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India to issue first 5 lakh tourist visas for free to boost tourism: Sitharaman

Five lakh tourist visas will be issued free of charge – once the government resumes issuance – Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, as the government unveiled a list of eight relief measures for some of the sectors worst affected by the Covid pandemic and lockdown. This scheme will run till March 31, 2022, or till the first five lakh tourist visas are issued, whichever is earlier, Sitharaman said, adding that each tourist could only avail of this scheme once. She said the total financial implication of the scheme will be INR 100 crore.

FM announces loan guarantee scheme for over 11,000 registered guides & tourism stakeholders



Nirmala Sitharaman

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced financial support to over 11,000 registered tourist guides, travel agents and tourism stakeholders under the new loan guarantee scheme.

“The personal loans or working capital will be provided to people in the tourism sector to discharge liabilities and restart businesses impacted due to COVID-19 pandemic,” the Finance Minister said.

Under the new loan guarantee scheme, travel and tourism stakeholders (TTS) — recognised by the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) will be able to get INR 10,00,000 loans per agency with 100 per cent guarantee. Also, a provision to provide loan of INR 1,00,000 for tourist guides licensed at regional or state level has been made.

The Finance Ministry assured that there will be no requirement for any processing charges, waiver of foreclosure or prepayment charges, or additional collateral for these personal loans. The scheme will be administered by the MoT through National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd.

489 Lok Sabha constituencies offer passport services: Jaishankar



S Jaishankar

India has established a passport issuance centre in 489 Lok Sabha constituencies, Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar said. He also added that the government hopes to establish similar centres in the remaining 54 constituencies to strengthen the outreach of passport services.

Jaishankar said the mandate of the government was to “ensure efficient governance and timely, effective, assured, transparent and accountable public service delivery.”

The Minister said continuing with the “global outreach exercise, the Ministry has integrated 174 Indian Embassies and Consulates abroad with the Passport Seva Programme enabling a centralised passport issuance system for our citizens in India and diaspora abroad.”

IndiGo rolls out discount for vaccinated passengers



Sanjay Kumar

In a move to promote vaccination against Coronavirus infection in India, flight operator IndiGo has said that it will offer a 10 per cent discount to passengers who have taken at least one dose of Covid-19 vaccine. The company’s discount offer is applicable on the base fare and will be offered to people depending on the inventory.

The offer stands valid for everyone who is above the age of 18 years and is located in India. At the time of booking, passengers can opt for discounts if they have received their first jab of Covid-19 vaccine.

Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy and Revenue Officer, IndiGo, said that the airline thinks that it is its responsibility to contribute to the vaccination drive being conducted in India. By offering discounts to encourage people in favour of vaccination can be a step for them towards the common goal.

Serum’s Covishield cleared by few European Union nations and Switzerland

A day after India formally requested European Union member states to include both Covishield and Covaxin in their exemption list for the passport, Switzerland and seven EU countries have added the Serum Institute-manufactured Oxford-Astrazeneca vaccine.



Austria, Germany, Slovenia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland and Spain are the seven EU member countries that accepted Covishield vaccine on July 1. Estonia has said it would recognise all the vaccines authorised by the Indian government, the source said, which would include Covaxin that has been developed by local firm Bharat Biotech. The Centre on June 30 said that the failure to include Covishield and Covaxin will force India to implement mandatory quarantine rules for EU citizens.