

Update on IATO Activities (Sunday, 1st August to Sunday, 15th August 2021)

Dear Members

Greetings

Please find appended relevant activities of our association for the period (Sunday, 1st August to Sunday, 15th August 2021)

Segments covered are

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

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

1. Communication / Letters that addressed key issues

Segment 1 update sequence by date:2,6,9,10,13 August

Monday, 2nd August

- **IATO offered inputs /Suggestions for the event "Promotion of Buddhist Circuit on Rail" in the month of September 2021 to Mrs. Rupinder Brar Additional Director General Ministry of Tourism**

With reference to the meeting held on 26th July 2021 regarding promotion of Buddhist Circuit on Rail in the month of September 2021 IATO gave its inputs suggesting day wise itinerary, preliminary information and a list of suggested stakeholders, international media, frontline daily newspapers and travel trade media to be invited for the event.

Friday,6th August

- **IATO wrote to Smt. V. Vidyavathi, Director General, Archaeological Survey of India on the Mud Packing of Taj Mahal's main dome for 6 months**

IATO requested to know the authenticity of the news and also the dates on which the mud packing would be done with scaffolding so that we may inform our members who may in turn inform their foreign tour operators/ visiting foreign tourists in advance to avoid disappointments to the foreign tourists and also they should not feel deceived. This information was also necessary for IATO members to

avoid any legal complications from their foreign tour operators/clients for not providing the promised/contractual services.

IATO also urged that ASI should inform the Ministry of Tourism and IATO in advance of the same so that foreign tour operators could be informed through our members well in advance. IATO also requested ASI to consult with the Ministry of Tourism and IATO before taking such decisions for the benefit of the tourism industry.

A copy of the letter was marked to Secretary Culture

Monday, 9th August

➤ Regarding releasing of SEIS Scripts to the tour operators for FY 2019-20

IATO thanked Mr. Vaibhav Bhatnagar, OSD (Drawback), Ministry of Finance for informing that the requisite funds have been allocated to the Department of Commerce for continuation of SEIS for FY 2019-20 and that necessary action for issuance of notification etc. for implementing SEIS would be taken by Department of Commerce. In this regard, IATO wrote back that though the Finance Ministry had allocated funds for release of SEIS about a month ago, but it is regretted to inform that there was no further development thereafter and DGFT is yet to announce the release of the funds rather they had put the scheme on hold for the reasons not known.

A copy of IATO's letter dated 14th July 2021 which IATO had handed over personally to the Hon'ble Finance Minister was enclosed placed for ready reference.

An audience was sought to explain the problems which the tour operators were facing due to Covid -19 pandemic as there was zero business for last 17 months.

A Copy was marked to **A.** Finance Secretary & Secretary Expenditure, **B.** Secretary (Revenue), **C.** Secretary (Tourism), **D** Joint Secretary (TRU-1), **E.** Joint Secretary and **F.** Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism

➤ Request to preserve Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex, Jammu, a unique and glorious Heritage of Jammu and Kashmir and a potential UNESCO World Heritage Site

IATO requested H.E. Shri Manoj Sinha, Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor UT of Jammu and Kashmir and drew his attention to the Expression of Interest (EOI) issued by the Executive Director Heritage Society dated 15th July 2021 inviting proposals for Development of HERTIAGE HOTEL IN ZANANA MAHAL (Queen's Palaces) at Mubarak Mandi Complex, Jammu, under PPP Model.

IATO requested that Mubarak Mandi be preserved as Heritage property and to be developed and promoted as one of the iconic tourist destination for both domestic and foreign nationals which would not only generate revenue for the Jammu & Kashmir but will also create local employment in the long run. On favourable consideration of the request Mubarak Mandi Heritage Society may be directed to withdraw their EOI issued on 15th July 2021

*A copy of the letter was marked to **A. Chief Secretary, B. Principal Secretary to Government, Tourism Department, Government of Jammu & Kashmir and C. Chairman - IATO Jammu & Kashmir Chapter***

Tuesday, 10th August

- **IATO wrote to Prof. Alok Sharma, Director, Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management, Gwalior regarding E-marketplace for RLG and Tourism Facilitators**

IATO referred to the discussion held during the virtual meeting chaired ADG (Tourism) wherein it was discussed about an App being developed by the Ministry/IITTM where data of guides would be available and booking of guides could be made on minimum price fixed by MoT/IITTM depending upon the calibre of the guide, which would help the tourists who make the arrangements including guides directly and not through tour operators.

