

34TH IATO CONVENTION, VISAKHAPATNAM

MISSION TOURISM: 20 MILLION BY 2020

**IATO MEMBERS
JOINED ROADSHOWS
IN USA**

**PARYATAN PARV
WILL PROVIDE A
GREAT MOMENTUM
TO THE TOURISM
SECTOR IN INDIA:
HOME MINISTER**





A special thanks to Andhra Pradesh Tourism team for the overwhelming support to ensure the IATO Convention was the most successful one. Please accept my grateful thanks for being with us in Visakhapatnam and for joining the efforts of IATO

Festival greetings!

We had a very successful 34th Annual Convention in Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) from September 6-9, 2018. Over 1000 delegates were present. Exceptionally good arrangements were made. Business sessions and topics discussed were very informative and engaging. Everything was meticulously managed like the venue of the event, technical sessions, accommodation, air tickets, international transport, post convention tours, social engagements, lunches, dinners, Responsible Tourism Run. Really everyone had good memories of the experiences they had of the convention.

We also feel proud to see the overwhelming response from our members, registration of delegates from various stakeholders, media members and state governments. Everyone liked the great support extended by the Andhra Pradesh Government, a new state with so much of tourism activities where hon'ble chief minister of the state himself ensured all arrangements were efficient and hassle free. The warm hospitality of Andhra Pradesh, mesmerising landscapes, beautiful sea coast, cuisine, culture, mountains, was presented in all its grandeur and pristine beauty. The opportunity to interact with the stalwarts of the industry and renew our contacts with the leaders in the travel and hospitality industry helped us to be updated on today's market trends.

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In respect of other events, September month was very busy with roadshows and the International Buddhist Conclave of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) where IATO played a very prominent role. Our members helped in handling the guests of the MoT from overseas to ensure their airport transfers, hotels in Delhi and onward journeys to Aurangabad-Varanasi-Sarnath-Bodhgaya and back to Delhi, etc. Thereafter IATO was busy with the first ever India Tourism Mart of the ministry which was coordinated by FAITH wherein IATO as member provided valuable service for the success of the event. IATO members were involved in hotel, tour operators inspection duties by being part of the team founded by the ministry. IATO as member of the National Award Committee rendered services for the event. IATO in fact remained busy not only with IATO Convention but several other events of international standing.

IATO's Tour Operators Manual was also launched and a good time devoted on this book as it carries IATO's success story and updated members list. It stands as a ready reckoner for the tourism industry. Alongside the convention, there was the Tourism Mart which was also inaugurated by hon'ble minister of Andhra Pradesh and tourism ministry of Kerala; Rashmi Verma, secretary tourism, Government of India and Mukesh Kumar Meena, secretary tourism, Andhra Pradesh on September 6. It offered excellent B2B opportunity to the visiting delegates to connect with suppliers. Staff of the state tourism and private stakeholders interacted with the delegates. Post-convention tours were of immense value and this helped tour operators to have first-hand experience on the new domestic/products on offer from Andhra Pradesh and these were sponsored by Andhra Pradesh Tourism and IATO.

So much of cyber fraud came to our knowledge and we flagged those issues to the attention of MoT as it gives a bad name to our industry. We reviewed the GST issues and took up the pending issues with the GST Central/ministry of finance. We are also working on guide issues and all other pending issues with the ministry. We reassure you we will do our best to keep the interest of our members and to have confidence in us. We also mean business. It is now festival time - enjoy the festivals. Wish you all good health and good business.

Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO

34TH ANNUAL CONVENTION, VISAKHAPATNAM

MISSION TOURISM: 20 MILLION BY 2020

The 34th annual convention of IATO in Visakhapatnam, a three-day event whose theme was 'Achieving 20 million foreign tourists by 2020', debated on pertinent issues that India currently faces in reaching this milestone



The 34th annual convention of one of India's biggest inbound travel trade associations, the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), kickstarted with a grand opening at Novotel Hotel in Visakhapatnam. The minister of state (I/C) for tourism, K J Alphons graced the event which saw an overwhelming attendance from IATO members pan India.

