

SPECIAL ON THE WORLD TOURISM DAY

‘UP emerging as ultimate tourist destination’

Mukesh Meshram

According to the United Nations, tourism is one of the world's most important economic sectors employing every 10th person on earth. The objective of celebrating World Tourism Day (Sep 27) is to underscore the importance of tourism on a global scale. Tourism not only impacts economically but also has a significant influence on the social, political and cultural landscape of countries and regions. India has been observing this day since 1980 and continues to be part of the global celebration.

Uttar Pradesh has earmarked a budget of Rs 216.22 crore for tourism and the focus is on tourism infrastructure. The tourism department has major initiatives planned to cater to the inflow of more than 48 crore tourists in recent years. International and domestic tourists travel to Uttar Pradesh to experience the rich culture and architecture in addition to spiritual circuits, especially Buddhist circuit.

The department is developing spiritual destinations such as Vindhyachal (Ma Vindhyawasini, Kali Khoh and Ashtbhuj), Gola Gokaran Nath (Lakhimpur Kheri), Puran Mahadev (Baghpat), Shakumbhari Devi, Maghar, Devipatan (Balrampur), Mahadeva (Barabanki), Chitrakoot, and Naimiharanya through development projects. A project, Maharaja Suheldev Smarak in Bahraich, is also nearing completion.

To celebrate the contributions of hockey legend KD

UP AT A GLANCE

► Ranked 1st in terms of domestic tourist visits with inflow of 48 crore, and 5th in terms of foreign tourist arrivals with footfall of 16 lakh in 2023

► In July 2022, Varanasi was named as the first 'Cultural & Tourism Capital of Shanghai Cooperation Organization' under new rotating initiative to promote people to people connect

► Kashi Vishwanath Corridor received 6.3 crore tourist footfall in 2023



49% of tourist inflow growth in financial year 2023 as compared to 2022

146% increase in terms of international tourist arrivals in 2023 as compared to 2022

Singh Babu and Yog Guru Paramhans Yoganand, their homes will be converted into museums. The birthplace of Maharshi Valmiki at Lalapur and Goswami Tulsidas ji at Rajapur will also get a facelift.

Globally, UP is recognized as a religious tourism destination and is host to three Unesco world heritage sites.

One of the key focus areas for the tourism department is to provide quality tourism infrastructure to tourists which include modern wayside amenities with access to clean and hygienic sanitation units. The UP govt is striving to create infrastructure along national & state highways and major district roads.

The department is keen on developing UP as the first choice for weddings and business conferences. To facilitate this, the department had launched the Tourism Policy in 2022 to attract investors to set up tourism units across 33 categories.

The state has an indust-

ry-friendly tourism policy, which provides economic thrust to the making of Uttar Pradesh a trillion-dollar economy by 2027 and creating an 'Uttam Pradesh' for private sector participation, promoting ease of doing business and enabling transparency in subsidy through digital subsidy application and disbursement portal.

UP is also making a mark in religious tourism through development of six major Buddhist circuits which include Kapilvastu, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kaushambi, Sankisa and Kushinagar. In 2023, nearly 13 crore tourists visited six circuits. The department is engaged in organizing investment outreach programmes to attract private investors to develop hotels and resorts, convention centres, theme parks, museums and meditation centres along the circuit routes.

Other major circuits that are being developed include Ramayana Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Mahabharat Circuit, Shakti Peeth Circuit, Ad-

hyatmik Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Jain Circuit, Bundelkhand Circuit, Craft Circuit, Swatantra Sangram Circuit and Wildlife & Ecotourism Circuit.

The state has many forts and palaces pioneering adaptive use of heritage properties under public-private partnership mode where emphasis is laid on architectural conservation and promotion of heritage tourism. The aim is to improve experiential tourism for visitors and provide a range of branded hospitality units.

The department has awarded three heritage properties - Chhatar Manzil in Lucknow, Baruasagar Fort in Jhansi and Chunar Fort in Mirzapur - to private developers through a competitive bidding process for architectural conservation and adaptive reuse as heritage hotels. Many other properties are lined up for adaptive reuse.

Tourism department is also engaged in redevelopment of Rahi tourist bungalows under PPP basis on DBFOT (design, build, finance, operate, and transfer) model. At least 33 Rahi Tourist Bungalows are planned for redevelopment across the state.

To improve interstate connectivity, access to tourist destinations and to facilitate convenient transport facilities for tourists, the department is in the process of developing heliports in seven major tourist destinations across the state through PPP model.

Other projects under PPP include development of integrated tourism zone in Kushinagar on PPP basis (DBFOT) and MoU with Government of India and Tata Sons Pvt Ltd for develop-

Uttar Pradesh has earmarked a budget of Rs 216.22 crore for tourism and the focus is on tourism infrastructure

ment and maintenance of Museum of Indian Temple Architecture in Ayodhya.

The theme for World Tourism Day-2024 is 'Tourism and Peace' which has been fostered by the United Nations with the intent that sustainable tourism can transform communities - creating jobs, fostering inclusion and strengthening local economies. Keeping pace with global trends and vision, UP is also developing the concept of "responsible tourism" through policy advocacy.

The policy includes employment generation subsidy, establishment of units for disabled, revival, scarce art and culture, and subsidy on sewerage plants.

Uttar Pradesh is also improving byelaws at institutional level for leveraging development. A comprehensive review of existing building bye laws pertaining to hotel and hospitality unit construction in the state has been undertaken.

The state is also encouraging FDI in the tourism sector and UP Tourism Land Lease Policy-2024 facilitates allotment of land to bankable projects. FDI of 100% is permitted for tourism construction projects, including development of exquisite hotels, resorts, and unparalleled recreational facilities.

(Writer is principal secretary, tourism and culture department, UP)