

E-visa for 43 nations, big boost for tourism

NEW DELHI: Giving the tourism sector a significant push, the government on Thursday launched the much-touted online visa facility for 43 countries including the US, Australia, Japan, Israel, Germany and Singapore. Travelers can apply for a visa from the comfort of their homes and receive a visa within 72 hours.

The electronic travel authorization (ETA) will be valid for 30 days and the visa fee has been fixed at \$62. Those traveling on leisure, short duration medical treatment, casual business visit or to meet friends and relatives will be eligible to apply. The facility will be made available at nine airports including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi, Goa, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram.

Assuring safe and secure tourism for foreign tourists, home minister Rajnath Singh said, "We want to promote tourism in the country in a big way. The contribution of tourism in GDP is approximately 7% and we want to double it."

Other countries included in the first phase are Russia, Ukraine, Brazil, UAE, Jordan, Kenya, Fiji, Finland, South Korea, Singapore, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Oman and the Philippines among others. "Currently, we have included 43 countries in the first phase. Barring those who are 'high-risk' countries, we will extend this facility to almost every country in the world phase-wise," Singh said.

Congratulating all those involved in the launch of e-visa system, tourism minister Mahesh Sharma said, "This is a historic day for tourism sector. The facility has opened the country to a vast world."

Tourism secretary Lalit Panwar described the launch of e-visa as a "red letter day" in tourism history. "It is going to change the tourism scenario soon," he said.

Highlighting the importance of the scheme, Indian Association of Tour Operators President Subhash Goyal said, "We have been demanding this facility for long. The launch of e-visa system for so many countries will boost the industry and we hope foreign tourist arrivals will reach the seven million mark this year."

EASY TRAVEL FOR FOREIGNERS

1 To facilitate nationals of 43 countries to travel to India for tourism, short-term medical treatment or casual visit and have a short stay of 30 days

2 Eligible foreign nationals may apply for Indian visa online without going to Indian mission and to pay visa fee online

3 Once application approved, applicant will receive email authorizing him to travel to India

4 A printout of this email is all foreign visitor needs to show to the immigration authorities in India, who will then stamp the entry into the country

5 Applicants may apply online minimum 4 days in advance of the date of arrival with a window of 30 days

6 Facility cannot be availed of more than twice in a year



7 Nine airports to have the facility; biometric details of the applicant will be mandatorily captured on arrival

8 TVoA enabled with ETA latest in a series of measures introduced by Modi regime to ease visa regime and encourage foreigners to visit India. Other initiatives include doing away with two months' gap between two consecutive visits, visa fee payment through debit/credit card, doing away with filling of embarkation card by outgoing foreigners and disembarkation card by incoming Indians