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SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

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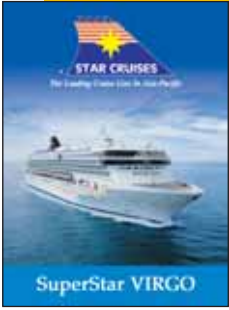
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# Visa free entry to the Philippines

In what can be termed as providing a major fillip to the Visit Philippines Year 2015, the Philippines is planning to lift visa requirements for Indian and Chinese tourists.

**PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA**

Indians may soon require no visa to go to the Philippines. Secretary of Tourism (Philippines), **Ramon R Jimenez, Jr** who was recently in India, talked about the fact that the country is exploring the possibility of lifting visa requirements for Indians on an experimental basis for 2015-16. Speaking to **TRAVTALK**, **R Glen Agustin**, Chief, Tourism Operations Officer, India Market Development Group, Philippine Department of Tourism, says, "The Secretary has announced that he has recommended to the President, Benigno Simeon C. Aquino, III to extend a visa free facility for Indian as well as Chinese tourists



(From Left) Benito C Bengzon, Jr, Undersecretary, Tourism Development, the Philippines, and Ramon R Jimenez, Jr, Secretary of Tourism, the Philippines, at the launch of taxis branded with the Tourism Philippines slogan, 'It's more Fun in the Philippines', in New Delhi

for 2015 to 2016. He mentioned that his recommendation may be decided upon before the end of the first quarter this year. If approved, this facility is going to be in effect from 2015 up to the end of 2016. This is being done to support the Visit Philippines Year 2015 and to provide additional arrivals from China (the number 4 tourist source market with more than 1.3 billion population) and India (the number 13 tourist source market with more than 1.2 billion population) to help reach the goal of 10 million tourists by 2016."  **R Glen Agustin**

For Minister's interview, see page 36 ▶

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# New govt, old demands, now what...

With the Union Budget just round the corner, **TRAVTALK** spoke to the industry leaders. Industry status for tourism and eliminating service tax topped the priority list of stakeholders.

**TT BUREAU**

This government is very dynamic and we want to be with them. But there is also a strong need for infrastructure. We, the stakeholders (who are in a position to invest), must be encouraged to invest. There has to be a cut in taxes, excise duty and customs duties. Secondly, service tax should be collected by the airlines itself. It should be inclusive of all the commissions that the airlines are paying to people rather than asking the airline to bill the agent and then the agent bills the customer. It should be simplified.



**Sunil Kumar**

Acting President, TAAI and India Travel Award Winner



This year's budget will mark a change with the Make in India policy. Tourism holds greater potential for job creation even with low investments and its impact can reach distant locations, it can boost foreign exchange earnings. We are confident our long demand for extending Export Status to tourism will get priority consideration. We are confident multiple taxation part will be done away in the budget.



**Subhash Goyal**

President IATO and India Travel Award Winner

Contd. on page 20 ▶

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## Reinventing TAAI in Bali this March

About 800 delegates are expected to attend the TAAI Convention. A new initiative of the TAAI-Preferred Partner Programme will also be unveiled at this Convention.



MEGHA PAUL

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) themed 'Reflections-Redefining Relevance', will

TAAI, said, "We are expecting around 800 delegates at the Convention at The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali in Indonesia. The three-day TAAI convention will be packed with presentations and business

in Indonesia'. Thus, the TAAI Convention is taking place at an apt time. Also, Indonesia has faced numerous adversities in the past and has bounced back strongly. Our convention destination also

### Convention Details

▶ B2B meetings will be held on the second and third day

▶ Around 50 table-tops will be arranged for these

▶ The agents and tour companies from Indonesia who engage in inbound business with India will be invited for the Expo, and so will national tourism boards, airlines, hotels, etc

▶ Around 350 rooms have been booked at two beach hotels, namely – The Westin Resort Nusa Dua and the Laguna Nusa Dua - each adjacent to the Bali International Convention Centre



George Kutty, Sunil Kumar, Harmandeep Singh Anand and Rajan Sehgal

focus on inspiring the delegates to prepare themselves to sustain success in a fast-changing environment.

sessions, partnerships, B2B Exhibition which is popularly known as India Travel & Tourism Expo (ITTE), and a host of other activities. We are thrilled that recently Government of India has launched the 'Festival of India'

gets reflected seamlessly with our theme."

He added, "B2B meetings will be held on the second and third days. Around 50 table-tops

Contd. on page 12 ▶

Addressing the media in Delhi at Royal Plaza, **Sunil Kumar**, Acting President,

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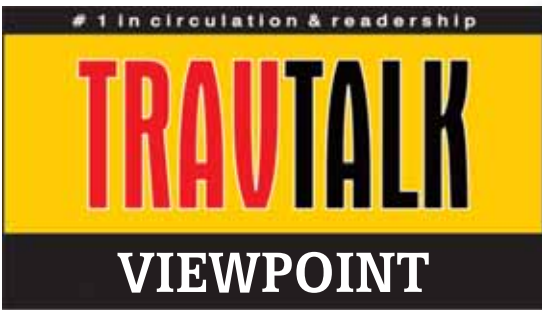
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# Air passenger growth up by 9.7%

The Ministry of Civil Aviation recently analysed the traffic data submitted by various domestic airlines for Dec 2014 which showed that there has been a growth of 9.7% in passenger numbers. TRAVTALK reports...

## Eventful beginning to the year 2015

What's on our mind? Well, the travel industry in India has had its plate full this month, what with the various tourism fairs and tourism initiatives that have been lined up for the entire month. The March calendar is also full for the travel and hospitality fraternity as there are some very important events scheduled next month.

But what takes centre stage this March is of course the Union Budget. This is one event that everyone in the industry has been waiting for with baited breath. With the Narendra Modi-led government coming across as tourism-friendly, there is a lot of hope riding on them. Industry status for tourism is the need of the hour and one can only hope that this Budget helps attain this objective.

Realising the importance of tourism, states too have decided to give it the necessary impetus and now almost all states are coming up with tourism marts of their own. There is the UP Tourism Mart this month and talks are also on for a Jammu & Kashmir Travel Mart in April. UP has been harping about promoting the state beyond Taj Mahal.

Kerala is also launching Visit Kerala 2015 in April in a bid to woo both domestic and international tourists.

While new states are all wanting to make a foray in the travel mart scenario, we are yet to hear from the more seasoned players like Goa and Gujarat who are yet to announce their tourism fairs. We hope to hear soon from them on this.

The importance of tourism was also reflected at the stalls in FITUR, Spain, recently. India was shining indeed at this tourism fair as states like Goa and Kerala made their presence felt.

Indian travellers are also being wooed by various destinations as they all want a piece of the pie and why not; the great Indian traveller has evolved a lot and doesn't mind splurging while on a holiday. With the average spend of Indian tourists growing rapidly; NTOs are making sure they leave no stone unturned to lure them.

2015 sure has begun on a good note and we hope that the good times stay on.

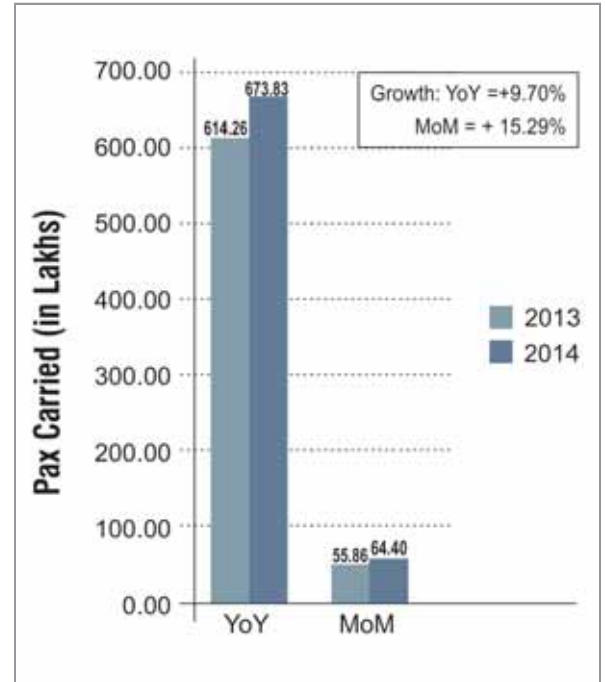


### Performance of domestic airlines for the year 2014

Traffic data submitted by various domestic airlines has been analysed for the month of December 2014. Following are the salient features:

#### Passenger Growth

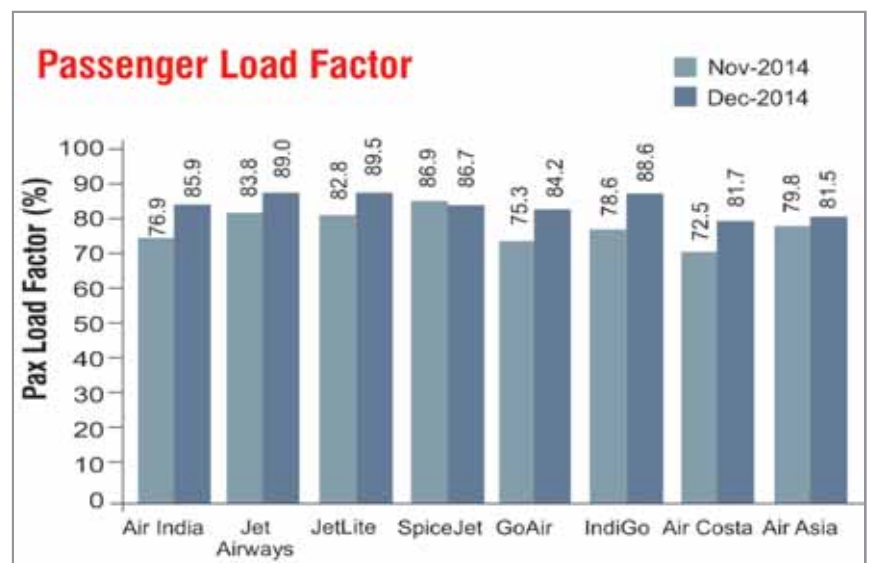
Passengers carried by domestic airlines during Jan-Dec 2014 were 673.83 lakhs as against 614.25 lakhs during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering a growth of 9.70%



### Total domestic passenger carried by scheduled domestic airlines (Year 2014)

Month & Year	Air India (Domestic)	Private Carriers	Total Domestic	Percentage Share	
				Private Carriers	Air India
January	10.19	41.28	51.47	80.2	19.8
February	9.62	39.84	49.46	80.5	19.5
March	10.81	42.07	52.88	79.6	20.4

▲ The passenger load factor of various scheduled domestic airlines in Dec 2014 are as follows...



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# Lower ATF taxes to fuel connectivity

The PHD-GMR Aviation Summit 2015 'Wings for Indian Aviation' was recently held in New Delhi. The conclave helped the participants to share their progressive practices, understand development and discuss practical & financially viable solutions.

**PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA**

The summit recommended drastic VAT cuts on ATF from average rate of 22% to less than 5%, arguing that states that have done so, have witnessed immediate connectivity and traffic impact of this incentive.

A white paper was released on the occasion on 'Developing Regional & Remote Connectivity' by Ambassador of Turkey to India **Burak Akcapar**, Joint Secretary Ministry of Civil Aviation **Balwinder Singh Bhullar**, Vice President, PHD Chamber **Gopal Jiwrajka**, Secretary, Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India **Alok Shekhar**, Chairman & Co-Chairman, Civil Aviation Committee, PHD Chamber **K Narayana Rao** and **Bhupesh Joshi**.

The white paper demanded that lowering ATF taxes would fuel connectivity to regional air and cargo hubs and increase their traffic drastically. The white paper cites that with a reduction of VAT on ATF from 20% to 4%, Chhattisgarh has seen almost 100% increase in air connectivity. West Bengal's incentive has led to SpiceJet starting an international connection from Bagdogra to Kathmandu; and Bagdogra has clocked a 64% year-on-year rise in passenger traffic in April-May FY15 as the number of flights has grown by 37% compared to previous year. Likewise, the connectivity and the air traffic was also increased substantially in states such as Goa, MP and Jharkhand as these respectively curtailed VAT on ATF from 22%, 23%, and 20% to 12.5%, 5% and 4%. Jiwrajka pointed out that the other states should follow the suit and the central government can undertake

persuasive initiatives and efforts. Burak Akcapar offered Turkey's expertise on Civil Aviation to India in any respect to help become its 'Make in India' partner emphasizing that whatever Turkey is producing, it can do in India with her Indian counterparts.

Bhullar in his remarks said that the government would consider the proposals of the industry for the growth

of civil aviation sector as and when the time comes.

In his address, K Narayana Rao said, "PHD Chamber feels to make the important aspect of regional and remote air connectivity, all the stakeholders in the sector such as centre and state governments, airports, regional airlines should work together with great coordination so that this sector is taken to the desired height."



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## Key Points

▶ The summit recommended drastic VAT cuts on ATF from average rate of 22% to less than 5%

▶ The white paper on 'Developing Regional & Remote Connectivity' demanded that lowering ATF taxes would fuel connectivity to regional air and cargo hubs and increase their traffic drastically



# Wah Taj! But there's more to UP than this

Seeking to boost tourist inflow and tourism revenue, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government is keen to explore the potential of Historical, Rural, Cultural, Religious, Wellness, Ecological, Ravine and Motor Sports, Water Sports, and Heritage Tourism, apart from the already famous Taj Mahal, Amrit Abhijat, Secretary Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh says.



MEGHA PAUL

## 'Agra Darshan' bus

According to Amrit Abhijat, Secretary Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh, the focus of the government is now on pro-poor tourism. The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to launch a bus service named 'Agra Darshan' in the city soon. The buses will be complemented with radio taxis and other tourism-friendly travel apparatus. Talking about UP government's plan,

he said, "As a part of this tourism plan, the Holipura and Kachhpura villages of Agra will be transformed into tourist-friendly villages, where tourists can catch a glimpse of the rural life in Braj region. Previously, Barara was designated as a tourist village and it still attracts tourists from across the world. The government is also planning to designate former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's ancestral village Bateswar as a tourist village."



would accompany the tourists and provide information about the historical buildings.

## Agra beyond Taj

Uttar Pradesh Tourism has recently promoted the 'Heritage Arc of Uttar Pradesh' via its forward looking initiatives. The Heritage Arc of Uttar Pradesh traverses great epochs of Indian history, heritage, art, culture, myriad cuisine and spiritual traditions and runs across the heart of the state covering three very distinct regions- Agra, Lucknow, Varanasi. To develop the Heritage Arc and welcome more tourists to enjoy the marvels that the 'City of Taj' has to offer, the Agra Development Authority is developing an 'Inner Ring Road'. It is a 5 km route from Kuberpur to Fatehabad Road that will connect the Yamuna Expressway to the Taj and will cut the travel time drastically letting tourists reach the Taj directly without any hassles. A Rs. 167 Crore Project for the development of Tajganj has also been started with the help of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

## Connectivity

In a bid to attract more tourists to Agra and Varanasi, the Uttar Pradesh government has slashed the value added tax (VAT) on jet fuel (aviation turbine fuel or ATF) from 21 percent to four percent to all flights coming to these two cities. According to Abhijaat, a government order has already been issued. He said this had been done essentially to encourage more and more flights to these destinations. "The idea is to encourage more and more chartered flights, private air carriers to start operations to these tourist hotspots," Abhijaat added. Any plane, other than defence aircraft, at these twin cities would now on be given a VAT exemption of 17 per cent. The VAT exemption would be for all private carriers, daily fliers and charter flights. The tourism sector had been demanding slashing of the VAT for a long time.

## Cycle tours

On the lines of Berlin and London, Uttar Pradesh Tourism will launch a new scheme called 'Lucknow by cycle' for visitors and later this will be unveiled in heritage cities of Varanasi and Agra. "Under the scheme to be launched by the end of this month, cycle will be provided on rent to tourists," Abhijat revealed. He said that in many countries like China, cycles are available on rent at local level in a few cities to visit tourist spots. "Cycles are also available for city

tours in Berlin, Munich in Germany, Amsterdam and London. On similar lines, UP tourism is launching 'Lucknow by cycle'," he revealed. Keeping in view the popularity of heritage walk, it has been decided to make cycle tour its part. He said that in the first phase eight geared cycles would be provided by UP tourism on a rent of Rs 200. The tour which will start from Residency will end at Shahnajaf Imambara via Chotta and Bara Imambaras, he affirmed. Abhijat said a guide



“The focus of the government is now on pro-poor tourism. The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to launch a bus service named 'Agra Darshan' in the city soon

**Amrit Abhijat**  
Secretary Tourism  
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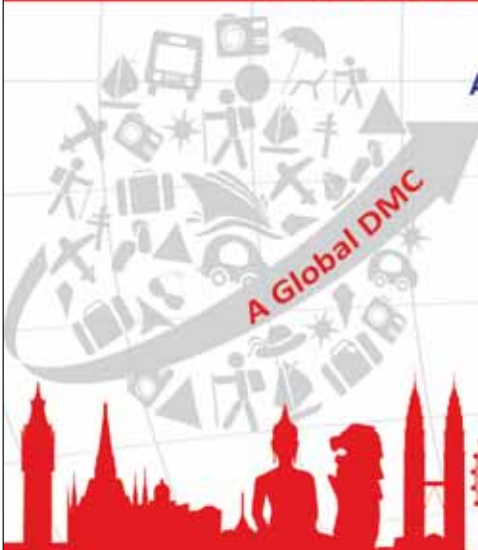
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# Uttar Pradesh pushes tourism religiously

The state government's plan to develop a 'heritage arch' involving Agra, Lucknow and Varanasi on the lines of 'Agra-Jaipur-Delhi triangle' will be a welcome move, says Sunil C. Gupta, Chairman, UP Chapter, IATO.

MEGHA PAUL

Stressing on the importance of religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh, **Sunil C. Gupta**, Chairman, Uttar Pradesh Chapter, IATO said, "Religious tourism plays a very significant role in the state with huge festivals and popular temples at

Travel Bureau is the largest ground operator in UP with our own infrastructure to cater to over 2000 visitors every day. Our fleet has over 35 coaches and a team of over 200 dedicated professionals. About 15 per cent of our clients are inbound travellers and 85 per cent are domestic tourists."

The Kumbh Mela at Allahabad had a record participation of over 120 million. Recently Motor Car Rally was organised from Lion Safari at Etawah to Chambal near Agra. The UP government's new project of Heritage Arch to develop Agra/Lucknow /Varanasi would be a game changer for the industry."

fuel on Agra-Lucknow route from 21 per cent to four per cent after getting it passed by the Cabinet. In case this is implemented, there will be direct impact on the arrivals in the state, the UP Chapter Chairman adhered. Currently the UP Chapter has 87 members. Around 20 new members have joined recently. The chapter expects to cross 100 members within this year, he further added.

Gupta opined, "The UP Government has taken many initiatives to promote tourism.

The government also plans to slash VAT on aviation

## Going the Religious Way

- ❖ Religious tourism plays a very significant role in the state with huge festivals and popular temples at Mathura, Ayodhya, Varanasi and Allahabad
- ❖ The Buddhist trail, including Sarnath, Kushinagar, Kapilavastu, Sankasia and Sravasti in UP attract tourists from all over the world and large numbers from South East/Far East and neighboring countries
- ❖ The segment will now further get a boost due to the implementation of the eVoA



Sunil C. Gupta  
Chairman  
Uttar Pradesh Chapter, IATO

The UP government's new project of Heritage Arch to develop Agra/Lucknow/Varanasi would be a game changer for the industry

Mathura, Ayodhya, Varanasi and Allahabad. The Buddhist trail, including Sarnath, Kushinagar, Kapilavastu, Sankasia and Sravasti in UP attract tourists from all over the world and large numbers from South East/Far East and neighboring countries." The segment will now further get a boost due to the implementation of the eVoA, Gupta affirmed. Now with eVoA, travellers can plan their trips within a short notice. The inbound tourists coming to Delhi can easily take a side trip to Agra/Mathura and to Varanasi since it has good number of flight connections as well, he added.

Talking about his company, he revealed, "Our company

## On the Anvil

▶ The government also plans to slash VAT on aviation fuel on Agra-Lucknow route from 21 per cent to four per cent after getting it passed by the Cabinet

▶ In case this is implemented, there will be direct impact on the arrivals in the state



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# Mauritius bets big on Indian travellers

With new activities such as Sea Kart and Rum Tasting on the rise with its already vast range of options, it is no wonder that the beautiful and spotless island of Mauritius is gaining popularity amongst Indian travellers. India is no wonder on the priority list of the tourism board as they expect arrivals to shoot up.



In 2015, their endeavour remains to increase Indian footfalls from adventure, honeymoon and family segments. Also, there will be a special focus on golf, weddings and MICE movements.

"India is one of the most important tourism source markets for Mauritius," said



Blue Bay Beach, Mauritius

## Aims and objectives

▶ The primary objective will be to increase awareness and knowledge of Mauritius as a tourist destination among Indian travel representatives

▶ Its marketing activities in 2015 will revolve around luxury, destination weddings, MICE, adventure activities and golf

**Vivek Anand**, Country Manager, MTPA, India. "Apart from new visitors, we aim to get repeat travellers to the destination. Some activities such as Sea Kart and Rum Tasting are relatively new experiences that this pristine island has on offer. Our marketing activities in 2015 will revolve around luxury, destination weddings, MICE, adventure activities and golf," he added.

According to figures shared by Mauritius Tourist Promotion Authority (MTPA), Mauritius had 61,200 Indian

tourist arrivals in 2014 which is an increase of nearly 7% as compared to 2013. He said, "We will be re-launching our travel agents programme soon. While the primary objective will be to increase awareness and knowledge of Mauritius as a tourist destination among Indian travel representatives, it will also look at boosting an agent's base by adding Mauritius to the array of destinations he can promote."

Speaking on the subject, **Vijaye Haulder**, Deputy

Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority said, "Considering that OM Tourism was appointed as a representative office from March 2014, the growth from March to December is 9% as compared to the corresponding period in 2013."

Haulder added, "The rise in numbers is attributed to a focussed strategy by the OM Tourism team which has created awareness and positioned Mauritius as a round-the-year destination. Some initiatives undertaken in 2014

## Experts Talk



"The rise in numbers is attributed to a focussed strategy by the OM Tourism team which has created awareness and positioned Mauritius as a round-the-year destination

**Vijaye Haulder**  
Deputy Director, MTPA

"India is one of the most important tourism source markets for Mauritius... Our activities in 2015 will revolve around luxury, destination weddings, MICE, adventure activities and golf

**Vivek Anand**  
Country Manager, MTPA



were a multi-city roadshow, trade and media familiarisation trips and agents seminars. MTPA India showed a consistent presence in travel &

wedding shows, golf and polo events. We have a clear vision in mind and are looking forward to a better 2015."



## Nepal Airlines (RA) reintroduces flights from Delhi



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FLT NO.	SECTOR	TIME	A/C	OPERATING DAYS	FLT NO.	SECTOR	TIME	A/C	OPERATING DAYS	FLT NO.	SECTOR	TIME	A/C	OPERATING DAYS
205	KTM/DEL	0800/0940	A320-200	1, 3, 5 and 7	205	KTM/DEL	0800/0940	A320-200	1, 3, 5 and 7	205	KTM/DEL	0800/0940	A320-200	Daily
206	DEL/KTM	1040/1240	A320-200	1, 3, 5 and 7	206	DEL/KTM	1040/1240	A320-200	1, 3, 5 and 7	206	DEL/KTM	1040/1240	A320-200	Daily
					217	KTM/DEL	1500/1640	B757-200	2, 4 and 6	217	KTM/DEL	1500/1640	A320-200	3, 4 and 7
					218	DEL/KTM	1740/1940	B757-200	2, 4 and 6	218	DEL/KTM	1740/1940	A320-200	3, 4 and 7

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# Trek along the Frozen River in Ladakh

Himalayan Voyages is proud to deliver brilliant experiences in terms of adventure tourism, handling back-to-back daily charter movement, adhoc groups, incentives or FIT customers. Stany Wangchuk, Managing Director, Wisdom – Himalayan Voyages talks to TRAVTALK about the company's future plans.



TT BUREAU

**Q** How was 2014 for Himalayan Voyages? What are your plans for 2015?

The year 2014 was a great year for Ladakh, where we saw some good exponential increase in traffic. Ladakh has become the most popular destination amongst tourist destinations and in particular the domestic tourists. This year, 2015 looks quite exciting. We are bullish and geared for a good increase in traffic compared to 2014. We are also adding offbeat places in Ladakh, apart from our regular bouquet of products.

**Q** How has adventure tourism developed in India?

Adventure tourism is quite niche and this segment's demand is lower in India with slower growth compared to mainstream holidays. However, it is fast catching up and we can see some great traction in the coming years. Ladakh has numerous options for adventure activities, which is up close to nature and offers some unique adventure activities, which other destinations don't have. We have seen a lot of demand for Chadar Trek (Frozen River Trek) and a few other adventure activities in Ladakh like motorbike safaris, cycle safaris, trekking, mountain expeditions, rafting etc.

