



GST has had a severe negative impact on tourism partners and even led to unemployment. We took up the matter with union minister of finance, Government of India and other concerned GST officials but none of them till date have given a satisfactory reply

**Dear Members,  
Greetings from IATO!**

**W**e are very optimistic that with the introduction of GST, there will be change in the tourism industry. This will ease the operations of business. We were confident that tax incidence on none of the commodities will go up and in fact there will be reduction in case of many as on tax will not be there. But GST has had a severe negative impact on tourism partners and even led to unemployment. We took up the matter with union minister of finance, Government of India and other concerned GST officials of the Government of India but none of them till date have given a satisfactory reply. We mainly raised two issues:

- We request that a deemed value equal to 10 per cent of total bill amount charged by the tour operator may be fixed on the same lines as in case of air travel agents under rule 32 (3) of CGST Rules, 2017.
- In case the government does not agree to the solution suggested in para 1 above, the association prays that like transporters and rent-a-cab operators, limited Input Tax Credit (ITC) in respect of GST charged by a tour operator may be made available to another tour operator availing services i.e- former tour operator in the same line of business.

Till there is a clear-cut decision on double taxation, it will negatively effect the growth of tourism in a sustainable manner. We also represented to GST Council which met in Guwahati on November 10, 2017 through Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) and put forward our above claims. Our efforts will continue till we get success in the matter.

We also concluded our 34th Annual General Meeting on October 23, 2017 at Hotel the Park, New Delhi. Members were also given a copy of the annual report which recorded progress of events in course of the year 2016-2017, and success we achieved on our efforts. The report and the financial balance sheet presented were approved with thumping appreciation from all members present.

We also had series of meetings with minister of states for tourism (independent charge) Government of India about pending issues viz guide policy matters, human resource development, infrastructure development, posting of regional directors in all overseas offices, which had remained vacant for quite some time, global media campaign, participation in global travel exhibitions and mainly our GST issues which are negatively impacting inbound tourism business operations.

As IATO, we were present in Hotel Federation Convention, ADTOI Convention and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) sponsored investors meet, Mumbai and remained busy all through October - November period. This is part of IATO's partnership with all stakeholders to raise a common voice in bringing the negative impact of GST to the government's notice.

We have revamped our website and kept all latest circulars, notifications etc. & please do update yourself on all the matters, specially MDA, GST Tax complications/calculations, ministry of tourism guidelines etc. The more you are equipped the more efficiently you can run your business.

Have good business on the peak season and successfully reach your goals.

