



IAAI Newsletter

March 2nd Fortnight Issue, 2014

IAAI News

IAAI, made another appeal to Secretary of Civil Aviation regarding the reinstatement of travel agency commission, similar to DGCA order No. AV 13030/7/2006A passed on 27th August 2007 directing Air India to ensure 5% Commission to all Cargo Agents by all airlines and mandated that every cargo agent should be provided with airway bill stock of all airlines operating in India.

IAAI had reminded the Secretary that DGCA order No.AV.13030/34/2013-DT dated 16.09.2013 mandated Commission as the rightful remuneration of the Travel Agents. Even though nearly six months have passed since the passing of the above order, the same has not been given effect by the DGCA or the Airlines. Hence IAAI urged the Secretary to intervene in the matter of Travel Agents' Commission requested to issue an order similar to AV 13030/7/2006A dated 29.08.2007 directing the National Carrier to ensure:

- The minimum commission of 5% shall be paid to all IATA Accredited Travel Agents/ Intermediaries by all Airlines operating in India under the IATA Resolution 818g.
- All Agents/ intermediaries shall be given ticket stock by all Airlines operating in India.

This will ensure 5% commission to all travel agents from all airlines operating in India and also eliminate the restrictions imposed through TAP, (which was illegally processed through APJC-India), enabling every agent to get ticket stock of all airlines operating in India as a statutory right.

An Easier Visa Regime soon for travellers to European Union



Each year, around half a million Indians apply for visa to go to Europe for vacations, studies and business. Between 2009 and 2012, the number of visitors from India rose by almost 40%. Europe is the top tourist destination in the world with a wealth of natural, cultural and artistic heritage. But many potential Indian travellers are still discouraged from visiting Europe because of cumbersome visa rules and long waiting times. Now, the European Commission has proposed to change EU visa legislation to make it easier for people to travel to the EU borderless Schengen area. The main obstacles in the existing system include long waiting times both to get an appointment with consular offices and for the visa to get issued, and the need to prepare and submit complex supporting documents. In a recent survey financed by the European Commission, over 30% of Indian respondents perceived the supporting documents requirement to be problematic. With the proposals for new EU laws, getting a decision on one's visa application should, in principle, take no longer than 10 calendar days. Furthermore, it is proposed to ease the rules on which supporting documents are needed; and to make the process similar, no matter which embassy or consulate the application is launched in. *Also, minors under the age of 18 should no longer have to pay a visa fee.* Another deterrent for potential visitors to Europe is insufficient consular coverage in certain regions. People sometimes have to travel far to present their visa request. These requirements are even more frustrating for frequent and regular travellers as they cannot obtain a visa for multiple entries. The commission, therefore, proposes that people who regularly travel to Europe should be granted a multi-entry visa valid for several years, if they have had a visa issued to them twice in the previous 12 months. According to the proposals, in the future, it will not be necessary to lodge an application in person if the applicant is already registered in the system. In addition, a new type of visa is proposed: the touring visa, with which the holder can stay in the Schengen area of Europe and travel across the continent for up to one year, with the possibility to extend it by another year. This will be a key new element to the visa code for tourists who wish to stay longer in Europe, but not set up residence in one country. The touring visa will also be welcome for many who travel to Europe for business, especially in the cultural sector. Increased mobility and exposure to diversity promotes cultural openness and will surely contribute to EUIndia cooperation. Recent studies show that if countries of the European area without internal borders would take advantage of the flexibility of our visa rules — speeding up procedures, limiting the number of documents required and providing frequent travellers with multiple entry visas with long validity — there could be up to 46 million additional international arrivals by 2015. Already, some European countries have initiated measures to promote tourism from abroad. Italy, for example, has increased its consular capacity in China, resulting in a 100% increase in the number of visas issued. Also, Poland implemented a “fasttrack” procedure for visa applications during the Uefa European Football Championship in 2012. Events such as the Milan World Expo in 2015 and the Uefa European Football Championship in 2016 in France are opportunities for millions of new travellers to visit Europe, but only if they can obtain a visa without unnecessary hassle.