**Q** What are the road-blocks in promoting adventure tourism in India?

The major road block is largely on marketing adventure tourism aggressively and secondly the infrastructure needs to be of International standards

**Q** What are the most famous adventure routes?

Today, Chadar trek is in great demand where we do trekking on the frozen river of Zangskar Valley. One of the most famous trekking routes is Markha Valley Trek. We have various peaks above 6,000 metres. Some of them are easily doable like Stok Kangri (6140m) and Kang Yatse trek (6400m).

**Q** How different are domestic tourists and foreign travellers when it comes to adventure tourism?

There is a huge difference when it comes to demand for adventure tourism from foreign travellers viz-a-viz Indian travellers. In fact foreign tourists have been

more exposed to adventure tourism compared to Indian tourist. They certainly have lot of facilities and options abroad which they have been exploring regularly compared to an Indian tourist.

**Q** What is your Unique Selling Point?

Our USP is that we have a very strong networking across Ladakh, even in remote villages.

Also, we cater to every request. We have a team of 60 experienced professionals in our organisation who not only know every bit of Ladakh, but are well trained to cater to every need of a customer, be it domestic or foreign tourist. It's also not about organising all arrangements but also to ensure that all customers go back with some wonderful memories and experiences.

“ We have a team of 60 experienced professionals in our organisation who not only know every bit of Ladakh, but are well trained to cater to every need of a customer, be it domestic or foreign tourist.



**Stany Wangchuk**  
Managing Director  
Wisdom – Himalayan Voyages



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**Convention to change idea of TAAI being ticketing agents**

▶ Contd. from page 5

will be arranged for these. The agents and tour companies from Indonesia who engage in inbound business with India will be invited for the Expo, and so will national tourism boards, airlines, hotels, etc.” Around 350 rooms have been booked at two beach hotels, namely – The Westin Resort Nusa Dua and the Laguna Nusa Dua - each adjacent to the Bali International Convention Centre. About the travel arrangements, Kumar said TAAI is coordinating with Air India and Garuda to operate charter flights for the convention.

The event will also see the launch of the Preferred Partner Programme, revealed **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Secretary General, TAAI. “The programme is our endeavour to change the perception that TAAI members are mere ticketing agents. It would entail principals who support TAAI members. We are looking at creating partnerships with those who want to support us through this platform. They can be tourism boards, cruise operators, airlines, hotels, etc.” he informed.

# Bring eVoA in UP to boost inbound

Sunil B Satyawakta, Chairman, TAAI-Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter, talks to TRAVTALK about initiatives of the newly-launched chapter in Uttar Pradesh and how tourism can grow leaps and bounds in the state if eVoA facility is extended to the airports in UP.



MEGHA PAUL

Despite the presence of three international gateway airports like Lucknow, Varanasi and Agra, Uttar Pradesh is yet to see the light of eVoA, **Sunil B. Satyawakta**, Chairman, TAAI-Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter said. According to Satyawakta, eVoA facility should be extended to airports in the state. “The facility as of now is available only to the passengers of diverted flights. Regular eVoA to all passengers arriving into the country through these airports is the urgent need of the hour. This will go a long way in boosting inbound tourism in the state,” he said. The eVoA facility is currently available at nine airports in India in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Goa.

Talking about TAAI chapter’s initiatives in Uttar Pradesh, he added, “The chapter was unveiled only in September 2014. We are aim-

ing to act as a bridge between the travel trade and the government and increase the membership from the inherited number of 69 members. In September only last year, we

During February end, TAAI-Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter will be holding a workshop on Service Tax for travel agents and tour operators at

the first-of-its-kind in Uttar Pradesh, he pointed out.

be connected with other tourist spots, he added.

Regarding the inter-state air service policy in the state, he pointed out, “The government is offering various concessions to air service providers by way of underwriting seats, rebate on VAT to non scheduled airlines, free landing and parking facility for initial three years on the air strips under the control of the state government. This shows the government’s enthusiasm in promoting tourism in the state. This will enable tourists to easily commute to the various places in the different parts of the state.” Taking into account the vast size of the state, this type of service will not only encourage business and economy but the transportation will also be much easier to distant places in UP. The service will especially benefit the tourists visiting the Buddhist Circuit here. Apart from this, cities like Jhansi, Agra, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Kanpur, Bareilly, Meerut, Allahabad, Lucknow etc. will be inter-connected as well as would



“Regular eVoA to all passengers arriving into the country through these airports is the urgent need of the hour. This will go a long way in boosting inbound tourism in the state

**Sunil B. Satyawakta**  
Chairman, TAAI-Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter

took the initiative of approaching the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority with 19 points to improve the poor conditions at the International Terminal building at Lucknow before applying for User Development Fee (UDF) from October 1.”

Lucknow. This will be conducted by Manish Gadia, Chartered Accountant from Mumbai along with Harmandeep Singh Anand, Secretary General, TAAI. They have already conducted about 10 such workshops in various cities. This shall be

## The First Move

▶ During February end, TAAI-Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter will be holding a workshop on Service Tax for travel agents and tour operators in Lucknow

▶ This will be conducted by Manish Gadia, Chartered Accountant from Mumbai along with Harmandeep Singh Anand, Secretary General, TAAI

▶ They have already conducted about 10 such workshops in various cities

▶ This shall be the first-of-its-kind in Uttar Pradesh



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## British-Irish visa scheme goes live in India

■ The British-Irish visa scheme recently went live in India. The scheme will allow Indian nationals to travel to the UK and Ireland on a single short term visit visa. Ireland and the UK will share Visa Application Centres across India. From February 10, 2015, all applicants applying for an Irish or British visa will need to use the shared Visa Application Centres.

"India is a priority market for Ireland under the Government's Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy and the Embassy in New Delhi and the State agencies in India work on the basis of a joint strategy to increase trade, investment, education and tourism between our two countries," said Feilim McLaughlin, Ambassador of Ireland to India.

**James Bevan**, British High Commissioner to India, said "This is another example of the continuous improvements we are making to the visa service for Indian nationals. India is a key growth market for both UK and Irish tourism. We hope that more Indian visitors will choose to come to the UK and Ireland as a result of this latest change."

# 'Worst is over for airline sector'

Airlines are ensuring that investment and capacity is moderate, and in line with demand. In a brief interview with Kapil Kaul, CEO, South Asia, CAPA, TRAVTALK finds out about eVoA and market dynamics.



KANCHAN NATH

## Q How is eVoA through QETA going to affect tourism and especially the aviation segment?

India is a long-haul destination. People do not come to India overnight; they take years; they plan well and book years in advance. Obviously they have time in their hands to plan well in advance. However, this would be a game changer for people who come to India for work and for people who attend conferences and MICE. I think this will create growth, a new dynamism which will be good for aviation, tourism, hotels, and for the economy as well.

## Q What is your forecast for the aviation industry for 2015?

Starting from the third quarter, especially from January, we see the worst is over for the industry with fuel prices coming down. There are various state govern-

ments which are cutting taxes. Also, efforts are being made to include the fiscal regime of airlines. I think the

a supply demand sort of a correction that is happening with airlines correcting their capacity going forward. I think



“It's the best time to be in an airline. I feel if the operating environments especially from the fundamental perspective remains the way it is, we see the worst is over for airlines.

**Kapil Kaul**  
CEO, South Asia, CAPA

worst is over, the fact that the economy is on an upswing and will continuously grow. Cost structure is becoming better; airlines are ensuring that the investments and capacity is moderate, in line with demand. There is

it's a good time, I would see that it's the best time to be in an airline. I feel if the operating environments especially from the fundamental perspective remains the way it is, we see that the worst is over.

## Q What is your comment on Vistara entering India?

I think Vistara is a premium brand; it's much more premium than Jet and Air India. Vistara has one advantage, even if it's a very premium airline; it has a low-cost back end. I would say the way they are focused on customer, customer service, using analytics, it becomes a key sort of differentiator for them; I think there is a

market for Vistara. It will have 25 aircraft in five years. It will have a moderate expansion; it will only fly on routes where there is a demand for full service. As long as its cost base remains what it is and they keep attacking the cost base, I think there is a market for Vistara. There is exclusivity for premium services and there is a market. But the question is if you have the cost structure to support that.

