

## **Lead Sector in Tourism – BIMST-EC**

Follow – up Action on the Second BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting, Dhaka – 17- 19 December 1998

Subsequent to the above meeting, which was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 17 – 19 December, 1998 to which the Sri Lanka delegation was led by Hon. Lakshman Kiriella, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, it was decided that all member countries take the lead in one of the six primary sectors identified for cooperation in the BIMST-EC work programme. Sri Lanka undertook to lead in the tourism sector for the initial period of three years. (I refer to my letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> December 1998, in this regard). It is now the responsibility of Sri Lanka to coordinate projects in the tourism sector among the members of the BIMST-EC region. The role and functions of lead countries in the identified sectors of cooperation is at annex A for your guidance.

During the discussions at the Senior Officials meeting member countries were generally of the view that the proposals adopted by the BIMST – SPOT tourism conference in Calcutta last year in October, would serve as a means of laying the groundwork for cooperation in this sector. Your attention is also drawn to the report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ministerial meeting of BIMST-EC sent with my letter of 25<sup>th</sup> Ultimo, (a copy of which is attached for your easy reference – Annex B) According to this Ministry's records Hon. H.B. Semasinghe, Deputy Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation participated in the BIMST – SPOT Tourism Conference.

Since decisions have been taken to declare year 2001 as the Visit BIMST-EC year a combined effort would be required to create world awareness regarding this Project.

H E Mr.Pitak Intrawithayanunt, Minister in charge of tourism and the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand has expressed willingness to assist Sri Lanka in providing training facilities and has pledged his support in making this endeavor a success. He has extended a personal invitation to the Hon. Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation to visit Thailand.

It would be appreciated if you could convene a meeting urgently of the relevant Ministries/Institutions and private sector representatives from the Chambers of Commerce dealing with tourism in order to apprise them of Sri Lanka's responsibilities in this regard and formulate a plan of action for cooperation within the region in the tourism sector which would have to be submitted to the other member countries. It may be noted that Sri Lanka will have to report on the results of its endeavors as the lead country in tourism for the BIMST-EC region, to the next Ministerial meeting scheduled to be in November/December 1999 in New Delhi. Representatives from the Economic Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would attend the meeting, once the venue and time are conveyed by you.