

The overall TPCI ranking of India has improved to 52nd in 2015 as compared to 65th in 2013.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has formulated "Bharatmala" Pariyojana with a view to improve the road connectivity to coastal/border areas, backward areas, religious places, tourist places, construction/rehabilitation/widening of about 1,500 major bridges and 208 Railway Over Bridges (ROBs)/Railway Under Bridges (RUBs) on National Highways (NHs) and improvement of newly declared NHs providing connectivity to District Head Quarters. Development of road infrastructure enhances the overall development of the area besides giving boost to tourism in the country.

Domestic air transport services have been decontrolled and deregulated. Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines with a view to achieve better connectivity to remote areas and different regions of the country. It is, however, up to the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability. As such the airlines are free to operate anywhere in the country subject to compliance of route dispersal guidelines issued by the Government.

For improvement of connectivity, CFA is provided by Ministry of Tourism under the Schemes Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD for the components like last mile connectivity, heliports, helipads, airstrips, ropeways, procurement of equipment for eco-friendly modes of tourist transport, etc.

(e) Product/Infrastructure Development for Destinations and Circuits (PIDDC) Scheme for States was delinked from Union Support -2015-16, pursuant to acceptance of the 14th Finance Commission's recommendation for higher devolution of 42% to States from Union taxes and duties. Consequently, MoT has launched two Schemes namely- Swadesh Darshan Scheme for Integrated Development of Tourist Circuits around Specific Themes and National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) to beautify and improve amenities and infrastructure at major pilgrimage sites in the country.

Promotion of religious tourism

2770. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had planned a fund for promotion of religious tourism in regard to Ramayana circuit, Krishna circuit and Buddhist circuit, the details thereof;

(b) whether the project of religious tourism worth ₹1500 crore has been sanctioned only for the States of UP and Bihar, whether, still there are many pilgrimage places in other States which have not been included in this project, reasons therefor;

(c) whether the religious places of Jainism, Sikhism and Islam have also been included in this scheme; and

(d) the details regarding the implementation of this project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) to (c) For development of tourism infrastructure in the country, the Ministry of Tourism has launched two new plan schemes in 2014-15 *i.e.* Swadesh Darshan-Integrated Development of Theme-Based Tourist Circuits and PRASAD- Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive.

Ramayana circuit, Krishna circuit, Buddhist circuit and Spiritual circuit are among the thirteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan scheme. Under PRASAD scheme thirteen cities/sites have been identified for development namely: Amritsar, Ajmer, Kedarnath, Dwarka, Mathura, Varanasi, Gaya, Kamakhya, Puri, Amaravati, Kanchipuram, Vellankanni and Patna.

The details of projects sanctioned to the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar under the above two schemes are given in Statement (*See below*).

(d) The projects for tourism infrastructure development are identified in consultation with the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations and are implemented by them through their respective agencies in a time framed manner.

Details of projects sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD Scheme to the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

				(₹ in crore)
Sl. No.	Name of Theme	State	Name of Project	Sanction Amount
Year 2014-15				
1.	Buddhist Circuit	Bihar	Construction of Cultural Centre adjacent to Maya Sarovar on the western side at Bodhgaya, Bihar.	33.17

PRASAD Scheme

			(₹ in crore)
Sl. No.	State	Name of the project	Sanction Amount
Year- 2014-15			
1.	Bihar	Development of basic facilities at Vishnupad temple, Gaya, Bihar	4.29
2.	Uttar Pradesh	Development of Mathura-Vrindavan as Mega Tourist Circuit (Ph-II)	14.93
3.	Uttar Pradesh	Construction of Tourist Facilitation Centre at Vrindavan, Distt. Mathura	9.35
Year-2015-16			
4.	Bihar	Development at Patna Saheb	41.53
5.	Uttar Pradesh	Development of Varanasi	20.40

Status of cruise tourism

2771. SHRI C.M. RAMESH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) the status of cruise tourism in the country;
- (b) whether it is a fact that cruise tourism in the country is still at a nascent stage; and
- (c) if so, whether the Ministry is preparing a road map for the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) to (c) Considering it as one of the growing areas of travel to the country, the Ministry of Tourism has identified Cruise Tourism as one of the Niche Tourism products. Central Financial Assistance is provided to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations/Central Agencies for the development of tourism infrastructure including development of Cruise tourism infrastructure under relevant scheme guidelines subject to availability of funds. Ministry of Tourism has also constituted a Task Force for promotion of Cruise Tourism with representatives of all major stakeholders.

Following the recommendations of the Task Force, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for cruise vessels has been finalized involving the concerned