

IATO Convention In Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka has been selected as the venue for the Outbound Convention organised by the Indian Association of Tour Operators. While welcoming IATO’s decision, the tourism industry hopes to further improve industry ties with India and China.

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) will host its Outbound Convention in

Sri Lanka. The Convention to be held this month, is expected to host over 200 representatives from the Indian travel industry. The Ministry of Tourism Development and Religious Affiars, Sri Lanka Tourism Board and Sri Lanka Convention Bureau have extended their full support to the event, which is being held in Sri Lanka for the first time.

Speaking on this occasion, Prema Cooray, Chairman, Sri Lanka Convention Bureau said, “This is a great opportunity for the Sri Lankan travel agents to meet with their counterparts in India and a chance for them to see our beautiful island.” He urged travel agents to work towards strengthening the important travel partnership between the two countries.

Tourist arrivals from India to Sri Lanka have increased from 125,000 in 2010 to 360,000 in 2016. It is a 60 per cent increase within a space of six years. The Government and industry aims to improve this number to 400,000 in 2017. Within the next few years the Government hopes to achieve a target of one million tourist arrivals from India.

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John Amaratunga, Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs, meanwhile called for a vigorous marketing campaign in India to promote Sri Lanka as tourism destination, especially targeting high-end tourists. The Minister stated that the renewed focus on Indian and Chinese tourism is due to these being strong emerging markets in the wake of declining tourist arrivals from Europe. He suggested that travel agents should tap into the Indian and Chinese wedding markets by promoting Sri Lanka as a unique destination for weddings. In December this year, a traditional Chinese wedding ceremony will be held in Sri Lanka for 100 couples from China. The ceremony will be attended by the President and Prime Minister.

Minister Amaratunga stated that to ease air traffic at the Katunayake International Airport, the Mattala International Airport will be opened soon. He revealed that

officials are also discussing the possibility of accommodating flights from India at the Ratmalana Airport. In conclusion, Minister John Amaratunga added that while a four per cent increase has been recorded in tourist arrivals this year, they expect the number of tourist arrivals to reach 2.5 million by the end of 2017.