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NITI Aayog Roadmap to Unlock India's Tourism and Hospitality Sector

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NITI Aayog Roadmap to Unlock India's Tourism and Hospitality Sector

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WHY IN NEWS

On June 30, 2026, NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Tourism released the report “Unlocking Growth in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector” at a National Workshop in New Delhi, arguing that India’s tourism challenge is not weak demand but weak enabling conditions.

The report, framed within the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision and prepared in consultation with State Governments and industry, shifts the policy lens from demand generation to easing the regulatory and procedural friction that holds the sector back.

CENTRAL FINDING: THE PROBLEM IS NOT DEMAND

The core argument of the report is that India does not suffer from a tourism demand deficit. Instead, growth is throttled by **enabling conditions**, that is, **regulatory complexity and procedural inefficiency**, including cumbersome visa regimes, a maze of licences for hotels and restaurants, and fragmented state-level clearances.

The Economic Weight of Tourism

The sector is a major driver of output and employment, as the data below shows.

INDICATOR (FY24)	VALUE
Contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	About Rs 15.73 lakh crore
Share of GDP	About 5.22%
Employment supported	About 84.6 million jobs

The Visa Openness Gap

India's visa accessibility **lags its regional competitors.** Ujjiyari Current Affairs · ujjiyari.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS

METRIC	VALUE
India's UN Tourism Visa Openness Index score	38.14
Global average	About 40
Countries ahead of India	Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka

India offers visa-free entry only to Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, and Visa-on-Arrival to a small set of nationalities, while the e-visa, though covering many countries, is constrained by category complexity, short stays and annual caps.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The report proposes a package of “ease of travel” and “ease of doing business (<https://ujjiyari.com/terms/ease-of-doing-business/>)” reforms.

- **90-day multiple-entry Tourist Visa-on-Arrival** for select countries, available at designated airports and seaports without prior application.
- **Collapsing multiple e-visa sub-categories** into broad-purpose visas (tourism, business, short-term medical, short-term student and dependents).
- **A single health trade licence and a single liquor licence** for hotels, replacing multiple overlapping permits.
- **Removing the Eating House Licence** requirement for food and beverage operations.

ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

Because **tourism is largely a State subject**, the success of these reforms depends on **cooperative federalism** (<https://ujjiyari.com/terms/cooperative-federalism/>). The Centre can rationalise visas and set model frameworks, but licensing, land, and local clearances rest with States and municipalities. A single-window, single-licence architecture will need State buy-in through the GST Council-style consensus model or model State legislation.

The way forward lies in treating regulatory simplification as infrastructure. Improving India's Visa Openness Index score toward and beyond the global average, digitising licences, and benchmarking against Thailand and Malaysia can convert India's deep cultural and natural endowments into higher foreign tourist arrivals, foreign exchange earnings and jobs, especially for youth and women in the hospitality economy.

UPSC RELEVANCE

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GS Paper 3: Indian economy, growth and employment; infrastructure and services sector; mobilisation of resources.

GS Paper 2: Government policies and interventions; issues arising from the federal structure (tourism as a State subject); functioning of NITI Aayog.

Prelims pointers:

- Report title: “Unlocking Growth in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector” (NITI Aayog and Ministry of Tourism, June 30, 2026).
- India’s UN Tourism Visa Openness Index score: 38.14, below the global average of about 40.
- Tourism contributed about Rs 15.73 lakh crore (about 5.22% of GDP) and about 84.6 million jobs in FY24.
- Recommendation: 90-day multiple-entry Tourist Visa-on-Arrival for select countries.
- Single health trade licence, single liquor licence, and removal of Eating House Licence for hotels and F&B.

Mains question: “India’s tourism sector suffers not from a shortage of demand but from a deficit of enabling conditions.” Examine this proposition with reference to the recent NITI Aayog roadmap. (15 marks, 250 words)

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Report: “Unlocking Growth in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector”, by NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Tourism.

Released: June 30, 2026, at a National Workshop in New Delhi.

Central finding: India’s constraint is enabling conditions (regulatory complexity, procedural inefficiency), not weak demand.

Visa reform: 90-day multiple-entry Tourist Visa-on-Arrival for select countries; broad-purpose e-visa categories.

Licensing reform: single health trade licence and single liquor licence for hotels; removal of the Eating House Licence.

Economic weight (FY24): about Rs 15.73 lakh crore (about 5.22% of GDP) and about 84.6 million jobs.

Visa Openness Index: India scored 38.14, below the global average of about 40, trailing Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

Federal note: Tourism is largely a State subject, so cooperative federalism (<https://ujjari.com/terms/federalism/>) is essential for implementation.

Sources: *NITI Aayog* (<https://www.niti.gov.in/>), *Ministry of Tourism* (<https://tourism.gov.in/>), *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in/>)

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