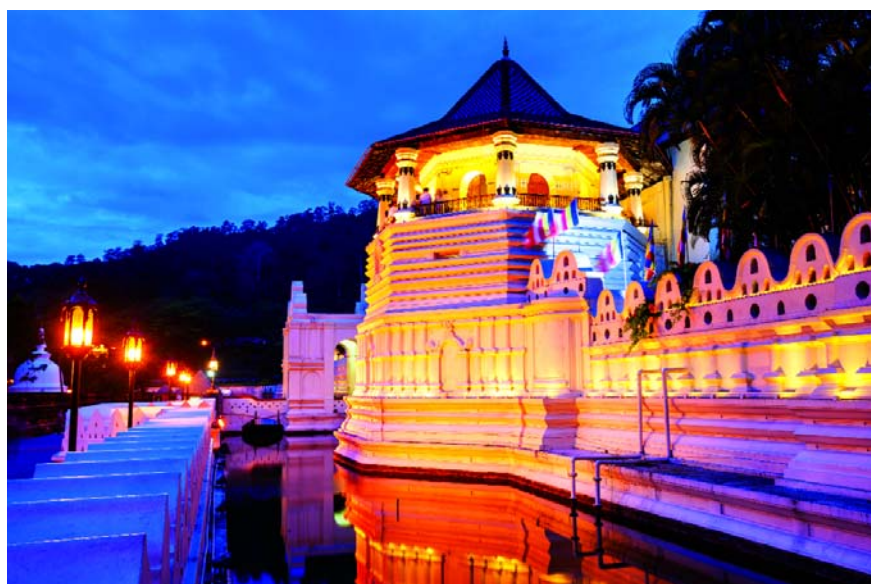
Thanks and regards

**Pronab Sarkar, President, IATO**

# IATO HOSTS FIRST OUTBOUND CONVENTION IN SRI LANKA

**T**aking another step toward expanding the country's tourism opportunities, IATO hosted its first Outbound Convention in Sri Lanka. The four day event was held from October 2-5, 2017 with full support of the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau. The event saw many interesting sessions unfold the tourism potential of our country. Sessions raised issues like moving beyond culture and heritage, MICE tourism, India's outbound market reality, cultural trails between India and Sri Lanka, regional tourism, among many others. The venue of the convention was Taj Samudra, Colombo where all the business sessions were also held. The theme of the convention was "Regional Tourism- Beyond Boundaries."

Subhash Goyal was the chairman of the convention along with Amaresh Tiwari as the co-chairman. Over 130 delegates from India participated in the convention with over 53 tour operators/hoteliers from Sri Lanka attending the B2B meetings. The convention was inaugurated by minister of tourism development and Christian religious affairs, John A E Amaratunga and Dr Sarath Amunugama - minister of special assignments delivered the keynote address. The inaugural event was attended by Esala Weerakoon, secretary tourism, ministry of tourism development and Christian religions affairs, Government of Sri Lanka; Prema Cooray, chairman, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau; Ramachandran, COO, SriLankan Airlines and host of



other officials from government ministries and Sri Lanka Convention Bureau, and the Sri Lankan travel and hospitality industry.

Dr Amunugama recalled the close relationship that Sri Lanka has shared with India and the rekindled interest in the Ramayana trail which is a great attraction for Indian tourists. The tourism minister, Sri Lanka called upon the delegates to explore the country. It was an excellent opportunity for our outbound tour operator members to develop business contacts and experience the new tourism developments in Sri Lanka. Leading travel and tourism industry personalities from both India and Sri Lanka participated as panelists in the business sessions. On October 4, B2B





sessions with the local travel trade was a big success wherein 52 Sri Lanka trade partners interacted with Indian delegates. This convention was also a big success and thanks to Rajiv Mehra who organised everything at such a short notice.

Apart from the business sessions at Taj Samudra, the members also got a chance to see Galle Face Hotel, Colombo where a special dinner was held. The city tours were organised to make sure the members and their spouses got the opportunity to see the city.

A day excursion was organised to Kandy which is about 130 km from Colombo. A large city in central Sri Lanka, Kandy is home to picturesque tea plantations and a bio diverse rain forest. The members were also given another option for an overnight stay in Kandy at Earl Regency. The two day tour also included stays at Kandalama and Nuwara Eliya.

The post tours were strategically planned to give the members an overview of what the destinations offers. The first outbound convention of IATO received great response from the members.





## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE PARK HOTEL



IATO's Annual General Meeting was held on October 23, 2017 at The Park hotel, Parliament Street in New Delhi in the presence of 60 members. Pronab Sarkar, president, welcomed the members but expressed his concern on very thin attendance, requesting all the members to participate in large numbers. He highlighted that members have acted in the spirit of unity to make remarkable progress. The achievements have given IATO great recognition in both, government ministries and private institutions, which has made the state governments come forward and partner with IATO.

He mentioned that IATO had jointly worked at many areas with the ministry of tourism, ministry of culture, ASI, ministry of finance, ministry of commerce, GST Council and state tourism departments to combat the emergent issues, which were negatively impacting the interest of the members, especially e-Tourist Visa, GST and revised guide policy of ASI. He added, "Also we often receive complaints from the members that it is taking three to four hours for groups to get clearance at the



immigration counters at IGI airport to complete the bio-metric process and this has been taken up with all the concerned authorities."

He also spoke about the 33rd IATO Annual Convention in Bhubaneswar, which was a grand success and thanked the members for their overwhelming support. He also mentioned that the 1st IATO Outbound Convention was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from October 2-5, 2017 in coordination with Sri Lanka Convention Bureau and this was also a big success. He

apprised the members about series of meetings which were held in the ministries with respect to issues related to growth in tourism.

