

Update on IATO Activities **(Monday, 16th November to Sunday, 22nd November 2020)**

Dear Members

Greetings

Please find appended relevant activities of our association for the period (Monday, 16th November to Sunday, 22nd November 2020)

Segments covered are

1. **Communication / Letters that addressed key issues**
2. **Webinars/ Panel Discussions/Circulars/Meetings/Chapter news**
3. **Media Coverage**

Request your feedback to further the content of our weekly report.

1. **Communication / Letters that addressed key issues**

Segment 1 update sequence by date:20,21 November

Friday, 20th November

- **After the statement of Health Minister that Vaccination for Covid 19 shall be available within next 3 months' time, with this positive note IATO's has requested for restoration of E-Visa and Tourist Visa for survival of tour operators and the tourism industry**

IATO wrote to Mr. Yogendra Tripathi, Secretary (Tourism), Govt. of India and Mr. Anil Malik, Additional Secretary (FOREIGNERS), Ministry of Home Affairs (Foreigners Division) drawing his kind attention to IATO's earlier email of 23rd October 2020 requesting restoration of E-Visa and Tourist Visa for survival of tour operators and the tourism industry. Now that it has also been announced by the Minister for Health and Director of AIIMS that vaccine for Corona Virus will be available in January 2021. A request has been made that it is imperative that our Ministry should plan for inbound tourism to start as early as possible for which Ministry of Tourism and the stakeholders should start international marketing. This can only be possible if we know of Government plans of opening of e-Visa and Tourist Visa and resumption of international flights, so that accordingly we can inform our foreign tour operators and clients so that they can promote India as a safe destination well in advance.

It is therefore requested that E-visa and tourist visa should be resumed at the earliest or at least MHA should announce the definite date of opening of E-visa and tourist visa. Also dates of resumption of international flights should be announced. A copy of the letter was marked to a) DG Tourism, b) ADG Tourism, and c) JS Tourism.

Saturday, 21st November

- **On receipt of legal notice from Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat by Ministry and some stake holders, Ministry of Tourism called a meeting on**

24th November 2020 chaired by ADG Tourism to address issues related to cancelled package tours & refund by tour operators'/travel agents and online booking platform.

IATO in response to a letter from Additional Director General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism on the above subject communicated that that this meeting is basically to look into the issues of Domestic Tours and Outbound Tours. Whereas IATO members do mostly inbound tours and some members do domestic and outbound Tourism.

IATO has written number of letters to the Ministry of Tourism and Niti Aayog seeking help to get refund from State Governments, various domestic airlines and the hotels but it did not get any response either from the Ministry or Niti Ayog, IATO also approached Government of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Airlines, FHRAI, HAI directly seeking refund of the advances paid to them. IATO also filed an application for intervention for refund of air tickets along with TAFI on the write filed by Pravasi Legal Cell, for the air tickets, which were cancelled due to Covid-19. But Hon'ble Supreme Court in their order has given directives to refund the amount in the credit shell which can be utilised by 31st March 2021. Similarly, some hotels have made the refund but most of the hotels have agreed to adjust the advance payments for future bookings but there is no reply from the State Governments especially from Rajasthan Government. Under the circumstances, IATO members who received advance payments from their foreign clients have informed their foreign clients that they will adjust the advance for future bookings which foreign tour operators/tourists are not accepting and are asking for refund. When IATO does not get the refund from our various vendors then how can we refund to our clients. The tour operators can make refund only after they get refund of advances paid to their service providers i.e. hotels, airlines, state governments etc.

IATO thus requested that it is pertinent to invite all concerned associations, airlines and the state governments. Also Ministry should write to the State Government to respond to the request made by the stakeholders to refund the advance payments, which they have received for booking of luxury trains and Wildlife Safaris.

2. Webinars/ Panel Discussions/Circulars/Meetings

Segment 2 update sequence by date:18,20,21 November

Wednesday, 18th November

38th IATO Annual General Meeting was held on the 18th of November at 11.30 am virtually, with the office bearers physically present at the The Park New Delhi. Approximately 80 members participated during AGM. President IATO addressed the members and thanked them for their support. Hony Secretary IATO briefed the members on the major issues, activities, initiatives, plans and achievements of IATO and thanked the members for their support. Hony. Treasurer presented balance sheet/accounts for the financial year 2019-20 to the house and the same was approved unanimously. Three members of the IATO Secretariat Mr. B.D. Taneja, Mr. Manoj Rana and Mr. Vijay Yadav were felicitated for their 25 years of dedicated service to IATO. Mr E M Najeeb gave the vote of thanks.

Friday, 20th November

Ø MICE Travel Mart (MTM) + Luxury & Leisure Travel Mart (LLTM) was organised on 20th and 21st November 2020, by OptiMICE Events Pvt Ltd virtually. All our members were invited to attend the Mart

Saturday, 21st November

Ø Dekho Apna Desh Webinar series: Episode 64- India's hidden gems was organised on the 21st November 2020 at 1100 hours to 1200 hours”.

