

THE WEEKLY WATCH

March 19, 2022



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India restores long-term E-tourist visas to 156 countries with immediate effect

The Ministry of Home Affairs restored all valid five-year e-tourist visas issued to nationals of 156 countries and suspended since March 2020 with immediate effect, news agency ANI reported. Nationals of these countries will also be eligible for issuance of fresh e-visas for tourists as per existing rules. The government also said it would similarly restore valid regular (paper) long-duration (10 years) tourist visas for US and Japanese nationals, as well as permit issue of fresh visas to citizens of both countries.

"The government took the step keeping in view the improvement in the Covid-19 situation in the country and considering the need for further relaxation of visa and travel restrictions," the Home Ministry said.

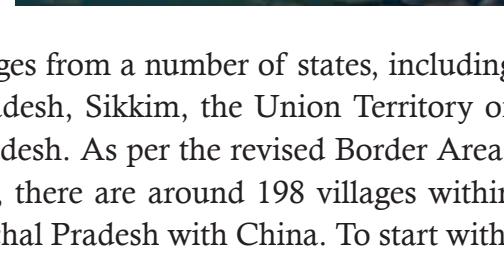


Tata Sons appoints N Chandrasekaran as Chairman of Air India

N Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons, has been appointed as the Chairman of Air India. The appointment was cleared at a board meeting held by Air India. Meanwhile, Air India is on hunt for a new CEO to replace former Turkish Airlines CEO Ilker Ayci, who resigned before taking charge officially. Ayci was supposed to take responsibilities as the CEO and Managing Director of Air India on or before April 1, 2022.

MHA plans to open villages on border with China for tourism under Vibrant Village programme

With an aim to open the villages along the Chinese border for tourists under the Vibrant Village programme, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) held a meeting with public representatives of such villages from a number of states, including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, the Union Territory of Ladakh, and Arunachal Pradesh. As per the revised Border Areas Development Plan (BADP), there are around 198 villages within the 242 km border of Himachal Pradesh with China. To start with, those villages that are situated within a 10 km distance from the last border village will be taken up on priority.



21.5 mn people in tourism sector lost their jobs since covid outbreak: Reddy

Around 21.5 million people, involved in the tourism industry, have lost their jobs due to the three waves of COVID-19 that first hit the country in early 2020, said G Kishan Reddy, Union Tourism Minister. Reddy said tourist arrivals in the country were down by 93 per cent during the first wave of COVID-19 outbreak, 79 per cent in the second wave and 64 per cent during the third wave.

"We have conducted a study on the impact of the pandemic on tourism. As per the study, there were 14.5 million job losses during the first wave, 5.2 million job losses in the second wave and 1.8 million job losses in the third wave," he said in Lok Sabha during Question Hour.



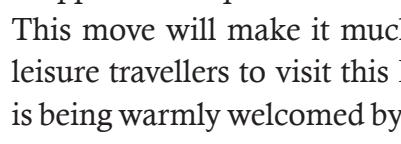
Visitors no longer require negative PCR test before entering Mauritius

The Republic of Mauritius has done away with the requirement for all incoming visitors to present a negative PCR test before being allowed entry, reports Travel Daily International.

Previously, fully vaccinated passengers had to present a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours before

departure. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has dropped this requirement as from 12 March 2022.

This move will make it much easier for business and leisure travellers to visit this Indian Ocean Island and is being warmly welcomed by the travel and hospitality industry in Mauritius.

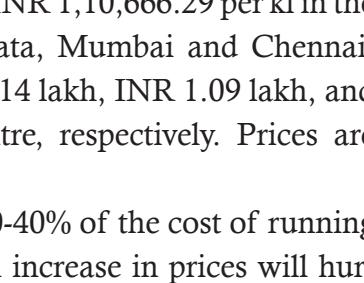


Record hike of 18% in ATF prices

Oil marketing companies on March 16 sharply raised prices of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) to record high of over INR 1 lakh per kilolitre (kl).

In a first, ATF prices were hiked by a steep 18.3% to INR 1,10,666.29 per kl in the national capital. In Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, jet fuel is priced at INR 1.14 lakh, INR 1.09 lakh, and INR 1.14 lakh per kilolitre, respectively. Prices are revised every fortnight.

Jet fuel prices comprise 30-40% of the cost of running an airline in India and an increase in prices will hurt profit margins of airlines which have reported huge losses over the last few quarters due to the coronavirus pandemic.



Vietnam reopens for international tourists

Vietnam fully reopened its borders for international tourists, reports Xinhua.

Nguyen Trung Khanh, Director General of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism said foreign nationals can now enter Vietnam by air, land and sea through all border gates as long as they meet the COVID-19 prevention and control requirements, Vietnam News Agency reported.

Prior to this policy, foreign tourists could only travel to Vietnam by air after booking a tour package with a designated travel agency under a vaccine passport programme. Despite being offered a quarantine waiver, foreign tourists were restricted to visit just a few localities with the process heavily monitored.



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