

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Tourism has approved a proposal for setting up of a Food Craft Institute (FCI) at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh in December, 2014 with Central Financial Assistance upto ₹ 475.00 lakh. Release of funds is subject to fulfilment of required formalities by the State Government.

**Financial assistance to States for rural tourism**

2693. PROF. M.V. RAJEEV GOWDA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry is planning to provide financial assistance for the rural tourism schemes to States like Karnataka and Odisha, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the Ministry intends to provide special subsidies and travel packages to boost the rural schemes in States like Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) to (c) The Ministry of Tourism has launched a new Scheme namely Swadesh Darshan for Integrated Development of Tourist Circuits around Specific Theme pursuant to the Budget 2014-15 announcements. Rural Circuit is one of the twelve circuits identified for development under this Scheme.

The Ministry of Tourism does not provide subsidies or travel packages to the States.

**Attracting foreign Buddhist tourists into the country**

2694. SHRI R. K. SINHA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of Buddhist population in India and Buddhist population living in different countries of the world;

(b) the number of foreign Buddhist tourists visiting Sarnath, Varanasi and Bodhgaya during the last five years;

(c) the quantum of the revenue being earned on this account during the last five years; and

(d) the proposal/strategy to publicise Buddhist culture through Indian Embassies and High Commissions to attract more foreign Buddhist tourists into the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) Indian Population Census, wherein religion-wise data is collected, is a decadal exercise conducted in the year ending with '1'. The last Census was conducted in the year 2011 and the previous one in 2001. Census 2011 data on religion is not