



World Tourism Day 2020

Why in News

27th September has been celebrated as **World Tourism Day since 1980**. It was on this day in 1970 when the Statutes of the **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** were adopted which are considered a milestone in global tourism.

- The UNWTO is the **United Nations specialised agency** responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

Key Points

▪ Significance:

- The World Tourism Day **highlights the unique role of the tourism sector in preserving cultural and natural heritage** all around the world. It acts as an auxiliary in safeguarding habitat and endangered species.
- It addresses the **importance of the tourism sector in providing jobs and opportunities**, mostly for women and youth, in rural as well as big cities.

▪ 2020 Celebrations:

- **Theme for 2020:** 'Tourism and Rural Development'.
 - The theme encourages the celebration of the unique role played by tourism in job creation outside of the big cities.
- **Joint Hosts:**
 - In the history of 40 years, the official celebration of World Tourism Day will not be hosted by a single member state of the **UNWTO**.
 - Nations from the **MERCOSUR bloc** (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Chile joining as member associate status) **will also be the joint hosts**.
- **Covid-19 Impact:** As per the data of the UNWTO, about 100 to 120 million jobs in the tourism industry are at risk directly.

Tourism and India

- India has **significant potential for tourism**. Its wealth of **culture, heritage, archaeology and nature** uniquely places it to provide such experiences for people to rediscover themselves.
 - There are 38 **World Heritage Sites** located in India. The World Heritage Sites are important places of cultural or natural heritage as described in the **UNESCO World Heritage Convention**, established in 1972.
- The industry's contribution to **India's Gross Domestic Product** in 2019 stood at 9.3%, and is said to account for over 8% of the total employment.
- Some **Initiatives** taken to **promote tourism** in India:
 - **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** It is a **Central Sector Scheme**, and was launched in 2014

-15 for **integrated development of theme based tourist circuits** in the country.

- **PRASHAD Scheme**: The 'National Mission on **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive**' (**PRASHAD**) was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15 with the objective of **holistic development of identified pilgrimage destinations**.
- **Iconic Tourist Sites**: The government is developing 17 "Iconic Tourist Sites" in the country as world class tourist destinations which in turn would serve as a model for other tourism sites. It is aimed at enhancing India's **soft power**.
- **Webinar Series Dekho Apna Desh**: It was launched in January 2020 with the **objective of creating awareness** among the citizens about the rich heritage and culture of the country.
 - It encourages citizens to travel widely within the country and enhances tourist footfalls leading to development of the local economy and creation of jobs at the local level.
- **Destination North East-2020**: It **aims** to bring the rest of India closer to **North East (NE)** India.
- **SAATHI Application**: It is an initiative **of the Ministry of Tourism with the Quality Council of India**, launched **to assist the hospitality industry** to continue to operate safely and thereby instill confidence among the Staff, employees and the guests about the safety of the hotel/unit.

▪ **Challenges:**

- The **Swacch Survekshan** (cleanliness survey) has projected many tourist hotspots such as Amritsar, Jaipur, Mumbai, Delhi, Srinagar, Varanasi and Shillong **in poor light**.
 - Almost half of the world's 50 most-polluted cities are in India.
 - The **habit of littering and ineffective waste management** has led to widespread pollution.
- Tourists in India still face many **infrastructure related problems** like inadequate roads, water, sewer, hotels and telecommunications etc. **Safety and security of tourists**, especially of the foreign tourists, is a major hurdle to tourism development.
- Tourism sector **got largely affected due to pandemic and associated lockdown**. The travel ban hugely **impacted tour operators and travel agencies, hotels, and the aviation industry**.
 - In 2019, foreign tourist arrivals in India stood at 10.89 million, achieving a yearly growth rate of 3.20% from 2018, earning USD 29.90 billion in foreign exchange earnings.
 - But the top countries that once contributed to foreign tourists in India, namely China, Germany, the United States and the UK have been badly hit by the pandemic.

Way Forward

- Strengthening the waste collection system and **educating common citizens about the importance of responsible disposal of various types of plastics** would ensure less waste littered at tourist hotspots and other Indian cities. The government has also asked all the **tourist hotspots cities to switch completely to clean fuel**.
- Indian tourism has, for a long, just focused on creating more and more tourist destinations in the name of economic upliftment of local communities, rather than **striking a balance between the needs of the host, visitor and the environment**. It is time to turn the pandemic into an opportunity by redesigning the current business model into a long-term sustainable and resilient tourism industry.

Source: PIB

