

India targets 10 million tourists in 2010

The tourism ministry expects 10 million foreign tourist footfalls in 2010, thanks to the Commonwealth Games to be hosted by India that year, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture Ambika Soni said.

'We are expecting a total of 10 million tourist footfalls in India keeping in mind the Commonwealth Games in 2010,' Soni told reporters during the inauguration of the travel and tourism fair (TTF) here Saturday.

Pointing out the emerging prospects of the tourism industry, she said that in the last few years the number of tourists had increased.

In 2005, the total tourist flow was 3.92 million while in 2006 the figure rose to 4.43 million.

'The tourist flow between Jan and July makes us feel that this year we are going to receive about five million tourists in India,' Soni said, adding that the government had undertaken several initiatives to spruce up the tourism sector by developing adventure tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism and shopping tourism.

Talking on the prospects of shopping tourism, Soni said initially the government had identified four places across India - Noida, Hyderabad, Aurangabad and Bhubaneswar - to develop as shopping tourism destinations.

'This new concept of shopping tourism will help local artisans get a good market for selling their traditional artefacts. Subsequently, it will create tremendous amount of job opportunities in different rural pockets and will also promote the cultural heritage of our country. The union ministry is also looking at some other places, including West Bengal, to develop as shopping tourism destinations,' she said.

Travel and Tourism fair, a three-day event, is the biggest tourism exposition in India. This year, over 250 participants from all over India, including 22 states and seven countries, participated in this fair.

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