

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. SASMIT PATRA): Hon. Member, Dr. John Brittas (Kerala) associated himself with the Special Mention made by Shri Vijay Pal Singh Tomar.

Shri Abdul Wahab; not present. The next speaker is Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu.

Demand to develop Cruise tourism in Chennai

DR. KANIMOZHI NVN SOMU (Tamil Nadu): Sir, cruise tourism is emerging as one of the rapid growing segments of the leisure industry globally. The Indian tourism sector is providing major contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE), as well as for providing employment. Chennai Port is one of the oldest ports in the country in the southern part of India from the time of East India Company. During the British period, passenger services were operating regularly from Chennai to Malaysia, Burma and Andaman.

India's first international cruise was flagged off from Chennai to Sri Lanka in June, 2023. The MV Express, with 750 passengers on a 5-day sea cruise, will cross three ports. Cruise tourism holds huge opportunity for our maritime sector, and this cruise will further boost tourism, generate employment and strengthen the economy. The cruise was launched from Chennai's International Cruise Terminal built at a cost of INR 17.21 crore. The main aim of the Government is to develop Chennai as a cruise tourism hub. This initiative has the potential to greatly contribute to the economic development and tourism growth in India.

By 2024, the Government plans to build three new international cruise ports with additional ferry routes through India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar. At the moment, there are only ferries plied by private companies and the cost is on the higher side. Therefore, I urge the Government of India to ply Government-sponsored ferries at an affordable cost so that more and more tourist will experience cruise tourism in Chennai.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. SASMIT PATRA): The following hon. Members associated themselves with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu: Dr. V. Sivadasan (Kerala), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu), and Shrimati Jebi Mather Hisham (Kerala).