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 ON WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2021 @ 3:00 PM IST

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## India extends ban on scheduled international flights till September 30

India has extended the Covid-induced suspension on scheduled international passenger flights till September 30, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said.

The aviation regulator added that international scheduled flights on selected routes might be allowed on a case-to-case basis by the competent authority. India suspended scheduled international flights on March 23, 2020, amid a spike in Covid-19 cases in the country at the start of the pandemic.

However, India has been operating special international flights under its Vande Bharat Mission since May 2020. India has also agreed bilateral 'air bubble' arrangements with several countries since July 2020, allowing flight services to resume with these countries. India has air bubble agreements with 25 countries such as the UK, the US, the United Arab Emirates, Bhutan, France, and Kenya. Under the arrangement, airlines can operate special international flights between the two territories.



## TAAI delegation discusses vital issues with Goa CM

Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) on August 25 had a virtual interaction with Dr. Pramod Pandurang Sawant, CM, Goa and raised issues that are hampering the growth of tourism industry in the state. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI initiated the discussion and said that most of the travel fraternity members are registered under the Directorate of Tourism, Government of Goa for which the license is renewed every year.



**Dr. Pramod Sawant**

Till last year, the fee, specifically to Travel Agents, was around INR 1250/- only. However, this year, the same has been increased to more than INR 5000. Requesting the CM to withdraw the increased fee, Mayal said, "As the Tourism sector is going through its worst time, and has been facing losses and NPA's our request is to withdraw the increased Fee."

Responding to requests made by TAAI, the Chief Minister said that the matter of licences fee has already been taken into consideration, and assured of a favourable decision soon.

## VFS Global resumes UAE tourist visa services for Indian travellers



**Noel Swain**

VFS Global has resumed UAE tourist visa services for Indians. UAE announced the reopening of borders for Indian travellers ahead of the Expo 2020 trade fair scheduled to commence on October 1, 2021.

Travellers will be required to present a valid negative Covid-19 Test certificate issued within 48 hours from the time of collecting the sample and from an approved health service, which use the QR code System, as well as Rapid PCR Test report conducted at the departure airport 6 hours prior to departure, provided with a QR code system.

Noel Swain, Business Head – Schengen, eVisa and Passport Services, VFS Global, said, "The reopening of borders to the UAE is a reassuring move for the travel industry, with the United Arab Emirates being among the most popular destinations for Indians, especially with the Expo 2020 Dubai around the corner. We wish all our customers safe travels."

## Cruise service In Ayodhya set to start in November

Pilgrims and tourists will soon get the opportunity to sail on the Saryu river in Ayodhya on a state-of-the-art luxury cruise ship. Known as the Ramayana Cruise Service, it is all set to start in Ayodhya before Deepotsav, scheduled in the first week of November.



Operators of Alaknanda Cruiseline, which launched the Alaknanda cruise service in Varanasi three years ago, will operate the Ramayan Cruise Service as well with the support of the state tourism department, said a senior official familiar with the matter.

Vikas Malaviya, Director, Alaknanda Cruiseline, said, "We are very thrilled to launch the first-ever luxury cruise service—Ramayan Cruise Service—on the holy Saryu river in Ayodhya. We aim to give a mesmerising experience to the pilgrims. The ship will sail on the Saryu from one ghat to another."

## Lindiwe Sisulu takes charge as Tourism Minister of South Africa



**Lindiwe Sisulu**

President Cyril Ramaphosa has appointed Lindiwe Sisulu as minister of tourism following a cabinet reshuffle. Sisulu takes over from Mmamoloko Kubayi, who is now the Human Settlements minister. Sisulu brings with her diverse skillset and strategic prowess to the role, even as South Africa firms up plans for international tourism recovery.

Having served as member of parliament since 1994, Sisulu was also the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation from 30 May 2019 to 5 August 2021.

## Saudi Tourism appoints Think Strawberries as its India market representative

Think Strawberries has been appointed by Saudi Tourism Authority as its India market representative. The representative agency will be responsible for implementing a robust cross-channel marketing strategy within the India market to help contribute towards this target. Think Strawberries has been awarded the India mandate following a multi agency pitch that focused on creatively showcasing Saudi Arabia's attractions including its magnificent historical sites, ancient ruins, sandy beaches, delectable cuisines, world-class shopping malls, theme parks and the luxurious Red Sea project among plenty other offerings.



## Vistara receives official approval to operate international flights to USA

Vistara has received the official all-clear from the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) for a foreign air carrier permit. Vistara was granted the final approval to conduct flights between the US and India. Vistara can now schedule commercial flights between the two countries, moving people, property and mail. The nod allows Vistara to even fly charter and cargo flights.