

Need to include Puri- Konark in the list of top 50 tourist destination

SHRI BIBHU PRASAD TARAI (JAGATSINGHPUR): Sir, India's tourism sector is rich in heritage, culture and diversity. This crucial sector is the key driver of economic growth towards achieving the agenda for Viksit Bharat 2047. Recognizing the potential of tourism sector for employment-led development, the Union Budget has allocated Rs. 2541 crore to enhance infrastructure, skill development, and travel facilitation, which is praiseworthy. It is true that the sector created 7.6 crore jobs in financial year 2023. The foreign exchange earnings reached 28 billion USD and India attained 14th rank worldwide in world tourism receipts. The breakthrough initiatives of the Government to including developing 50 top tourist destinations in partnership with the States through a challenge mode, ensuring world-class facilities and connectivity, will certainly elevate tourism infrastructure, improve ease of travel, and strengthen connectivity to key sites.

In this context, I want to highlight one place in my MP segment, Konark. Konark, once upon a time was one of the seven wonders of the world. On the other hand, there are beautiful sea beaches like Chandrabhaga and Astaranga. An ASI Museum is also here. Here is one famous Sun Temple and a renowned UNESCO world heritage site. The Sun Temple is famous for its impressive and architectural design and intricate stone carvings. It is just 35-km away from Puri, a place famous for the Jagannath Temple, which is one of the four *dhams* of the country.

Recognizing the deep cultural and spiritual significance of Puri and Konark, which is a good example of art and architecture, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Union Minister of Tourism to consider inclusion of Puri and Konark within 50 top tourist destinations for the overall development of these sites not only to attract tourists, but also to provide employment and earn foreign exchange for the country.