## A Close Observation

- ▶ There are various state governments which are cutting taxes. There are various efforts to include the fiscal regime of airlines
- ▶ The economy is on an upswing and will continuously grow
- ▶ Cost structure is becoming better
- ▶ Airlines are ensuring that the investments and capacity are moderate, in line with demand
- ▶ There is a supply demand sort of a correction that is happening with airlines correcting their capacity going forward

# IAAI in direct dialogue with airlines

With an aim to gather momentum in its fight to reclaim commission for agents, IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI) has initiated talks with airlines to try and salvage the situation that is currently in limbo. This comes as a precursor to the Kerala High Court's verdict that is expected soon.



HAZEL JAIN

Unwilling to give up the fight on behalf of all IATA agents in India, **Biji Eapen**, National President, IAAI (IATA Agents Association of India), has stated that the association has been approaching

expect certain airlines to announce something on these lines in February 2015. At least five major airlines that fly domestic and international have given us a favourable response. We will then have to look at the modalities of the process," he said.

## Focus for 2015

The IAAI president highlighted the association's national convention that will be held along with ETAA (Enterprising Travel Agent's Association). The destination will be decided by March 2015. Speaking about training on the NDC (New Distribution Capability) program that IATA has launched, Eapen said, "NDC does not require any special training. We have already done it a couple of years ago for our members. The implications of this however are worth looking at. For one, it will increase the disparity of fares – something which nobody is looking at. If the airlines want to sell their products, they will record all details of travellers and then directly approach them with discounted rates. This is bad for the industry. The only solution is for the travel industry to unite and stand together."

met three officials from the airline: **Rajeev Nambiar**, VP (Sales), **V. Raja**, Regional Head, Sales (South) and **Muralidas Menon**, General Manager (Kerala).

"It was a red letter day on January 30, 2015 as a very fruitful discussion took place on the commission issue between us in Cochin. The Jet Airways team has promised to revert on the modalities after discussions

with their IT and legal affairs departments on their return to Mumbai," Eapen said in a statement.

This, he added, was a continuation to the talks held in Mumbai earlier that month. The DGCA order that came on March 5, 2010 and the MoCA order of September 16, 2013 that had favored IAAI's claims on the legality of agency commission as opposed to a transaction

fee formed the basis of the discussions.

Issues related to the laws mandating payment of commission, quantum, nomenclature and the modality of payment including the implication and application of the Aircraft Rule 1937, Rule 54 (A) for tariff and its break-up were discussed in detail. IAAI has also had a discussion with its legal consultant on matters related to aircraft rules and legal deliberations. Eapen was also seen deep in discussion with **Essa Sulaiman Ahmad**, Vice President (India & Nepal) for Emirates Airlines on the sidelines of the recently concluded India International Travel & Tourism (IITT) Exchange held in Mumbai.

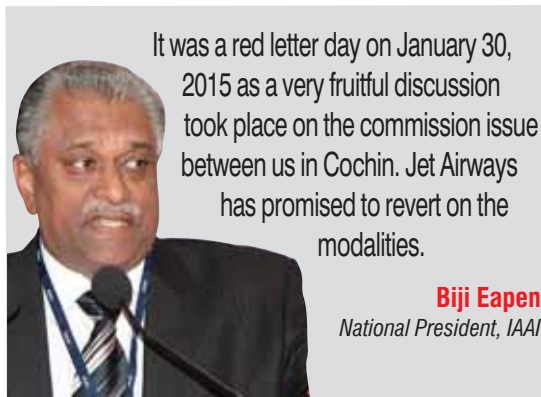
Outlining his points, Eapen said, "We want commissions to be part of the basic fare. We are waiting for the court's verdict on that in Kochi which can come anytime now. Of course, the per-

## Raging issues

Issues related to the laws mandating payment of commission, quantum, nomenclature and the modality of payment including the implication and application of the Aircraft Rule 1937, Rule 54 (A) for tariff and its break-up were discussed in detail IAAI has also had a discussion with its legal consultant on matters related to aircraft rules and legal deliberations

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centage will have to be mutually decided since no court can interfere with that. Cargo airlines are still giving five per cent commission to agents so why not us?"



It was a red letter day on January 30, 2015 as a very fruitful discussion took place on the commission issue between us in Cochin. Jet Airways has promised to revert on the modalities.

**Biji Eapen**  
National President, IAAI

airlines directly in its effort to restart the dialogue on agent commission.

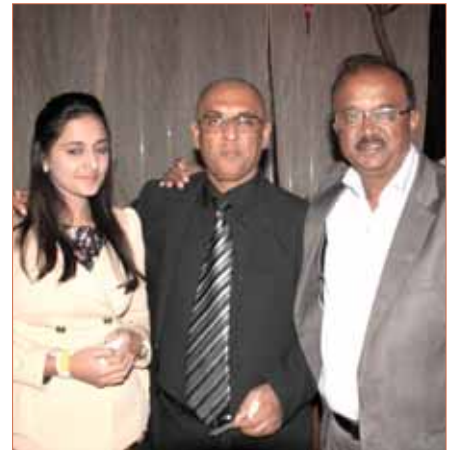
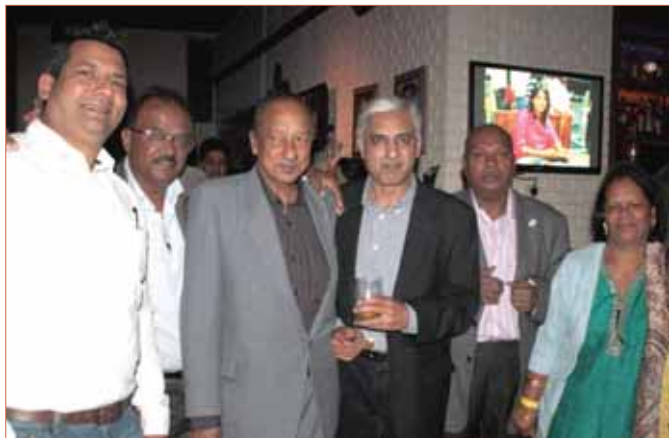
"We have approached many airlines and some of them are seriously considering rolling back commissions. We

**Discussions with Jet**  
Eapen recently met officials from Jet Airways along with **Girish G**, President of IAAI (Kerala State Committee) and **TU Shamsuddin**, IPP, IAAI (Maharashtra State Committee) in Kochi. The trio



# It's party time, says Mauritius

Mauritius Tourist Promotion Authority (India) recently organised a dinner for the travel fraternity at Zorzura in Qutub Hotel. The aim of the event was to enlighten the travel agents about the new travel and tourism products of Mauritius and network with them.





# Revamped BritAgent programme

Jaco Coetzee, Head of Commercial & Trade, VisitBritain, talks about how the national tourism agency will continue to work in tandem with the Indian travel trade and look at further strengthening relationship with the travel trade fraternity.



MEGHA PAUL

## Increasing tourist arrivals

Our provisional figures for last year's April-September period reflect a three per cent increase in tourist arrivals from India. Even the visitor expenditure figures are roughly the same. In 2013, India contributed a record 375,000 visits to the UK, up 11 per cent compared to 2012. In 2013, Indian visitors spent GBP441 million (US\$751m) in the UK, 32 per cent more than the previous year. Thus, we have already surpassed the record arrivals in 2014.

## Travel trade ties

We recognize that travel trade is important globally. And, in India, it is absolutely indispensable. Thus, they form the core part of our strategy. India has become Britain's largest BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) market in terms of volume of visits. Our trade engagement in India is vital for us to deliver our tourism targets. We introduced

## VisitBritain launches family travel supplement

VisitBritain has launched a travel supplement, titled 'Great Britain-The Ultimate Indian Family Vacation'. The supplement gives information on experiences, key UK suppliers and travel providers for the family segment. Talking about the development, **Shivali Suri**,

Country Manager – India, VisitBritain remarked, "VisitBritain is more than likely to attract 425,000 visitors from India by 2016 - worth GBP 380 million in annual visitor spend. The Indian travellers visiting Britain last year were not

deterred by the falling value of the Rupee against the Pound. A record 375,000 Indians visited the UK spending GBP 441 million. This special family supplement is aimed at helping them discover their memorable moments in Britain and how they can book the same."

the Great Tourism Week road show format in India last year. It has enabled us to engage effectively with the travel trade pan-India, as well as provide platforms to introduce British tourism products for Indian travellers. Held in nine cities in India (Kolkata, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Pune, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai) last year, the event was an opportunity to promote Britain's tourism offerings and discuss the possibility of developing new bookable products and packages for the Indian visitors. India is the first market where we had introduced this

format. Looking at its success in this market, we are now going to introduce this in other markets as well.

## Learning the Brit way

Currently, we have 1,000 BritAgents in India. India has the second highest number of BritAgents in the world. (China is No. 1 with about 1400 agents). Now we are revamping the website and the programme by the end of March. We will add new modules and information. We would like to take the qualified agents to the second level by introducing the revamped website and programme. The programme will focus on pre-

senting a better understanding of Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. In addition we will also promote Britain as a sports, heritage and cultural hub.

## New trends

Indian visitors have a higher propensity to travel beyond London. Hence, they are a hugely valuable market in terms of spreading the regional benefits of international tourism across the country. Leisure travel from India has grown the most followed by business travel. The VFR segment, which earlier had grown exponentially, is

## Experts Talk

“ VisitBritain is more than likely to surpass its ambition to attract 425,000 visitors from India by 2016 - worth GBP 380 million in annual visitor spend



**Shivali Suri**  
Country Manager – India, VisitBritain

“ India has become Britain's largest BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) market in terms of volume of visits. Our trade engagement in India is vital for us



**Jaco Coetzee**  
Head of Commercial & Trade, VisitBritain

constant as of now. But what is interesting is that people do connect with relatives in Britain but extend it to more leisure activities and travel without relatives. Thus, spending has increased due to this.

Earlier the VFR segment had the lowest spending in the market and now this has drastically changed for the better. The VFR traveler is now acting as more of a leisure tourist.

Contd. on page 32 ▶

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## Hilton enters city of Taj

The opening of DoubleTree by Hilton in Agra marks the group's entry into one of the most important leisure markets in India for both DoubleTree by Hilton and Hilton Worldwide.

TT BUREAU

Hilton recently announced the opening of its DoubleTree Hotel in Agra. With this launch, Hilton Worldwide has a presence across the Golden Triangle, the most popular tourist circuit in the country,

Set in the heart of the bustling city and minutes from the iconic Taj Mahal, the trendy DoubleTree by Hilton Agra is among very few hotels offering a view of the magnificent mausoleum. The hotel is in the vicinity of popular attractions and shopping districts including the Agra

Agra Airport and seven kilometres from the Agra Cantonment Railway Station. Guests driving from Delhi can also easily access the hotel from the Delhi - Agra Yamuna Expressway.

The hotel features 104 guestrooms, including four suites, all equipped with modern amenities including the signature Sweet Dreams by DoubleTree sleep experience bed, and Wi-Fi. Recreational facilities at the hotel include an outdoor infinity pool with views of the Taj Mahal. DoubleTree by Hilton Agra also features a range of flexible meeting and event offerings.

"The opening of DoubleTree by Hilton Agra is a significant milestone as it marks the entry of Hilton Worldwide into this prime leisure destination," said **Daniel Welk**, Vice President, Operations - India, Hilton Worldwide.



"The opening of DoubleTree by Hilton Agra is a significant milestone as it marks the entry of Hilton Worldwide into this prime leisure destination

**Daniel Welk**  
Vice President,  
Operations - India  
Hilton Worldwide

with hotels in Delhi NCR, Jaipur and Agra. The hotel is owned by Archer Hospitality and managed by Hilton Worldwide.

Fort, Akbar's Tomb, Jama Masjid and Kinari Bazaar. The hotel is located 10 kilometres from the

According to **John Greenleaf**, Global Head, DoubleTree by Hilton, the opening of this property marks the group's entry into one of the most important leisure markets in India for both DoubleTree by Hilton and Hilton Worldwide.

### Location and its Benefits

- ▶ The trendy DoubleTree by Hilton Agra is among very few hotels offering a view of the Taj Mahal
- ▶ The hotel is near popular attractions and shopping districts including the Agra Fort, Akbar's Tomb, Jama Masjid and Kinari Bazaar

## A Fijian catalogue

Tourism Fiji and Kuoni-SOTC has launched an exclusive Fiji brochure for Indian travellers offering customised group holiday options.

TT BUREAU

Indian travellers will now be able to choose from a multitude of itineraries to the exotic destination of Fiji from this summer. An exclusive brochure for Fiji has been developed and launched in partnership with

Operating) Kuoni India. The ministerial delegation was in the country to conduct its annual Tourism Fiji roadshow. This year, it had brought about six suppliers from Fiji.

The ministerial delegation led by the minister included

**Rajeev Wagle**, MD of Kuoni India and **Amod Thatte**, Head (Product & Innovation - Tour Operating), Kuoni India.

**Pranav Kapadia**, Director of Global Destinations, that represents Fiji Tourism in India, said, "With this, Kuoni now has Fiji in its FIT brochure as well as part of the group series. The Australia-New Zealand series that Kuoni is currently selling now has Fiji as part of the group departures. So far, we were focusing only on the FIT and the honeymoon markets. But Fiji's presence in the group series will help us develop the family as well as the group markets as well."

Speaking on the launch of the brochure, **Suri** said, "Kuoni-SOTC brings to Indian travellers the exclusive experiences in Fiji designed to indulge them in the stunning islands of Fiji."



"So far, we were focusing only on the FIT and the honeymoon markets. But Fiji's presence in the group series will help us develop the family as well as the group markets as well

**Pranav Kapadia**  
Director  
Global Destinations

Tourism Fiji in Mumbai recently. Those present included the Fijian delegation led by **Faiyaz Koya**, Minister for Industry, Tourism & Trade, as well as **Vishal Suri**, CEO (Tour

**Lorna Eden**, Assistant Minister; **Maciusela Lumelume**, Deputy Secretary, and **Prakashni Chandra**, Senior Tourism Officer. Also present at the launch were

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# Most wanted: Indian travellers

India's biggest travel trade show, Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) has marked its presence among NTOs, travel agents and tourism companies. This was reflected in the overwhelming response and participation at the just-concluded OTM 2015 in Mumbai.

**HAZEL JAIN**

Outbound Travel Mart kicked off on a high note on February 4 in Mumbai with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, inaugurating the three-day event at the Bombay Convention & Exhibition Centre. It hosted over 2,500 participants from 70 countries thereby showcasing the huge market potential of Indian outbound.

Fadnavis, who also holds charge of the state's tourism portfolio, said, "I would like to



congratulate OTM for successfully organising a travel trade show of this magnitude. Both Indian and international tourism is set to get a huge boost out of this show. As the state host, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has also participated as we have a special focus of promoting Maharashtra as a tourism destination."

OTM, held from February 4-6, will be quickly followed by

TTF Delhi scheduled to be held at the swanky Thyagaraj Sports Complex located near INA Market from February 10-12, 2015. Many of the international and domestic participants of OTM Mumbai are also participating in the TTF. Fadnavis took a tour of the exhibition, halting at various NTO stalls including the Philippines and Japan and also took a virtual tour of the bullet train at the 'Visit Japan' stall. His consent to be the chief guest at the event indicates the impor-

tance the Government of Maharashtra accords to promotion of tourism in the state.

In fact, MTDC had a sizeable presence in OTM Mumbai, ably supported by a large number of private sector operators as co-exhibitors in the Maharashtra Pavilion at the expo. The two-month-old Fadnavis Government has already taken up a slew of initiatives towards boosting tourism in Maharashtra.

## Glimpse of the exhibitors

- ❖ Over 1,000 sellers from 50 countries exhibited at OTM 2015 and an estimated 10,000 buyers from the travel industry visited the event over three days.
- ❖ Some of the international exhibitors that had large pavilions at OTM include Philippines, Turkey, Mexico, Dubai, Japan, Thailand, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Oman, Seychelles, Jordan, Bhutan, the Czech Republic, and Taiwan.
- ❖ From India, some of the big participants include Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Gujarat, Kerala, Daman & Diu, Karnataka, Punjab, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir and Maharashtra.
- ❖ Among the major participants at the event were The Taj, Best Western, Sri Lankan Airlines, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Adlabs Imagica, Ark Travels and Heena Holidays. For the first time, OTM witnessed strong participation from Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) comprising operators specialising in adventure tourism.
- ❖ OTM has a substantial segment on Business Travel & MICE which was presented as a show-in-show called the BTM. Technology too was not left behind as several technology companies went on to showcase their products and some of the latest vehicles were also on display.
- ❖ The OTM-Kuoni Knowledge Series was held for the first time and focused on mastering the challenges and opportunities within the travel industry. Three experts from Kuoni India shared their expertise on the best practices in corporate travel, MICE and luxury travel over the three days.

