

October 2016 and November 2016 over same months of previous year were 6.74% and 12.14%, respectively.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Impact of tourism on ecology of hill areas of Western Ghats and Himalayas

2548. SHRI K. K. RAGESH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether any studies to ascertain the negative impact of tourism on the ecology of the hill areas including Western Ghats and Himalayas, have been conducted by Government; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) and (b) Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has informed that a High Level Working Group (HLWG) was constituted for identifying the Ecological-Sensitive Areas (ESA) covering six States with a view to conserving the biodiversity of the Western Ghats region while providing adequate opportunities for livelihood security of the local people by promoting environment-friendly and socially inclusive development in the Western Ghats region.

In order to promote sustainable tourism HLWG recommended the following:—

- (a) Existing regulatory provisions to assess environmental impact of tourism projects must be strengthened,
- (b) The tourism policy for Eco-Sensitive Area of the Western Ghats must provide local community ownership and benefits, and
- (c) All tourism hotspots in the Eco-Sensitive Area be monitored for compliance and assessed in terms of impact.

Steps to promote foreign tourists coming to the country

2549. DR. VIKAS MAHATME: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether tourism can fetch us good revenue in the form of foreign currency and also give employment to people;

(b) how many foreign travellers have visited India for tourism in last three years;

(c) what steps Government wants to take to increase the number of foreign tourists; and

(d) how much revenue was directly raised from foreign tourists in last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) to India during 2013, 2014, 2015 and Jan.-Oct., 2016 were 6.97 million, 7.68 million, 8.03 million and 6.96 million, respectively.

(c) The steps taken by the Ministry of Tourism in the recent past years for promoting tourism and to attract more tourists in the country are as below:

- Introduction of e-Tourist Visa facility for the citizens of 155 countries.
- Revision of e-TV fee in four slabs of 0, US\$25, US\$48 and US\$60 from November 3, 2015. Earlier e-TV application fee was US\$60 and bank charge as US\$2 which was uniform for all the countries. The revision of Visa fee has been done on the principle of reciprocity. Bank charges have also been reduced from US\$2 to 2.5% of the e-TV fee.
- The Ministry of Tourism has launched 'Welcome Booklet' with information on Do's and Don'ts for tourists, contact details of India Tourism domestic offices and Tourist Helpline Number for distribution at immigration counters to tourists arriving at international airports.
- Promotion of India as a holistic destination in the international markets under the Incredible India brand line.
- Organisation of biennial International Buddhist Conclave.
- Organisation of Annual International Tourism Mart for promotion of tourism in North Eastern States.
- Promotion of activities in tourist generating markets overseas through the India Tourism Offices abroad with active participation in International Tourism Events.
- The Ministry of Tourism provides Financial assistance to Stakeholders and Tourism Departments of States/UTs for undertaking promotional activities under the Marketing Development Assistance Scheme.

(d) The Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism during the years 2013, 2014, 2015 and Jan.-Oct., 2016 were ₹ 1,07,671 crore, ₹1,23,320 crore, ₹1,35,193 crore and ₹1,24,371 crore, respectively.

Safety standards for adventure tourism

2550. SHRI PARTAP SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is an increasing interest in adventure tourism in the country;
- (b) whether there have been any cases of deaths or injuries to tourists while undertaking adventure activities in the country; and
- (c) whether Government has any mechanism to ensure that the companies/agencies offering adventure activities to tourists follow all the necessary safety standards?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (DR. MAHESH SHARMA): (a) Yes, Sir. The number of Domestic Tourists Visits (DTV's) and Foreign Tourist Visits (FTV's), including the tourists visiting for adventure purpose, to different States/Union Territories (UTs) during 2015 have registered a positive growth of 11.6% and 4.4%, respectively. Ministry of Tourism does not compile the data of adventure tourists separately.

(b) The adventure tourism activities have an inherent risk of injuries. Ministry of Tourism does not have this data as no such cases have been reported to this Ministry.

(c) The Ministry of Tourism has formulated guidelines for Basic Minimum Standards including safety standards for Adventure Tourism related activities in the following categories of adventure tourism viz. land, water and air based activities which include mountaineering, trekking, river running, para gliding, bungee jumping and para sailing.

Unexplored tourist destinations of North-East States

2551. SHRI K.G. KENYE: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has made any study report on unexplored tourist destinations of North-East States;
- (b) if so, details of sites that have been chosen under 'Incredible India' during the last two years thereof;