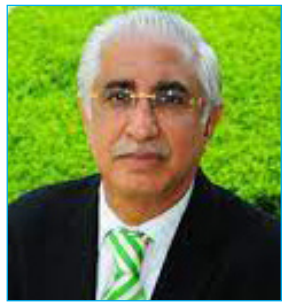




FAITH urges states coordination for revival of Indian tourism sector post Covid



Nakul Anand

The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) has urged for immediate national coordination among states for revival of the tourism sector after the pandemic.

During a virtual meeting held with the tourism secretaries of all states and Union territories, FAITH urged the states for a coordinated support for waiver of statutory obligations of power, utilities, parking, inter-state tax tariffs, state goods and service tax waiver and industry status, it said in a statement.

Nakul Anand, Chairman, FAITH, said, "It is indeed heartening that all states' secretaries have committed to the suggestions by FAITH." He also added that some have already implemented the industry status, ensured waiver of property taxes, excise duties and declaration of tourism as front-line staff for vaccination. "All FAITH presidents are optimistically looking forward to great outcome for reviving the travel trade. Indeed, a revolutionary step today towards revival of Indian tourism travel and hospitality."

DGCA seeks India-UK airfare details from airlines

Amid complaints by air travellers over "high-fares" in the India-UK flights, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has sought details of fares in this route from airlines. DGCA's announcement has come in the wake of uproar by passengers who complained as India-UK flights restarted on Sunday after a gap of around three and half months after the UK government has moved India from the 'red' to the 'amber' list with effect from Sunday. The DGCA has sought details of airlines' fares for the India-UK route.



It is learnt that the minimum one-way fare on the Delhi-London non-stop route of the economy class in August for Vistara is in the range of INR 1,03,191-1,21,356. The British Airways fares are in the range of INR 1,28,916 to INR 1,47,544. Fares of Air India flights are at least INR 1,15,936.

Brand USA organises Key Partner Briefing

Brand USA's key partner briefing, which took place virtually August 11, threw light on the US market and importance of India. The US recorded 79.4 million international visitors in 2019, accounting for 5.4% of total international travellers globally and placed the United States as the third most visited country in the world. In 2019, 1.47 million Indian visitors visited the United States, contributing \$14.2 billion to their economy.



"In June 2021 total foreign air passenger travel on non-stops from India to the US was down 59% compared to June 2019," the webinar noted. As far as Indian visitors profile is concerned, business remains as the top main trip purpose which is 35% of all visitors in 2019—a level three times higher than the average across all overseas countries. Other main trip purposes include VFR, Vacation, holiday and convention, conference and trade show. The webinar also noted that, in a typical

year, 18 states get 2% or more of total Indian visitors volume. This supports Brand USA's efforts to encourage international travel to rural or lesser known destinations throughout the United States as required by the Travel Promotion Act. The speakers in the event also praised the Brand USA team in India for keeping engaged the Indian travel trade with a series of innovative webinars.

Air India to restart Kochi-London direct flights from August 18

Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) and Air India have joined hands to relaunch direct London services from Kochi after the United Kingdom (UK) moved India from its Red to Amber list, a categorisation created for facilitating international travel during pandemic times.

Accordingly, Air India will operate Heathrow-Kochi-Heathrow services on Wednesdays from August 18, said a communication from CIAL. Interestingly, CIAL has decided to waive parking and landing fees as part of efforts to attract more European carriers to Kochi. Air India will deploy Dreamliner category aircraft to operate in the sector. The AI 150/149 aircraft will arrive in Kochi at 3.45 a.m. and depart for London at 5.50 a.m. on Wednesdays.

Facial recognition-based boarding system under trial in 6 airports: Govt

"Work has been awarded for implementation of Biometric Boarding System (BBS) by using facial recognition technology at six airports namely – Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune, Varanasi and Vijayawada. The project is at the trial stage. Upon successful completion, the same will be implemented across other airports in the country in a phased manner," informed VK Singh, Minister of State for Civil Aviation, in Lok Sabha. The minister also informed that Airports Authority of India (AAI) plans to invest around INR 25,000 crore in next 4-5 years for expansion and development of existing and new terminals, using modern technology.



VK Singh

90% people want Govt to frame travel booking refund policy: Survey

As many as 90 per cent of people in a survey carried out to assess issues faced in getting refund for cancelled travel bookings, including of flight tickets, in the wake of COVID-19, want the government to formulate a pandemic-specific cancellation refund policy. According to the survey by online platform LocalCircles, based over 37,000 responses received from citizens across 359 districts, some travel agents (online and offline), airlines as well as hotels did not initiate any refund with people losing the complete booking amount.



As per the platform, only 12-13 per cent of those who cancelled travel bookings due to the second COVID wave could get timely refunds. "As many as 95 per cent of citizens believe that the current policies of the airlines, railways or hotels are not in consumer interest and 90 per cent want the government to come up with a travel booking refund policy till the time the COVID pandemic is on," LocalCircles said. The same could be brought by the respective ministries like Civil Aviation, Tourism and Railways or by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the Disaster Management Act 2005, it said, adding that people have also suggested a 3-option traveller-friendly travel booking cancellation and refund policy.