

# To increase tourist inflows, Govt to roll back e-visa fee

It was hiked from \$50 to \$80 for most nations in June

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The Tourism Ministry plans to soon roll back the increase in e-visa fees introduced in June.

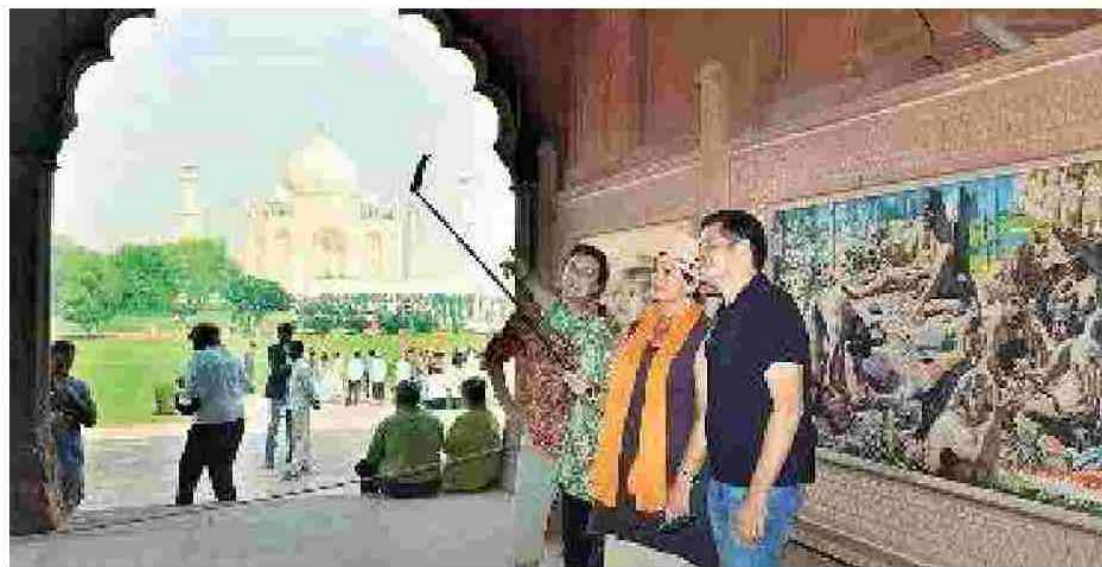
Part of the reason for the proposed move is the Centre's keenness to ensure that its target of doubling the arrival of foreign tourists by 2020 is achieved.

"So far, we have done a great job by introducing e-visa.

However, all the gains that we have achieved from this, I think we are negating some of those by increasing the e-visa fee," said Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

He added that some markets, especially group travels, tend to be very sensitive to visa fees. In a competitive market scenario, there is a possibility that tourists would choose the cheapest option.

In June, India increased the e-visa fee for most countries to \$80. Since 2015, it had been



India expects to double the number of foreign tourists by 2020

\$50. On the other hand, the e-visa fee for the US and the UK — from where the highest number of tourists travel to

India — was increased to \$100.

"When the e-visa fee of our neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia

and Thailand is already much lower than ours, the hike would have a negative impact on foreign tourists arrivals in the country," said Pronab Sarkar, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators. He added that it gives a message that the country does not intend to welcome tourists.

Also, there are countries which give various incentives to attract more tourists such as no e-visa fee for certain months or no e-visa fee for those below 18 years travelling with parents, Sarkar added.