Thereafter, Lally Mathews, hony. secretary before presenting the annual report requested the house to observe a minute silence in remembrance of O P Ahuja, Holiday Makers; Inder Sharma, Select Holidays; Frank Govaes, Trimurti Holidays; Dinesh Baloni, Insight India Voyage and Amal Sarkar, Himalchura Travels and Tours, all members who

passed away during this year.

He then presented a detailed report on IATO's activities, achievements and the issues that have been taken up with the government and other concerned authorities in last one year. The report was well appreciated with a round of applause by the members.

Amaresh Tiwari, hony. treasurer, who while thanking the members presented the accounts for the financial year 2016-17 to the house and gave brief details and major highlights of the balance sheet. Mukesh Goel, Rajesh Mudgill, Atul Rai and few of the other members raised that instead of putting money in FDs, IATO should spend this for members' benefit. After due deliberations, it was decided that this should be discussed in detail in the next active members meet which was agreed by the house. Some of the members also mentioned to have more training programmes for the benefit of the members.

Following this, Tiwari sought approval from the house to reappoint M/s. B R Kapoor & Co as the statutory auditor for the financial year 2017-18. It was unanimously approved by the general body.

On the MDA Scheme, Goel and few other members wanted to know the position as many of the claims still remain pending for settlement. Rajiv Mehra, vice president, informed that all old cases of 2015-16 have been settled and pending cases of 2016-17 are being settled. However, for any specific case, which needs to be taken up with the ministry that should be sent to IATO. Also, members raised that the clause of 5 per cent increase in the turnover is not in the interest of our members to which Rajeev Kohli, senior vice president, mentioned that in the initial draft it was 15 per cent and on IATO's intervention, it has been made 5 per cent and that too cumulative increase for three years. He also pointed out that only few selected members are actually taking benefit of MDA by adopting other means, which has been pointed out by the ministry. However, matter would be taken up with the ministry to remove clause of 5 per cent increase.

Sarkar mentioned, "After Rashmi



Verma has taken over, files have started moving and we are hopeful all pending issues will be resolved. But we need to have patience and there is no need of agitation on the roads as suggested by Mudgill and few other members."

Mehra apprised the members on the pending case of guide fees. He informed the members that this was discussed in the special session held during the convention and it was agreed to increase the guide fee by 7.5 per cent. This decision was taken keeping in mind the 18 per cent GST on guide fee under RCM. However, since RCM has been withdrawn since March 31, 2017 and is not likely to come again, we may consider the increase between 10 to 15 per cent on the guide fee. This was agreed by the house. However, this increase will be only on the guide fee and not on allowance. Also, the agreement for signing the revised fee to be considered once authorised person is indicated by the guides with written consent from both the parties.

Mehra updated the members about the meetings which were held with G D Lohani, commissioner, CBEC followed by meeting with Amitabh Kumar, joint secretary (TRU), ministry of finance, Government of India on October 20, 2017, where issues related to GST on tourism related services and how negatively GST is impacting the tourism industry have been taken up.

During the meeting, IATO felicitated J K Mittal, advocate Supreme Court for the services he has rendered to IATO in getting

relief on Rule 6A of the Service Tax, which the Delhi High Court in its decision on August 31, 2017 has pronounced its judgment in IATO's favour and has declared ultra vires and no service tax will be leviable on foreign tourist from neighbouring countries. Also IATO felicitated Sakshi Mehra for the services she rendered for the IATO Outbound Convention in Sri Lanka and also for the IATO annual Convention in Bhubaneswar.

Kohli, in his concluding remarks mentioned that this year, international and economic situation has remained very fluid like last year and brought more difficulties for members. He said, "IATO continued its efforts in coordination with the ministry of tourism, Government of India for maintaining stability and inbound tourism and remained proactive by having regular meetings with the ministry and giving its valuable inputs. This helped us to put our points before the decision makers in MHA, MEA, ministry of commerce, ministry of railways, etc."

He raised a vote of thanks to members, state chapters, EC members for keeping the association active with their participation in all the activities. Kohli thanked the media partners, state governments and The Park hotel for their endless support throughout the year and then ended with a thanks to the IATO secretariat in maintaining efficiency in operations.