IATO and others discussed and requested that the existing practice of finalising the rates between IATO and TGFI should continue on the basis of which tour operators quote their rates to their foreign tour operators/clients 6-12 months in advance. Similar was the practice which tour operators followed for the special contracted rates for the hotel rooms which they got from the hotels and on the basis of the same they signed contract with foreign tour operators/clients. This practice was followed for more than 25 years and was working smoothly.

Suggestions put forward by IATO was supported by TGFI also.

*A copy of the letter was marked to **A. ADG Tourism, B. DDG TT and C. Asst.Dir General TT, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India.***

11th August 2021

Friday, 13th August

- **IATO requested Shri P.K. Singh, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Government e Marketplace (GeM), Ministry of Commerce to waive off requirement of three years' experience for MoT Recognised Operators having Tourist Coaches/Cars to provide services through GeM Platform**

IATO requested that for the service (tour operators, travel agents, tourist transport operators) recognised by the Ministry of Tourism,

Government of India, who possessed tourist vehicles and were registered on GeM Portal, clause of Prior Experience of assisting Government department/PSUs be relaxed and removed and all MoT recognised operators be eligible to provide vehicles, Bus, Tempo Traveller or Cab /Taxi Operators under 'Service Category' on GeM platform. This would help the MoT recognised operators to utilize their tourist vehicles, especially during the time of Covid-19, when all tourists' coaches/cars were not being utilized and operators' had no business.

*A Copy of the letter was marked to **A.** Secretary, Department of Commerce and Chairperson, GeM, **B.** Secretary (Tourism) **C.** Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and IT, **D.** Additional Secretary, Department of Expenditure, **E.** Joint Secretary (Supplies), Department of Commerce, and **F.** Additional Director General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India*

2. Webinars/ Panel

Discussions/Circulars/Meetings

Segment 2 update sequence by

date:2,3,5,6,7,9,10,11,12,13,14,15 August

Monday, 2nd August

- The IATO Members Interactive Meeting was held on Monday, the 2nd August 2021 at 5 pm on Zoom.

Tuesday, 3rd August

- Pending refund of Excursion Agents/Tourist Transport Operators from the Principal Agents

All members were informed that during the IATO Members Interactive meeting held on the 2nd of August 2021, some of our excursion agents/tourist transport operators raised concern of their pending dues from their Principal Agents for the services provided by them but payment had not been made to them in spite of repeated reminders/requests made by them. Also some of the members had complained that they were being asked to settle the outstanding by accepting some percentage and a give certificate of full and final settlement. All this was giving a bad name to the principal agents as the services had already been provided by the excursion agents including the payments made by the excursion agents for monuments entry fee, rides, safaris etc. All members were requested to clear dues of all their excursion agents'/transport operators etc. at the earliest without any delay to avoid this matter being escalated with the Ministry of Tourism Government of India or state tourism departments as per the request of the excursion agents/tourist transport operators.

Also through the email, all the excursion agents were also advised to forward names of their Principal Agents who had withheld their payments or were asking for settlement by cutting down huge percentage. IATO to take up the matter with each Principal Agent individually and request them to clear the

payment without disclosing the name of the excursion agent. The information was sought by 10th August 2021.

Thursday, 5th August

- A Presentation on the Opening of Iconic Raffles Udaipur was organised on 5th August 2021. All members were apprised.

Friday, 6th August

- A virtual meeting of the Hon'ble Prime Minister on the Export Target of US \$ 400 billion (Target 400) for FY 2021-22 was held on Friday, August 6, 2021 at 6 PM.

All Active Members (Members of SEPC) were informed.



- President IATO addressed the 2nd FICCI Travel Tourism & Hospitality E Conclave on the 6th of August 2021



Tuesday, 10th August

- All members were informed on the Extension in period of Modification of IEC till 31 August 2021 and waiver off of fees for IEC updation done during August 2021.

Wednesday, 11th August

- Hon secretary had a meeting with ADG Tourism Mrs Rupinder Brar requesting her on communicating to the states to allow free movement of domestic tourists with 2 vaccines for pan India. This shall set the trend to allow foreign tourists in near future for seamless movement. ADG agreed and issued instantly instructions to concerned staff to write to all states for the same. Same was in news next day.

IATO had sent numerous communication on the above subject.

