

NATIONAL

Mission mode: Govt to pick 50 destinations to develop as a tour package

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday announced that the tourism promotion would be taken on 'Mission Mode' in collaboration with states and private stakeholders. Under the Vibrant Villages programme, tourism infrastructure and amenities will also be facilitated in border villages. The minister said the sector has huge potential and offers opportunities for job creation and entrepreneurship. "The country offers immense attraction for domestic and as well as for foreign tourists. There is a large potential to be tapped in tourism. The sector holds huge opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship for youth in particular. Promotion of tourism will be taken up on mission mode with the active participation of states' convergence of government programmes and public-private partnership", said Sitharaman. The minister further said that the Government will pick 50 destinations which would be developed as a complete package. In addition to this, the focus will be on to improve physical connectivity, availability of tourist guides, high standards for food streets and tourists' security, Sitharaman said. The finance minister also said that sector specific skilling and entrepreneurship development will be dovetailed to achieve the objectives of the 'Dekho Apna Desh' initiative. This was launched as an appeal by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the middle class to prefer domestic tourism over international tourism. Budget allocation to the tourism ministry this year is ₹2,400 crore, which is same as that of the previous fiscal. Out of this, ₹1,662 crore have been earmarked for integrated development of tourist circuits and infrastructure around religious and spiritual sites. She said that states would be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall in their state capital or most prominent tourism centre or the financial capital for promotion and sale of their own ODOPs (one district, one product), GI products and other handicraft product, and for providing space for such products of all other States.

(I.E., 02/02)