



SPEECH
OF
HIS EXCELLENCY
LT GENERAL NIRBHAY SHARMA,
PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (RETD),
GOVERNOR,
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
ON THE OCCASION OF
“TAWANG FESTIVAL-2013”
AT
TAWANG
ON
20 - 22 OCTOBER 2013

At the very outset, I extend my warm greetings to all participants of this prestigious Festival and people of Tawang on this special occasion. I deem it our honour to host all the tourists especially our esteemed delegates from friendly countries and stakeholders who have come here for the International Tourism Mart to this 'Last Shangri La on Earth'. I am confident that this tourism and travel initiative will go a long way in harnessing the diverse tourism potential of Arunachal Pradesh and North East region and reflect the true cultural diversity of India.

I would like to congratulate Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Nabam Tuki, the team of tourism department, Government of India and Government of Arunachal Pradesh led by State Tourism Minister Shri Pema Khandu for hosting this international event.

In Arunachal, essentially, there are two main issues to be kept in mind. One is the security of the State. The War Memorial at Tawang bears testimony to the price paid to preserve our territorial integrity. Given the geostrategic significance of the State, we can never let our guard down on this score. In my service in Kashmir, I had coined a phrase, i.e. "JAWAN AUR AWAAM, AMAN HAI MUQUAM." Loosely translated it means that both soldiers and public have peace as their common goal. To my mind, it is as much applicable here. The men in uniform and the people have to stand together and I urge both to work on it.

The second issue is the economic development and it goes hand in hand with security. Tourism is an important facet of our economy and therefore interlinked as well. Tourism not only plays a vital role in the economic development of a country, but brings the universe closer. It promotes better understanding of diversity, appreciation for nature and the need for its preservation.

With great pride I can say that Arunachal Pradesh has been chosen as the fourth best region amongst the top ten tourist destinations in the world for the year 2012 by one of the leading travelogues, Lonely Planet. The State has added another feather to its wings after being voted the 'Favourite Upcoming Destination' by a travel magazine 'Outlook Traveller.' Also Government of India has recently launched '777 Days of the Incredible Indian Himalayas' campaign to centre stage the Incredible Indian Himalayas on the World Tourism Map. Arunachal Pradesh is one of the major stakeholders in the campaign. Well done Arunachal !

This mystical land of smiling people, Arunachal Pradesh is host to one of the twelve mega biodiversity hotspots in the world. Having 80% of its land surface covered with greenery, we have rich flora and fauna, variety of species and large number of rare orchids, pristine beauty and green pastures of dense forest.

The State stretches from the snow-capped Himalayans in the north to the plains of Brahmaputra valley in Assam towards the south. It is unique geographically because it has alpine climate conditions and glaciers in the north and tropical evergreen rain forests on its southern border. It is an ideal ground for all adventure lovers, from mountaineers to white water rafters. The mighty rivers have not only hydro power potential, but can also be an ideal spot of global standards for adventure sports.

Like the rest of the country, Arunachal Pradesh is not only rich in biodiversity but also rich in ethnic and cultural diversity. It is a mini India and truly a mesmerizing cultural mosaic. Among all its 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes, Arunachal Pradesh has distinct and varied cultures with a strong tradition of art, music, dance, handicrafts, distinct socio cultural practice and festivals.

As a destination for religious tourism, it has Parasuram Kund, a place of pilgrimage for Hindus in the east of the State, Malinithan Temple in middle of the State and Tawang monastery for Buddhists in the west.

Tourism has potential to provide livelihood to large numbers of unemployed youth, both skilled and unskilled. As this sector grows, we will increasingly deal with tourists from rest of the country and abroad. I expect us to put our best foot forward. As ingrained in our Indian Culture, 'Athithi Devo Bhava', we always revered our guests. We make elaborate arrangement for them. The tribal people are always renowned for their hospitality. We must maintain this magnificent tradition and look at each tourist as a house guest. I would like to remind our youth that your ignorance and impolite act with visiting tourist will adversely affect tourism. We need to exhibit the highest level of hospitality and courtesy. I am reminded of our First Prime Minister Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, who said 'Receive a Tourist as a Guest. Send him back as a Friend'. What he said must be put into practise by all of us. Each one of us must be a 'Brand Ambassador' for our abundant, unspoiled natural beauty, wonderful traditions, great heritage sites and marvellous spots that would really enthrall any tourist, which we must preserve it at all costs.

The Government primarily plays the role of a facilitator, acting as a catalyst for development and promotion of tourism. The participation of stakeholders acts as a driving force. It is of paramount importance that we have proper coordination and collaboration with all stakeholders, such as tour operators, marketing agencies and other institutions involved in tourism. I would like to advise all the stakeholders to get connected with tourists, service providers both newcomers and veterans, and other tourism activities, including accommodation that fit the clients' requirements and budget.

We need to effectively segment and target different groups of tourists, from religious to adventure. Widely advertise through media & through our action the differentiation and quality of service we are offering through personal interactions as well.

Dear visitors and participants of Tawang Festival, ITM, you will enjoy Tawang's haunting beauty, unforgettable hospitality and the love of its people. The mountains looming majestically above, the clouds charioting distant dreams, the mysterious deep lakes with their silent stories, the drumming of the cascading falls and the innate divinity of the numerous monasteries would stun the entire being. The beauty of Tawang will indeed take your breath away and leave an everlasting imprint on your mind. What you have visited is just 10% of the treasure of beauty; each district of the State is a complete tourism package of its own. Come and explore rest of Arunachal Pradesh as well and when you go back to your place, share the beauty of this place with fellow citizens of the country.

One of the greatest sons of Arunachal Pradesh and former Chief Minister, Late Dorjee Khandu, always worked for strengthening our heritage and traditions. He was a great advocate for preservation of flora and fauna. On this occasion, as a tribute to this great son of the State, let us pledge to commit ourselves towards preservation of the blessed flora and fauna of this beautiful land.

In closing, I urge our stakeholders to capitalise on this wonderful and unique opportunity that is being offered. Use it to the fullest extent possible and as expeditiously as possible. Tourism Arunachal is grateful for your support and looks forward to future collaboration as we move forward with tourism development in the State, region and country.

Today, as this Tawang Festival begins, it marks new beginning for the people of Arunachal Pradesh and North East region in tourism sector. Arunachal Pradesh is truly a mystical land to be explored, admired and enjoyed. Tourism in our State can facilitate in discovering this land of 'Dawn lit Mountains'. I am hopeful that this event will grow to be an annual International event and will be a positive contributor in taking the mystique and magic of Arunachal across the world.

To sum up, I urge my beloved Arunachalees and all the other stake holders to ensure two things – one, in wake of modern development, nothing should be done to harm the Nature's bounty and unspoiled beauty of the State. Two, each tourist who comes here must go back as a friend.

God bless.

Jai Hind!

Thank you.