

T.N. unveils tourism policy, envisaging ₹20,000-crore investments in 5 years

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday released the Tamil Nadu Tourism Policy, 2023, which aims to attract investments of ₹20,000 crore into the sector over the next five years.

The policy envisions the enhancing and upgrading of the existing tourism infrastructure and implementing of new greenfield projects. It would be valid for a period of five years from the date of its notification, or till a new policy is announced.

The Tourism Department has also set targets for the next five years, which include contribut-



Investment push: Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at the launch of the Tamil Nadu Tourism Policy, 2023 in Chennai on Tuesday.

ing at least 12% to the GSDP annually and employing 25 lakh people.

The department would support private sector investment in projects located in certain geographies designated as 'focus tou-

rism destinations' and certain corridors classified as 'focus tourism corridors'.

The policy provides for a single-window portal for necessary clearances, concessions in electricity tariff and other incentives for

eligible tourism projects.

"New hotel projects in focus tourism destinations will be eligible for electricity tariff rebate (i.e. the difference between commercial tariff and industrial tariff) for a maximum period of three years, subject to the condition that the rebate shall not exceed 10% of the eligible investment in fixed assets," it said.

The policy provides for a capital subsidy of up to ₹1.5 crore, and an additional capital subsidy in the form of reimbursement of an additional share of investment in eligible capital assets.

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Tamil Nadu unveils tourism policy

It also provides for interest subvention, payroll incentive, quality certification incentive and sustainability initiatives incentive, among other benefits. A feedback-based rating system, activity operator licence, registration, accreditation and categorisation of tourism enterprises are among the other features envisioned under the policy. Tourism projects are to be categorised as 'A' (investment in eligible capital assets of up to ₹50 crore), 'B' (investment in eligible capital assets of up to ₹200 crore) and 'C' (investment in eligible capital assets of more than ₹200 crore).

As part of the policy, a Tourism Facilitation Cell will be created within the department to assist Guidance Tamil Nadu (the nodal agency instrumental in bringing investments into the State) in monitoring and promoting tourism investment. The cell will work towards investment promotion and facilitation and monitoring of private sector investment. A dedicated segment for tourism would be created at the upcoming Global Investors' Meet (GIM), 2024 with the objective of highlighting the investment potential of Tamil Nadu's tourism sector.

The department is planning to create a large-format amusement park on the lines of global theme parks such as Disney and Universal Studios. Plans are afoot to launch cruise services on various stretches of the Chennai - Rameswaram - Kanniyakumari and Chennai - Port Blair routes. Jetty infrastructure would be developed at these places after suitable spots are identified.

Towns and cities with good infrastructure would be developed as gateway hubs, from where visitors to Tamil Nadu could begin their journey. Chennai, Tiruchi, Madurai, Coimbatore and Kanniyakumari would be made into such hubs. An allocation of 5% from the Smart City funds would be made towards enhancing tourism infrastructure in gateway hubs.

The State is also looking at enhancing golf tourism and sports tourism. The Tourism Department would engage with golf courses located in hilly regions for the development of accommodation facilities, which could be promoted as part of recreation tourism. Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing forms of recreation tourism. It includes tourists travelling to participate in, and attend, sports events.

The department envisages the promotion of film tourism across Bollywood, Kollywood, documentaries, TV productions, foreign movies and shows, and other regional movies. A Film Tourism Scheme would be launched. The feasibility of developing a Marina and launching a cruise service from Kovalam would be evaluated. Rameswaram and Kunthukal islands have unexplored marine life, which offers opportunities for underwater and aquatic sports for tourists. Activity operators' licenses would be issued by the department for scuba diving and snorkeling at these locations. Beaches such as those in Kovalam, Rameswaram and Ariyaman are most suitable for sea-side, water-based activities, including surfing, speed boating, water-skiing, etc. The establishment of water sports infrastructure by private operators would be encouraged in these locations.

Tourism Minister K. Ramachandran received the first copy of the policy, which envisages the deployment of trained personnel to ensure tourists' security at all major destinations across the State. "They shall be trained in languages, tourist etiquette, behaviour and other soft skills," it said.

The policy can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/459JEJL>.

The Mylapore building and the birth of Indian National Congress

Opposite the Kapaleeswarar Temple tank at Mylapore stands an apartment named 'Vishwakamal'. It was once the house of civil servant Diwan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao. In 1884, a meeting took place at his house, which was claimed to have led to the formation of the Indian National Congress the next year. But this claim is disputed

Opposite the Kapaleeswarar Temple tank, on Ramakrishna Mutt Road at Mylapore in Chennai, stands an apartment named 'Vishwakamal'. The building is now a landmark, occasionally featured in heritage walks organised in the city, as the place of an epoch-making meeting that led to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. In 1884, the place, where the apartment stands, had the house of renowned civil servant Diwan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao. Soon after the annual convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar in December 1884, 17 men from different parts of the country met at Rao's residence. Allan Octavian Hume, the 'Father of the Congress', was not among them.