The three-day event whose theme was 'Achieving 20 million foreign tourists by 2020', debated on pertinent issues that India currently faces in reaching this milestone. At present, India welcomes a little over 10 million foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) per year. This was revealed by Rashmi Verma, secretary tourism, Government of India. She said, "In 2017, we had a growth of 15 per cent in FTAs. We also saw a 20 per cent increase in foreign exchange earnings. We have set ourselves a very tough target by our tourism minister - that of achieving 20 million tourists by 2020. Last year, for the first time we crossed the 10 million mark which was a doubling of the numbers in just three years. This was no easy task. I am sure that the new target we have set for ourselves will also be achieved if we all join hands."

Other government dignitaries present

at the inauguration included Bhuma Akhila Priya, minister of tourism, Government of Andhra Pradesh; Kadakampally Surendran, tourism minister of Kerala; Mukesh Kumar Meena, secretary tourism, Andhra Pradesh and Himanshu Shukla,

CEO, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority.

The evening started with cultural performances local to Andhra Pradesh followed by welcome speeches from the IATO team and keynote addresses from the various state ministers.





Meanwhile, Alphons paid tribute to his home state of Kerala and asked the audience to give a standing ovation to the people of India who had come to the aid of the state in the time of trouble. He said, "I was there for 10 days during the floods and I was overwhelmed to see the kind of support that came from the people of Kerala. I am very happy to say that today, Kerala is ready for business. It has bounced back!"

The tourism minister of Kerala extended an invitation to the association to hold their next convention in his state. During the evening, IATO along with FAITH, presented the state of Kerala with donations over of Rs 50 lakh.

With such a great beginning to the convention, IATO was all set to convene meaningful discussions over the next two days of the convention.

IATO brainstorms on key issues

Keeping with the theme of the convention - 'Mission 20 million tourists' - the sessions on Day 2 of the convention were aligned to bring out some core issues behind achieving this ambitious target, and how the trade can come together to make it possible. With a day stacked with business sessions focusing on pertinent issues and state presentations, the audience was treated with intense discussions on day two of the three-day convention. The day started with the conventional IATO Run for Responsible Tourism in the morning which took the participants alongside the lovely R K Beach.

IATO registered a record number of delegates this year crossing 900 members from across India. The first session of the day was the flagship session of this convention and it aimed to highlight the challenges of touching the ambitious milestone of 20 million foreign tourist arrivals within the next two years. The panelists also touched upon the ways in which this can be achieved. Rashmi Verma, who was part of the panel, said, "The 20 million is definitely achievable - there are no doubts about that. Of course, there are challenges but we have set certain things in place such as the inter-ministerial group that we have created which has been very



successful in resolving issues which cannot be sorted by the ministry of tourism alone.”

She added, “This group includes the ministry of culture, the environment ministry, the ministry of civil aviation, the ministry of external affairs as well as the home ministry. We also need to take a cue from the Kerala Tourism model which has worked along with the private sector to double their visitor numbers.”

Another strategy that the panelists agreed on was for India to focus on the neighbouring countries such as China, Russia and Japan and make India a short-haul destination while continuing to market in the traditional markets of US and Europe.

Change is the need of the hour

The second session brought together members of key hotel companies face to

face with tour operators to discuss what both industries can do to help the other since it is getting harder and harder to do business, whether it is the hotels or the travel trade. Homa Mistry, CEO, Trail Blazer, who was moderating the session, exclaimed, “Change, change, change is what we need. We also need to promote India in the summer season so that the hotels can fill their rooms during the lean season.” He indicated that in turn the hotels could continue to include the tour operators instead of going direct to customers.

The next session had an all women panel who spoke about their personal experiences that are evidence that India is a safe country. However, they did present ways in which the safety of women travellers could improve.

The final panel discussion, moderated

by Rajesh Mudgill, secretary, IATO, and MD of Planet India Travels, deliberated on how to change one's business to adapt to the changing mindsets of today's travellers.

This was followed by presentations by different states including Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Odisha and Rajasthan. In between the state presentations and the panel discussions, the audience also took advantage of individual presentations on FAITH by Nakul Anand, chairman, FAITH and an interesting and informative session on how travel agents can use digital marketing by Avijit Arya who is the founder of Internet Mogul. The day was bookended by a session on forex management.

