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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***PHDCCI's Spiritual Tourism Conclave highlights Ayodhya's global potential***

**Ayodhya:** PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (PHDCCI) first Global Spiritual Tourism Conclave, **रूहमantic**, held here on 23 August, came in for high praise from the **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board**, which collaborated with it in organizing the conclave. **Mr. Sheo Shekhar Shukla (IAS)**, Principal Secretary – Tourism and Culture, Madhya Pradesh, extolled the concept of **रूहमantic** which he said was unique and showed the innovative thinking of the Chamber in combining spirituality with tourism. The conclave brought together global thought leaders, government officials and industry stakeholders, who took the holy city of Ayodhya's transformation into a global spiritual tourism destination a notch higher, fostering discussions that will shape the future of the industry.

Also present in the Inaugural Session were **Ms. Eesha Priya (IAS)**, Special Secretary – Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh; **Mr. Arun Srivastava**, Joint Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; **Mr. Rajan Sehgal**, Co-Chair – Tourism & Hospitality Committee, PHDCCI; and **Ms. Shalini S Sharma**, Assistant Secretary General, PHDCCI.

Mr. Shukla provided insights into Madhya Pradesh's efforts in preserving and promoting its spiritual heritage. Ms. Priya spoke about the state's commitment to enhancing infrastructure in spiritual hubs like Ayodhya. Mr. Srivastava highlighted the government's initiatives to promote spiritual destinations across the country. Mr. Sehgal emphasized on the significance of spiritual tourism in India's socio-economic landscape.

A special guest at the conclave was **Mr. Champat Rai**, General Secretary, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra who gave insights into the vision behind Shri Ram Mandir, the kind of facilities that it has the provision to provide and the direction which future development is going to take. Emphasising on the role of the Government in creating infrastructure and providing facilities to pilgrims, he criticized the profit-making which industry was getting into, in a holy place like Ayodhya.

The Inaugural Session saw release of two reports – one by PHDCCI on the Conclave with messages from Uttar Pradesh Governor, Smt. Anandiben Patel; Tourism and Culture Minister, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and the Chamber. The second report was made by KPMG in partnership with PHDCCI on the scope, challenges and recommendations for spiritual tourism.



The day of the conclave started with a yoga session which was curated by Isha Foundation. Participants were told about the nuances of different types of yogic kriyas such as Upa yoga and Nada yoga.

A session titled '**Ayodhya: The emerging spiritual hub**', focused on civic initiatives, infrastructure development and strategic measures being undertaken to transform Ayodhya into a global spiritual tourism hub. Moderated by **Mr. Prateek Hira**, Chairman – UP Chapter, Indian Association of Tour Operators, the session featured insightful discussions from panelists including **Mahant Girish Pati Tripathi**, Mayor of Ayodhya; **Mr. Ashwini Kumar Pandey (IAS)**, Vice Chairman, Ayodhya Development Authority; **Mr. Vinod Pandey**, Cluster General Manager, Hotel Taj Mahal, Lucknow; and **Mr. K S Sawhney**, Managing Director, Bakshi Transport Service (P) Ltd.

The conclave also featured two critical case study presentations. **Dr. Kiran Shinde**, Convener – Planning Program at La Trobe University, Australia, presented a thought-provoking analysis on Buddhist Tourism in India, discussing whether these sites should be promoted as mass circuits or niche destinations. The second case study, presented by **Ar. Charlie Gupta** and **Ar. Ridhu Dhan Gahalot** from the School of Planning & Architecture, Bhopal, focused on sustainable tourism in Vrindavan and how its pilgrimage landscape has evolved from a sacred trek to a leisure destination, drawing valuable lessons for other spiritual sites.

The panel discussion, '**Nirvana through digital darshan**' explored how technology is revolutionizing the way people experience spirituality. Moderated by **Dr. Sanjukta Ghosh**, Associate Professor, IIT (BHU), Varanasi, the session brought together leaders from the digital spirituality space, including **Mr. Acharya Dev**, Co-Founder, Vama; **Mr. Giresh Vasudev Kulkarni**, Founder, Temple Connect; **Mr. Indraneel Dasgupta**, Founder & CEO, My Tirth India; and **Mr. Raghava Krishna**, Founder and CEO, Brhat. The panelists discussed innovative ways to make spiritual experiences more accessible through digital platforms.

The conclave concluded with a Maha Abhishek Puja conducted virtually through Vama App at Jarkutinatheshwar Mahadev Temple in Prayagraj. Delegates were also treated to a special VIP darshan of Shri Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, marking the perfect end to a spiritually enriching event.

Among the industry partners of 1<sup>st</sup> GSTC were Vama, Pawan Hans Ltd, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO).

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Warm Regards,  
Media Division  
PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry