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Pay less to fly to Agra from Allahabad, Varanasi

TNN | Oct 21, 2014, 10.07PM IST

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Mathura/Vrindavan: Pilgrims and tourists wanting to fly to Agra from Lucknow, Allahabad and Varanasi will soon be able to avail of cheaper airfares, thanks to the UP government. This will also be a blessing to those who wish to visit the holy cities of Mathura and Vrindavan.

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced drastic reduction in VAT on aviation fuel to promote air travel to and from Agra to Lucknow, Varanasi and Allahabad. Against 22% VAT, airlines will now have to pay only 4% on aviation fuel at Agra's Kheria airport.

"This initiative will particularly benefit NRIs and elderly pilgrims who can land at Agra and reach Mathura within an hour-and-a-half by road," said Mathura resident Kamal Kant, a businessman. It will also come as a boost to tourism, said sources, as the state is trying to promote a new tourism arc spanning Agra, Allahabad and Varanasi as part of the Buddhist circuit. Mathura museum, it was pointed out, has the biggest collection of Buddha statues which most Buddhists want to see.

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Indications are that of the 18 companies which had entered the fray, the North East Flight Company will begin operations early November. The state government has assured the companies guaranteed 30% booking of seats in each flight for its bureaucrats and politicians to make the service viable.

Rajiv Tiwari, president of the Federation of Travel Agents of India, said, "The profile of tourism in the Braj region is all set to change as air travel will not only becoming affordable but logically practical. The airport has enough space for parking of Boeings. The ILS and night vision cameras are in place. Waiver in parking charges will prove attractive. The 18% saving on fuel is a huge bait. Normally airlines spend around 45% on fuel, if they can save 18%, I think we should see a queue soon at the airport in Agra."

Tiwari said the Akhilesh government was also seriously pursuing the new air terminal project and has already announced increased compensation to farmers whose land is to be acquired for the new facility at Dhanuali village. The state government is keen on bolstering tourism in the Braj sector for which a number of schemes are on the anvil.

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