The evening saw delegates enjoying the evening cultural performances and networking at the convention venue of



Novotel Hotel in Visakhapatnam.

The last day of the convention saw attending delegates leave Visakhapatnam completely motivated. The event started off with an ambitious theme but the two days of intense deliberations and discussions with the government representatives, the ministry and the hoteliers showed IATO members a clear path ahead.

The last day saw a short recorded video message from Suresh Prabhu, ministry of commerce and industry and civil aviation, Government of India, specially for the members attending the IATO Convention since he was unable to be present personally due to travel commitments. He spoke about the Champion Sector and what the ministry of civil aviation was doing under it. He also requested the audience to share their ideas on what the

ministry can do to provide the impetus that the travel trade needs.

Desh ki UDAN

The first session of the day beautifully moderated by Subhash Goyal, former president of IATO and chairman, Stic Travel, focused on the government's scheme of UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) and how the airlines and the tour operators can symbiotically work together to benefit from each other.

The participating airlines on this panel included the two low-cost carriers, IndiGo and SpiceJet. While both the airlines have introduced multiple routes under the UDAN scheme and continue to do so even today, the travel trade has requested them to look at newer routes that have tourism potential as well and not just financial viability for the airlines. They also

recommended some destinations that see a lot of tourist traffic already or has huge potential for it. Keeping the session relevant was G K Chaukiyal, executive director, Regional Connectivity Scheme, Airports Authority of India (AAI). He gave an elaborate presentation on the work that AAI has done and is currently focusing on to ready the airports under the UDAN scheme. While some airports are ready to receive flights, some are under development and a few others are in the planning stage. This was followed by various presentations by West Bengal Tourism, Tamil Nadu Tourism and Jammu & Kashmir Tourism where they showcased myriad products that the states offer to the tour operators which they can weave into their itineraries.

Suman Billa, joint secretary - tourism, Government of India, flew down specially



for the convention to make a presentation on the various steps that the ministry has undertaken and its plans for the near future. He also made the session interactive by taking many questions from the audience and noting down suggestions that the stakeholders made to him. One of the most pertinent issues that was brought up by the members was of the guides and escorts and the lack of skilled guides available for their foreign tourist clients.

An interesting session that IATO included this year was on the SEIS (Service Export from India Scheme) presented by Sangeeta Godbole, director general, SEPC. After some more state presentations by Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Punjab Tourism, the valedictory session made an apt conclusion to an exciting convention. On the panel were experts in the field of tourism: Satyajeeet

Rajan, director general - tourism, Government of India, who had flown into Visakhapatnam specially for the session; E M Najeeb, founder and chairman, ATE Group of Companies; IATO president Pranav Sarkar and some members of IATO's executive committee; Vasant Kumar, vice chairman, Visakhapatnam Urban Development Authority (VUDA) and P S Naidu, director, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation.

This was followed by presentation of Awards and Mementos in order to recognise the work that individuals in the industry do. This included winners of the IATO Run for Responsible Tourism under all categories, and those who have continued to support IATO for its conventions such as the media, the airlines and hotel partners and the state tourism boards. The day concluded on an

inspirational note with a special motivational session by Swami Gopal Das Gaur who spoke on 'Transforming Negativity' and how individuals can multiply their success multi-fold by following simple and basic rules of life and redefining 'success'.

The day ended with a networking evening for the members with cocktails and dinner. With the 34th IATO Annual Convention coming to a close, the IATO team thanks all its members who extended their support to the association and made the effort to participate in this grand event. The team at the association hopes that it continues to receive such overwhelming response from its members, the government as well as its sponsors every year. The association wishes everyone a great season and a fantastic year ahead! Until next time....