# GST CONTINUES TO CHALLENGE THE TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

In India, travel and tourism accounts for 5.9 per cent of the GDP and 9.2 per cent of the total employment. The total number of jobs (direct and indirect) in the tourism sector in 2016 is about 54 million and it is expected that in every 10 people there will be one tourism professional in job scene and could be more if tourism gets due priority and additional funds were given in Tourism Budget in the 13th Five Year Plan i.e. 2017-22 onward.

Our sector estimates about 80 million jobs by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan. Travel and tourism sector is estimated to create 78 jobs per million rupees of investment compared to 45 jobs in the agriculture sector and 18 in the manufacturing sector for similar investment. Along with construction (infrastructure related tourism activities), it is one of the largest sectors of service industry in India. An additional employment of 25 million (direct and indirect) is likely to be created in every nook and corner of the country by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan.

There is a need for diversity of actions from micro to macro level including product and infrastructure development, marketing, branding, promotions, manpower planning, policy and investment. Unfortunately lip sympathy continued in all previous plans regarding taxes - Service Tax, Luxury Tax, VAT, Road Tax, Toll Tax, Excise and so on and even double taxation which was killing tourism. Trade was very optimistic that with the introduction of GST, one tax regime will benefit the tourism sector. But it proved just the opposite. The main objective of introducing GST was One Nation and One Tax to avoid cascading effect and double taxation.

The highest of taxes on tourism is under GST, which was never there in



earlier plan period, and there have been negative effects on tourism investment and growth. This has dampened the interest of holiday-makers to choose India as a holiday destination. Investors preferred to run away amidst GST confusion and so many legalities involved. However, what came as a loss to India was taken as an opportunity by neighbouring countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, etc, where taxes on tourism sector varies from 6 to 10 per cent only (whereas India leads the way with average tax percentage of 23 to 25 per cent). So job creation which was the focus of the introduction of GST became a wild dream.

The situation needs urgent revision and correction. Several recommendations highlighting the steps to be taken to boost tourism have been given to the concerned authorities but remain only on paper. Here are the two recent points that the IATO

team brought forward with the respective committee.

1. We request that a deemed value equal to 10 per cent of total bill amount charged by the tour operator may be fixed on the same lines as in case of air travel agents under rule 32 (3) of CGST Rules, 2017. We feel that the above provision determining the taxable value of services provided by the tour operators will meet the ends of justice facilitating the service provider to pay GST at the rate of 18 per cent on 10 per cent deemed value, making the effective rate of 18 per cent of the gross billing (without ITC).

2. In case the government does not agree to the solution suggested in para 1 above, the association prays that like transporters and rent-a-cab operators, limited ITC in respect of GST charged by a tour operator may be made available to another tour operator availing services from former tour operator in the same line of business.

# REVISION OF GUIDE FEES

A meeting between IATO and Tourism Guide Federation of India (TGFI) was held at the IATO office for revision in guide fee, wherein both the factions of TGFI, Narender Singh Rathore and Sanjay Sharma were present. There was demand for exorbitant increase @ 25 per cent in the guide fees, which IATO did not agree and therefore, Sanjay Sharma left the meeting in between, after lot of deliberations and trying to convince the IATO Committee.

After deliberations between TGFI members and IATO Guide Committee, we reached a conclusion for a reasonable hike i.e. 15 per cent hike in guide wages and 5 to 10 per cent hike in some allowances while some were left as is. An agreement was signed between Pronab Sarkar, president, IATO and Narender Singh Rathore, president, TGFI. The revised guide fees are valid till September 30, 2019.

Kindly note that, though the increase is effective from October 1, 2017, we were assured by TGFI that the guides who have already submitted their bills for the period that has lapsed, will not ask for the additional amount.

