

CHINA AND INDIA VISIT

Statement by Minister for Tourism

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Tourism) [9.02 am]: I am pleased to present details of my mission to China and India from 20 to 26 January 2024. The main purpose of the mission was to strengthen tourism and trade ties and to highlight our government's commitment to securing direct flights with both regions. It was an incredibly busy, but incredibly productive, mission.

On 20 January, we celebrated the nineteenth new or resumed flight between Western Australia and the world since borders reopened, with the recommencement of China Eastern Airlines' services between Perth and Shanghai. The service is running seasonally over the Chinese New Year holiday period, and we are working with China Eastern towards a year-round service. I travelled to Shanghai, where I met with Tongcheng Travel to discuss the China market, current travel trends and opportunities to promote Western Australia to Chinese tourists.

From there I travelled to Delhi, India, where I met with Air India and IndiGo airlines to discuss direct flights between Perth and India. Everyone agrees with the economic case for direct flights. Our two nations are closely linked through trade, tourism opportunities and our growing Indian diaspora. At present, Air India and IndiGo, like many airlines, are facing aircraft supply constraints that are impacting their ability to expand. We will continue working with these airlines and pursuing every opportunity for aviation connections. In Delhi, I also met with representatives from the Indian mining, primary industries and innovation sectors, as well as with key travel market and tourism destination partners. The priority was to showcase WA as a key investment destination and emphasise our desire to build stronger trade and tourism connections. I had a meeting with the chairman of the Tata Group—an Indian multinational conglomerate with a huge global footprint—and discussed a range of opportunities our government is keen to pursue, including green steel, the electric vehicle supply chain, direct flights and tourism infrastructure.

In Chennai, I met with the Minister for Youth Welfare and Sports Development to discuss skills exchanges and major sporting event opportunities. I also met the Minister for Information Technology and Digital Services to launch the innovation exchange statement. The statement was spearheaded by Minister Dawson and explores knowledge-sharing between innovators, entrepreneurs and the brightest students in India and Western Australia. Almost every day I spoke to local media about investment opportunities in WA and our aim to grow trade and tourism connections. This resulted in close to 200 local media reports online and in respected local publications such as the Press Trust of India, *The New Indian Express*, Asian News International, the *New Delhi Times*, *The Economic Times* and the business newspaper *Mint*.

Our government has proven our longstanding commitment to both China and India; previous Premiers and quite a few of my ministerial colleagues have been fortunate to visit. My mission was yet another demonstration of our deep commitment to those countries and further strengthened our state's reputation as a premier destination to visit, study, work and do business.

I table a copy of my itinerary.

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