Glimpses of the 34th IATO Annual Convention in Visakhapatnam



Chapter Chairman Meet at Novotel Visakhapatnam



The Chapter Chairman Meet was held and coordinated by senior vice president E M Najeeb on September 6 with Active and Allied members at Novotel Hotel as part of the 34th IATO Annual Convention in Visakhapatnam. All executive committee members including Pronab Sarkar, president; Najeeb; Rajiv Mehra, vice president; Rajesh Mudgill, hony. secretary; Ravi Gosain, hony. treasurer; Rajnish Kaistha, hony. joint secretary and Subhash Goyal, immediate past president were present.

While welcoming all members, Mudgill talked about the achievements made by IATO which had direct bearing in the interest of total membership. He mentioned inter-alia the areas including e-tourist visa and additional facilities viz Medical Visa, MICE Visa, cruise passengers entitled for e-visa and no biometrics for cruise passengers as this was time consuming and now for five years no such biometric process for them. He also talked about the efforts put by president and other EC members in streamlining GST issues and reverse mechanism which was negatively impacting tourism business, which has now been withdrawn due to IATO intervention. MDA norms also have been liberalised with 90 per cent of air ticket cost and hotel accommodation. The rental charge reimbursement on booth taken by the participating members for being in the National Tourism Pavilion have been added

in MDA scheme. These are really benefitting the members. Mostly MDA incentives are being utilised by members in the Northern Region. This should be utilised by members from other regions also. The five per cent growth in course of three years period is not possible for our members due to economic slowdown in the overseas markets where members are operating and they could not claim the reimbursement in time. This matter has been taken up with the ministry ADG (tourism) who has already moved our proposal with Internal Finance and there could be a positive response. To take advantage of this incentive of the ministry, one should be duly recognised by the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India. Hence those have not yet taken MoT approval, please get the approval. This is must for availing the MDA scheme.

He also updated on the IATO website which is linked with ministry's website and enquiries generated are given to members on a rotation where transparency is maintained. IATO also handles MoT invited hospitality guests and these are handled by Active members, selection is done on the basis of confirmation given in writing by Active members and thereafter selection of tour operators to handle the specific guests is done through a raffle. This has helped members to develop new contacts overseas by extending professional services. So it is in the interest of members to convert the membership from Allied to Active and be

more involved in these IATO activities.

Thereafter Sarkar addressed the members and talked about special Training Programme conducted by IATO and the chapter chairmen in the respective regions. This helps members to be updated on GST matters, digital marketing, sustainable tourism practices, new trends in tourism scene, PR and marketing, new norms through social media, global warming, terrorist control and safety norms, etc. These are emergent issues and our members should be very sensitive on all these issues.

IATO will have regular interactions with experts, and members will be benefitted. Constantly as IATO, we are talking with GST council and ministry of finance so that the request for total foreign exchange earning of tour operators to be made GST free and tourism be given industry status to be able to have all such benefits which are given to export oriented industries. Members also talked about overseas participation and why IATO cannot take booth of its own.

Some other issues related to delayed payments from MoT for hospitality cases handled by members and even MDA reimbursements were also raised. As time was running short, Najeeb requested all regional chapter chairmen to update members on the activities they have undertaken/achievements made so that there is exchange of ideas and members also get updated.

Pre-convention press conference at Novotel Visakhapatnam



The 34th IATO Annual Convention was announced at a press conference in Visakhapatnam. P Basanth Kumar, IAS, vice chairman, Visakhapatnam Development Corporation while addressing the pre convention press conference said, “We are fortunate to host tourism summits and events which are enabling the space to generate opportunities for tourism sector in Andhra Pradesh such as, Partnership Summit in January 2018 and 34th IATO convention at Visakhapatnam. These will boost global tourism opportunities in Andhra Pradesh.”

Himanshu Shukla, CEO, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority while addressing the press conference said, “I feel delighted that the event will held for three days and delegates will get a chance to explore Visakhapatnam. As a part of tourism promotion, Andhra Pradesh Tourism is organising this event and Visakhapatnam is a lovely place for tourism. We welcome the initiative of IATO, to promote the city as a MICE destination through this convention. This convention will increase international and domestic tourist arrivals to Andhra Pradesh. It will boost economic growth and will create new jobs. Andhra Pradesh has five tourist hubs - Visakhapatnam, Amaravati, Anantapuram, Rajahmundry and Tirupati; and each hub offers its own kind of unique experience and cuisines.”

