

Mumbai terror could further hit Goa tourism

Tourism in Goa, already reeling under the global meltdown, will further be hit in the wake of the [Mumbai](#) terror attacks, Travel and Tourism Association of Goa (TTAG) president Ralph de Souza said Sunday.

The Mumbai tragedy would trigger a drop in the Free of Itinerary (FIT) category of travellers, which account for 50 percent of Goa's tourist arrivals, de Souza told IANS Saturday. Chartered tours and scheduled flight operators account for the other 50 percent. FITs are those who follow no fixed travel schedule.

'Most FITs travel around India and then use Mumbai as the point from where they enter Goa. With Mumbai now insecure, this number is likely to fall drastically,' he said.

De Souza said that as a result of the global meltdown, travel agencies have not been able to get bookings for the months of January and February.

'These are the months all tour operators look forward to. There have been virtually no bookings as of now,' he said, adding that tours to Goa were generally booked months in advance.

Recent travel advisories issued by France, the US, Britain and Australia had also hurt tourism prospects, he added.

Ernst Dias, vice president of Sita travels, a leading travel agency and chartered tour handler, said there had been several cancellations of tour packages from Russia and Ukraine.

Considering the current season lost, tour operators say that it is time to work from the bottom up and gear up for the years ahead.

'We have to win the confidence of the tourists all over again. There have been recent incidents, which have shown Goa in poor light. We need to improve Goa's image in the international market,' de Souza said.

The TTAG expressed dissatisfaction at the manner in which the Goa government has treated the tourism industry though it contributes nearly half of the total revenue.

'The industry earns nearly Rs.1,500 crore revenue for the government but the budgetary allocation for the tourism sector is only Rs.35 crore,' de Souza said, urging the government to pay more attention to the sector.

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