Source : Economic Times

Premier train service on New Delhi-Jammu route extended till mid-April



Looking to cash in on the ever-increasing rush of pilgrims at the Vaishno Devi Temple, the Railways has extended the service of its Premium special train for Jammu till the middle of April, 2014. The New Delhi-Jammu Tawi Premium special train with costlier tickets was made operational for the Holi festival on March 14, 16 and 21. It has now been decided to extend the service further with trains every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday, from March 23 to April 15. A dynamic fare system is followed as regards tickets for the Premium trains, whose rate is determined as per the demand at the time of booking. No waitlisted tickets are issued for these trains. The train departs from New Delhi station at 9.50 pm to reach Jammu at 6.50 am. For the return leg, the Jammu Tawi-New Delhi superfast train will run on Wednesday, Saturday and Monday till April 16 at 8.35 pm, to reach New Delhi at 5.35 am. There is no commercial stoppage en route for this train. Bookings are made available only through Internet that is on the IRCTC portal and not through counters at reservation centres. For the journey, passengers are required to carry the prescribed original photo identity card to be produced along with the ticket.

DGCA Gets Tough on Safety After FAA Downgrade

India's aviation regulator has tightened the screws on Airline Companies after the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in January downgraded the country's safety rating and put it on par with Swaziland and Uruguay. The ones impacted the most seem to be private charter operators, known as non-scheduled operating permit holders, which have to be ready for random, surprise checks on documentation and equipment. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) recently found faults with planes being used by Reliance Industries and Jindal Steel (JSPL) as a part of this drive. FAA downgraded India to category II status after it found that the regulator did not have enough flight operations inspectors to check Boeing 787 planes and other larger aircrafts. The downgrade, India's first, bars the country's carriers from increasing the number of flights to the US. Immediately after the decision, two American carriers severed codeshare ties with Jet Airways. The downgrade has spurred the DGCA into being stricter. The regulator wants Indian operators to be extremely particular and update with documents and equipment so they don't get stopped in foreign countries. Among Indian corporate fliers, those operated by Reliance, Essar and DLF fly to the US. Another reason for DGCA's caution is due to the upcoming general elections. Companies have to be careful about what the plane is used for and which VIP it is carrying. DGCA is to also come out with new air safety rules governing the safety and airworthiness regulations for non-scheduled flight operations such as those pertaining to helicopters and small aircraft.



Luxury buses to have black boxes



In a move to tame reckless drivers of long haul inter-state buses, government wants to make it mandatory for all such vehicles to have black box, speed controllers and seat belts for passengers. The black box will record the driving behaviour of the man on the wheels and also record whether the driver worked beyond the permissible hours in a day. Investigation of three Volvo crash cases, it came to notice that the buses were in high speed when the accidents took place. So, these buses need to have the speed limiting devices. To make a beginning, the focus is likely to be on Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra where these luxury buses ply in big numbers and are quite popular for interstate travel on weekends. Since many of such buses are relatively old, there is a need to fix seat belts for all the passengers so that they don't fall off or are thrown out in case of an accident. The Govt. will also take up the case of implementing Bus Body Code, which aims to make buses safer by using specified materials. A technical investigation into two Volvo buses that went up in flames last year in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka claiming 51 lives had revealed that these had wooden flooring, inflammable seats and had no emergency exit door.

Pamban Bridge—An Engineering Marvel..



THE PAMBAN BRIDGE IS A CANTILEVER BRIDGE ON THE PALK STRAIT WHICH CONNECTS RAMESWARAM ON PAMBAN ISLAND TO MAINLAND INDIA. ITS MIDSECTION CAN BE RAISED TO LET SHIPS AND BARGES PASS THROUGH. THE VIEW OF THE DISTANT SEA AND THE STRING OF ISLANDS ON THE LEFT OF PAMBAN ISLAND IS SIMPLY BREATHTAKING.

MTDC conducts Road-shows in Berlin & Milan

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) recently conducted a Road-show at Indian Embassy Hall in Berlin, Germany on the sidelines of the ITB Berlin trade show that concluded this month. Thereafter, the Road-show was organized in Milan, Italy. MTDC had invited about 60 travel agents and tour operators promoting India and about 70 electronic and print media officials for the Berlin Road-show. A cultural troupe performed traditional dances like Naman, Ganesh Vandana, lavni, vasudev and koli dance. Later, Maharashtrian wine and Indian delicacies were served for dinner. For the Milan Road-show, the India Tourism Office, Milan offered MTDC strong support. About 90 delegates from the travel trade attended the event, of which 90 per cent were tour operators. The Milan Road-show also included cultural dance performances, followed by dinner.



Chinese Portals ban Flight bookings to Malaysia

China's online ticketing agencies eLong, LY.com, Qunar & Mango etc. have imposed a ban on booking flights tickets to Malaysia. This is the first commercial backlash against Malaysia after the MH 370 incident. The move means the cancellation of many flights of Chinese & foreign airlines because a major part of Airline ticketing is done by online sites, with even Travel Agents using the service. The Portals announced to continue the ban until the Malaysian Govt. & Malaysian Airlines release all information which they believe is being suppressed.

