

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 733
ANSWERED ON 07.02.2022**

RELAXATION TO IATA AGENTS

**733. SHRI GIRISH BHALCHANDRA BAPAT:
SHRI RAVINDRA KUSHWAHA:
SHRI DHAIRYASHEEL SAMBHAJIRAO MANE:
SHRI SANJAY SADASHIVRAO MANDLIK:
SHRI RAVI KISHAN:
SHRI SUDHEER GUPTA:
SHRI RAHUL RAMESH SHEWALE:
SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:
DR. PRITAM GOPINATHRAO MUNDE:
SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU:
SHRI BIDYUT BARAN MAHATO:
SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV:**

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the services sector is the largest contributor to the Gross Domestic Product and travel trade is the most significant one among all;**
- (b) if so, whether the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has urged the Government to relax norms for its International Air Transport Association (IATA) accredited agents and also make the registration process automated and if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regard;**
- (c) whether the TAAI has requested the Government to undertake State-wise registration of the trade members for accreditation along with the travel agents body and if so, the measures taken by the Government in this regard as well as to help the tourism industry;**
- (d) whether the present Omicron variant of Covid19 has put a shackle on fast recovering tourism industry in the country and if so, the details thereof;**
- (e) whether the Government has given any relaxation/ considering to give any relaxation in visa norms to attract international tourists to**

- boost the tourism industry in the country in wake of Omicron variant and if so, the details thereof; and**
- (f) whether the Government proposes to develop new tourism clusters across the country and if so, the details thereof, destination-wise?**

ANSWER

MINISTER OF TOURISM

(SHRI G. KISHAN REDDY)

(a): Yes, Sir.

(b) to (c): To ensure standardized services for tourists, the Ministry of Tourism Government of India gives approval to different categories of service providers in the Travel and Hospitality industry including Tour Operators/Travel Agents/Tourist Transport Operators etc in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry in each category. This is purely a voluntary scheme and it is not mandatory for the service providers to seek approval of the Ministry for conducting its business.

Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has sought relaxation of guidelines for giving recognition to the travel agents by the Ministry. Among other things, it has sought automatic recognition to their members as most of them are members of International Air Transport Association (IATA).

In this respect it may be submitted that the Ministry of Tourism revised its guidelines for giving recognition to the tour operators, travel agents and tourist transport operators in December, 2020, only. Substantial changes have been made, specially keeping in view of the pandemic situation caused by Covid-19. These include the following: -

- 1. A new category of Green-shoot has been introduced. Prior one-year experience requirement has been done away with in this category.**
- 2. For experienced category, the turnover requirement has been lowered,**
- 3. For tour operator's/travel agents having annual turnover lower than Rs. 10Cr. - following relaxations have been given:**
 - a. the requirement of a office space of has been done away with.**
 - b. the requirement of qualified staff has been lowered to two, in which director/owner of the agency is taken as a qualified staff.**

Therefore, it has not been found feasible to give further relaxation as it might impact the assured service quality of the recognized travel agents.

(d): Yes, Sir. The decision taken by the Government to resume schedule commercial international flights w.e.f. 15.12.2021 has been put on hold and the same has been suspended till 28.02.2022 due to emergence of the Omicron variant of the Covid 19. This resulted in a big setback for the recovery of inbound tourism industry.

(e): The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, has relaxed the restriction for all foreign nationals intended to visit India for Tourism purposes subject to the Covid related guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW).The e-Tourist Visa / Tourist Visa is fully restored for all individual foreign nationals intended to visit India for tourism purposes w.e.f. 15th November, 2021. Initially, the e- Tourist / Tourist Visa is being issued with the validity of 30 days. Further, the Government of India has announced first 500,000 free visa fee to the international tourists.

(f): The Ministry of Tourism launched its Swadesh Darshan scheme in the year 2014-15 under which financial assistance is provided to the State/UT Administrations/ Central Agencies for development of Tourism Infrastructure. This financial assistance is provided in consultation with States / UT Administrations. Since its inception in 2014-15 till 2018-19, a total number of 76 projects under 13 thematic circuits, have been sanctioned in the country for a revised sanction amount of Rs. 5503.84 Crore and Rs. 4442.18 Crore has been released. The projects under this scheme are sanctioned subject to availability of funds, submission of suitable Detailed Project Reports, adherence to scheme guidelines and utilization of funds released earlier etc.

The Ministry of Tourism has framed 'Development of Iconic Tourist Destinations Scheme'. The Scheme is not approved and hence further details are not finalized.
