

## **Staff shortage hits Karnataka state tourism**

HUBBALLI: Even as the state government has ordered reorganization of the tourism department, many offices are plagued by shortage of staff and officers.

There are only 97 staff and officers against the 194 sanctioned posts. Meanwhile, the department has got 118 additional posts. With this, the numbers of vacant posts has increased to 221 and it's the main hurdle for the development of tourist spots.

Karnataka has many tourist spots, particularly in North Karnataka like Badami, Pattadakallu, Gol Gumbaz, Aihole, Hampi. Hundreds of people visit these places every day. But, the tourism department has failed to make these place tourist-friendly by improving the facilities.

Ironically, Dharwad district had only tourist officer which has been upgraded to assistant director's post. The district didn't have a permanent post of tourist officer. World-famous heritage site Hampi is facing a similar problem of manpower shortage.

Thousands of visitors from within the state, neighbouring states and foreign countries would visit Hampi to take a look at the heritage sites. The government has upgraded and elevated Hampi tourism office from assistant director to deputy director. Surprisingly, Hampi didn't even have permanent staff.

The staff shortage and the delay on the government in appointing persons to various sanctioned positions has affected the development.

Many tourists have not been getting adequate information and facilities in many tourist places.

Some places have been neglected by the government and they were not open to the public.

When contacted, tourism minister Priyank Kharge told TOI they have sent a proposal to the finance department to commence the process of recruiting adequate staff. But the finance department has not given its approval to go ahead with the recruitment.

"We have sent another proposal to get its nod to go ahead for recruiting additional 118 posts which were created after the department's

reorganization. I hope the finance department will give its approval," he said.

The reorganization will help boost tourism in Karnataka and will give the much-needed fillip for economic growth of North Karnataka. The department is likely to expand its services by starting new offices in Delhi and Goa.