

## **Government mulls harmonised infrastructure status for hotel industry to boost tourism investment: Tourism Minister**

The central government is actively considering extending harmonised infrastructure status to the hotel industry — a long-awaited reform expected to attract major capital investment and boost India's global tourism competitiveness, Union Tourism and Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat announced.

Speaking at the 98th Annual General Meeting and Convention of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Shekhawat said the proposal would “unlock capital, expand room inventory and strengthen our global price competitiveness.”

He outlined the government's broader vision to develop tourism into a \$1 trillion sector by 2047, coinciding with India's 100th year of independence. Achieving this target, he stressed, will require large-scale private participation and innovative hospitality models aligned with global and regional tourism leaders.

The proposed infrastructure status forms part of a wider national strategy to position tourism as a structural growth engine. FICCI President Harsha Vardhan Agarwal noted that tourism currently contributes 5.2% directly to India's GDP and supports 84 million livelihoods. With supportive policy interventions, the sector has the potential to grow into a \$250 billion industry by 2030.

Shekhawat highlighted India's ongoing investment in tourism infrastructure — over ₹12,000 crore committed to destination development and efforts to develop 50 world-class destinations under a challenge-mode framework, encouraging states to compete on infrastructure quality, visitor experience, and sustainability.

India's connectivity expansion has also accelerated tourism growth, he said, citing the increase in operational airports from fewer than 75 to 127 in the past decade, the development of 10 international-standard cruise terminals, 1,50,000

km of new highways, 38 inland waterways for river cruises, and over 10,000 km of metro networks across 23 Tier I and II cities. The redevelopment of temple corridors such as Kashi, Mahakal, Kedarnath, Puri, and Ayodhya was described as “one of the most transformative tourism initiatives in modern India.”

Shekhawat further underscored India’s strengths in wellness tourism, medical travel, and concert tourism, and noted that India will host the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Gujarat.

Despite the progress, Agarwal pointed out that India currently welcomes only 10 million international visitors annually, compared with France’s 90 million and Spain’s 84 million. “This is not a gap in potential, but a vast opportunity waiting to be unlocked,” he remarked.

FICCI President-elect Anant Goenka praised initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and PRASHAD, noting that they reflect a renewed focus on global standards, elevated visitor experience and sustainable tourism infrastructure.