

Speech of Ambassador of India to Chile, Mr. Debraj Pradhan
at the India Tourism Road Show
(Monday, 29 September, 2014 at 1830 hrs
(Venue: Hotel Ritz Carlton, Santiago)

H.E. Mr. Parvez Dewan, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India;

Mr. Anil Oraw, Director, India Tourism Office, Toronto;

Ms. Meenakshi Vashist, Assistant Director, India Tourism Office, New York;

Distinguished Guests; and

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure in welcoming you all to the India Tourism Road Show, the first ever such event being organized in Chile, in recent years. I appreciate the initiative taken by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in identifying Chile as one of their target countries in Latin America, for promoting tourism between the two countries.

I understand that the B2B meetings have already taken place between the Tour Operators of both sides. I am sure they would have identified the potential areas of cooperation as well as hurdles which may be affecting the promotion of cooperation in Tourism Sector. Anyway, Embassy of India in Santiago looks forward to closer interaction between the Tour Operators and Government and Private agencies of both the countries to enhance cooperation in this vital area of the economy.

India is one of the earliest civilizations of the world, rich in diversity, full of charm and punctuated with attractive historical sites. The majestic Himalayas, the sparkling ocean, the dry desert, the dancing rivers, the enticing lagoons or the magical backwaters, all appeal to nature lovers. People come from far and wide to experience a totally new vision of glory of nature.

Adventure tourism is on the rise for those who prefer a more challenging holiday like water rafting, paragliding, trekking and mountain climbing. There are many wildlife sanctuaries and numerous fortresses and palaces in India which are also worth visiting. A majority of the tourists, Indians as well as foreigners, go to various famous temples, Mosques, Churches, Gurudwaras and other places of worship, new and ancient, that are visible all over India.

Taj Mahal, Great Himalayas and Bengal Tiger are few names which are very well-known the world over. In fact, they have become icons of Indian tourism. For those who prefer beach and sunshine, India is ready to offer famous Goa and Kerala Beaches with hundreds of kilometres of long beautiful sea line. India is also known for its lip-smacking culinary offerings which leave your taste buds asking for more.

Indian art and culture, various languages and traditional clothing leave tourists visiting India wishing for more. With a population of over 1.25 billion, India is very multicultural and each of the 29 States in the country has its unique identity, both cultural and linguistic. Every region is famous for its own unique handicraft, fairs, folk dances, music and its people. At present, India has 32 world heritage sites and 25 bio-geographic zones.

India has also emerged as one of the most sought after destinations for medical tourists across the globe owing to its high value proposition in terms of quality health care and low cost compared to others. Ayurveda, a traditional means of natural cure, is famous world over. Yoga and spiritual traditions have motivated people all over the world to visit India.

The tourism and hospitality industry is one of the largest segments under the services sector of the Indian economy. Indian tradition of extending hospitality is embedded in its rich culture of 'Athithi Devo Bava' means 'Guests are God'. Tourism in India is a key growth driver and employment generator and a significant source of foreign exchange earnings.

The role of the Indian government, which has provided policy and infrastructural support, has been instrumental in the growth and development of the industry. The tourism policy of the government aims at speedy implementation of tourism projects, development of integrated tourism circuits, special capacity building in the hospitality sector and new marketing strategies. In the hotel and tourism sector, the government has also allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) through automatic route.

India is not new to the people of Chile. We have come across several groups and individuals in this beautiful country who are admirers and followers of Indian dance, music, Yoga, Ayurveda, and spiritual and religious traditions. Many Chileans travel to India for tourism and other purposes, despite the distance and high costs of travel.

During the last few years, we have seen a noticeable increase in the number of Chilean nationals going to India for tourism and business visits. During 2013-14, the Embassy had issued around 3000 visas for Chilean nationals and this year the figures may go up to 3500. We are happy that there is now a greater and increasing awareness and interest about India among the people of Chile. India Tourism Road Show is a practical initiative to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in Tourism and Hospitality Sector.

Thank you all for coming.

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