

India's Buddhist Diplomacy

Posted On: 24 JUL 2025 4:58PM by PIB Delhi

In the past two years, Government has facilitated two significant expositions of the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha in Southeast Asia. The first, held in Thailand from 22nd February to 19th March 2024, included relics of Buddha and his disciples, and witnessed wide public participation across four venues, with over 0.4 crores devotees in attendance. The second exposition was undertaken in Vietnam from 2nd May to 2nd June 2025, where relics from Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh, were displayed at nine locations during Vesak celebrations, drawing an estimated 1.8 crores visitors. These initiatives contributed to fostering cultural linkages with the respective countries.

The Ministry of External Affairs has conveyed that, under the ASEAN-India cooperation framework, several Southeast Asian countries have a significant Buddhist population. In this context, India is supporting ASEAN in conducting a feasibility study for the development of an ASEAN Cultural Heritage List. Additionally, a yearly ASEAN-India Tourism Ministers' Meeting is held to facilitate exchange of views and promote tourism cooperation between member nations. The year 2025 has been designated as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism, and the Government of India has announced funding of USD 5 million from the ASEAN-India Fund to support the related celebrations and initiatives.

Ministry of External Affairs has also informed that in a significant engagement aimed at enhancing spiritual and cultural ties, a high-level Thai delegation has been on a visit to Gujarat from June 18, 2025 along-with Indian delegates. Under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Plan of Action (2019-24), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) organised a 9 days trip of travel agencies to prominent Buddhist sites for 50 participants, (10 each from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam) from 2nd June 2025 to 10th June 2025 on nomination basis in coordination with Government of Uttar Pradesh and Government of Bihar.

International Tourism Mart (ITM) in Sikkim in 2025 is scheduled to have a component of business networking between the travel stakeholders of the North Eastern region with the invited global buyers, including the ASEAN countries.

Development and Promotion of tourist destinations and tourism products is primarily undertaken by the respective State Government/ Union Territory (UT) Administration. However, the Ministry of Tourism through its central sector schemes of 'Swadesh Darshan(SD)', Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (SD2.0)', 'Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD)' – a sub-scheme of Swadesh Darshan and 'Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)' complements the efforts of tourism infrastructure development by extending financial assistance to the State Governments/UT Administrations; subject to availability of funds, adherence to scheme guidelines, submission of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) by the State Government etc.

In addition, Government of India under its initiative for 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI)' has also provided financial assistance to the States for development of tourism projects.

The details of the projects including Buddhist Heritage sites sanctioned under SD, SD2.0, CBDD, PRASHAD and SASCI schemes is annexed.

This information was given by Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

Sunil Kumar Tiwari

tourism4pib[at]gmail[dot]com

(Release ID: 2147794)