

## Attacks on foreign tourists 'blot' on Indian tourism

Attacks on foreign tourists is a 'blot on Indian tourism' and the government is taking several steps to ensure that travellers feel safe and secure in the country, Minister of Tourism Ambika Soni said here Monday.

'The few sporadic happenings in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and the highly publicized incident of Goa, are a cause of concern for the government. This creates worries about the security and safety of the tourists in the country. These incidents are a blot on Indian tourism,' she said.

Speaking at the first Great Indian Travel Bazaar-2008, the minister said the government believed in the age-old adage that 'guest is god'.

Soni said the government is involving various stakeholders - including the taxi drivers, the guides and the shopkeepers, who would be trained - to help create an atmosphere of better security and safety.

'It is a long process but it is happening. People are learning that if tourism is impacted in their areas, it is going to harm their economy,' she said while addressing about 160 foreign buyers from 42 countries and state tourism representatives.

Soni said 11 states in the country already have tourism police.

She said the ministry had also formulated guidelines for the formation of a special task force, comprising retired army personnel, as they belong to a more disciplined force.

'We are talking to the home ministry and finance ministry to help us in the formation of the task force,' she said at the three-day travel mart, organised jointly by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci), tourism ministry and the Rajasthan Tourism department.

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