

**Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministers call for stakeholders to work as a team to position Indian tourism products on a higher pedestal**  
*Infrastructure development and regional connectivity is essential for tourism development*

**NEW DELHI, 23 July 2015:** In a rare demonstration of inter-ministerial coordination to raise the profile of India's tourism sector, **Mr. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister for Civil Aviation and Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (IC), Ministry of Tourism**, shared the same platform at the **'Tourism Investors Meet' (TIM)** here today, both emphasizing the need for all stakeholders to work as a team to position the Indian tourism products on a higher pedestal.

The two-day **'Tourism Investors Meet'** organized by FICCI in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Tourism Finance Corporation of India (TFCI) concluded on a positive note with 12 Indian states showcasing their tourism products and more than 300 B2G meetings.

Speaking in a Special Ministerial Session on **'Tourism Infrastructure and Opportunities for Investment'**, Mr. Gajapathi Raju urged the industry to employ the underutilized bilaterals in civil aviation sector to give a boost to tourism sector. Responding to the issue of opening the Indian sky, Mr. Gajapathi Raju said that the country's sky had been opened up for SAARC nations.

He informed that India was amongst the few countries that had satellite navigation and it could help in making our skies safer, travel economical and environment less polluting and added that the onus was now on industry to utilize this to its advantage.

Underlining the need to speedily build the country's infrastructure to cope up with the demand and need of the country, Mr. Gajapathi Raju said that tourism sector needed the Central and State governments to work in harmony with the private sector. He urged the industry to share an actionable paper with his Ministry to take forward the agenda of promoting the sector.

**Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (IC), Ministry of Tourism**, said that the highest priority should be accorded to improving India's perception abroad. As a country, India must be looked at as a congenial and conducive environment by foreign tourists. He added that it was imperative for citizens to cherish the country's heritage and communicate its richness to visitors.

Dr. Sharma said that for tourism to thrive it was essential that infrastructure development and regional connectivity went hand-in-hand. Ministries and States need to come on-board for this and issues related to the sector must be resolved within a stipulated timeframe in a single window approach, he added.

Speaking on medical tourism, Dr. Sharma said that India has lagged behind in medical tourism despite its competitive pricing of health care delivery. For instance, a heart surgery may cost a person in Europe around Rs. 15-20 lakh but in India the same would cost approximately Rs. 2 lakh. Yet, we have not been able to realize the true potential as the sector remains unorganized, he added.

To promote tourist destinations, Dr. Sharma proposed that visual presentations and interactive audio-visual media should be employed to make the experience of visitors to heritage sites and monuments lively and engrossing. He

added that social interaction needs to be revived to showcase India's heritage on the global platform.

**Dr. Jyotsna Suri, President, FICCI**, said that foreign tourist arrivals in India in 2014 was 7.7 million with a foreign exchange earning of Rs. 120083 crore. Indian tourism grew at 10.6% while the world tourism at 4.4%. With this projected growth, the country witnesses a void as the infrastructure struggles to cope with the demand in tourism. She added that TIM has been conceptualized with the aim to bridge this gap by bringing together the policy makers and investors on the same platform.

The other eminent personalities representing the government and industry present on the occasion were **Dr. Lalit K. Panwar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; Mr. S.K. Sangar, MD, TFCI and Dr. A Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI.**

On the occasion, a **FICCI-EY** knowledge paper on '**Tourism Infrastructure: The Role States Play**' was released by the dignitaries.

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