

Record note of discussion of IATO Interactive Luncheon Meeting on Wednesday, the 17th January 2024 at The Metropolitan Hotel, New Delhi

Mr. Sanjay Razdan welcomed all to the 1st meeting of the year and informed the house that there will be a Presentation by Bawa Mohit Singh, Head - Marketing & Corporate Communications, Safe Tree (A2V Insurance Brokers on Liability Insurance. He apprised the members that Mr. Rajiv Mehra will address the house on key events that have panned out so far and the success stories on the efforts of IATO. He then requested Mr. Mehra to address the members.

Mr. Rajiv Mehra wished everyone good health, good business for the New Year. He said we have reached around 75% of the Pre Covid level due the exigencies in the in the Macro Environment like China not opening up and other geo-political disturbances.

With help of our esteemed Regional Heads, Chapter Chairs, Co Chairman PAN India, IATO has achieved substantial increase in membership. In the last 9 months, 300 plus members have joined IATO. This is very important. IATO special rates for hotels contributed to this substantial increase in membership, besides others. "We are here for smaller agents," said Mr. Mehra

Mr. Mehra said that IATO had taken up the concerns of our members and addressed them to the relevant policy makers. Hony Secretary would apprise the house on the same in his in-house announcement.

IATO appealed to the Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi ji, Prime Minister of India and requested for help to the Tourism Industry for revival of inbound tourism to India and highlighted that

- Post Covid The incentives for overseas marketing and promotion were not there
- All Indiatourism Overseas offices were closed and due to lack of trained manpower, Indian Embassies/High Commissions/Consulates were also not able to do regular interaction/follow up with the foreign tour operators who were promoting India/or wished to promote India
- For participation in overseas travel marts, Ministry of Tourism had to approach Ministry of Finance to seek approval for each travel mart separately. Lot of time was wasted in taking approval
- It was understood that the Government put all the schemes for overseas promotion including Fam Trips to India, overseas road shows, marketing and promotions through electronic and print media etc. on hold.

IATO also wrote to the Hon'ble Prime Minister that SEIS was not there when the authorities have accepted that Inbound Tourism have suffered then why not a scheme similar to SEIS for the benefit of tour operators engaged in inbound. We understand that here is some movement on this and something might happen. Let us hope for the best.

Mr. Mehra said that he was live on India Today TV on the 7th of January 2024 regarding Lakshadweep and on the same subject IATO apprised the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on the 9th of January that post this recent visit to Lakshadweep and his message to the nation to visit Lakshadweep created a lot of interest amongst the tourism industry stakeholders. Many queries have started coming in but IATO is not able to cater to the queries due to some inherent issues, which the government needs to address and these are on Flight Connectivity, Hotel Accommodation, Tourism and Sports Activities and the Requirement of Police Clearance Certificate. A letter to this effect was sent to the office of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on the aforementioned issues.

On IATO's taking up the issue before the Tourism Parliamentary Committee, Centre decided to appoint tourism officers in all embassies and high commission .On the communication and efforts of IATO, Elephant Ride revised rate were withdrawn and new Notification issued in consultation with IATO. Change of date of Pushkar Fair happened on the representation of IATO. With the initiative taken by IATO - ILP (Inner Line Permit) for Taiwanese Nationals visiting Sikkim was issued from Rangpo Checkpost. Restriction were imposed on Diesel Buses, Mini coaches and Tempo Traveller from 1st January 2024 in Delhi NCR. Mr. Mehra and Mr. Ravi Gosain were pursuing the matter for the past one year with the concerned authorities

Post IATO's success at the recently concluded Annual Convention IATO was looking ahead for the 2024 Convention and have been approached by State Governments for the same. Mr. Mehra mentioned that he attended the Mahabharata Circuit Conference and familiarization trip at Kurukshetra and he urged members to promote this circuit. He also met the ISKON Temple Vice President who wanted IATO to promote it and they will do everything for IATO.

IATO Annual carnival will be on Sunday, 11 February at Heritage Transport Museum, Taoru, Gurgaon. Mr. Mehra requested all to join in numbers.

We have formed nine sub committees on various segments and we are all working on it

IATO members were there at WTM London and we will be there at FITUR in Madrid. With regards to the booths at the last WTM in London, the matter was taken up with the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

A few of our members, five, who are booking agents for Palace on Wheels had FIRs registered against them for promoting Palace on Wheels. IATO has taken up the matter and Mr. Mehra would be travelling to Jaipur to meet the MD RTDC on the issue so that things are sorted out.

Mr. Mehra then handed over the proceedings to the Hony. Secretary

The Hony Secretary handed over the address to the Hony. Joint Secretary Mr. Viney Tyagi.

Mr. Mehra mentioned that this is the first time that IATO Hony. Joint Secretary would be making the In-house Announcement. The members applauded in appreciation.