Now Apply for UK Visa & retain your Passport

Effective from 31 March 2014, the UK will be extending its "Passport Pass back" service to all 12 Visa Application Centers (VACs) in India.

Passport Pass-back service is a **user-paid service** that enables applicants to retain their passport for the majority of the application processing period. Frequent travelers, particularly business visitors, holiday-makers planning tours around multiple countries could avail this facility. *This service is optional and incurs additional fee.*

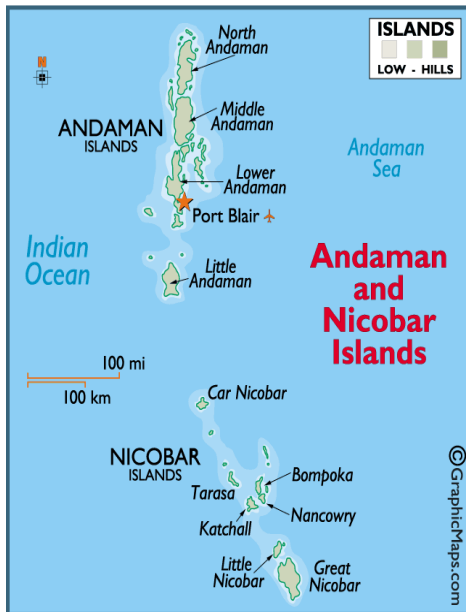


The UK has also announced a number of changes to the fees charged for visas as follows :-

- The passport pass-back service will cost INR 4200/- per applicant.
- Priority Visas (earlier known as "Fast Track") which are processed within 2-3 days will cost INR 10500.
- Prime time Appointment at the VAC will cost INR 5250/-
- The User Pay Service for the VAC in Goa will cost INR 6195/-
- The Super Priority Visa Service fee remains INR 63000/-

Contributed by Ms. Prema Radhakrishnan, Chairperson (PR)IAAI-National Council.

More islands in Andamans to be opened for tourists soon



The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago comprises 556 islands of which only 37 are inhabited. The Andaman and Nicobar Administration is planning to throw open three to four islands soon to attract more tourists. This will involve creation of infrastructure on these islands and will generate employment. Government have identified a few islands for development. A large number of tourist attractions exist across the Andaman and Nicobar Islands but Govt is planning to do more to attract tourists. As ecological issues are involved, Industrialization is not possible on these islands. Govt also wants to start night landing facilities at the Veer Savarkar International Airport at Port Blair. It is only an inter-national airport for namesake. Though 96 international flights overfly Port Blair every day, not a single one lands here. In the next six months, the Govt. hopes to have night landing facilities at Port Blair and stopovers for some international flights. This should boost tourism.

Paris experiments Free Public Transport to reduce severe smog

Authorities in Paris have taken the rare step of making public transport free for three days to reduce severe smog caused by unusually warm weather. The French capital region and 30 other departments have been on maximum pollution alert for several days. Landmark buildings like the Eiffel Tower were barely visible after a white fog settled over Paris. The capital's air quality has been one of the worst on record. A lack of wind, combined with cold nights followed by unseasonably warm days, has contributed to the worsening conditions. The smog has also affected neighboring Belgium, where officials have reduced the maximum speed limit allowed on main roads. The southern Wallonia region said it had also decided to make buses, trains and underground trains free until the pollution emergency was over.



Experts say levels of smog recorded in Paris this week have been similar to those of Beijing in China, one of the world's most polluted cities. As part of the emergency measures, commuters in Paris and neighbouring areas will not have to pay for public transport between Friday and Sunday. Bike sharing services are also free, as are one-hour sessions for electric car shares. The country's northern and eastern regions have been particularly hit by toxic pollutants. Several other French cities, including Reims, Rouen and Caen, announced they would follow Paris's example and make their public transport free over the weekend.

The Best 10 Airports in the World .. By Skytrax

The World Airport Awards are the most prestigious accolades for the airport industry, voted by customers in the largest, annual global airport customer satisfaction survey. The survey and awards process is totally independent and guaranteed free of any airport influence or interference in final results.

The World Airport Awards are based on 12.85 million customer nominations across 110 nationalities of air travellers, and included 410 airports worldwide. The survey evaluates customer satisfaction across 39 key performance indicators for airport service and product - from check-in, arrivals, transfers, shopping, security and immigration, through to departure at the gate.