3. Media Coverage

Segment 3 update sequence by date:18 November

Wednesday, 18th November

Story carried in today's edition of Business Standard

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/task-force-on-the-anvil-to-revive-leisure-travel-amid-covid-19-pandemic-120111701431_1.html

Task force on the anvil to revive leisure travel

Measures being planned to bring back consumers who have shied from tourism

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA
New Delhi, 17 November

With leisure and vacation travel virtually decimated both in the domestic and the international space because of the Covid-19 pandemic, a task force likely to come up with a plan for reviving the sector.

The task force will comprise key stakeholders and representatives from the government. It will include representatives from airlines like Indigo, Vistara and Go Air, leading travel associations such as the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FATTH), Travel Agents Association of India, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), and airport operators like Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL).

The statistics tell the story of the horrific impact of the pandemic on tourism and leisure travel. For example, at Delhi airport, which is the largest in the country, domestic leisure and vacation travel in pre-Covid times accounted for 41 per cent of passengers, travel for friends and family comprised 33 per cent, and the rest was mostly business travel. However, after the lockdown was lifted and airlines got permission to fly again, in May-June, business travel accounted for 50 per cent of passengers, distress travel accounted for 43 per cent, and the rest was from others.

With the onset of the festive season, the share of various segments shifted again. Since the Dussehra, family and friends have accounted for over 63 per



TRAVEL DIARIES

► At Delhi airport, domestic leisure and vacation travel in pre-Covid times accounted for 41% of passengers, travel for friends and family comprised 33%, and the rest was business travel

► When the airlines got permission to fly again, in May-June, business travel accounted for 50% of flyers, distress travel accounted for 43%, and

leisure and vacation tourism, which constituted the biggest share of the market before the pandemic, is negligible now and is mostly limited to Goa.

Last year, Delhi airport alone witnessed around 20.1 million domestic holiday travellers, who accounted for the largest share of its passengers. But from April, 2020, this has been down to a trickle. Says Subhash Goyal, chairman of FATTH: "We are seeing some leisure travel, but in motorable distances. The industry, together with the government, has to bring the trust back into leisure travel. The task force is meant to find ways to do that."

This has a serious bearing on how quickly domestic airlines can go back to pre-Covid levels. In the month of October in Delhi, the total traffic from domestic flights was 43 per cent of the traffic for the same month

the rest was from others

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► Last year, Delhi airport alone witnessed 20.1 mn domestic holiday travellers, who accounted for the largest share of its flyers

cap on flights has been increased to 70 per cent (from 60 per cent) we believe the temporary spurt in demand is due to the festive season and will fall after that. January-March will be crucial. Without tourism and leisure picking up, reaching pre-Covid levels will not be possible anytime soon," says a top executive of a leading airline.

The story is replicated in the international space, too. India received 10.9 million international tourists in the calendar year 2019, and over 60 per cent of them travelled between October and March. Moreover, the country earned foreign exchange to the tune of \$30 billion through tourism that year. But the prospect of getting anywhere near those levels is looking bleak now, according to industry experts.

Says Prakash Sarkar, president of IATO: "About 40 per cent of this business comes through group tourism and the

profile of travellers is older, well-to-do vacationers, mostly from Europe. With the current health risks, and the fact that they plan for travel three to six months in advance, it is unlikely that they will come to India. We will be optimistic if even 10 per cent of what we got last year is retrieved."

MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions) is the other big market, and usually constitutes 12 to 15 per cent of the travel business. But with most companies and their staff working from home, this, too, has been knocked out.

The impact on the travel and tourism business is aggravated by the fact that even outbound international tourism has come to a virtual standstill. In 2019,

over 26.9 million Indians travelled abroad for leisure and tourism, and nearly 53 per cent of inbound and outbound international traffic in Delhi airport came from leisure and vacation travellers. This has been pretty much wiped out during the pandemic.

The members of the task force will be looking at various proposals to try and kick-start leisure travel.

One, start bubble-like flights in the domestic sector, where all passengers have to get a negative antigen test before they board a flight so that they are more confident about travelling for leisure. Two, have a joint advertising blitz by all stakeholders — airports, airlines, taxi operators and hotels — to showcase the safety procedures put in place. Three, push for common rules for passenger movement across states rather than the myriad rules and restrictions that are changed frequently.

"In many cases while interstate on-road movement is allowed, movement by air is not. There are numerous scen-

cent of all travel, and the bulk of the remaining share is coming from business travel. Domestic

last year, and the number of flights was 53 per cent of it during the same period. "While the

dent of IATO: "About 40 per cent of this business comes through group tourism and the

aries which need to be smoothed," says a member of the committee.

Rahul Chakravarty

COO