## Agreement between Indian Association of Tour Operators & Tourists Guide Federation of India

Guide Fee w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017 to 30 September 2019

Particulars	Fee
<b>1. <u>GUIDE FEE</u></b>	
<b><u>1-5 Persons</u></b>	
a) Half Day	1600
b) Full Day	2000
<b><u>6 – 14 Persons</u></b>	
a) Half Day	2000
b) Full Day	2600
<b><u>15- 40 Persons</u></b>	
a) Half Day	2650
b) Full Day	3450
<b>From 41 Pax onward in a group, services of two guides should be used or only half day extra guide fee to be paid</b>	
<b>2. <u>LANGUAGE ALLOWANCE</u></b>	
<b><u>1 - 14 PERSONS</u></b>	
a) Half Day	600
b) Full Day	800
<b><u>15 PERSONS ONWARDS</u></b>	
a) Half Day	650
b) Full Day	1000
<b>3 <u>OUTSTATION EXCURSION ALLOWANCE</u></b> (Applicable only when the minimum distance covered is beyond 100 kms. Per day and involves no overnight stay)	1300
<b>4. <u>OUTSTATION ALLOWANCE</u></b>	
i. For outstation guiding, escorting, accompanying irrespective of size per night, when a travel agent/tour operator/excursion agent does not provide hotel accommodation and meals	3500
ii. For outstation guiding, escorting, accompanying of groups irrespective of size per night, when a travel agent/tour operator/excursion agent provide hotel accommodation and meals and bear such expenses	1200
iii. When on escorting assignment, if the duty exceeds 12 continuous hours additional allowance to be paid	1000

<b>5. <u>CONVEYANCE ALLOWANCE</u></b>	
i. To report for assignment in metro cities (covering Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai before 0730 hours or finishing after 2030 hours	550
ii. Other Cities	230
<b>6 <u>EXTGRA ALLOWANCE</u></b> – For Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai sightseeing whether Half day of Full Day. In Jaipur for the hotels which are beyond Amber Fort and beyond Jhalana and Gopalpur bypass. In case of Delhi irrespective of reporting at Noida or Gurgaon hotels. In Mumbai irrespective of city or Suburb hotels. It is mandatory for the guide to report at the hotel. However, in case on the request of the guide if guide reports at any monuments instead of the hotel, then this conveyance charges would not be applicable. This amount be included by the Guide while raising invoice and payable once a day. <b>This extra allowance will be applicable from 01 January 2016.</b>	270
<b>7 <u>CONVEYANCE ALLOWANCE</u></b> – to report or to return Fatehpur Sikri and Sikandra – Ex Agra, But to be paid only once either for going or for coming	180
<b>8 <u>All other allowance</u></b> like lunch, overtime, transport etc. will not be payable and will be covered in the above fees	
<b>9 <u>The following excursions would be paid as full day</u></b>	
i. Elephanta caves excursion	
ii. Excursion to Fatehpur Sikri	
iii. Excursion to Bharatpur	
iv. Excursion to Fatehpur Sikri and Bharatpur	
v. Excursion to Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram from Chennai	
vi. Excursion from Trivandrum to Kanyakumari	
vii. Excursion to Daultabad (or) Ellora	
<b>10 <u>For the following excursion tours</u></b> (vice-a-versa), which exceed 8 hours, an extra allowance would be paid in addition to all the above fee and allowances.	730
i. Hyderabad – Warrangal – Palampet and back	
ii. Chennai- Kanchipuram – Mahabalipuram and back	
iii. Chennai – Tirupathy/Thirumala and back	
iv. Chennai – Pondicherry and back	
v. Chennai – Gingy fort and back	
vi. Madurai – Tanjore – Trichy drop and back	
vii. Trivandrum – Kanyakumari and back	
viii. Kochi – Alleppey – Kottayam and back	
ix. Bangalore – Mysore, Brindavan Garden and back	
x. Bangalore – Belur- Halebid and back	
xi. Mumbai - Karla, Bhaja, Bedsa and back	
xii. Aurangabad – Ajantha Caves and Ellora	
xiii. Kokota to Shantiniketan and back	
xiv. Kolkata to Bishnupur and back	
xv. Ranakpur and Kumbhalgarh – Ex Udaipur	



