

SC/ST and OBC Communities in Tourism Sector

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In the Union Budget 2025–26, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism has earmarked 4.3 % of the total scheme outlay i.e. ₹103 crores under the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) component of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, which includes ₹88 crores under the Tribal Area Sub Plan and ₹15 crores under the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PM-JUGA). This dedicated head of expenditure ensures focused investment in Scheduled Tribes-dominated regions, facilitating cultural preservation economic upliftment, and inclusive tourism growth. Projects sanctioned under the Tribal Circuit theme specifically aim to enhance visibility of tribal heritage and integrate tribal communities into the tourism value chain, thereby contributing to sustainable and regionally balanced development. However, there are no separate budgetary provisions made exclusively for Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Other Backward Classes (OBCs) by the Ministry of Tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism supports tourism infrastructure and amenity development through its Central Sector Schemes—Swadesh Darshan (including SD 2.0 and Challenge Based Destination Development) and PRASHAD. These schemes are implemented through State Governments/UT Administrations, subject to submission of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), availability of funds, and compliance with scheme guidelines. The Ministry promotes development in tribal and backward areas by encouraging project proposals that strengthen tourism-linked livelihoods.

Ministry of Tourism implemented targeted interventions like the 'Development of Homestays in Tribal Areas' under PM-JUGA, aimed at enhancing livelihood opportunities for tribal communities. Guidelines also include provisions for technical training and upskilling of homestay owners.

Under PM-JUGA, the Ministry would support development of 1,000 homestays in tribal areas. Support includes up to ₹5 lakhs for village community requirements, ₹5 lakhs for constructing two new rooms per household, and ₹3 lakhs for renovating existing rooms. These initiatives are designed to address systemic challenges by providing sustainable, tourism.

As of now, no funds have been released under the PM-JUGA Homestay initiative.

Fee exemption is given to SC and ST Candidates under Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF) certification programme - a digital initiative conducted by the Ministry that aims at creating and online learning platform with an objective of creating pool of well trained and professional Tourist Facilitators and Tourist Guides across the country. The system provides basic, advanced (heritage and adventure), spoken language and refresher courses for candidates.

No specific, independent impact assessment focused exclusively on SC, ST or OBC participation under Swadesh Darshan or Dekho Apna Desh has been conducted. However, a third-party impact assessment of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme was undertaken by the National Productivity Council in 2019. It noted that the scheme contributed to livelihood generation and employment opportunities for local communities.

The 2019 assessment by the National Productivity Council also acknowledged the potential of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme to provide robust employment in the operation and maintenance phases.

While the Ministry does not earmark community-specific funds under tourism schemes, it promotes inclusive development through infrastructure enhancement and service delivery that indirectly benefits SC, ST, and OBC communities.

Currently, there is no formal mechanism for community-wise public verification of beneficiary data under these schemes. However, Ministry guidelines emphasize transparency and the implementing State Governments/UT Administrations are expected to ensure inclusive planning in tourism projects like Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD.

This information was given by Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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