

Record note of discussion of the IATO Interactive Meeting held on 28th April 2023 at The Park Hotel, New Delhi

Mr. Sanjay Razdan Hony. Secretary welcomed the members and mentioned that he was elated and honoured to address the meeting as Hony Secretary and looked forward to having a fruitful discussion with our valued members. He thanked the members for reposing their faith in the new Executive committee and assured that the team will continue to work hard to deliver the desired results. He then invited the President, Mr. Rajiv Mehra to welcome and address the delegates.

Mr. Rajiv Mehra welcomed all to this interactive meeting. He apprised the house that around 10.30 today around 15 members were called to discuss what needs to be done further. The aim was to get hold of their experience to gauge future course of action. It was purely based on what we thought and for the benefit of all so that we can start working on our programme. There is no discrimination in it. All Active & Allied members are all equal for us.

Mr. Mehra offered his heartfelt thanks for electing **the** office bearers unopposed. It was an honor for us and personally **for him** when his entire Executive Members were elected.

He then apprised the members on various initiatives on which IATO is engaged and mentioned the following: -

1. On SEIS, a meeting was called on 19th April 2023 at Vanijya Bhawan where he raised issue of SEIS. It was very categorically and clearly mentioned by Mr. Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce that all benefits to the service sector have been withdrawn and there would be no handholding from the Government. Mr. Mehra told DG SEPC that IATO would request Mr. Pronab Sarkar to resign from SEPC Council and tell IATO members to cease being member of SEPC and why spend the additional amount on SEPC Membership as nothing is happening but the IEC CODE must be retained and renewed and updated every year.
2. As far as TCS on the outbound business is concerned, IATO and other associations approached the concerned authorities in the Ministry of Finance and also through Ministry of Tourism, but there has been no favorable response from the Government and it has been passed in the finance bill and implemented.
3. On the above two issues we have written to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on the 27th of April 2023 stating that these will negatively impact both inbound and outbound tourism and have sought his help.
4. He officially announced that the 38th IATO Annual convention would be held at Sambhaji Nagar (earlier *known as Aurangabad*) from 29th September to 1st October, post Tours will commence from 2nd October 2023. He and Mr. Ravi Gosain, met the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Eknath Shinde in Mumbai, Shri Ambadasji Danve, Hon'ble Leader of Opposition of Maharashtra Legislative Council and Mr. Mangal Prabhatji Lodha Hon'ble Minister of Tourism of Maharashtra and invited them for the 38th IATO Annual Convention. Hon'ble Chief Minister assured his full

support from his office and also from Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra Government for the convention. We met the collector Aurangabad and he assured IATO that they would do the IATO Convention in the best possible way. IATO delegation also met the Hon'ble Shri Rahul Nalurekar, Speaker of the Maharashtra, Legislative Assembly. Mr. N.S. Rathor, Chairman, IATO Western Region, Mr. Sunit Kothari, Chairman, Civil Aviation Committee & Public Relations Committee, ATDF and Mr. Jaswant Singh, President, Aurangabad Tourism Development Foundation (ATDF) were also part of IATO delegation.

5. IATO has requested Mr. Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, regarding the applications for grant of MoT recognition/renewal of tour operators'/travel agents'/service providers and the balance sheet of 2019-20 to be accepted for renewal of MoT recognition till March 2023 **which has been done and many of our members benefitted out of it.**
6. We have offered Shri Verma suggestions for Road shows to be organized by Ministry of Tourism in 2023-24. In the meantime, Ministry is asking us as to where the Road Shows are to be conducted. Mr. Mehra asked the members for their suggestions so that it can be collated and sent to the Ministry.
7. We are constantly following up with the Ministry of Tourism on MDA scheme and this he understood should be resumed very shortly i.e. 15th May 2023. In the new MDA the Turnover Criterion from Rs. 2 Crores has been reduced to Rs 1 Cr as information got from our members.
8. Overseas promotion, road shows, fam trips to India should also begin very shortly, which we have been very constantly writing to the Ministry. On our follow-up, Ministry participated in FITUR, ITB and Arabian Travel Mart.
9. He as President IATO is in touch with approx. 60 Indian Embassies/High Commissions worldwide and have offered them publicity material and IATO films along with Incredible India Films.
10. It has been decided by the Ministry of Commerce that all delegations of the level of Minister going abroad, IATO will be intimated and our members can join the delegation subject to all expense will be borne by the individual. However, meeting will be arranged by them. This exercise has started and a delegation is going to Egypt and we were asked to nominate two members. However, we have been able to nominate one IATO member, even though the circular was sent to all Active Members.
11. We wrote to Shri Vinay Kwatra, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs Problems being faced by foreign tourists in making payment for e-Tourist Visa fee on line. This was immediately resolved
12. We are in touch with Shri Rajiv Bansal, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation regarding Exorbitant increase made by the airports run by the Adani group who are charging Rs 2 Lakhs per year whereas at Delhi Airport it is Rs 75000/-per year. There is an exorbitant fee that is being charged for airport entry passes especially in Mumbai, where charges are very high.

