Civil Society Groups Call for Child Safety at Tourism Spot
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A section of civil society organisations (CSOs) from Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Goa have called for child safety-centric tourism policy, especially in context of recent studies in the state that showed rampant exploitation of children at major tourism spots such as Khajuraho and Ujjain.

Representatives of 18 organisations from the three states held a consultation here recently to discuss the provisions made in the draft of the national tourism policy that has been put in public domain to seek objections and suggestions.

Following discussions, a 16-point resolution on child safety issues in tourism was adopted and it was decided that the points would be forwarded to the ministry of tourism for consideration.

The consultation was coordinated by Bhopal-based organisations Vikas Samvad and Hifazat and Bangalore-based Equitable Tourism Options (EQUATIONS).

Vikas Samvad and EQUATIONS had conducted a study in Khajuraho and Ujjain last year and reported extensive exploitation of children, including forced labour, begging and sexual exploitation. HT had reported the details of the study.

One of the major resolutions adopted by CSOs was that the ministry for women and child development should come up with a national and state level action plan to stop exploitation of children in tourism with assistance of the ministry of tourism, tourism industry, state governments, community members and social organisations.

They also said in the approval process for tourism development projects, declaration to safeguard local communities from exploitation — especially children and women — should be sought from the applicants.

There should be special arrangements for prevention of human trafficking at the tourism spots.

The CSOs also suggested strict implementation of the code of conduct for safe tourism.

Sachin Jain of Vikas Samvad told HT that the draft tourism policy totally lacks the concept of safety and security of children and women in context of tourism.

“The entire draft of the policy does not refer to the words like child/children, rights or communities in sense of local people even once. The reference to women is also in context of entrepreneurship and not protection from exploitation,” he said.

Suggestions

Strengthening of tourist police and child protection committees

Gathering statistics related to exploitation of children and women and analysing it

Coordination between departments dealing with children’s issues

Inclusion of tourism-related exploitation issues in graduate/PG syllabus