

ATTRACTING TOURISTS TO BUDDHIST CIRCUITS

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Southeast Asia, with its significant Buddhist population, constitutes an important source market for the Buddhist Circuit in India. To promote the Buddhist heritage along with other destinations and products the Ministry carries out various promotional activities in association with Indian Missions abroad, State Governments/Union Territory Administrations and the travel trade sector. These include organisation of tourism roadshows, participation in international travel trade exhibitions, fairs and events; conduct of familiarization (FAM) tours for foreign tour operators, media and influencers; engagement with local tour operators and other stakeholders; and promotion through digital and social media platforms.

For development of tourism infrastructure at tourist sites, including the Buddhist Circuit, the Ministry of Tourism implements projects under its schemes of Swadesh Darshan, Swadesh Darshan 2.0, National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD), Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD), Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) and Assistance to Central Agencies. The details of projects sanctioned under these schemes at Buddhist sites, with particular reference to Bihar and adjoining regions, are placed at Annexure.

In addition, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) offers specialised pilgrimage tour packages connecting major Buddhist destinations through the Mahaparinirvan Express train. The Ministry also engages with tour operators and other stakeholders, who in turn promote tour packages to Buddhist circuits, including in South East Asian market.

To enhance visitor experience at tourist sites in the country including the Buddhist sites the Ministry has instituted the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF) Certification Programme to create a pool of well-trained and professional tourist facilitators/guides, including those trained in foreign languages. The programme also includes advanced and refresher courses aimed at improving communication, service quality and cultural sensitivity.

ANNEXURE

Details of projects sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan (SD), Swadesh Darshan (SD) 2.0, 'Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD) and Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) schemes at Buddhist sites in Bihar and adjoining areas

S. No.	State/ UT	Scheme	Sanction Year	Name of the Project	Amount Sanctioned (in ₹ Crore)

1.	Andhra Pradesh	SD	2017-18	Development of Buddhist Circuit: Shalihundam-Bavikonda- Bojjanakonda - Amravati- Anupu	35.24
2.	Andhra Pradesh	CBDD	2024-25	Enriching Buddhist Heritage and Cultural Experiences at Nagarjuna Sagar at Nagarjuna Sagar	25.00
3.	Bihar	SD	2016-17	Development of Buddhist circuit- Construction of Convention Centre at Bodhgaya	95.18
4.	Bihar	SD 2.0	2024-25	Buddhist Meditation & Experience Centre in Bodhgaya	165.44
5.	Gujarat	SD	2017-18	Development of Junagadh- Gir Somnath- Bharuch-Kutch- Bhavnagar- Rajkot- Mehsana	26.68
6.	Madhya Pradesh	SD	2016-17	Development of Sanchi-Satna- Rewa-Mandsaur-Dhar	74.02
7.	Uttar Pradesh	SD	2016-17	Development of Srawasti, Kushinagar, & Kapilwastu	87.89
8.	Uttar Pradesh	SASCI	2024-25	Integrated Buddhist Tourism Development in Shrawasti	80.24
9.	Telangana	CBDD	2024-25	Buddhavanam – Development of Digital Experience Centre	24.85

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

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