

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that most of the forts in Maharashtra are of historical importance and situated in the Sahyadri mountain ranges having scenic charm;

(b) whether Government is thinking to develop a few of them as tourist centres which would attract tourists;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA) : (a) to (d) Development and promotion of tourism is primarily undertaken by the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations themselves. However, Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) for tourism projects, identified in consultation and interaction with them, subject to availability of funds and *inter-se*-priority under various schemes of the Ministry.

Ministry of Tourism had sanctioned projects worth Rs. 82.67 crore to the State of Maharashtra during the Tenth Five Year Plan which included development of Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, Sinhagad, Sewri Fort, Ghodbundar Fort, Worli Fort, Bandra Fort, Sevadi Fort and Panhala Fort.

In addition, the Ministry of Tourism had also sanctioned projects worth Rs. 65.28 crore to the State during the first three years of the Eleventh Plan *i.e.* 2007-08 to 2009-10 which included a project for Major Circuit Development for Eco-Tourism in Vidarbha Region consisting a component for development of Tent Resort Centre at Narnala Fort.

Southern Splendour Train Project in Andhra Pradesh

2242. SHRI K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the State Government of Andhra Pradesh has submitted the Southern Splendour Train Project modelled on the Palace on Wheels;

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

(c) whether it is a fact that the State Government of Andhra Pradesh has requested the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India for sanction of Rs. 10 crores as Central Financial Assistance under Large Revenue Generation Scheme; and

(d) the final decision taken by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA) : (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The project for Southern Splendour Luxury Train submitted by the Andhra Pradesh Government with a project cost of Rs. 40.00 crore has been approved, in principle, under the Large Revenue Generating Scheme. However, the Government of Andhra Pradesh have not yet finalized the tie up with the Indian Railways.

Closing of Simlipal National Tourist Park

2243. SHRI BHAGIRATHI MAJHI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) the cause for closing down the Simlipal National Tourist Park of Odisha which attracts the high number of National and International tourists;
- (b) whether Government has taken any action to reopen the Park;
- (c) if so, by when the same would be reopened; and
- (d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA) : (a) to (d) The Ministry of Tourism does not declare any place as National Tourist Park. However, the Ministry of Tourism, extends financial assistance to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for tourism related projects, which are identified in consultation with them under various schemes of the Ministry.

The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned Rs. 8860.72 lakh during the first three years of the Eleventh Plan *i.e.* 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 to the Government of Odisha for various tourism related projects.

Tax holiday for budget hotels

2244. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether to speed up development of hotel rooms before Commonwealth Games due in October, Ministry of Tourism has urged Finance Ministry of extend benefits of five years tax holiday for budget hotels under construction in National Capital Region upto July 31, 2010 instead of earlier deadline of March, 2010;
- (b) whether Ministry of Tourism has urged Finance Ministry for non-inclusion of inter-state passenger tax, road tax and toll tax in GST;
- (c) whether Ministry of Tourism has demanded restoration of budget grant of Rs. 1000 crore which was reduced to Rs. 950 crores in revised estimates 2009-10; and
- (d) if so, to what extent Government has considered these suggestions?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA) : (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. With a view to the growth of new budget category hotels, on the request of Ministry of Tourism, the Finance Minister had in Budget 2007-08, announced a Five Year Tax Holiday under Section 80-ID to new hotels of 2, 3 and 4 Star category and Convention Centers which would be functional between 01.04.2007 to 31.03.2010 in the NCT of Delhi and the districts of Faridabad, Gurgaon, Gautam Buddh Nagar (NOIDA) and Ghaziabad. Subsequently, in the Budget speech for the year 2010-11, the Finance Minister has proposed extension of the date of deadline from 31.03.2010 to 31.07.2010.

The Ministry of Tourism receive representations from the travel and hospitality industry associations for various fiscal and financial issues which are forwarded to the Ministry of Finance for consideration.

The Plan budget of Ministry of Tourism was Rs. 1,000 Crore in B.E. 2009-10. However, it was reduced to Rs. 950 Crore at R.E stage. The reduction was not restored.