Pronab Sarkar, president, IATO said, “We always want to visit a new area where we have never been and open up the area for international tourism. We have earlier experienced Andhra State cultural heritage and hospitality when hon’ble chief minister of United Andhra Pradesh was N Chandrababu

Naidu. It is for the first time, we are coming to the new Andhra Pradesh.” He further added, “We must capture the highlights of the state’s tourist attractions which further motivated us to have the convention here as our members always look for new opportunities, new experiences for the clients what best we can get. The beauty of Visakhapatnam, Araku Valley, temple heritage, state capital Amaravati and pilgrimage trails are hard to miss. They offer fulfilling experiences. The natural beauty of the state is a welcome sight for many travellers.”

While talking about the Theme of the 34th IATO Convention, E M Najeeb, senior vice president, said, “This goal of achieving 20 million tourists by 2020 is in tune with Government of India, ministry of tourism’s (MoT) goal as announced by minister of tourism at various platforms. Ministry has taken various new initiatives towards achieving the goal and IATO has formed partnership with the MoT.”

Rajiv Mehra, vice president and chairman of the convention while updating about the convention programme said over 900 registered delegates were already registered.

Rajesh Mudgill, co-chairman of the convention mentioned, “The stupendous success of the previous convention has raised the expectations of the members and sponsors. Members look for an enchanting destination like Andhra Pradesh which offers the A to Z of tourism - be it beaches, pilgrimage, hill station, wildlife, shopping, Ayurveda and medical tourism and these were our main considerations to have our convention in Andhra Pradesh to get acquainted with the new products and offer totally new packages to our overseas clients who are eagerly waiting to explore new areas in India.”

International Buddhist Conclave held in Aurangabad

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), in association with the ministry of tourism (MoT) organised an International Buddhist Conclave in Aurangabad in August 2018 with an aim to enlighten the people on various destinations associated with the Buddhist culture in the state.



MTDC is also planning to offer its land bank to Buddhist countries for developing a Buddhist theme park and monasteries near Ajanta, the UNESCO Heritage Site in Aurangabad. MTDC is planning to tie up with K J Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies to introduce new tour packages to promote Buddhist tourism in the state.

MoT has selected Ajanta and Ellora, UNESCO Heritage Sites under their Iconic Destination Project, to offer world-class amenities to tourists. MoT is also joining hands with the ministry of highways to develop the roads in Aurangabad for better connectivity of the iconic caves with the airport so that it becomes convenient for tourists coming in from other locations in the country. IATO was given the responsibility to handle the hospitality of guests of MoT who attended the Conclave from various overseas countries.

E-visa fee increase by MEA

On receipt of the feedback from our members, IATO president addressed letters to minister and secretary (tourism) to appeal to foreign minister to maintain status quo as this sudden increase may lead for cancellation of groups and also does not go with ministry of tourism's goal of achieving 20 million tourists by 2020. In fact, IATO has suggested a freeze on e-visa fees till the goal of 20 million tourists is achieved.



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Exempting the cruise tourist arriving with e-visa

IAATO has been pleading with the government about the problems being faced by cruise tourists about the inordinate delays in completing the immigration formalities including bio-metric at sea ports upon arrival in India. Presently facility of e-visa is available at five sea ports ie Mumbai, Kochi, Chennai, Goa and Mangalore. Keeping in view the difficulties being experienced by tourists due to inadequate number of immigration counters available at above five major sea ports, ministry of home affairs, Government of India has exempted cruise tourists arriving with e-visa at these five ports from the requirement of biometric involvement for a period of three years ie till December 31, 2020 for persons above the age of 12 years and below the age of seventy years. This is a big achievement for IATO in streamlining the visa issues.



Paryatan Parv will provide a great momentum to the tourism sector in India: Home minister

The 'Paryatan Parv' by the ministry of tourism (MoT) was inaugurated by Rajnath Singh, Union home minister, in presence of K J Alphons, Union minister for tourism; Rashmi Verma, secretary, MoT and other dignitaries. The second edition of "Paryatan Parv", a nationwide celebration of tourism, was held from September 16 to 27, 2018.

