

INDIA

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

India has now established a bilateral air bubble arrangement with Sri Lanka. Under this pact, special international flights can now operate between the two countries under restrictive protocols and conditions. Sri Lanka becomes the twenty-eighth country to enter into air bubble arrangement with India. Japan, Germany, Kuwait, Maldives, UAE, Bahrain, Netherlands, Nigeria, UK, and USA are some of the other countries to have signed the air bubble arrangement with India.

The Bureau of Immigration, Government of India has announced the restoration of Electronic Visa (e-Visa) under the categories of e-Business Visa, e-Medical visa, e-Medical Attendant visa, and e-Conference visa with immediate effect on 11 April for the nationals of 156 countries. However, e-Visa under Tourist category is presently suspended.

For details on eligibility and list of shortlisted countries, please [click here](#).

The Drugs Controller General of India has cleared the Russian made Sputnik V vaccine for emergency use. The government has now decided to fast-track emergency approval authorised by the World Health Organisation or that authorities in USA, Japan, UK, and across Europe are using for emergency use in India. The Chairman of the National Expert Committee on Vaccine Administration has expressed the intention of inviting vaccine makers like Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, and others to India.

A BOUNTYFUL HARVEST

This week, across India, people celebrated different harvest festivals and rang in the New Years as per the respective solar calendars. In Assam, Bohag Bihu began on 14 April that will continue till 20 April. Baisakhi, marking the beginning of the Hindu solar calendar is a festival with great religious significance for both Hindus and Sikhs. Sikhs observe this auspicious day as the birth of the Khalsa or the Sikh order under Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru. In Karnataka, Telengana, and Andhra Pradesh, people celebrated Ugadi that marks the first day of the Hindu month of Chaitra and beginning of the Hindu lunisolar calendar.

NO TIME TO BE NEGLIGENT

However, with a rise in the number of new cases reported every day, the government is taking measures to keep things under control. It is important that we follow all rules and guidelines, maintain social distancing, wear masks, use sanitizer, and regularly wash our hands to help overcome this difficult phase.

While domestic tourism continues with caution, people are also being extra careful about maintaining bio bubbles for safety and sanitisation. Pragmatic innovations across the travel industry continue to meet the requirements of travel in this new normal. This is also greatly adding to the confidence of travellers 65% of who are looking forward to travel for leisure and adventure purposes according to a January 2021 survey data shared by InterMiles.

As on 14 April 8 am, 11,11,79,578 people have been vaccinated in India. Maharashtra is leading the inoculation drive amongst the state.

For latest statistics and vaccination status, please [click here](#).

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka too has issued new tourism guidelines for international travel. Fully vaccinated foreign tourists do not have to quarantine on arrival in Sri Lanka provided they have a negative PCR test done within 96 hours before embarkation.

After arrival, guests will need to handover their vaccination certificate, duly completed health declaration form, and negative PCR certificate. All documents need to be in English or accompanied with an English translation. All travellers have to undergo another PCR test on arrival (Day One) from a Ministry of Health approved private sector laboratory or a state sector laboratory. Children below 12 years do not have to do PCR test on Day One. However, in case an accompanying adult tests positive, the child will also need to take the PCR test.

If the PCR test report is negative and the traveller has a vaccination certificate they can begin their travels immediately and do not have to quarantine. Travellers, who have not received vaccination or the doses are not complete and are staying for less than fourteen days, can travel to sites in a bio security bubble. They have to retake the PCR test day before their departure.

If you are staying for more than fourteen days, you will need to conduct a PCR test on the thirteenth day. If the report is negative, you can travel freely.

In a happy development, the island now has air travel bubble with India. The country reported one of the lowest fatality rates along with one of the highest recovery rates globally as per Sri Lankan Health Ministry data last updated on 13 April.

For latest statistics, Please [click here](#).

NEPAL

On 25 March, Nepal announced new travel guidelines for foreign tourists to give a boost to the travel and hospitality sector. Fully inoculated tourists (both doses complete) do not have to quarantine on arrival anymore provided they also have a negative PCR test from within 72 hours of boarding the flight.

On arrival, the guests need to immediately get another PCR test at their own cost and stay in isolation in the hotel until the results arrive. If the report is negative, the travellers can begin their tour immediately. In case of a positive result, they will need to continue isolation at the hotel on own cost until the report comes back positive.

Nepal has begun the second round of immunisation with the consignment of Chinese manufactured Vero Cell for frontline health workers, Nepali students studying in China, hotel staff and trekking agencies, people in advertising agencies, internet providers, and those working across the Sino-Nepali border. The shipment of Indian manufactured AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine is due to arrive later this month.

With a recovery rate of over 97%, Nepal is making good progress with its efforts to overcome the pandemic.

For latest figures and detailed statistics [click here](#)

BHUTAN

Bhutan's vaccination drive that began on 27 March 2021 has almost reached completion already, leaving behind countries like the United States, Israel, and many others. Though the vaccine had reached Bhutan in late January, the country decided to hold off on the roll out until 27 March to coincide with favourable dates according to Buddhist astrology.

As on 12 April, Bhutan had vaccinated a whopping 93% of its adult population making it the world's fastest immunisation programme. Apart from its small population, the country's success is also due to its committed citizen volunteers, and availability of established cold chain storage from earlier vaccination drives.

The government has excluded children from vaccination for now. Bhutan received its first lot of 150,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine as a goodwill gesture from India back in January.

The Bhutanese borders, however, remain monitored and closed to tourists until further notice.

Please [click here](#) for the latest updates.

[Click here](#) to read more on our proposed post-Covid preparations.