

Standing Committee Report Summary

Potential of Tourist Spots in the country - Connectivity and Outreach

- The Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture (Chair: Mr. T.G. Venkatesh) submitted its report on the ‘Potential of Tourist Spots in the country - Connectivity and Outreach’ on July 27, 2021. The Committee suggested ways to harness the huge tourism potential of India. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** The Swadesh Darshan Scheme (SDS) was launched by the central government in 2015 for the integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country. The Committee noted that only one out of the 15 thematic circuits under the SDS has been completed so far. It recommended: (i) developing tourist sites under the Himalayan, Buddhist, and North-East circuits on a priority basis, and (ii) including more rural areas in tourism circuits to benefit the poor.
 - **Development of tourism infrastructure:** The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spirituality, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme was launched by the central government in 2015 to provide a complete religious tourism experience through planned development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations. The Committee recommended: (i) engaging the private sector in providing tourism infrastructure under the SDS and PRASHAD schemes to make them commercially viable, (ii) augmenting hotel room capacity by constructing budget hotels on the surplus land at railway stations, and (iii) providing financial support to meet funding gaps for development of tourism infrastructure.
 - **Air connectivity:** The Regional Connectivity Scheme was launched by the central government in 2016 to enhance regional air connectivity. The Committee recommended operationalising the remaining routes under this scheme to meet emerging tourist demand in less connected regions. The Committee observed that due to poor air connectivity, India’s share in international tourist arrivals is a mere 1.2%. It recommended ensuring proper air connectivity to iconic tourist sites identified by the Ministry of Tourism. This can be achieved by: (i) converting domestic airports to international airports on priority basis for sites with domestic airports only, and (ii) developing new airports for sites without direct air connectivity.
 - **Land connectivity:** The Committee recommended: (i) introducing more semi-high speed trains on the routes where maximum tourists travel, (ii) ensuring intra-state rail connectivity, and (iii) developing roadside amenities like cafeterias along highways and expressways for long distance travellers.
 - **Cruise tourism:** To promote cruise tourism in India, the Committee recommended: (i) revamping India’s port infrastructure, (ii) making cruise tourism facilities affordable for the masses, (iii) providing a complete cruise logistics service, (iv) inviting foreign cruise operators to function in India, (v) cooperating with other south-east Asian countries, and (vi) setting up a special government unit for the industry.
 - **Outreach and publicity:** The Committee noted that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the revival of international tourism will take time. To promote domestic tourism, the Committee recommended: (i) adopting digital marketing strategies to increase tourist footfall, and (ii) formulating a media strategy specifically for promoting the North-East region of India. To promote overseas tourism, the Committee recommended: (i) targeting foreign tourists and non-resident Indians through online and offline marketing strategies, and (ii) setting country-wise targets of foreign tourist arrivals to cover countries with high growth potential.
 - **Impact of COVID-19 on travel and hospitality sector:** Taking note of the massive disruption in the tourism and hospitality industry due to COVID-19, the Committee recommended: (i) temporarily suspending all working capital, principal and interest payments for the sector, and (ii) extending the time periods for repayment or restructuring of loans by entities in the sector under the relief measures announced by the central government and the Reserve Bank of India.
 - **Adventure tourism:** The Committee noted that the annual growth rate of inbound adventure tourism in India is 5-7% and that of domestic adventure tourism is 20-25%. It recommended promoting India as an adventure tourism destination and promoting amusement parks in coordination with states and union territories.

DISCLAIMER: This document is being furnished to you for your information. You may choose to reproduce or redistribute this report for non-commercial purposes in part or in full to any other person with due acknowledgement of PRS Legislative Research (“PRS”). The opinions expressed herein are entirely those of the author(s). PRS makes every effort to use reliable and comprehensive information, but PRS does not represent that the contents of the report are accurate or complete. PRS is an independent, not-for-profit group. This document has been prepared without regard to the objectives or opinions of those who may receive it.