## OTM high points

▶ Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis inaugurates OTM 2015

▶ 2,500 participants from 70 countries

▶ Exhibition from 1,000 sellers from 50 countries

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# Transaero debuts Moscow-Delhi flight

Russia's Transaero Airlines commenced its maiden flight to New Delhi on February 5, 2015 and operates twice-a-week on the Moscow-Delhi route. Passengers arriving in Moscow can now take advantage of convenient connections to various other destinations in North America and Europe.

**PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA**

Beginning February 5, Indian travellers can look forward to reaching one of most historically rich capital city of Moscow as Russia's Transaero Airlines has commenced its maiden flight on the Moscow-Delhi route.

The Transaero flight UN543/544, between Moscow and New Delhi, is operated from



family here as I have been issued a multiple entry visa."

**HS Duggal**, Managing Director, Minar Travels (India),

the GSA for Transaero in India, said, "Transaero has been coming to India for the last 10 years, to Goa and Amritsar. We're very happy that they've now come to

Delhi. We hope to expand the air traffic between the two countries and it'll also give a big boost to tourism. The e-Visa facility played an important part in the airline's decision to start operations in Delhi." Duggal says, "Our strategy is very clear, we want 50 per cent direct passengers and 50 per cent transit passengers. With excellent service and compet-

itive fares, we think we'll give a very good deal to the public. We are on major GDA systems, so, the marketing will be done through GDA systems. Agents are our pillars and they'll support us and we'll give them special offers and incentives, so that they can push sales of this airline over other airlines and the product, of course, is very good."

## Quick Facts

▶ Operates twice a week from Moscow (Thursday & Saturday) and from New Delhi (Friday & Sunday)

▶ Minimum return ticket price from USD 332 (economy class) to USD 1,587 (business class)

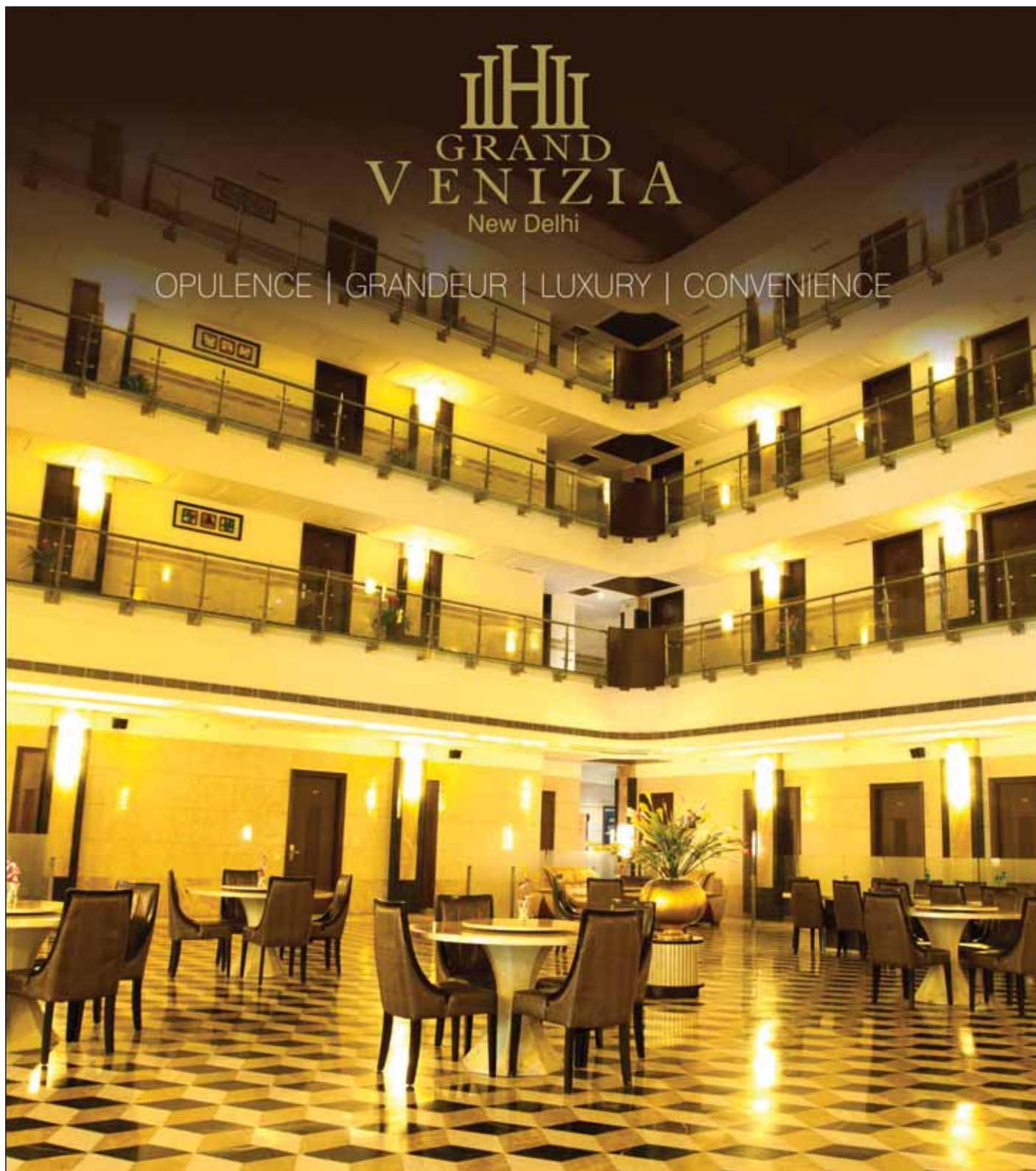


**HS Duggal**  
Managing Director  
Minar Travels (India),  
the GSA for Transaero in India

Transaero has been coming to India for the last 10 years, to Goa and Amritsar. We're very happy that they've now come to Delhi

Moscow Vnukovo Airport, Terminal A, two times a week. Talking to TravTalk after travelling on the maiden flight from Russia to Delhi, **Dmitry Y Erzakovich**, Deputy Director General, Head of Operation Department, Transaero Airlines, said, "Transaero uses Boeing 767 aircraft, configured with business, economy and tourist-class cabins. We are the second biggest airlines in Russia. We have started with two flights per week, but in our fleet, we have 777 and 747 aircraft, we have more than 20 Boeing 747 aircraft. We hope to get more and more transit passengers to North America and England."

Asked if he availed the e-Visa facility while entering India, Erzakovich said, "I didn't use the e-Visa facility, but the visa facilitation process was very quick. I got my visa in a day and I'm very happy with the visa process at the Delhi airport as well. The procedure at the airport was very fast, immigration and custom was also very prompt and friendly. I had a seamless experience and I plan to bring my



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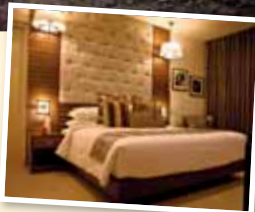
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## Fortune brings second property to Goa



Fortune Park Hotels has expanded its bouquet of hotels with the opening of the brand's 44<sup>th</sup> property, Acron Waterfront Resort, Baga, Goa- A Fortune Resort. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> hotel of Fortune in Goa after Fortune Select Regina that was launched in December 2010.

Acron Waterfront Resort is a boutique resort property, strategically located right where the Baga River meets the Arabian Sea. An exclusive resort along the Baga Riviera, the property offers 29 well-appointed contemporary rooms equipped with modern amenities, with views of the river, the sea and the courtyard. Each room has been meticulously designed with hand-painted

motifs to reflect an individual touch.

Commenting on the launch, **Suresh Kumar**, Chief Executive Officer, Fortune Park Hotels, said, "We are extremely happy to announce the launch of Acron Waterfront Resort in Goa and to partner with the Acron Group once again, who have yet again reposed their confidence in our brand. We would put in our best to uphold this trust and also look forward to more alliances with the Group in the near future."

# Budget Expectations 2015 Scrap service tax

► Contd. from page 3



We have already submitted our paper on how outbound tourism brings in more foreign exchange for the country. The report was prepared by Ernst and Young. We want the government to acknowledge the importance of outbound tourism and thus, exempt us from service tax. Also, we need to give special status to the tourism industry. The industry needs more sops to realise its full potential.