'Delegates from convention'

In her book, *How India Wrought from Freedom*, published in 1915, Annie Besant says, "Seventeen good men and true, who out of their love and their hope conceived the idea of a political national movement for the saving of the Motherland". According to her, the majority of them were delegates at the Theosophical Society convention. She goes on to indicate how this meeting led to the first Congress in Bombay in December 1885.

Besant was not the first to make this argument. Owing to many such accounts made ever since the formation of the Congress, it has become a popularly held belief, at least in Chennai, that this building was the birthplace of the Congress or the idea of it. In the *Madras-A 400-year record of the first city of modern India*, a collection of essays edited by writer and the city's renowned chronicler late S. Muthiah, author S.

Subramanian provides a similar account in his essay on political parties. Muthiah himself, in his column in *The Hindu* in 2015, credits the 'Mylapore 17' with sowing the seeds for what became the Indian National Congress.

A report in *The Hindu* on August 10, 1967, titled 'House where the Congress was born', laments the missing of a commemorative tablet that was earlier present near the building's entrance. The apartment had not come up then, but the old building had been fully remodelled. Upon enquiries with the house owner, the report says *The Hindu's* photographer managed to take a picture of the tablet, which was removed during the remodelling.

Overstatement

The tablet read, "The Indian National Congress organised here December 1884". While this was obviously a false claim as the first Congress was



A landmark: A report in *The Hindu* on August 10, 1967, laments the missing of a commemorative tablet that was earlier present near the entrance. By then, the old building was remodelled and it later became an apartment. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

officially convened only a year later, multiple other accounts show that the importance accorded to the 1884 meeting at Rao's residence as being a foundational event of the Indian National Congress may also be an overstatement.

Freedom fighter and Congress leader B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, in his book, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, mentions the meeting at Rao's house as one of the many theories on the Congress's origin, without being conclusive.

Historian S.R. Mehrotra in his book, *A History of the Indian National Congress 1885-1918*, says, "Like the seven cities of Greece claiming to be the birthplace of Homer, various persons and organisations have claimed, or been credited with, the parentage of the Indian National Congress." Albeit having some element of truth, he says none of these claims from places like Madras, Bombay and Calcutta takes away from

Hume the credit of being 'the father of the Indian National Congress'. A century history of the *Indian National Congress*, brought out by the Congress in 1985, agrees with Mehrotra.

No follow-up to the meeting

According to Mehrotra, H.S. Olcott, the co-founder of the Theosophical Society, claimed as early as 1886 that the society was the parent of the Indian National Congress as it first showed the possibility of bringing men from different parts of the country together. Rao, a member of the society, reiterated this claim and stated that the Congress's origin should be traced to the meeting at his house.

Mehrotra, however, says the idea of holding annual conferences with representatives from across the country to promote national objectives existed long before theosophy arrived in India. Moreover, the meeting at Rao's house was not

***The Hindu* says, "We do not believe that the National Congress had its origin in anything connected with Theosophy, nor is Ragoonath Row [sic] 'the very originator'."**

followed up with any action, he adds.

Besant in her book also says, "There seems to be no record of the work done in their own towns and provinces on their return home [after the meeting]..." The proceedings of the first Congress, regarding its origin, merely say, "In March 1885 it was decided to hold a meeting of representatives from all parts of India at the then coming Christmas" without any reference to the 1884 meeting in Madras. It is noteworthy that Rao was among the delegates at the first Congress, but did not participate in the discussions as he was a government servant.

A war of words

The most compelling and contemporaneous evidence that the importance accorded to the Mylapore meeting was exaggerated comes from *The Hindu* as part of what appeared to be a brief war of words it had with Rao in 1888 regarding his criticism of the Congress and claims on its origin. In its editorial dated March 16, 1888, the newspaper, whose editor G. Subramania Iyer was a delegate at the first Congress, says, "We do not believe that the National Congress had its origin in anything connected with Theosophy, nor is Ragoonath Row [sic] 'the very originator'."

Acknowledging that a meeting did take place at Rao's house, the editorial says, "...the committees appointed at that meeting never met after their appointment". It further says that to attribute the origin of "this great movement" to one particular individual or meeting was "as foolish as to attribute the great French cataclysm of 1787 to the famine that immediately preceded it".

It is, however, important not to undermine the role of Madras in the formation of the Congress. For instance, the Madras Mahajana Sabha, formed in 1884, was not only a provincial forerunner of the Indian National Congress but was pivotal in organising the first Congress in Bombay. The account of the correspondent of the Calcutta-based weekly *Reis and Rayyet* on the first Congress, quoted by Mehrotra in his book, best illustrates the impact that Madras had: "But by far the most striking figures in this assembly of Delegates were those from Madras...her representatives brought a flood of light before which those of all the other Provinces and Presidencies actually paled!"

Phalke award for veteran actor Waheeda Rehman

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Tuesday announced that veteran Bollywood actor Waheeda Rehman would be given the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award for 2021, honouring her stellar contribution to Indian cinema.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the 85-year-old actor on the micro-blogging site X (formerly Twitter). "Delighted that Waheeda Rehman ji has been honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award. Her journey in Indian cinema has left an indelible mark. A beacon of talent, dedication and grace, she embodies the best of our cinematic heritage. Congratulations to her," he said.

