

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE
NATIONAL TOURISM AWARDS**

Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi: 18-03-2013

Distinguished Guests,

1. It is indeed a pleasure to join you in recognizing those who have made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of India as a tourist destination. I welcome the institution of these national awards – which will give an impetus and encourage all players in this important sector of our economy. Today, our tourism industry has commendably expanded its operations and range of offerings. India has welcomed about 6.65 million foreign tourists last year. This denotes a growth of 5.4% in such arrivals over the previous year. Foreign exchange earnings in this segment of our economy are estimated to be about Rs. 94,500 crores for 2012. This, too, is a significant - 21.8% increase over the previous year.

2. It is also interesting to see how India's domestic demand for tourism has developed. The increase in disposable incomes of Indian citizens have given them an increasing capacity for leisure travel. There is also an abundance of attractive offers, new and improved air and rail connections and a general expansion of the tourism infrastructure in all States of India. Its multiplier effect has been strong and has led to creation of jobs in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

3. For this, a great amount of the credit is due to the initiatives of the Union Government and the State Governments to invigorate our tourism infrastructure and improve the facilities offered to the foreign and domestic tourist. The “Incredible India” campaign was, by all standards, a well-conceived and concerted effort in brand promotion. The diverse and unique aspects of all that is offered by the different States of India have been projected in a single, successful campaign. New categories of awards will promote India as a year-round destination. They will encourage States and Union Territories to develop effective mechanisms for maintaining cleanliness and safeguarding heritage spots.
4. I take this opportunity to stress the importance of a highly specialized and motivated work force. It is important for Government and private sector to collectively generate adequate manpower – both in terms of quantity and quality.
5. One of the most attractive assets that India can offer is our cuisine. There is no parallel to the range of local specialties that a traveller can savour as he travels through India. Due attention to safety and quality standards would instill more confidence in the foreign as well as domestic tourists. I am informed that Government will soon open an institute of excellence for culinary specialization and research. I wish them all success in this endeavour.

6. I would also stress the need to ensure that every aspect of our infrastructure responds to the expectations of the best traveled tourists. A visit to a world renowned heritage site can be marred by poor approach roads or the absence of public facilities en route or by unpleasant sights and odours. The campaign, “Clean India” launched by the Ministry of Tourism to promote cleanliness and hygiene and the “Atithidevo Bhava” campaign are good initiatives.
7. I would also like to stress the importance of sustainable, “green” tourism. To this end, I call upon host communities to be more conscious and proactive with regard to tourist destinations in their respective areas. Hotels, museums and monuments should consciously reduce their use of energy and water. They should consciously try to reduce generation of waste. Transportation, heating, cooling, washing and lighting could be made ‘greener’. Visitors themselves should be reminded to be more mindful. They should be encouraged and assisted in safeguarding the facilities that they use for future travellers. Co-operation, rather than competition, between organizations in the tourism industry could help to develop socially responsible products. I have no doubt, whatsoever, that we are generally on the right path, but we need to update and upgrade constantly.
8. Ladies and gentlemen, with these words, I commend those who have succeeded in identifying opportunities and swiftly realizing their tourism potential. I congratulate the Ministry of Tourism for instituting the National Tourism Awards, and

those who have received these awards. I take this opportunity to wish each of you great success in your daily efforts and your future endeavours.

Jai Hind!!