

Protection of Indian tourism industry

*208. SHRI NARESH GUJRAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government is taking to protect the Indian tourism industry from the global meltdown; and

(b) what is the expected increase/decrease of tourist arrivals in the current year, given the present economic scenario?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) The Ministry of Tourism is taking the following steps to protect the Indian tourism industry from the global meltdown:

- (i) Providing enhanced financial support under the Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme to approved Indian travel agents, tour operators, hoteliers for sale-cum-study tours, participation in trade fairs and production of publicity material.
- (ii) Providing financial support to approved Indian travel agents, tour operators and hoteliers for projecting India as an attractive tourist destination for domestic tourists.
- (iii) Providing financial assistance to representatives of approved hospitals for promotion of Medical Tourism in overseas markets.

(b) The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during January-November, 2008 is estimated at 4.84 million, which is higher than FTAs of 4.48 million during January - November, 2007. However, the growth rate in FTAs during January-November, 2008 over the corresponding period of 2007 is only 8% as compared to growth rate of 14.8% during January-November, 2007 over the corresponding period of 2006.

Jobs for disabled persons in the private sector

*209. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL:

SHRI R.C. SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a plan was announced during the last Budget Speech to employ one lakh disabled persons in private sector in the current financial year;

(b) if so, the details of the plan;

(c) whether it is a fact that not a single appointment has been made so far under this scheme; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and what corrective measures are being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) No, Sir. However, in the budget speech of 2007-08, Government committed support for

the creation of about 100,000 jobs every year for physically challenged persons with a salary limit of Rs.25,000 per month through a Scheme wherein, Government agreed to reimburse the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) for the first three years, once the physically challenged employee is regularized and enrolled under the Scheme. Accordingly, a Central Sector Scheme of providing incentives to employers in private sector by way of bearing employer's contribution to the Employees Provident Fund Organisation and Employees State Insurance Corporation for the first three years, in respect of persons with disabilities, appointed on or after 1.4.2008 with monthly wage up to Rs 25000/- has been introduced from 1.4.2008.

While the Employees Provident Fund Organization has reported having received claims for availing the incentives under the Scheme in respect of 33 employees with disabilities so far, the Employees State Insurance Corporation has reported having covered 21 such employees so far.

(d) The following steps have been taken to intensify the implementation of the scheme:-

- Scheme was sent by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 26th February, 2008, to all Ministries/Departments of Govt. of India, all States/UTs, Chambers of Commerce & Industry, and NGOs working in the Disability Sector.
- Ministry of Labour & Employment issued necessary notification under the EPFO and ESI Act on 31.3.2008. EPFO and ESIC issued details guidelines about the scheme to their respective offices in May, 2008.
- The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has sanctioned advance amount of Rs. 1 crore and 50 lakh to EPFO and ESIC, respectively to enable them to pay employers' contribution as soon as valid claims are received.
- Advertisements about the scheme are being published in newspapers at regular intervals.
- Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment and Labour & Employment, the Employees Provident Fund Organisation and the Employees State Insurance Corporation have prominently publicised the scheme on their websites.
- Minister (SJ&E) personally wrote to all State Chief Ministers/ Administrators of UTs in August, 2008 requesting them to publicise the scheme and to have its progress monitored regularly.
- Letters were sent by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in October, 2008 to Chairmen and Chief Executives of FICCI, CII, NASSCOM, ASSOCHAM and PHDCCI requesting wide publicity of the Scheme, and to encourage their members to avail of the Scheme by appointing persons with disabilities.
- FICCI organized a National Conference on engaging industry in employment of persons with disabilities on the 17th October, 2008.
- Twenty past recipients of National Award for Best Employers of persons with disabilities were individually requested in Sept. 2008 to employ more persons with disabilities and publicize the Scheme.
- State Welfare Secretaries in a Conference held on 17-18 Oct. 2008, were requested to ensure intensive implementation of the scheme in their respective States/UTs.
- The High Level Monitoring Committee constituted for the scheme has held two meetings so far, to, *inter-alia*, chalk out steps necessary to intensify implementation of the scheme.