

the election verdict and hope the tourism industry in India will get its long-awaited due," said S M Shervani, President, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).

Some of the leading stalwarts of the industry highlighted that the new government has to foremost look into key issues hampering the growth of the industry.

According to Arjun Sharma, Managing Director, Le Passage to India, "A difficult visa and taxation policy, lack of infrastructure status to tourism, non-descript aviation policy, ineffective international promotion

Tourist Visa on Arrival (VoA) in April, 2014 registers a growth of 53.9% over April 2013

Recently Govt of India has extended Visa on Arrival (VoA) Scheme for South Korea for which Ministry has started receiving data w.e.f 15th April 2014. The following are the important highlights of VoAs issued during April, 2014.

During the month of April 2014, a total of 2,167 VoAs were issued under this Scheme as compared to 1,408 VoAs during the month of April 2013, registering a growth of 53.9%.

During January-April 2014, a total number of 8,008 VoAs were issued as compared to 7,152 VoA during corresponding period of 2013 registering a growth of 12.0%.

The number of VoAs issued under this scheme during April 2014 for nationals of the twelve countries were New Zealand (451), Japan (437), the Philippines (337), Singapore (263), Indonesia (251), S.Korea (193), Finland (105), Myanmar (80), Vietnam (28), Luxembourg (16), Cambodia (6) and Laos (0).

The number of VoAs issued under the Scheme, during January-April 2014 were Japan (1,974), New Zealand (1,627), the Philippines (1,187), Indonesia (1,180), Singapore (1,029), Finland (466), S. Korea (193), Myanmar (164), Vietnam (78), Luxembourg (58), Cambodia (47) and Laos (5).

During January-April 2014, the highest number of VoAs were issued at New Delhi airport (3,893) followed by Mumbai (1,617), Chennai (980), Kolkata (518), Bangalore (502), Kochi (225), Hyderabad (192) and Trivandrum (81).



Arjun Sharma, MD, Le Passage to India

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and marketing and non-friendly environment policy are some of the concerns of the tourism industry. One of the primary tasks for the incumbent government is to accept that tourism is not an elitist activity but a very serious revenue generation source. The policy makers must embrace the cause with a firm belief that tourism is the real game changer."

Sharma said that some of the critical areas where the new government should lay emphasis are introduction of e-visas with simplification and standardisation of the visa forms. "Along with e-visas, there has to be rationalisation of the visa fees which must not be based on reciprocity. There is an urgent need to recommence the international advertising campaign that has been discontinued since last two years. As a result, India has virtually no visibility in the international markets," he observed.

"At the infrastructure level, there is an urgent need to treat the hospitality sector differently from the real estate sector. Current policy includes infrastructure status to projects that are worth ₹200 crore and above. There is a need to bring it down to ₹25 crore to increase

domestic and value tourism. Taxes levied on tourism should be unified, rationalised and made globally competitive. Multiplicity of taxation at all levels kills the competitiveness of the industry. It is long term exercise where policy makers should be sensitised to the benefits of tourism especially to a country's economy," he added.

Sharma highlighted that India can create SEZs dedicated to the tourism industry. "This area could have



S M Shervani, President, FHRAI

We are encouraged by the outlook of BJP towards tourism. They had recognised tourism as one of the five pillars of the country's future growth in their manifesto. Therefore, the industry has great expectations from the new government.



Vijay Kesavan, CEO, Musafit.com

There is need for infrastructure enhancement, improved economy and uniform tax reforms to boost leisure and business travel within and outside the country. It's good to see that the rupee has gained strength in the last few days and we are hopeful that it will become stronger in the coming months, fuelling outbound travel and domestic aviation growth.

multiple hotels spread across all categories with facilities like golf courses, convention centres, aquariums, shopping centres and its own dedicated airport to attract direct flights from all over the world," noted Sharma.

Speaking on the same lines, Madhavan Menon, Managing Director, Thomas Cook (India) Ltd., said, "The new government's pro-tourism stance is indeed welcome and its leaders recognising the powerful role of tourism in employment generation and as a growth driver, augurs well for the sector as a whole. We are hopeful of prioritisation towards key issues like safety and infrastructure, and also

FTAs show a growth of 4.5% in March 2014 over March 2013

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in March 2014 saw a growth of 4.5 per cent over the same month of the previous year as per figures available with ministry of tourism. The FTAs in March 2014 stood at 6.69 lakh while 6.40 lakh foreign tourists visited the country in March 2013.

FTAs during the period January-March 2014 were 21.27 lakh with a growth of 4.9 per cent, as compared to the FTAs of 20.27 lakh with a growth of 3.0 per cent during January-March 2013 over the corresponding period of 2012.

Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism in terms of US\$ during January-March 2014 were US\$ 5.308 billion with a negative growth of 5.0 per cent, as compared to US\$ 5.587 billion with a growth of 12.4 per cent during January-March 2013 over the corresponding period of 2012.