

PRESS RELEASE

4th Odisha Tourism Conclave 2019

18th September 2019 – Swosti Premium, Bhubaneswar

Keynote Address by Sri J K Mohanty, Chairman, HRAO

His Excellency Governor Prof. Ganeshi Lal, Hon'ble Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Sri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon'ble Tourism Minister Odisha Shri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Commissioner-cum-Secretary Tourism, Sports & Youth Services Sri Vishal Dev, Addl DG, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India Ms. Rupinder Brar, Director and Addl Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Odisha Sri N C Mishra, Esteemed media and my colleagues and friends. It is a great privilege for me to welcome all of you to this enlightened gathering to discuss on the tourism scenario of Odisha and how to enhance the same.

At this time when there is an economic slowdown in the country, HRAO has taken initiative of holding the Tourism Conclave to boost the tourism sector which can help our economy.

During the last three tourism conclaves we have submitted various recommendations and I am happy to announce that the State Tourism Department and the Government have taken up recommendations positively and many of them have been implemented such as

1. Revamping digital marketing strategies
2. Optimization of Odisha Tourism website,
3. Promotion of Eco Tourism,
4. Conducting domestic roadshows in different states,
5. Cleanliness campaign at Puri,
6. Change of Odisha Tourism logo,
7. Single Window Clearance for operation of tourism projects,
8. Special promotion campaigns at destination connected by Airlines to create awareness about tourist attractions in Odisha,
9. Development of tourists circuits other than Puri & Konark to give a boost to Odisha as a 21 night destination (including Western Odisha),
10. Allotment of land for hotel projects to attract investments to the State etc., etc.

However, I would also like to inform that although the Ministry of Tourism and the State Government are trying to improve tourism but still the country loses very high foreign exchange on Indians travelling abroad as tourists.

All countries are trying to take Indian tourists and many countries have opened their offices in India to woo Indian tourists. Last year Thailand had 22% growth, Maldives had a huge growth of 96.4% (from Jan to May 2019), Dubai had 13% growth, Japan witnessed 14.6% growth and Australia had 12% growth in its tourism inflow from India and it is projected that Asia Pacific's

HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF ODISHA

Regd. Off :

105, Janpath, Bhubaneswar – 751001, Orissa, India

Ph – 0674-2300067, Mob - 8895883469

Email : execsecy@hrao.org / cmd@swosti.com

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middle class tourists which was 700 million (70 crore) is expected to grow to 2.1 billion (210 crore) by 2030. India has been in the top 10 source markets of major tourist destinations of South East Asia.

Today's young millennial traveler is looking for adventure and experiential tourism and Thailand as a destination has been providing the same to capture the Indian Tourism market.

Hon'ble Sir, from the figures above it is clear that a huge amount of foreign exchange is being spent by Indians going on holidays because our country lacks good quality infrastructure, airlines connectivity, hotels, adventure tourism, experiential tourism etc. Our Hon'ble Prime Minister has already given in his public speech that tourism is a priority and has asked Indians to look more at the domestic market than foreign market. I therefore, suggest that in order to give a faster boost to the growth of tourism industry and infrastructure every department of the Government must be involved in allocating funds for development of tourism infrastructure. The Ministry may review its way of functioning since Independence as we have not been able to satisfy our own nationals to move as tourists within India. Hon'ble Minister may kindly review performance in the tourism sector since several years. Every state in India is bigger than most of the European

countries taken individually, every state have unique facilities and attractions, cuisine etc to offer. An extensive research work is needed to boost the high potential tourism sector of India. ***I suggest the Government should restart giving capital investment and interest subsidy at least 3 years to boost up our tourism infrastructure and hotel industry and the government will be able to contain out-go of foreign exchange and Indians going abroad.***

Further, GST of 28% charged on rooms above Rs.7,500 fails India to compete in the international tourism market specially in South East Asia where the taxes are low and hotels are cheaper in places like Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong etc.

The main objective of organizing this conclave is to create awareness of vast tourism potential of Odisha. Although Odisha has a huge tourism potential, compared with its neighbouring states, it has the lowest tourist traffic in Eastern India with the lowest number of star category hotels.

As far as Odisha is concerned, we request Hon'ble Union Minister for connectivity with Jeypore in Koraput District under the UDAN Scheme, to include Konark Temple and the Buddhist circuit under the Iconic destination list, construction of the 480 km coastal highway ring road and ring road around the Chilika Lake is necessary, development of tourism in the 9 circuits proposed by the travel trade of Odisha.

Chilika, the largest lagoon of the Northern Hemisphere (1100 sqkm), is a gold mine for tourism and needs attention of the Central Government for providing water sports and other infrastructural facilities for the growth of Eco tourism in the area.

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These are few suggestions which I humbly request Ministry of Tourism to kindly take a note of these and we hope for favourable decision from the Central Government on this.

States like Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Goa, Delhi Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, etc., have increased foreign tourist arrivals due to availability of much more star category hotels and rooms. But in case of **Odisha (8 star hotels with 594 rooms)**. Unless our state has more number of classified hotels, we cannot increase foreign tourist footfalls in our State. The requirement of rooms in Odisha other than Bhubaneswar & Puri are 2,000 rooms under 3-star category, 500 rooms under 5-star category and around 4000 rooms in 2-star category. ***We request our Government to take fast action on infrastructure development at Samuka Beach which will definitely attract lot of international chain to Odisha.***

The Government may constitute a Tourism Development Board for monitoring continuous infrastructure development required to retain longer duration of tourists to stay in the state. There could be game parks, water sports etc in line with Disney World or Essel World.

An **international standard Convention Centre with all modern amenities and state-of-the-art architecture** is required to attract MICE & Convention Tourism from different countries that could help in boosting the industrial as well as the tourism footfalls to the state. The government's plan for starting the World Trade Center, for which the Hon'ble Chief Minister had laid the foundation stone on July 2014, at Bhubaneswar is yet to come up.

Sir, although Bhubaneswar Biju Patnaik has been declared International Airport, we do not have any international connections except to Kuala Lumpur.

Apart from the above suggestions many more valuable suggestions will also be chalked out during the various panel discussions today and the travel trade of Odisha will compile the expert suggestions in the form of recommendation and will submit to both Central and State Government for their consideration and fruitful execution.

I express my deep gratitude to His Excellency Governor of Odisha Union Minister Sri Dharmendra Pradhan, Addl DG, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India Ms. Rupinder Brar, for sparing their valuable time to be here this morning. ***I would also like the Union Minister & Addl DG, Ministry of Tourism to kindly be present here after the Inaugural Ceremony to see the presentations made by three secretaries on tourism, forest and textile & handloom on their potential to boost Odisha Tourism.***

Before concluding my speech on behalf of Hotel & Travel industry of Odisha I express my sincere thanks to Hon'ble Chief Minister for his dynamic leadership and such a aggressive team with Sri Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi, Hon'ble Tourism Minister, Sri Vishal Dev, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Sri N C Mishra, Director Tourism, Odisha Tourism is definitely going to leap forward fast and we are hopeful to receive the most progressive Tourism Policy 2020.

Thank you