Thursday, 12th August

- A Webinar on Inspiring Stories on Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality was held on 12th August 2021 at 4 pm.



- IATO signs MoU with DRV, German Travel Association to promote bilateral tourism between India and Germany

Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) and Deutscher Reiseverband e.V., (DRV) German Travel Association signed an agreement to promote two-way tourism between the two countries by taking suitable measures to reinstate tourism once the situation is normal. A reciprocal cooperation agreement was signed by Mr. Norbert Fiebig, President - Deutscher Reiseverband (DRV) German Travel Association and Mr. Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) to take this forward. Under this agreement both IATO and DRV have agreed to undertake reasonable efforts to make its membership aware of membership of both the associations, its benefits and events in India and Germany. Officials of both the organisation will be invited to their annual conventions and will conduct travel exchange programme and training programme on reciprocal basis. As Germany is one of the major source markets for inbound tourism to India and this will help revive inbound tourism to India and will help outbound tour operators from Germany to reinstate selling Indian packages. The agreement signed between DRV and IATO will not only open doors for IATO members to connect with DRV members but will also send a message to other countries in Europe that India is ready to welcome the foreign tourists once e-Tourist Visa and international flights are resumed.

- Members were requested to give details of the problems they are facing in making refund of foreign exchange to their principal agents. Earlier we were given to understand by some of our members that they are facing problems in making refunds of advance payments which they received in foreign exchange from their foreign tour operators/clients for the bookings which were cancelled due to Covid -19 and foreign tourists could not travel to India. Accordingly, the matter was taken up with Governor RBI and RBI has asked us to send the details of some specific cases in this regard.

Friday, 13th August

- All members were Invited for webinar, “Relevance of Tour Operators and Travel Agents more than ever” on Friday, the 13th August 2021 at 1530 hours. President addressed the panel

LIVE WEBINAR

BEING TOURISM READY

Relevance of Tour Operators and Travel Agents more than ever

EMINENT PANELISTS

 <p>Mr. Vinod Zutshi IAS Retd Former Secretary Ministry of Tourism Government of India</p>	 <p>Mr. Rajiv Mehra President Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO)</p>	 <p>Ms. Jyoti Mayal President Travel Agents Association Of India (TAAI)</p>	 <p>Mr. Peter Rees-Jones Director N.E.I. Ltd., UK</p>	 <p>Mr. Rajiv Saxena Vice-President Tourism Guild of Agra</p>	 <p>Mr. Prateek Hira Chair FICCI UP State Council Tourism</p>	 <p>Mr. Mukesh Kumar Meshram, IAS Principal Secretary & DG, Tourism & Culture Government of Uttar Pradesh</p>
--	---	---	---	--	---	---

For free Registration, please follow the link below <https://fikki.in/registration/invitee-form.asp?evid=25710>

For any queries, kindly contact Dr. Anushree Banarjee, Director, M.KInstitute of Tourism Management | E-mail: info@mkitm.com

Join Us Live On 13th August 2021 at 3:30 pm

 /UttarPradeshTourism
  /uptourismgov
  /UttarPradeshTourism
  /UttarPradeshTourism

- A Webinar on White Water Adventure on Indian Rivers was organised on 13th August 2021 at 1200 hrs

Saturday, 14th August

- As a part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav / India@75 celebrations by the Ministry of Tourism, a virtual program was organised on the 14th of August 2021 at 1330 hrs in collaboration with Association of Indian Universities.

Sunday, 15th August

- Live Training on Sales on Steroid was organised on 15th August 2021.

3. Media Coverage

Segment 3 update sequence by date:3,12,13 August

Tuesday, 3rd August

Tuesday August 3, 2021
Tourism Breaking news
DTP PUBLICATIONS

IATO suggests changes in MOT's incentive scheme for Foreign Tour Operators
IATO has made suggestions to the MOT for amendments in the airport sector COVID scheme, which will provide incentives with financial assistance to Foreign Tour Operators (FTOs) in India based on their tour operators approved by MOT for promotion of tourism to India in select countries. Rajesh Kumar, Vice Secretary, IATO, informed during the association's Member's Meeting.