13. We have written to the Railway Minister and the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for Halt of Vande Bharat Express at Tundla Junction for Pilgrimage/Leisure Tourism. Mr. Mehra had personally mentioned to Shri Yogi Adityanath Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh on the stage at the 37th IATO Convention at Lucknow and he asked us to write to him and he would look into it.

14. We were informed by some of our members that some countries have issued advisories against travel to India On that issue we wrote to Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, spoke to the Joint Secretary MEA also that they must write that India today is a very strong and safe country and we will not accept this. Some headway is being done by the External Affairs Ministry.

15. On the air connectivity we have written to:-

- Air India to introduce flights on sector, • Delhi – Aurangabad - Delhi • Jaipur – Udaipur – Aurangabad – Mumbai and Mumbai – Aurangabad – Mumbai in evening
- IndiGo to restore IndiGo Flight (evening flight) on sector Mumbai - Aurangabad – Mumbai and introducing a new daily flight on sector Delhi – Aurangabad – Delhi
- IndiGo to introduce new flight on sector Agra – Khajuraho – Varanasi – Khajuraho – Agra

16. E. Visa for Honk Kong and some middle east countries is on our priority list and it should be resolved soon, which we are following up with the Ministry of External Affairs and Embassy of India in Hong Kong.

17. We are also in touch with the authorities regarding relaxation in restrictions, which are imposed in Delhi NCR on the BS IV Diesel vehicles during the winter months and hope this will be done.

18. IATO is a filing a case in Hon'ble Supreme Court along with ITTA for allowing registration of 7 seater and above Diesel vehicles including coaches of BS VI model to be registered in Delhi.

19. IATO will soon start a training programme for the owner/staff on various subject in delhi followed by in other states for skill development

20. As a very small gesture from the EC we have decided to reduce the Subscription Charges by 50%. Business is still now 30 to 35% of the Pre Covid era. It will specially benefit the small and medium category of our membership. EC ~~had~~ totally waived off the Subscription Fees for 1 year (in 2021), another year (in 2022) it was Rs 1000 (for Allied) and Rs. 1200 (for Active) plus GST. This year we have reduced it by 50%.

21. For promotion of BUDDHIST TOURISM, we have requested the Government to allow entry through land borders for the revival of Buddhist Tourism.

22. IATO got special promo code rates for the members from Taj Hotels, ITC Hotels and Sterling Resort. We are also in touch with Lemon Tree Hotel and The Leela Hotels. Most importantly 72 hours' cancellation is there. Taj ITC and Sterling are already following it. The rates are for Foreign FIT Tourists.

Mr. Mehra introduced Mr. Viney Tyagi who comes back to EC as Hony. Joint Secretary.

Mr. Mehra then requested Mr. Sanjay Razdan, Hony. Secretary to continue with conducting the meeting.

In-house Announcements by Mr. Sanjay Razdan Hony. Secretary

Addressing the members Mr. Razdan said that IATO Annual Day was celebrated with fun and gusto on the 19th of February 2023. and he further said that it was special as our members made it memorable. He was confident that the next one would be even better.

IATO represented before the authorities on issues that could be resolved for the benefit of our membership. Highlighting them Mr. Razdan mentioned:

- Request to Mr. Santosh Sarangi, Director General Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry for continuation of SEIS for the Foreign Trade Policy 2022-27 for the Inbound Tour Operators, set up an Industry specific “Export Promotion Council” for Tourism sector and to augment luxury transport fleet in view of Prestigious G20 Summit scheduled in Sept 2023.
- Requests were made to Shri Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India on various communication as to re-store e-Visa for Gulf , Hong Kong and other important source markets, to allow entry through land borders for the revival of Buddhist Tourism, in the Incredible India Global Tourism Promotion Brand Films in English and different languages needed to be edited and scenes of wearing masks needed to be removed and revised link may please be sent to IATO for circulation to the members and regarding the participation of Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India by setting up India Pavilion in Arabian Travel Mart 2023
- IATO expressed its concern to Sh. Vijay Pal Singh, Managing Director, Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation Bookings on Palace on Wheels and additional amount being asked by RTDC from our members and also offered suggestions for Operation of Palace on Wheels.
- We requested Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Kerala, regarding Kerala Government orders making it compulsory to wear mask in public places etc.
- IATO requested Mr. Sheo Shekhar Shukla, Principal Secretary, Tourism, & Managing Director Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board for his kind help regarding the problems and hardship being faced by the tourist transport operators in Maharashtra and Gujarat who were promoting tourism in Madhya Pradesh.
- We wrote to Mr. Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa regarding Closure of ASI Monuments during visit of G-20 Delegation.
- Regarding MDA for its members who were participating in ITB 2023 in Indiatourism Pavilion in Germany. IATO wrote to Mr. Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary It was verbally confirmed to IATO that MDA would be provided. Further IATO requested Shri Verma regarding removal of referral from the State Tourism Department after registering on Nidhi Portal to be considered as there were many applications which were pending due to non-receipt of referral

from the state tourism department causing delay in getting renewal of MoT recognition.