Inaugurating the Parv, Singh said that India is the only country where all major religions of the world, diverse culture, customs and cuisines are found and, one should see and experience this Incredible India. The home minister added that the government has ensured 'ease of travel' through various steps like simplification of process of e-tourist visa application. The minister also urged Indians to visit various places in the country and thereby understand its rich and varied culture and heritage, also enjoy its natural beauty.

Speaking at the event, Alphons said that Indians have made 1.8 billion domestic trips in the last year and added that the ministry is aiming to double these visits in next three years. The tourism minister also called upon everyone to see, experience and get transformed by travelling across India.

The ministry also signed a MoU with Apeejay Group of Hotels and V Resorts for adoption of Jantar Mantar, New Delhi and Surajkund, Haryana, respectively, under its Adopt-a-Heritage scheme. The home minister handed over the MoUs and, nine Letters of Intent for adoption of several other



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monuments under the scheme, was also issued to nine companies.

The highlights of the event was the participation of a record number of 32 states / UT's who have put their best foot forward, which include 18 Theme Pavilions, a Food Court with 54 stalls, bringing in the cuisine from across India; a Kitchen Studio by Institute of Hotel Management, Delhi, Crafts Bazaar with 76 handicraft and handloom stalls, Yoga demo and training, performances by Armed Forces bands and an exhibition on the theme Saaf Niyat Sahi Vikas by the ministry of information & broadcasting.

Over 3150 activities and events took place across the country during the 12-day event.

Pending issues with ministry of tourism (MoT)

MDA: Long pending reimbursement of MDA cases were discussed and the ministry was requested to arrange to settle these old cases at the earliest. On the follow up, over 50 cases were settled. While on this subject, in the meeting the emergent issue of minimum five per cent growth in tourist arrivals, a major clause for settlement of reimbursement of MDA claims was raised. How even to maintain five per cent increase became difficult due to economic recession in global traffic markets was also pointed out. The necessity to withdraw this clause which is an impediment for submission of claims was raised for consideration. Follow up letters have been addressed in the matter.

Tour operators approval and MoT recognition: Since the business operation styles have changed and more and more tour operators are operating from home and business is more on online and through digital technology, the set guidelines of the MoT, Government of India need immediate revision. The old guidelines of minimum areas of office space, minimum 2 trained staff in office either holding Tourism Degree or Diplomas from IITM or any universities where tourism is taught, have become defunct. Thus immediate need is for revising the approval guidelines. Letter to this effect has also been addressed to secretary, tourism.

IATO members joined roadshows in USA

Roadshows were organised in various places in USA by the ministry of tourism, Government of India wherein 25 IATO members were present. The Indian delegation was led by tourism minister, K J Alphons. The places included New York, Houston, Chicago and St Louis. These roadshows proved very useful to develop new contacts for future business by our members.

Roadshows in Russia and Nordic countries covering Moscow, Petersburg, Helsinki, Stockholm. Australia and New Zealand are yet to be announced. The second one in China took place from August 26 to 30 covering Beijing, Guangzhou, Wuhan and Shanghai.

2nd Indo Nepal joint working committee meet

IATO hon. secretary Rajesh Mudgill represented IATO in the joint working group meeting with Nepal Government in Kathmandu on July 6, 2018 and updated the committee on areas of mutual cooperation needed to boost two-way traffic between India and Nepal. Indian delegation was led by Suman Billa, joint secretary, ministry of tourism, Government of India.

In the meeting it was agreed to set up the Indo-Nepal Tourist Forum with representation from government and private sectors from both sides for mutual consultation and promotion of tourism in both countries. The joint working is decided to officially recognise two circuits Ramayana circuit and Buddhist circuit by both governments for joint promotions through common branding and marketing exercises.



Announcements

GST rates reduced for hotels

GST council has done well in reducing tax that originally were 28 per cent and now lowered for hotels charging @ Rs 7500 to 18 per cent. Above Rs 7500 to pay 28per cent but on actual rate negotiated. All the more, the new decision that GST to be charged on actual tariffs to customers and not printed rate is a huge relief. It means that incidence on tax will decline as tax will be charged on actual rates. This will give impetus to tourism and room costs will decline. IATO had been fighting for this since the day GST was put into operation. The issue related to reverse charge mechanism however remains unresolved, just a relief till September 30, 2019. IATO's efforts to get this withdrawn continues.