xvi.	Same Day Trip to Agra (Delhi-Agra-Delhi)	
xvii.	Chennai City Sightseeing + Kanchipuram	
xviii.	Chennai City Sightseeing + Mahaballipuram	
xix.	Jaipur – Ajmer – Pushkar	
xx.	Varanasi – Kushinagar – Varanasi	
xxi.	Varanasi – Bodh Gaya – Varanasi	
11	<b>Wherever language or outstation or overnight</b> allowance are applicable, the same will be over and above the guide fee that would be applicable	
12	<b>Suitable imprest amount</b> may be given to the guides before the commencement of their assignment with the mutual understanding in case of outstation trips involving minimum one overnight	
13	<b>Usage of Guides and fee structure shall</b> be as per the laid down policies of the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India	
14	<b>Following Tours in Mumbai would be considered as full day</b>	
	i. Heritage Walks in the Fort Enclave	
	ii. Visit to Banganga, Khotachiwadi	
	iii. City tours starting from hotels situated in the suburbs.	
	iv. Local sightseeing tours that exceed beyond 8 hours, the extra hours should be calculated as a half day tour.	
	v. Bhuleshwar and Mumbadevi	
15	<b>Special allowance for Aarti on Ghats in Banaras</b>	
	i. Morning River Tour Allowance (No other conveyance charges will be payable)	270
	ii. Evening Aarti (no other conveyance charges will be payable)	370
16	<b>The fee and allowance agreed above between IATO and TGFI</b> are to be paid in full and are not negotiable. There will be no extra charges in addition to the above for escorting groups.	



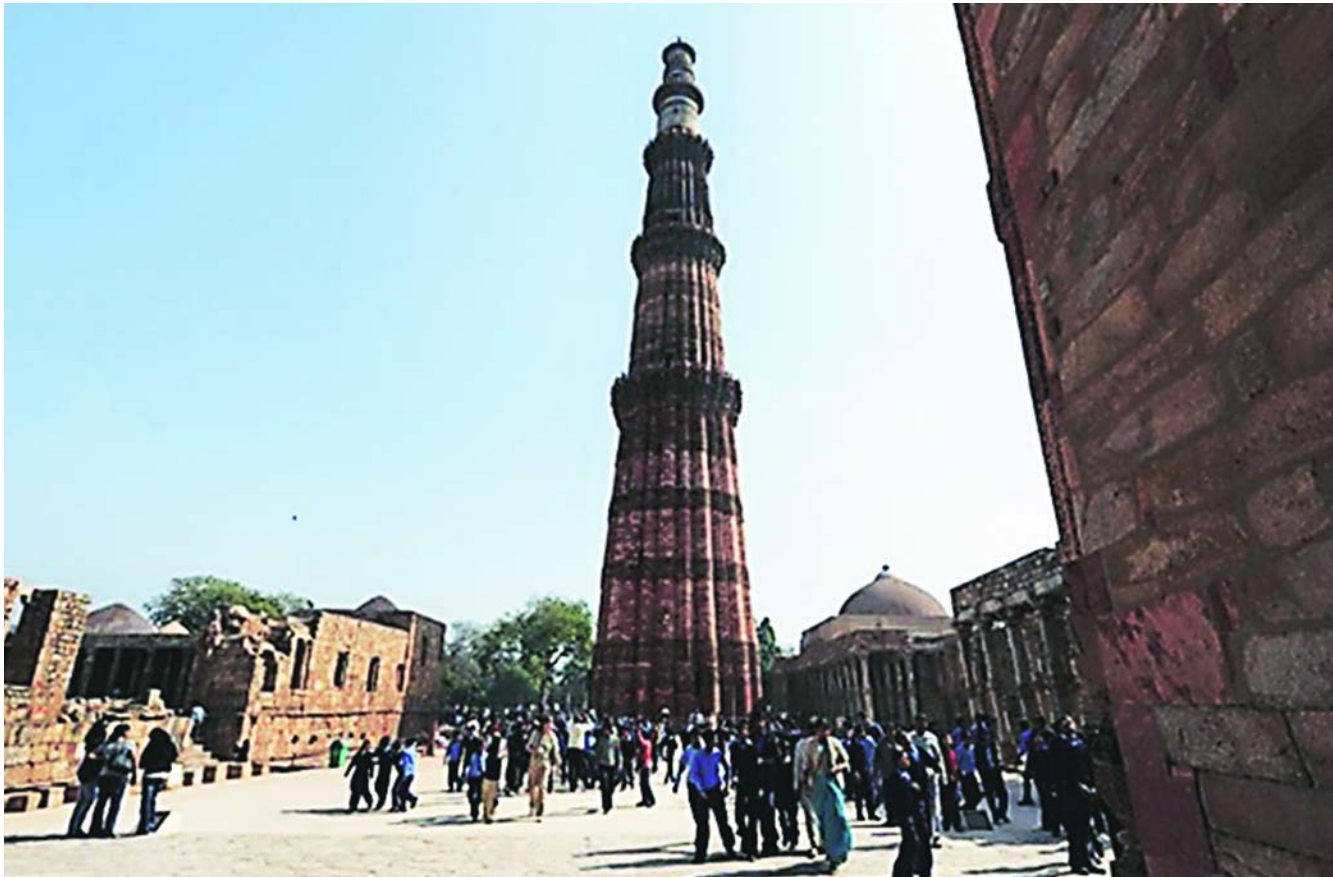
**Pronab Sarkar**  
President  
Indian Association of Tour Operators



