12 Languages including 10 international languages (German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic), Hindi and English for domestic and foreign tourists to provide support service in term of information relating to Travel in India and to offer appropriate guidance to tourists in distress while travelling in India.

Further, the Government has set up a dedicated non-lapsable corpus fund - Nirbhaya Fund, being administered by Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, which can be utilized for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of women. Ministry of Tourism sanctioned Rs.16.79 crore (approx.) under the “Safe Tourism Destination for Women” Scheme to the State Government of Madhya Pradesh.

(e): While funds are provided by the Central Government under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes for implementation of projects, its operation and management including private investment at destinations is encouraged by State Governments through various incentives and providing industry status to the tourism sector.