Ms. Rehman has been critically acclaimed for her roles in Hindi films, prominent among them being *Pyaasa*, *Kaagaz ke Phool*, *Chaudhavi Ka Chand*, *Saheb Biwi Aur Ghulam*, *Guide*, and *Khamoshi*.

The announcement coincides with the birth centenary of Dev Anand, who had worked with Ms. Rehman in classics such as



Waheeda Rehman

Guide (1965), an adaptation of R.K. Narayan's novel, and the crime thriller *C.I.D.* (1956), her first Hindi film. Earlier, she had acted in Telugu films *Rojulu Marayi* and *Jayasimha*, released in 1955.

"In her career spanning over five decades, she has essayed her roles with extreme finesse, leading to a national film award for her role as a clanswoman in the film *Reshma aur Shera*," Mr. Thakur said.

The award will be presented during the 69th national film awards ceremony. The award selection committee comprised the film personalities Asha Parekh, Chiranjeevi, Paresh Rawal, Prosenjit Chatterjee, and Shekhar Kapur.

Ms. Rehman has worked in more than 90 films. She bagged the national award for the best female actor in 1971 and was honoured with the Padma Shri in 1972 and the Padma Bhushan in 2011.

95% of components used in Indian rockets indigenous, says ISRO chief at CSIR event

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Nearly 95% of the components used in the rockets, including those used in Chandrayaan-3 mission, were made in India and were a result of several years of development involving the Indian Space Research Organisation and Indian industries, S. Somanath, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation, said at the Foundation Day celebrations of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in New Delhi.

"These have not come about just like that and have come over several years...and is a result of collaborations with various agencies, including Indian laboratories, national labs, defence labs, and CSIR



S. Somanath

labs, focusing on material indigenisation, technology capabilities, and research," he said.

The ISRO built its own lithium-ion batteries for space applications and was now in the process of transferring it to industry, he added. Several key components were made at Chandigarh's Semi-Conductor Laboratory (SCL) and only about "5% of high-end electronics" were

imported for the space mission.

"It is not a supercomputer but enough to run a rocket and take it safely into space. The battery systems, storage, solar cells... we've been doing this over a long time and have created an industry capable of doing all of this," he said prior to a ceremony to felicitate the winners of the CSIR-Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar prizes, awarded annually to recognise scientists aged under 45 who have done exceptional work in previous years.

Jitendra Singh, Minister of Science and Technology, said that India was seeing a sea change in the way the organisation was being led and geared to address not only national aspirations but also to contribute to socio-economic growth.

Golden end to India's long equestrian medal drought

The quartet of Sudipti, Divyakriti, Hriday and Anush overcomes a strong field and scripts history by clinching the country's first-ever yellow metal in the team dressage event

ASIAN GAMES

Uthra Ganesan
HANGZHOU

Equestrian as a sport made its maiden appearance at the Asian Games in 1982 and saw host India dominating the competition with three gold medals. Since then, it had been a 41-year long wait for the elusive yellow medal that ended with a team dressage gold as a quartet of youngsters scripted history at the Tonglu Equestrian Centre here on Tuesday.

It was also the first-ever medal in dressage for India, the previous one coming in eventing. The four riders and their horses – Sudipti Hajela (Chinski), Divyakriti Singh (Adrenalin Firod), Hriday Cheda (Chemxpro Emerald) and Anush Agarwalla (Etro) – overcame a strong field that saw multiple-time winner South Korea being eliminated and defending champion Japan relegated to fourth.

With the sport embroiled in unending controversies back home for a long time now, it wasn't surprising that the youngsters – all aged between 21-25 – were both emotional and ecstatic at the result. "It's just unbelievable to have



1-1-1-1: The Indian quartet, which reigned supreme in the team dressage event, atop the podium. AFP

won gold here. It's not been an easy journey for all of us to come here – we have worked very hard for many years, stayed in Europe away from our families, missed every occasion and celebration back home and sacrificed a lot.

"When we finally realised that Team India was winning gold, it was very emotional, especially when the national anthem was playing, and then the silence and respect looking at our flag, there has not been a better feeling than that ever," Anush said.

"It has been a very long

journey but everything came together with this team. None of us were able to believe it at that moment but we gave our 100% and then when you see the Tiranga going up, that is the biggest motivation," Sudipti, the youngest at 21, chirped in.

But while the spotlight was on the riders, they themselves reminded that the humans were no good without their mounts. "Horses are the most important part of our sport, without them we are nothing. You may be the best rider in the world but with-

out the right horse, you are helpless. And finding that one horse that is right for you is a tough task."

"This is not an easy sport and finances are a big part of being successful. We need a lot more government support and something like the Madhya Pradesh State Equestrian Academy in every State to make it more accessible for everyone. But here, we have great camaraderie as a team and it feels really surreal, so a big 'Thank You' to everyone who's supported us all the way," Divyakriti added.