MOT sanctions 3 Swadesh Darshan projects worth ₹179.68 cr in Gujarat: G Kishan Reddy
G Kishan Reddy, Cabinet Minister, Tourism & Culture, has said that the Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned three projects for total amount of ₹179.68 crore under Swadesh Darshan scheme and three projects for total of ₹179.68 crore under National Interest in Tourism (NIT) scheme in Gujarat. The projects are: 1) Piploda, 2) Somnath and 3) Somnath and Somnath. He said that the projects are worth around ₹179.68 crore. The projects are worth around ₹179.68 crore. The projects are worth around ₹179.68 crore.

IndCo announces Jabalpur as its 69th domestic destination
IndCo has announced Jabalpur as its 69th domestic destination. The airline will start direct flights to Jabalpur from Mumbai and Delhi. The airline will start direct flights to Jabalpur from Mumbai and Delhi. The airline will start direct flights to Jabalpur from Mumbai and Delhi.

Lakshadweep to get Maldives like beach & water villas worth ₹813 crore in three islands
Despite recent protests, the Lakshadweep administration has invited global leaders for building eco-tourism beach villa and water villas in Kadmat, Minicoy and Ganai islands. The projects are worth around ₹813 crore. The projects are worth around ₹813 crore. The projects are worth around ₹813 crore.

Jaipur Int'l Airport ranks first nationally and 51st globally in airport quality survey
Jaipur International Airport has been ranked first nationally, in the second quarter survey conducted by the Airport Council International (ACI) Airport-QAT. The airport has also been successful in achieving the 5th position at the global level. The airport has also been successful in achieving the 5th position at the global level. The airport has also been successful in achieving the 5th position at the global level.

➤ **Ministry bats for Tourism inclusion in the Concurrent List**

<https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/tourism-likely-to-be-included-in-concurrent-list-11627997824209.html>

Thursday, 12th August

➤ President on Zee Business tonight



Audio 2



AUD-20210812-WAO
061.

Audio 1



AUD-20210812-WAO
062.

Travel & Tourism
World of
News & Views

13th Aug. 2021

Difficult Roads Often Leads to Beautiful Destinations'
This time shall pass too
Keep moving

contact us
+91 -87 15060403
visit us at www.casadekashmir.com

G Kamala Vardhan Rao is the new Director General Tourism, GOI

G Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS officer of Kerala cadre of 1990-batch, has been appointed as new Director General (Tourism), Government of India. He will also remain Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of ITDC until further orders. Ganji Kamala V. Rao has held senior positions in different states. He had served as the Secretary, Kerala Tourism in 2014-15. During the last three decades, Rao has served in different fields, including Chairman of Indian Tobacco Board, Director of Fisheries Department, Director of Department of Tourism and Culture of Andhra Pradesh government.



Bangkok and Khao Yai National Park named among "The World's Greatest Places of 2021"

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is pleased to announce that Bangkok and Khao Yai National Park have been included in Time magazine's list of 'The World's Greatest Places of 2021'. In compiling this 3rd annual list of the 'World's Greatest Places', Time considered nominations of countries, regions, cities, and towns from its international network of writers with a particular interest in those offering new and exciting experiences. The list was published on 20 July, 2021.



an insight into the Incredible!

Kandima Maldives wins Agoda's 2021 Gold Circle Award Yet Again

Kandima Maldives has once again been voted one of the best resorts in the Maldives by its guests. Celebrating the win, Neeraj Seth, Cluster Director of Marketing Communications & Public Relations, Kandima Maldives, and Nova Maldives says, "Kandima has been able to uphold the customer expectations. It is the perfect place for Indian travellers looking for a wedding or honeymoon destination in the affordable luxury segment. Kandima has also become the first choice for Indian celebrities to enjoy an action-packed stay and is extremely popular amongst families because of its multiple villa options and activities that cater to everyone."



Tit - Bit

DRV
IATO

IATO signs MoU with DRV, German Travel Association to promote bilateral tourism between India and Germany

A reciprocal cooperation agreement was signed by Mr. Norbert Fiebig, President - Deutscher Reiseverband e.V. (DRV) German Travel Association and Mr. Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) to promote two way tourism between India and Germany.

Under this agreement both IATO and DRV have agreed to undertake reasonable efforts to make its membership aware of membership of both the associations, its benefits and events in India and Germany. Officials of both the organisation will be invited to their annual conventions and will conduct travel exchange programme and training programme on reciprocal basis.

Germany is one of the major source markets for inbound tourism to India and this will help revive inbound tourism to India and will help outbound tour operators from Germany to reinstate selling Indian packages.

