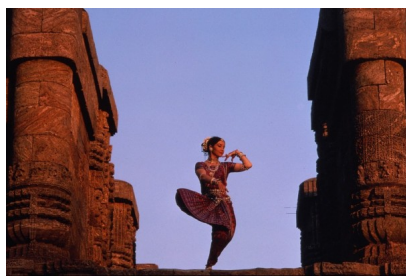


TOURISM INDUSTRY IN INDIA IS BOOMING



India's economic growth is weakening. However, a record growth in terms of tourism saved Prime Minister Modi's reputation as a successful reformer for now. India's government announced another ambitious goal: to double the number of jobs in the tourism industry over the next five years. According to Minister Alphons Kannanthanam, 100 million citizens will work in this field by 2022.

Today, 43 million people are employed in the industry.

Tourism industry in India is booming more than anywhere else in the world. Last year, India counted 14.4 million foreign visitors. This figure is set to increase to 40 million over the next half-decade, according to Prime Minister Modi's plans.

That does not seem too remote from reality. **In the first two months of this year alone the number of guests was 1.94 million.** This is an increase of 15% compared to the same period last year.

At present, tourists travelling to India make up one percent of the world's travelers. With currently 43 million jobs, the number of employees in the tourism industry ranks second internationally.

A recent study by the WTTC stated that tourism growth in 2016 would have significantly outstripped general economic growth for the sixth year in a row. In 116 out of 185 countries surveyed, the numbers were better than the other economic data. Worldwide, according to the survey, 292 million jobs are now directly dependent on tourism.

The increase rates are enormous. Forecasts can barely keep up with reality. Just last June, US ambassador Richard Verma had suggested that the number of jobs in the tourism industry could be increased to 46 million by 2025. Measured by the previous tendency, this should already be outbid.

India is the seventh largest tourism market in the world, with 9.6% of the gross domestic product. It represented 208.9 billion in 2016. The previous years' figures, with ambassador Verma still operating, were 6.3% and 120 billion.

This increase is convenient for Modi's government. India's once strong economic growth has decreased significantly lately. This has brought harsh criticism to the government, which is trying to push ahead the economic development with great ambitions.

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