Mr. Viney Tyagi thanked the Hony. Secretary for the opportunity and highlighted the key issues taken up by IATO on behalf of the members and placed before the policymakers.

- Change of date of Pushkar Fair from 20-27 November to 14-20
- To consider services of tour operators of providing travel by All India Tourist Permit Diesel Buses (tempo traveler and Coaches) in essential services category and to allow plying of BS IV All India Tourist Permit Diesel Buses in Delhi
- Issues with the e-Visa 24x7 Help Desk Number 91-11-24300666.
- Negative Travel Advisories issued by the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO and Netherland). IATO requested for withdrawal of these advisories, which were negatively affecting the inbound tourism to India and especially in Jammu & Kashmir and Manipur, where situation was normal except for India-Pakistan border areas.
- Closure of State Monuments and Museums on Election Day without any advance notice.
- India Pavilion at WTM London 2023 was not up to the standard and mentioned that on a larger global platform where we showcase India, it is crucial to work meticulously to ensure we present ourselves in the best light possible, without appearing inferior to others.
- Problems being faced by the foreign tourists from Taiwan while going to Sikkim from rang outpost.
- Promotion of Palace on Wheels and Cases filed against Tour Operators promoting Palace on Wheels.
- Sudden increase of Entry Fee for City Palace, Jaipur from INR 700 to INR 1000 per person (foreigner), which was already implemented.
- Purchase of Republic Day Parade/ Beating the retreat tickets by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India recognized tour operator for foreign tourists

Mr. Tyagi mentioned the participation of IATO at

- International Tourism Mart, Shillong, Meghalaya 21-23 Nov 2023
- Stakeholder Conference for Tourism Projects in A&N Islands on 04.12.2023 at ITC Maurya.
- 14th Convention India Conclave from 7-9 December 2023 at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, Gujarat
- FAM trip and Tourism Stakeholders Seminar at Sariska, Alwar, Rajasthan being organized by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India (Northern Region) on 17 and 18 December.
- Palace on Wheels meet & greet session on 20th December 2023 and 10th January 2024
- Familiarization Trip at Kurukshetra, Haryana, from 9-11 January, 2024

He addressed the huge support from IATO membership that helps IATO Leadership to strive to attain excellence in their endeavors, negotiate roadblocks and meet with quantum success to cater to our valued members.

Liability insurance presentation was made and the question raised by the members and the answers given by Safe Tree (A2V Insurance Brokers team were very informative for the members

GENERAL Q&A

Mr Lajpat Rai mentioned that to promote Inbound Tourism a booth to be taken up and subsidised by IATO at major International Travel Marts across the world for the members to come and do their marketing by being at the booth.

Mr. Mehra mentioned that IATO would spend the money of the members whereas only say 25 members will benefit. Other members may not afford the ticket, accommodation and other costs at the Travel Marts and they will question on their money being spent on a few 15 to 25 members who will be at the IATO booth. Same 15 to 25 members may be there at another International Travel Mart. IATO Money should be spent in such a way that all members benefit. Further IATO members take up space inside the MOT arena at the International Travel Marts and not a separate booth.

Capt Swadesh Kumar said we need Marketing Support and requested IATO to do Road Shows, have a PR Company to select FTOs.

Mr. Mehra said that Embassies / High Commissions do not have the funds at present to organise Road Shows. In MOT Organised Road Shows, one can participate, MDA is permissible and one has to buy space. At times even the MDA does not come to members on time though the money has been sanctioned by the Finance Ministry to the Ministry of Tourism. IATO had taken up the issue with the then Secretary Tourism.

Wing Cdr NAYAL mentioned that the offer from the Ministry of Tourism comes at the last moment, those who have direct booth they prepare from November for ITB but the Ministry gives the offer 1 to 11/2 months before ITB. We should emphasise this point with the Ministry of Tourism. *Mr. Ravi Gosain mentioned that for ITB Ministry is charging Rs 1.5 Lakhs where as SEPC is charging Rs 2.5 Lakhs and IATO is pursuing the case of MDA with the Ministry where they are going with their laid out condition but they say that they do not have the staff strength to make a list of people who have applied and need to be given the MDA as per their eligibility.*

Mr Sandeep, a member, doing outbound travel, said that they are facing problems in hiring representatives across the globe and can IATO help here in hiring representatives at various foreign markets/ destinations? Mr. Gosain mentioned that he needs to tap his industry colleagues for the same on a one to one basis

Mr. Ravi Gosain offered the Vote of Thanks. He thanked the members for their presence, IATO is heard and recognised with the policy makers that helps in IATO's pursuance of its Policy documents. He thanked the Regional Heads, Chapter Chairs for the notable increase in membership, the Sub Committee members, the EC, the IATO Secretariat, Metropolitan Hotel and Mr. Bawa Mohit Singh and his team at Safe Tree for their presentation on Liability Insurance.

The meeting concluded with thanks to the chair.

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