Twang - the most picturesque town of Arunachal is all set to get a fantastic product in form of a toy train to showcase mesmerising Twang.

For media coverage mail to: info@travelworldonline.in

Friday August 13, 2021

Tourism Breaking news

DPP PUBLICATIONS

Experience AIUla Trade Webinar

Join the Webinar on Wednesday, 18th August 2021 at 3 PM (IST)

Win Exciting Prizes

jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com, +91 9650194532

G Kamala Vardhan Rao appointed as the new Director General, Ministry of Tourism, GoI



G Kamala Vardhan Rao has been given additional charge of the post of Director General, Ministry of Tourism, GoI. He would remain as the Chairman & Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), till appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earlier. The announcement was made by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

MOT has recognised adventure tourism as niche tourism product: G Kishan Reddy



G Kishan Reddy, Cabinet Minister, Tourism & Culture, has shared that MOT has recognised adventure tourism as a niche tourism product to promote India as a 365 days destination and attract tourists with specific interest. MOT has issued Guidelines for Approval of Adventure Tour Operators as well as provides Central Financial Assistance to State Governments/ UT Administration for tourism infra development.

IATO signs MoU with German association DRV



Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO has revealed that the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has signed an agreement with Deutscher Reiseverband e.V. (DRV) German Travel Association to promote bilateral tourism between the two countries by taking suitable measures to reinstate tourism once the situation is normal. A reciprocal cooperation agreement was signed by Norbert Fiebig, President - Deutscher Reiseverband e.V. (DRV) German Travel Association and Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO to take this forward.

Powered by **eVent**

MICEtalk DIGITAL CONCLAVE

Rebooting the Indian MICE landscape

WEDNESDAY, 25th August, at 11 am IST

jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com, +91 9650194532 **Register Now**

MOT to go forward with Adopt a Heritage initiative aggressively: Rupinder Brar



Highlighting that the government understands that they have to get into hard infrastructure, Rupinder Brar, ADG, MOT, informed, "We are going forward with our Adopt a Heritage initiative in a very aggressive manner. Innovatively, apart from doing hard interventions like providing drinking water and toilets, people are coming up with solutions, which will make the travel experience around a monument more interesting."

79% travellers in Gujarat prefer expert advise to book travel: Thomas Cook India & SOTC



79% travellers from Gujarat prefer an expert for guidance/ assistance for booking. Out of this, 29% opt to purchase through retail outlets; 17% for home service and 33% prefer a contactless experience of a virtual store/video chat. The results came after customers from key Gujarati source markets were surveyed as part of the Thomas Cook India & SOTC's Third Holiday Readiness Report.

MoCA launches new Bareilly-Mumbai flight

Jyotraditya Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, along with General (Retd.) Dr. VK Singh, Minister of State, MoCA and Santosh Gangwar, MP, Bareilly, has launched the new flight connecting Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) with Mumbai (Maharashtra) in a virtual ceremony. Pradeep Singh Kharsia, Secretary Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and Usha Padhee, Joint Secretary, MoCA alongside other officials of the MoCA & AAI were also present at the event.

For more information contact harshal@ddppl.com +91 96194 99167
arumita.gupta@ddppl.com +91 96503 99908
www.tourismbreakingnews.com

For more news & updates please log on to

[f](https://www.facebook.com) [i](https://www.instagram.com) [in](https://www.linkedin.com)

4. Chapter News

Segment 4 update sequence by date:2,5,8,10,11,14 August

Monday, 2nd August

➤ **IATO Chapter Chair DEBJIT DUTTA: #SafeDestinationSafeTravelers Strategy recommended to the state and implemented as per recommendation.**



1. To notify Tourism as priority sector for vaccination
 2. Vaccination drive by tourism department for the tourism industry stakeholders
 3. Allowing fully vaccinated travellers
- <https://travel.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/destination/states/west-bengal-mandates-rt-pcr-report-or-vaccination-certificate-for-entry/84573775>

Thursday, 5th August

➤ **Mr. Jk Mohanty Regional Chapter Chairmen attended a very successful meeting with union tourism minister. The Hon'ble Minister assured all support.**

https://twitter.com/ficci_india/status/1423235127245606915?s=24



Sunday, 8th August

- Chapter Chair North East State attended the Travel & Tourism Meet organised by Gujarat Tourism at Guwahati. 9th August Gujarat Tourism is organising a similar event at the upper Assam town of Dibrugarh and IATO members would help them in organising the show