Here are the results for 2014:

1. Singapore Changi Airport
2. Seoul (South Korea) Incheon International Airport
3. Munich Airport
4. Hong Kong International Airport
5. Amsterdam Schipol Airport
6. Tokyo Haneda International Airport
7. Beijing Capital International Airport
8. Zurich Airport
9. Vancouver International Airport
10. London Heathrow Airport

Air France-KLM, Delta Airlines offer Agents an Online feature chat via Trade Website



Air France-KLM and Delta Airlines are offering 'online chat' functionality to more than 300 travel agents via a dedicated trade website, www.agentconnect.biz. This website offers quick solutions and provides a vast range of tools and information. Trade partners can directly chat with the Air France KLM Delta agents from Monday through Saturday between 10:30 until 17:30 hrs without having to call. Travel agents can enroll on this website free of cost and access round the clock information on trade offers and latest promotions. The navigation system is simple and provides comprehensive information under four topics: My Space, Sales & Support, News & Promotions and Products & Services. Some exclusive services are also being offered via the website to select trade partners like Group booking tool and the Corporate Contract Kit. To keep the engagement attractive on the website, from time to time, Airline launched e-quizzes on various topics and offer our partners a chance to win a host of attractive prizes.

News at a Glance...

- Airport charges and User Development Fees (UDF) at Delhi and Mumbai will remain unchanged till May 31 as the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) is yet to complete the process for determining tariffs for the second control period starting April 1, 2014 and ending on March 31, 2019.
- Air India is to operate a daily flight on the Delhi-Leh-Delhi sector from April 1. The airline currently operates 3 flights a week on the sector.
- France will be opening offices for visa application & Campus France, the French higher education promotion agency, in Kochi by the year-end.
- Keys Hotels is all set to launch its first hotel in the pilgrim destination segment. Launching in March 2014, Keys Hotel Templetree at Shirdi will be Keys Hotel's 5th hotel in Maharashtra. Located in close proximity to the Sai Baba Temple complex, this 87-roomed property will offer the guests a wide range of business services including complimentary Wi-Fi. It will be the first hotel in Shirdi which offers rooms specially designed to the needs of differently-abled & Single women.
- AirAsia India received its first aircraft, an Airbus A320, on March 22 at Kamaraj airport, from the Airbus factory in Toulouse, France. The plane was greeted with a water cannon salute as it taxied on the runway upon arrival. Powered by CFM engines, the aircraft is configured in an all-economy layout with 180 seats. AirAsia India's fleet will be drawn from the 475 A320 family aircraft ordered by the AirAsia Group. To date, almost a third of the aircraft on order have already been delivered and are flying on AirAsia Group's operations out of Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila and now Chennai.
- ITC is setting up a luxury resort and spa at Mahabalipuram, a Heritage Tourism spot near Chennai. The resort, ITC Vilasa, is expected to be launched by mid of this year. It would come up 25 km from South of Chennai, overlooking the Bay of Bengal. ITC Vilasa will comprise 92 luxurious rooms, many of which are sea-facing, 12 exclusive ocean suites, a presidential villa and a dedicated honeymoon suite.
- InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has announced its entry into the newly-built development of Aerocity with the opening of Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport, a 265 room property. It is the second Holiday Inn hotel in the capital and ninth in the country.
- The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority has imposed a bar on levying User Development Fee (UDF) by Hyderabad International Airport effective April 1, 2014.

Lighter Moments

An Elderly woman called the emergency Police number on her cellphone to report that her car had been broken into .

She is hysterical as she explains her situation to the dispatcher, “they have stolen the stereo, the steering wheel, the brake pedal, & even the accelerator!” She cried.

The dispatcher said, “stay calm, an officer is on the way.” A few minutes later, the officer radios in “Disregard”. He says, “*She got in the back seat by mistake*”.

Thought for the Fortnight

“I don’t believe in taking right decisions... I take decisions & then make them right... So always believe in your ability & efforts”

— Ratan Tata

Forthcoming Events in April 2014

- April 1 : Mumbai : Tourism Poland's Roadshow
- April 2 : Bengaluru : Tourism Poland's Roadshow
- April 3 : Delhi : Tourism Poland's Roadshow
- April 3 : Kochi : Destination New South Wales & Tourism Queensland's Best of Australia Workshop
- April 4 : Mumbai : MICE Travel Mart + Luxury & Leisure Travel Mart
- April 8 : Ludhiana : Destination New South Wales & Tourism Queensland's Best of Australia Workshop
- April 8-9 : Delhi : Incredible India Travel Bazar
- April 10 : Guwahati : Destination New South Wales & Tourism Queensland's Best of Australia Workshop

Source : TravTalk

IAAI Director Board

1. Mr Biji Eapen, National President : Speedwings Travel & Cargo Pvt. Ltd., Kochi.
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We welcome your suggestions to improve this newsletter.

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