**Narender Singh Rathor**  
President  
Tourist Guides Federation of India

**Date: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

# HOW TO BECOME A 'MONUMENT MITRA'



**T**he recently launched Incredible India 2.0 campaign also unveiled the 'Adopt a Heritage' project by the ministry of tourism. The project will entrust heritage sites, monuments and other tourist spots to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for development of tourist amenities. These companies would thus become 'Monument Mitras' by adopting these sites and taking care of the basic amenities at these destinations. From cleanliness of the area, infrastructure and basic amenities, these companies will be looking after the sites.

The project has begun with 93 ASI ticketed monuments and will slowly

expand to other natural and cultural sites in India. For convenience, the sites have been classified into various categories and packaged on basis of visibility and footfall. Seven shortlisted companies were given letters of intent for 14 monuments under 'Adopt a Heritage Scheme' of ministry of tourism at the closing ceremony of Paryatan Parv at Rajpath Lawns in New Delhi. These companies have taken up these projects as part of their CSR initiatives and promised to look after these monuments.

Ashima Mehrotra, director, ministry of tourism, stated, "Regardless of the plethora of heritage sites in the country, many are left untapped by the tourists

because of lack of awareness or basic facilities. Only a few local people know of some places that have not been listed on the tourism map. Through this initiative, the companies will look after these sites, make it accessible to everyone so the government can promote it in their international campaigns and through its tourism offices."

The initial phase received 57 responses where 14 monuments were adopted through seven expression of interests (EoIs). The companies ranging from different sectors of hospitality, travel and banking were carefully looked into before being finalised as a 'Monument Mitra'.

The scheme has been drafted by the





ministry of tourism in collaboration with ministry of culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

In order to make India a tourism friendly destination and have world class infrastructure at popular tourist destinations, the government has roped

in the private sector as well as the public sector. Commenting on the second phase of the campaign, Mehrotra added, "We have once again received an overwhelming response in phase two, many individuals, law firms and educational institutes have come

forward not restricting it to the travel or hospitality sector. We will be carefully assessing the companies to see their vision for development. It will also be noted if the companies are financially stable to maintain these sites."



## LIST OF COMPANIES WHICH HAVE ALREADY UNDERTAKEN PROJECTS

1. SBI Foundation shortlisted for the adoption of Jantar Mantar, Delhi
2. T K International shortlisted for the adoption of Sun Temple, Konark; Raja Rani Temple, Bhubaneswar; Ratnagiri Monuments, Jaipur, Odisha
3. Yatra Online shortlisted for the adoption of Hampi, Karnataka; Leh Palace, Jammu & Kashmir; Qutub Minar, Delhi; Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra
4. Travel Corporation of India shortlisted for the adoption of Mattancherry Palace Museum, Kochi; Safdarjung Tomb, Delhi
5. ATOAI shortlisted for the adoption of Gangotri Temple Area and Trail to Gaumukh; Mt Stok Kangri, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir
6. Special Holidays Travel, along with Rotary Club of Delhi, shortlisted for the adoption of Agrasen ki Baoli, Delhi
7. NBCC shortlisted for the adoption of Purana Quila, Delhi

## Announcements

### Paryatan Parv enables cultural knowledge exchange among states

Each day of the “Paryatan Parv” organised by the ministry of tourism in collaboration with other central ministries, state governments and other stakeholders from October 5 to 25, 2017 was full of activities. Paryatan Parv received a very enthusiastic response from other central ministries and state governments, who had come forward in organising various activities and events. The event which spread to all regions of the country has been received very well and has attracted participation in large numbers.