Tuesday, 10th August

IATO **INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF TOUR OPERATORS**
NORTH EAST CHAPTER
ORGANISES

CHAPTER CHAPTER MEET

WITH **INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF TOUR OPERATORS WESTERN INDIA CHAPTERS**

10th Aug 2021 4:00 PM, Tue

On **zoom** (Prior Registration Mandatory)

Mr. Nirmalaya Choudhury
Chairman, North East States Chapter

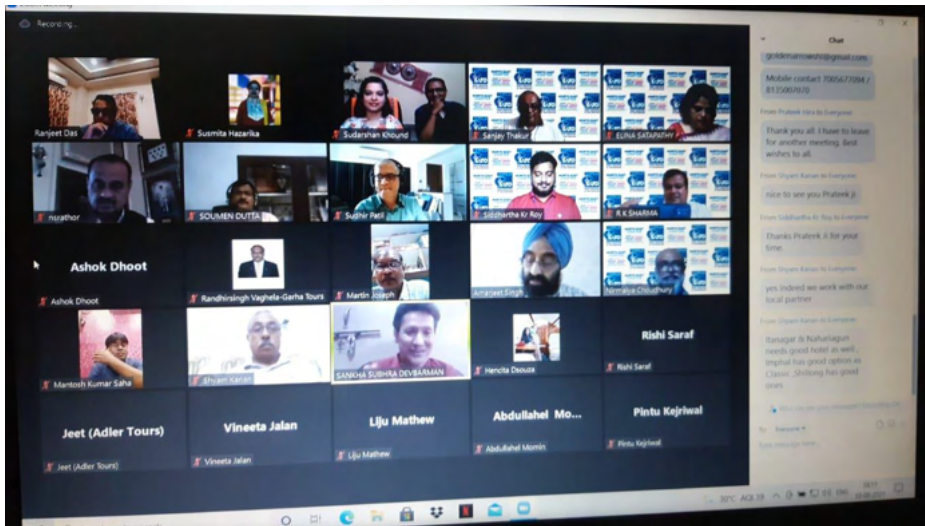
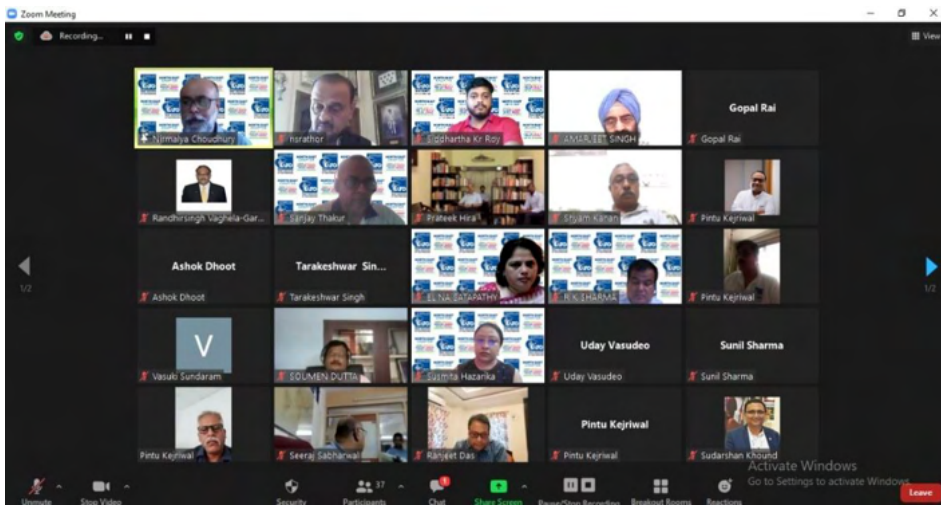
Mr. N.S. Rathor
Chairman, Western India Region

MR. JITENDRA KEJRIWAL
Chairman - IATO Maharashtra and Dadra, Nagar Haveli & Daman Chapter

MR. GOPAL RAI
Chairman IATO Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter

MR. MARTIN JOSEPH THYPODATH
Chairman IATO Goa Chapter

MR. RANDHIRSINGH VAGHELA
Chairman IATO Gujarat & Diu Chapter



- Mr Soumen Dutta State In-charge, IATO Tripura, met Shri Pranajit Singha Roy, Hon'ble Minister, Tourism, Govt. of Tripura. Shri Singha Roy discussed Tripura Tourism plans to enhance tourism facilities in the state. Tripura Tourism is adding accommodation facilities by adding a few log-huts with modern amenities at Chabimura, Dumboor Lake and a few other places. Tripura Tourism is interested to focus on adventure tourism. Mr Dutta assured him that with support from his ministry, IATO North East Chapter will work closely with Tripura Tourism to promote tourism destinations in the state.



