

**To drive MICE tourism govt. working towards facilitating
e-visas for conference delegates**

First edition of 'Global MICE Travel Mart' gets under way

NEW DELHI, MAY 19, 2016. Mr. Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India & Chairman, ICPB, today assured the tourism industry that the provision of e-visas for conference delegates would soon become a reality as the government was aware that e-visas would enable Meetings Incentives, Conferences Exhibition (MICE) tourism to thrive. India offered world-class MICE facilities across the country. There was a need for creating awareness about the segment and providing end to end solutions. He added that a broad-based Task Force could be formed to kick-start the sector in India.

Addressing the first edition of **'Global MICE Travel Mart'** (GMTM) organized by FICCI jointly with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and India Convention and Promotion Bureau (ICPB), Mr. Billa said that MICE tourism was suitable for extending peak season and the spending of a foreign MICE tourist was generally more than that of other segments.

Mr. Billa said that based on research results, following a business trip, 40% of the participants return to the destination as leisure tourists and globally, the MICE segment, with a 54% market share, has overtaken the traditional business trips segment.

He said that as per a latest release by International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) more than 11,000 large scale meetings have been organized in all countries across the world. USA, Germany, Spain, UK and France are the top five countries in the world in organizing meetings. But India with its wide range of offering in tourism sector had great potential for growth.

On the occasion, a FICCI-MRSS White Paper on **'India Inbound MICE Tourism – Trends and Opportunities'** was released.

Mr. Chander Mansharamani, Vice Chairman – India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) and Managing Director - Alpcord Network Travel & conferences Management Company, said that there was a need to create awareness about MICE tourism in India. Highlighting the challenges of the sector, he added that there was a need for single window clearance and simplification of the visa process for conference delegates.

Mr. Mansharamani said that in MICE tourism there was lack of research and without having the sector's statistics it was difficult to understand the true potential of the sector. He added that ICPB would play a key role in future in the bidding process for international seminar and conferences.

Dr. Jyotsna Suri, Immediate Past President, FICCI, Chairperson – FICCI Tourism Committee and Chairperson & Managing Director – The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, said that GMTM would become an annual event and in 2017 it would be held in July. For this edition of GMTM, around 800 B2B meetings have already been prescheduled for the two days between the buyers and sellers. She added that 32 tour operators, from 12 countries, and the MICE tourism fraternity of India including the state of Jammu & Kashmir were participating as sellers to showcase India's huge potential as a MICE Tourism destination.

Dr. A Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI and Mr. Rahul Chakravarty, Director and Head – Tourism, FICCI, also shared their perspective on MICE.

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