‘Paryatan Parv’ activities began with the flagging of the cycle rally by Rashmi Verma, secretary, ministry of tourism from India Gate, New Delhi to Qutab Minar. Tourism awareness ‘Walk & Run’ activities were organised in Shillong, Bhubaneswar, Kovalam (Kerala), Hajipur (Bihar), Gurudaspur, Chennai, Guwahati, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Imphal, Lucknow, Agra, Hyderabad, Gwalior, Bhopal, Panaji (Goa) and Delhi. Hundreds of students from Institutes of Hotel Management in the said cities and local stakeholders enthusiastically participated in the Tourism Walk & Run activity.

India Tourism, Chennai in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Tourism Department, organised ‘the Absolute India Travel Bazaar’ where the importance of tourism was conveyed to the large gathering of 1500 people which included state tourism departments and airlines.

Maharashtra government inaugurated a guide training course in Mumbai, Nagpur, Aurangabad and Pune. District level cultural programmes were organised in Aurangabad and Goa by the ministry of youth affairs (NYKS). The government ministries and state governments came together to organise an event at the Taj Mahal. The highlight of the event was Dastan-e-Amir Khusrau presented by Dr Syeda Hameed, Zakia Zaheer and Rene Singh at Taj Khema Mound.

Many state governments came forward and organised these small initiatives for knowledge exchange and learning. Arun Jaitley, Union finance and corporate affairs minister was the chief guest at the official closing ceremony of Paryatan Parv at the Rajpath Lawns, New Delhi. K J Alphons, minister of state (independent charge) for tourism was also present.

In the afternoon, different states/ UTs presented their cultural performances viz. Assam presented Bihu; Daman & Diu presented Macchi Dance; Andhra Pradesh presented Kuchipudi; Rajasthan presented Chari & Ghoomer; Tamil



Nadu presented Karakattam Thappattam; Jammu & Kashmir presented Kashmiri dances and Telangana presented Perini. In the evening, Savita Devi presented ‘Purab Ang Gayaki of Banaras Gharana’ which was followed by a cultural performance by the North Zone Cultural Centre.

The event was aggressively promoted by the government to not only raise awareness but also enable cultural exchange between the states within the country. It can be identified as another step to boost tourism but with some major challenges hindering our industry’s growth, we will have to wait and see the benefits of this movement.



# Announcements



### Ministry of tourism conducts workshop on innovation in tourism

The ministry of tourism, Government of India recently organised a workshop on 'Innovation in Tourism' to receive innovative ideas and suggestions from stakeholders in the tourism sector to keep abreast with the developments taking place around the globe and respond to them in a proactive and adequate manner.

The workshop was chaired by K J Alphons, minister of state for tourism (independent charge) and attended by approximately 50 participants representing various segments of tourism industry viz hotels, tour operators, travel agents, adventure tour operators, tourism professionals, media representatives and trade associations. Secretary, ministry of tourism and other senior officials also participated in the workshop. The workshop deliberated extensively on various issues affecting Indian tourism and the came out with innovative solutions to overcome such issues and in order to position India as the most preferred destinations.

Some of the key innovative ideas that emerged in the

workshop included effective promotion of Buddhist circuits and opening of land border at Piprahwa, countering negative publicity by putting in place an integrated 'Reputation Management' strategy and appointing a dedicated PR agency, constituting a Crisis Management Cell making available quality tourist guides (including those proficient in foreign languages), engaging with travel bloggers for generating positive stories on India on social media, setting up of a company through SPV to handle marketing and PR, advising the state governments to replicate the best practices followed by states proactive in tourism, engaging with the NRIs & POI through India missions abroad and preparing a countrywide festival calendar.

During the workshop, Alphons informed that the ministry of tourism will be constituting two Committees to work on development of Buddhist Circuits and to advise on marketing and PR. It was also decided to regularly interact with the related central ministries on matters pertaining to development and promotion of tourism and facilitating the tourist to ensure that they have a pleasant and memorable experience during their visit to India.