Wednesday, 11th August

- Article of our Chapter Chair Uttar Pradesh, Mr Prateek Hira

UP, still an unexplored destination, is promoting religious, eco tourism

Prateek Hira

The tourism industry has been hit hard by the novel coronavirus pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, tourism was thriving in Uttar Pradesh which boasts of millions of domestic and international tourists every year.

According to India Tourism Statistics-2020, UP has been ranked first with a share of 23.1% travellers and 53.58 crore domestic tourists and the third with a share of 15.1% travellers and 47.45 lakh foreign tourists. As a sign of how seriously the state is taking its tourism industry to diversify the economy, Purvanchal, Ganga Expressways will connect major tourist hubs, slashing journey times, while more airports will increase the inbound passengers. The state has already developed an international reputation when it comes to religious tourism.

Travellers to Ayodhya will be able to marvel at fantastical structures, including Ram Mandir, coming up in the city. Ayodhya has become the quintessential religious tourist destination and the government has already chartered a master plan for turning the ancient holy city into a 'Smart City'. The city will be developed as a major pilgrimage centre. The vision document prepared for its development proposes to construct four main Lord Ram gates in the city inspired by the design of Ram Mandir. Ramayana Spiritual Forest will be constructed in 2300 acres, which will also house Ramayana Spiritual Theme Park.

Similarly, Mathura, the fabled land of Lord Krishna, will also get a makeover. There are plans to promote Prayagraj as a global religious and tourist centre after modelling it on the principles used to develop ancient Vedic city. The recently announced Rs 300-crore Vindhyachal corridor project will be a big boost for tourism. A dream project of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the project will see amenities developed for devotees visiting the famous Vindhyachal temple. The surrounding roads will be widened to 50 feet.

The pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the tourism industry and one can hope that this can prove to be an opportunity to introduce slower, fairer, more sustainable holidays. Part of the plan is to promote local tourism because when it comes to Uttar Pradesh, it is still an unexplored destination.

The government has started promoting road trips within the state. It will target the domestic market as things gradually open up and the international market when the predicted third wave subsides and people are vaccinated. Since the tourism economy has been hit badly, to create a circular economy might be a good option.

The state's focus is also on developing 'Eco Tourism'. The state government has unveiled its 'One District, One Eco Tourism Spot' initiative to develop eco-tourism centres in every district and lure tourists for longer stays.

As the world slowly opens up, people stifled by the pandemic want to venture out. Numerous heritage properties dotted in the rural landscape of UP provide an ideal family getaway close to home. UP Tourism has also entered into an MoU with the ITHRD for the promotion of rural tourism in the State.

A renewed focus on slower travel as well as keeping experiences as local as possible and offering a secure stay are part of the state's post-Covid plans, with wilderness and wellness trips tipped to be of great interest.

Prateek Hira is a well-known tour operator and tourism researcher.

Saturday, 14th August

- Regional Chapter Chairman North

Hindustan Times

Now, tourists can visit Taj Mahal five days a week

HT Correspondent

letters@htlive.com

AGRA: With the UP government easing weekend corona curfew restrictions and allowing movement of people and other activities on Saturdays too from August 14 onwards, tourists will now be able to visit the Taj Mahal five days (Monday to Thursday and Saturday) a week instead of earlier four.

The Taj Mahal remains closed on Friday because of weekly closure. So, tourists could view it only for four days i.e. from Monday to Thursday.

After remaining shut for two months since April 16 due to the second wave of the Covid pandemic, the 17th century monument was opened again for visitors from June 16 this year.

However, terming it a partial relief, trade pundits continue seeking opening of the Taj



Tourists taking a selfie at the Taj Mahal.

HT

Mahal on both Saturdays and Sundays to ensure better inflow of tourist on weekend.

"Tourism in the city of Taj has been facing a setback for so long. There are no international flights and thus there are no for-

eign tourists. With closure on Sundays continuing, there is negative impact on domestic tourists as well," says Sunil Gupta, chairman, Indian Association of Tour Operators (North).