

## **HRAWI Praises Maharashtra's New Tourism Policy for Infrastructure and Incentives**

The Hotel And Restaurant Association (Western India) – HRAWI has praised the Maharashtra Government for its forward-thinking Tourism Policy 2024. The Association emphasized that the annual financial allocation of INR 1,666 Cr for incentives and operational support demonstrates the Government's dedication to improving tourism and hospitality infrastructure. The industry is particularly enthusiastic about the infrastructure development, which includes fast-track clearances, additional Floor Space Index (FSI), and relaxed building restrictions to expedite projects. Moreover, fiscal incentives such as capital subsidies, SGST reimbursement, electricity duty exemptions, and interest subventions on loans, which have been long-standing demands of the hospitality sector, are part of the new policy. Most notably, HRAWI pointed out that this policy aligns with the National Tourism Agenda by enhancing coordination between the State and the Centre.

“We are thrilled about the Maharashtra Government's Tourism Policy 2024. This progressive framework, aimed at positioning Maharashtra as a premier global tourist destination, is a game-changer for our industry. The policy's strategic initiatives and incentives are set to attract significant investments and create over 30 lakh jobs. Additional FSI, relaxed building restrictions to expedite projects, capital subsidies, SGST reimbursement, electricity duty exemptions and interest subventions on loans are some of the key requirements of the industry and we believe, once implemented, will give a big boon to the State's tourism and hospitality sector. We eagerly anticipate its effective implementation within the stated objectives and the Ease of Doing Business framework,” says Mr Pradeep Shetty, President, HRAWI.

An annual financial allocation of INR 1,666 Cr for incentives and operational support highlights the Government's dedication to strengthening tourism infrastructure. The policy also emphasizes eco-tourism and cultural preservation, offering incentives for projects in these areas and supporting the revival of indigenous arts, culture, and cuisine.

“The industry is glad to see that the Government is aware of the ground realities of the sector and has crafted a policy that is tailored to address its needs. In the Tourism Policy 2024, skill development and research receive a significant boost with reimbursements for hospitality training and financial support for tourism research. ICT enablement and digital promotion are supported through grants for organizing national and international tourism events and developing digital publicity materials. More importantly, sustainability is a core focus, with initiatives like no single-use plastic zones, clean drinking water and waste disposal bins in tourist areas. The policy also emphasizes local integration, encouraging tourism units to showcase local culture, artifacts and cuisine,” adds Mr Shetty.

Aimed at transforming Maharashtra into a premier global tourist destination, the policy seeks to attract approximately INR 1,00,000 Cr in new private investments and create around 18 lakh direct and indirect jobs through the private sector, with the goal of doubling tourist inflow to the State. Key features include a focus on niche tourism segments such as eco-tourism, rural tourism, and agro-tourism, along with the promotion of cruise tourism and enhanced MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) facilities.

“Specific projects like luxury river cruises on the Sardar Sarovar and budget cruises on the Vashisti River are also included. MMRDA will develop a master plan to transform the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) into a global tourism hub, aiming to boost tourist footfalls to 25 million by 2030 by enhancing the length of tourist stay by 3 to 4 days. Segments including Beach, MICE, Cultural & Heritage, Bollywood, Learning & Recreation, Sports, and Wellness Tourism possesses immense potential to draw both national and international tourists while providing an engaging experience,” adds Mr Shetty.

The Association has praised the initiative to ensure visitor safety and convenience with essential infrastructure such as Wi-Fi coverage, CCTV surveillance, and a 24×7 tourist police helpline. The policy also includes awards for Best Tourism Village, Best Homestay, and Best Agro-Tourism units at various levels. Cruise and river tourism will be enhanced by developing jetties at various locations, including Veldur, Kashid, Arnala Fort, Janjira Fort, Padmadurg, Suvarnadurg, Underi, and Durgadi. Additionally, the policy

supports river tourism on perennial rivers such as the Godavari, Narmada, Vashisti, Savitri, Krishna, and Tapi.

“This progressive policy is a testament to the Maharashtra Government’s dedication to making the State a global tourism hub. It will not only boost the economy but also showcase Maharashtra’s rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes to the world. Also, it complements the vision and efforts of the Government of India under Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, aiming to position India as a tourism powerhouse with a \$3 trillion tourism economy and 100 million arrivals by 2047. We are confident that these initiatives will significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of the region and elevate the State’s standing in the global tourism landscape. HRAWI looks forward to collaborating with the Government to ensure the successful implementation of this policy, ultimately transforming Maharashtra into a world-class tourist destination,” concludes Mr Shetty.