

## Thailand's single-visa plan to attract seamless travel in ASEAN

- A Monitor Report

Date: 17 April, 2024



Bangkok : Thailand is pushing an initiative for a joint-visa programme with Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar and Vietnam-countries which together hosted about 70 million tourists last year as Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin ramps up initiatives to attract more long-haul and high-spending travellers.

Srettha, who is pledged to elevate Thailand's status as a tourism hotspot into an aviation and logistics hub, has discussed the Schengen-type visa idea with his counterparts, the aforementioned countries, in recent months. The facility is meant to ensure seamless mobility for travellers among the six neighbouring countries.

With most leaders positively responding to the single-visa concept, tourism-reliant Thailand aims to generate more revenue per traveller.

The six Southeast Asian nations reported a combined 70 million foreign tourist arrivals in 2023, according to reports. Thailand and Malaysia accounted for more than half of the tally, generating about USD 48 billion in tourism revenue.

The industry has served the country well, accounting for about 20 per cent of total jobs and making up about 12 per cent to the nation's USD 500 billion economy.

Industry insiders said, as per reports, the visa validity will need to be extended to 90 days from the usual 30-day period to make it attractive.

Srettha's administration has set a goal of attracting 80 million tourists by 2027. Since taking power about seven months ago, his government has signed a reciprocal visa waiver deal with China-Thailand's largest market for tourists-and offered temporary visa waivers for travellers from India, Taiwan and Kazakhstan. It is also mulling a plan to open casinos inside large entertainment complexes and event-based tourism will help the country generate more revenue.

For a joint visa scheme, approvals have to be coordinated and the absence of standard immigration criteria among participating nations unlike the European Union can pose challenges, said stakeholders.