Visa on arrival for South Korea introduced

The facility of Visa on Arrival (VoA) to nationals of the Republic of South Korea has been introduced with double entry for a period not exceeding 60 days for business, tourism, conference and medical purpose at six international airports viz Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad w.e.f October 1, 2018.

Ministry of tourism organises 'Swachhta Hi Seva' activities across the country

The ministry of tourism (MoT) organised the 'Swachhta Hi Seva' campaign at various important tourist sites across the



country. The campaign which was launched on September 15 will go on till October 2, 2018. Cleanliness and awareness activities are being conducted through regional offices of the MoT with active participation from local communities, institutes of the ministry, state governments and stakeholders. The campaigns are being popularised at 47 tourism sites in the country.

SpiceJet operates India's first biofuel-powered flight

No-frills airline SpiceJet recently operated India's first test flight powered by biojet fuel, marking a new chapter in the fast-growing domestic aviation sector. The nearly 45-minute flight from Dehradun to the national capital was operated with a Bombardier Q400 aircraft, partially powered by biojet fuel made from Jatropa plant, according to an airline official. The



flight landed at around 1150 hours. With the test flight, India has become one of the few countries and probably the first among the developing nations to use biofuel for flying planes. SpiceJet today said it has successfully operated "India's first ever biojet fuel flight".

It also comes at a time when the airline industry is grappling with spiralling fuel prices that are impacting their profitability. However, use of biofuel for regular flights would take some time. For the test flight, which carried 28 people, including five crew members, the aircraft's right engine was filled with 75 per cent aviation turbine fuel (ATF) and 25 per cent of biojet fuel, made from Jatropa plant, the airline official said. The fuel was prepared by the CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun.

US tourists to India increased by over six per cent, says tourism ministry

Tourist footfalls from the US to India in 2017 have increased by over six per cent as compared to previous year, government said, countering an American report that claimed there was a decline during the period.

The ministry of tourism in a statement said foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) from the United States has never declined since 2010. "FTAs in India from the USA during the year 2017 have registered a positive growth of 6.17 per cent over the year 2016,"

the statement said.

A report of National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) had recently said the outbound tourists from the USA to India have declined by 7 per cent in the year 2017 as compared to 2016, it said.

According to the said report released by NTTO, traveller volume is based on the US Department of Homeland Security Advanced Passenger Information System wherein all airlines are required to electronically submit passenger data on



The Bureau of Immigration of India (BoI) compiles the data of FTA from the records of scanned passport of each person arriving at all the international check posts in India, including airports, sea ports and the land check posts

flights arriving into and departing from the United States. The ministry said that it was obvious that the source of data for the report is only airlines reporting. In the cases where direct flight between the USA and India is not operating, it is not known whether the final destination or the transit destination is reported as India by the passengers.

Moreover, departures at international check posts other than airports are not captured in the report. Therefore, it may not contain the complete information on the outbound departures from the USA, it said. On the other hand, the Bureau of Immigration of India (BoI) compiles the data of (FTA) from the records of scanned passport of each person arriving at all the international check posts in India, which include airports, sea ports and the land check posts. The FTAs from USA in India during January - August this year was 9,26,192, 8.8 per cent higher than the corresponding numbers during the same period last year.

Year	FTAs from USA	Growth Rate over corresponding previous period (in %)
2011	980688	5.3
2012	1039947	6.04
2013	1085309	4.36
2014	1118983	3.1
2015	1213624	8.46
2016	1296939	6.86
2017	1376919	6.17
Jan-Aug 2018 (Provisional)	926192	8.18

1,62,660 cruise passengers visited the country in 2017-18

A task force on cruise tourism has been formed jointly by the ministry of tourism and ministry of shipping with representatives of all major ports and stakeholders for coordinated efforts to create an enabling ecosystem for the development of Cruise Tourism in India.

