



India's leading trade show on business, MICE and luxury travel, the Business and Luxury Travel Mart was held at the Leela Ambience Convention Hotel in New Delhi last week.

Minister of Tourism Development, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs John Amaratunga was the chief guest.

Minister Amaratunga said that there was a marked increase in the business and luxury segment of visitors arriving from India.

"Business and luxury travel to Sri Lanka is a new trend that is catching on and affluent Indian visitors comprise a large share of the volume that is driving this segment.

"Sri Lanka's participation in this Fair through the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) is to make further inroads in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) category which today accounts for around 15 percent of visitors to the island," he said. The Sri Lanka pavilion was at the entrance of the Convention centre and took prominence among other

participating countries and organisations. Ten companies from Sri Lanka participated in the travel mart and had over 250 pre-booked appointments. The SLCB had over 40 meetings with key industry players.

Buyers were presented with SLCB branded laptop bags and the SLCB sponsored a luncheon for the participants. The SLCB in association with SriLankan Airlines made a presentation on MICE opportunities and the facilities available in Sri Lanka. SriLankan Airlines has 125 direct flights per week to 13 destinations in India.

Minister Amaratunga highlighted the special relationship between India and Sri Lanka. He outlined the significance of the Ramayana Trail, places of interest that Sri Lankans and Indians visit, the expansion of tourism related business relations and the opportunities for Indian companies to invest in designated tourism areas working with the BOI.

He also emphasised the importance of leveraging the opportunities as a result of the free trade agreement between the two nations.

“As per the latest tourism data, nearly 20 percent of all tourists who came to Sri Lanka last year originated from India. Over 424,885 Indians visited Sri Lanka in 2018.

This is the highest number of Indian nationals to have visited Sri Lanka in a calendar year. This year we hope to target one million Indian tourists.

“We are aware that India will become the world's second largest economy within the next decade. We are also aware that India has the single largest population of young people in the world.

“Half of India's population is under 25 years. As much as this offers huge potential for tourism it also needs understanding of the products needed to attract the young and affluent travellers,” Amaratunga said.

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