- IATO wrote on the Participation of Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India by setting up India Pavilion in MITT 2023. On this context we thanked Mr. Roshan M. Thomas, Deputy Secretary (IC, IT & OM) Ministry of Tourism is communication regarding IMEX 2023 from 23-25 May 2023.
- We requested Shri Vinay Kwatra, Foreign Secretary to re-store e-Visa for Gulf and other important source markets and also thanked him for considering our request for restoring e-Visa for Saudi Arabia and Oman. IATO also requested for restoring e visa for Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar which was still pending.

On behalf of the EC Mr. Razdan assured the members that all efforts will be there to address the concerns of our members to the policymakers and seek a viable solution.

He then opened the house for interaction.

- Mr. Mukesh Goyal questioned on the vetting procedure of getting MOT Recognition through the State Governments, how and when did this come up? Mr. Mehra explained the procedure requested him to contact Mr. Zia Siddiqui, for any assistance
- Mr. Rishi Kapoor wanted to know as to how one can access the PROMO CODE rates given by TAJ, ITC and others. Mr. Mehra explained the PROMO CODE procedure in detail and said that Mr Dinesh Gupta at the IATO Office will give you the names with whom you have to contact.
- Mr. Raj Bajaj informed that on IATO's follow up departures of Deccan Odyssey train have been finalized from 16th September 2023 to 5th April 2025. He thanked Mr. Mehra for taking up the issue with the Maharashtra Tourism.
- Mr. Surendra Kumar from Jio Tours and Travels informed that E Visa issue is there for China Hong Kong and Macau. Mr. Mehra said that India is not giving any visa for China and Chinese are giving only Business/student visa at the moment. He also explained on the Hong Kong visa issue and mentioned that IATO is ceased with matter. However, with regard to Visa for Chinese, this is a political issue and we need to wait for the government decision.
- A member wanted to know what happens to a company if there is gap pf 5 years post expiry of the MOT GOI recognition period. Mr. Mehra explained since it has already expired it will be treated as fresh case and he has to apply on the Nidhi portal and the criterion of at least one trained staff from recognized institute & MOT Tourism facilitator course, IATO has recommended that the 6 month course by THSC to be recognized by MOT GOI in this context. Mr. Mehra mentioned that Mr. Zia Siddiqui will assist in this regard.

- Mr. Naveen Jain, Noble House Tours, wanted to know how we are bringing the numerous festivals that India is offering to our clients, how can a tourist participate and enjoy in these festivals? Here Mr Gosain said that we are making tourists aware of our festivals in our programme, social media handle and get a calendar of festivals from States. There should be designated place where tourists can be brought. Mr. Razdan explained about the Ladakh festival, the dates are known in advance and promoted by tour operators. Let's bring festivals to the client. A member from Ladakh said that some festivals are organized by the tourism department which are structured and some are conventional festivals We need to find out the expert people in the area and take their help

Mr Ravi Shankar Singh, pointed out the issue of touts at Delhi Airport. Specially gate no 4 & 5. Foreign tourists are hampered specially during major events like 15th August and 26th January. Mr. Mehra said that IATO has taken up the issue. The parking lot is a major issue as all have to go there for their surface transport. We will write again to the authorities and take a check on it.

- Mr. Raj Bajaj said that high definition images of tourist places to be made available at the IATO Office for used by members. Mr. Mehra said that we have all the images We have approval from MOT GOI that our member **can use it and members who are interested can get these images/videos from IATO.** Mr. Gosain said that very shortly a new website of MOT GOI will be in place with all the images. Mr. Mehra mentioned that today's situation is that IATO is sending videos to the embassies abroad.
- Mr. Pramod Bhatnagar wanted to know how the overseas promotion will be handled at the embassies. Mr. Mehra mentioned that we are in touch with 60 embassies and our Active members list have been given to them. We have recommended to the PMO that Ministry of tourism should depute one officer to sit in the embassies under the guidance of the Ambassador or the High Commissioner for tourism promotion. Something will happen when the National Tourism Board comes into existence by Mid May 2023.
- A member pointed out that India is not visible in most of the countries. Mr. Gosain agreed with the member and said that we have informed MOT GOI that Virtual Interactions will not work it has to be physical real time. Embassies have been directed by PMO to promote India. IATO members and FTOs are being called to the embassies over strategic meetings. Mr. Mehra said that IATO has provided material to the embassies who have funds for promotion. MEA has a message from the PMO to take IATO for overseas promotion.

Mr. Razdan requested Mr. Rajnish Kaistha, Sr. Vice President to sum up and offer the Vote of Thanks

Mr. Kaistha said that he was confident of the fruitful interaction by the members. He thanked the President for his welcome address and the Hony. Secretary for the in-house announcements. He thanked

- The members for attending the Lucknow Convention in large numbers and their participation at the recently concluded elections.
- Mr. Homa Mistry for his role as the returning Officer.
- The Media for taking the voice of IATO to the policy makers
- The Park Hotel for their hospitality
- The IATO secretariat for their support

Mr. Kaistha looked forward to the big participation by the members at the 38th IATO Convention at Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra.

Mr. Mehra informed that after the first circular on the payment of reduced subscription fees, 105 members have paid so far. Circular has gone to all Active Members also. He requested the members to please pay on time

The meeting concluded with thanks to the chair

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