During the year 2017-18, a total of 1,62,660 cruise passengers visited India at six major ports namely Mumbai, Chennai, Cochin, Kolkata, New Mangalore and Mormugao. During the same period, a total of 139 cruise ships visited India at these six ports.

The government has taken following steps to increase the flow of cruise tourists in the country:

(i) Foreign flag vessels carrying passengers with effect from February 6, 2009 have been allowed to call at Indian ports for a period of 10 years without obtaining a license from director general of shipping. This facility has been extended further for a period of five years i.e. up to February 5, 2024.

(ii) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cruise vessels have been revised and operationalised w.e.f. November, 2017 for uniform, redefined processes to be observed by all major ports.

(iii) Immigration counters have been set up at five major ports visited by cruise ships. The facility of E-visa has been extended to five sea ports namely Mumbai, Goa, New Mangalore, Cochin and Chennai.

(iv) Cruise tourists arriving with E-visa have been exempted from the requirement of biometric enrolment for



Cruise tourists arriving with E-visa have been exempted from the requirement of biometric enrolment for a period of three years i.e. till 31.12.2020

a period of three years i.e. till 31.12.2020 to facilitate expeditious immigration clearance.

(v) The port charges have been reduced and all major ports now charge a uniform single rate of US\$ 0.35 per Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT) for first 12 hours of stay w.e.f November 3, 2017 and will remain in force for a

period of three years.

(vi) The ports do not levy any priority/ousting/shifting charges for berthing the cruise vessel.

(vii) Walk-in berthing/preferential berthing to homeport cruise without any extra charge is now available.

(viii) To address manpower, coordination and logistic issues for handling cruise vessels at ports, Port Level Facilitation Committees have been formed under the respective chairman of the above-mentioned major ports to facilitate seamless handling of cruise ships and passengers.

The ministry of tourism has also sanctioned various projects for the development of cruise terminals related infrastructure in Goa, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu at the major ports for Rs106.39 crore under the Scheme for 'Assistance to Central Agencies for Tourism Infrastructure Development'.

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First ever India Tourism Mart 2018 held in Delhi



The Union minister for railways and Coal, Piyush Goyal inaugurated the 'first ever' India Tourism Mart (ITM 2018) in the presence of Union tourism minister, K J Alphons and the tourism minister of Morocco, Mohamed Sajid, in New Delhi. The India Tourism Mart was organised by the ministry of tourism (MoT) in partnership with the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) and with support of state /UT Governments.

Inaugurating the event, Goyal wished the best to the tourism ministry to reach the ambitious goal of US\$ 100 billion FTA receipts/year within five years. The minister said that unless the infrastructure /fundamentals are set up, India can't come up as a well sought after destination and he said that the present government has been developing these like ensuring 24 hour power supply, promoting renewable energy forms, and improving connectivity by effectively connecting the remotest destinations.

He also added that the most important element that will help promote tourism in a complete way is the government's cleanliness drive, the Swachhta Abhiyan, which will ensure India becoming a preferred destination for all international tourists. Mentioning the income multiplier effect in the tourism sector, the minister said that tourism generates a number of employment opportunities in formal and informal sectors and can change the destiny of the country. Goyal added that the youth of the country can be entrepreneurs, service providers, interpreters etc in the sector and ascertained that India with its varied features has tremendous potential and we just need to leverage from it.

Speaking at the event, Alphons announced that ITM will be an annual event hereafter in line with other international tourism marts and it will be held in the month of September. The minister said that India is so vast that there will be something new for everyone to see and experience in this country with its

varied geography, culture, traditions, architectural marvels, religions. Alphons also added that visiting the country has become easier with the new e-visa regime which is now open to 166 countries.

IATO was also involved in the event alongwith other tourist organisations like FAITH, FHRAI, HAI, and India Convention Promotion Board (ICPB) coordinated the whole event. The objective of the event was to create an annual global tourism mart for India. ITM 2018 had a participation of around 225 hosted international buyers and media across the world such as North America, West Europe, East Asia, Latin America, CIS countries, etc. Around 225 stalls were provided to the sellers to enable them to interact with the buyers.



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