**Guldeep Singh Sahni**  
President, OTOAI



After being ignored for several years, India's travel trade industry, now, has a reason to look forward with renewed optimism. We have a Prime Minister who is very supportive and encouraging towards the socio-economic benefits of tourism. He is convinced about tourism being a game changer. Irrespective of individual policies, industry per se, will benefit. We will have to see how the new AAP dispensation in Delhi reacts, because Delhi is a key pivot of the Golden Triangle.

**Zakkir Ahmed**  
President, TAFI



Service tax should be completely removed from sale of rooms, food and beverages. Hotels should be given similar financial benefits as the infrastructure sector with the ceiling for investment reduced to ` 25 crore against the existing ` 200 crore. Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) and Served from India Scheme (SFIS) licensing norms should be revisited and made simpler for the industry. Loans for building hotels from banks must have a tenure of a minimum 10 years as opposed to the current three years, which makes no sense whatsoever. Finally, a national policy should be made which recognises the value of tourism as an engine of growth for the Indian economy and dramatically reduces the ridiculous number of licenses which are required to be maintained by this industry.

**Bharat Malkani**  
President, HRAWI



This budget will be a roadmap to how the NDA government will get to the figure of 20 million international tourists by 2020. Our expectation is that the finance minister should permit and classify the hospitality sector as a permissible infrastructure activity for accessing tax-free bonds under Section 54 EC through Notified Financial Institutions. The Union Government through an appropriate legislative amendment should ensure that all states recognise tourism as an industry so that hospitality establishments can avail incentives and concessions under the industrial policy of state governments viz. property tax, electricity and water tariff on industrial tariff, land banks for budget hotels, interest subvention schemes and capital subsidies, etc. There should be rationalisation of taxes and early implementation of GST. Also, the 5:25 scheme of RBI should not be limited only to new borrowers but also be available for refinancing the debt of existing and under implementation projects in all eligible sectors.

**Luv Malhotra**  
President, HRANI

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# Hotels cautiously optimistic in 2015

The two-day event of Hotel Investment Forum India (HIFI) 2015 reflected the cautious mood of the hospitality sector and the challenges the hotel industry is facing today.



MEGHA PAUL

Amidst volatile market situation, high debt costs and soaring land prices, HIFI 2015 reflected the cautious mood of the hotel industry. Despite the relatively marginal revival in occupancies and RevPARs in hotel business in India in the second half of the 2014 after the assumption of the new government, the industry is yet to find comfort as room rates are not picking up in many micro markets. Industry players delved into crucial issues of future planning of operations, expectations from operators, development outlook, selection of operators, etc.

According to **Vijay P Thacker**, Director, Horwath

HTL India, confidence of the industry has improved ever since the new government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power. Make in India, e-Visa initiative, Swachh Bharat mission, etc. have brought a long-term attitudinal change, he felt. Presenting the 'Outlook for the Indian Hotel Industry', Thacker said, "Almost 10,000 new hotel rooms have been added into the organised room inventory last year and around 30,000 more rooms are expected to be added in the next three to four years time. Demand creation is the only way forward."

Regarding the challenges the industry is facing today, he lamented, "The structure of funding in our country is incon-

sistent. Thus, debt funding continues to be a concern for the hotel investors." He also warned the industry stakeholders against heavy discounting to keep cash flows going.

Talking about the 'Economic Trends Survey' report, **James E Burba**, President, BHN opined, "Economic sentiments are going to be better in key markets, including the US and South East Asia in 2015 com-

per cent, average rates declined by 2.70 per cent. Hotels in India have to explore strategies to improve rates," she stated.

Highlighting the government initiatives to boost tourism in the country, **Dr Lalit Panwar**, Secretary-MoT, commented, "Almost 40 per cent of the source markets are covered under ETA now, and after the proposed expansion, this would go up to 63 per cent of the mar-

## Hotel Talk

“Almost 40 per cent of the source markets are covered under ETA now, and after the proposed expansion, this would go up to 63 per cent of the markets.

**Dr Lalit Panwar**  
Secretary  
Ministry of Tourism



“Almost 10,000 new hotel rooms have been added into the organised room inventory last year and around 30,000 more rooms are expected to be added in the next three to four years time

**Vijay P Thacker**  
Director, Horwath HTL India



## Strategies for Success

All the participants in this session agreed on guiding owners at every level so that they do not overspend on projects ultimately impacting the return on investment. Throwing light on the luxury market, **Kapil Chopra**, President, The Oberoi Group said, "Despite difficult operat-

**Puri**, Managing Director-India & Regional Vice President, Starwood Hotels & Resorts highlighted, "We expect better days for the industry as supply has more or less stabilised in most of the micro markets." While the industry talks about the potential of domestic market, Puri said that because of



**Dilip Puri**  
Managing Director-India &  
Regional Vice President  
Starwood Hotels & Resorts



**Rajiv Kaul**  
President  
The Leela Hotels



**Kapil Chopra**  
President  
The Oberoi Group



**Rajeev Menon**  
Assistant Vice President  
Marriott International

ing environment, the Oberoi hotels across markets, with the exception of Chennai, have registered average rate growth ranging from seven to 22 per cent last year. India is the cheapest luxury market today." According to **Rajeev Menon**, Assistant Vice President, Marriott International, Marriott's stable properties have performed well showing positive growth in RevPAR and ADRs. **Dilip**

the 'mindset' problems, the industry is yet to have 'full faith' in the domestic market. **Rajiv Kaul**, President, The Leela Hotels, felt high land cost and development cost were major issues. "While a hotel project takes two years to complete in other countries, in India it takes over three years and at times the project lingers on to five or more years, resulting in major cost escalation," he said.

pared to 2014. About 63% of the people participating in the survey believed Indian economy would be better compared to last year. This was 82% and 66% for the US and SE Asia market, respectively. The investment activity in most of the markets surveyed showed an upward trend." As far as India was concerned, 60% of the respondents believed there would be more money available for development activities in 2015 compared to 2014. Compared to last year's 45 per cent, almost 70% of the survey participants believed in better RevPAR growth this year, he added.

Presenting the 'Global Hotel Industry Performance' survey of STR Global, **Elizabeth Randall-Winkle**, Managing Director, STR Global said, "Asia Pacific market has shown strong growth in international arrivals in 2014. While occupancies in Indian hotels improved by three

kets. The country would be able to reach the magical figure of 14 million inbound tourists (one per cent of the global inbound) in the next three years time." Thus, the country would require more hotel rooms to service those tourists. The government would consider legitimate concessions to hotel industry, including infrastructure status, to encourage more investments into the sector, he added.

## Optimism Grows

► As far as India is concerned, 60 per cent of the respondents believed there would be more money available for development activities in 2015 compared to 2014

► Compared to last year's 45 per cent, almost 70 per cent of the survey participants believed in better RevPAR growth this year



# AGENTS

## Taj Tours ups India budget

UK-based tour operator, Taj Tours, has increased its budget allocation by 300 per cent after seeing phenomenal growth and potential in the India market.



HAZEL JAIN

In the business since 1983, London-based Taj Tours is now headed by the second-generation businessman, Niteen Mehta, CEO of Taj Tours. He espies huge growth in the India market and this is evident in the increase in budget that Mehta is looking at for its India operations.



“Our major budgets have now been allocated to India and we are looking at increasing it 300 per cent! This will be on a B2B basis.”

**Niteen Mehta**  
CEO, Taj Tours

“Our major budgets have now been allocated to India and we are looking at increasing it 300 per cent! This will be on a B2B basis. We are investing a lot of our resources into India now and we can already see the returns,” Mehta said.

ommended for their infrastructure and their service. We are open to more PSAs in Mumbai provided we find the right partner. We want the local agents to earn which is why we don't take any booking directly,” Mehta adds.

until now because we were very particular about whom we tie up with,” Mehta explains. Taj Tours also launched a brochure recently that has 30 new destinations.

### Emerging markets

Speaking about the markets that are showing a lot of potential, Mehta underlines East and South India as the ones that stand out. Mehta says, “We have hit the metro city of Kolkata but we haven't really explored the region. For instance, Orissa is a huge market. We just appointed a PSA there and it is performing really well. Another example is Pondicherry.”

### PSAs in India

To capture the multiplying market, Taj Tours is appointing PSAs in all its key markets. It recently appointed Gogo Travels in Mumbai – its first since the Mumbai office opened in 1999.

It also recently appointed three PSAs in South India including Chennai and Pondicherry. “We are open to expansion in metros and even tier II and III cities. But we want to wait to partner with the right agents who will open up the market for us. New Delhi was one of our newest markets as well; we had no representation there since the last four years

“We hadn't found anyone to represent us here until now. Gogo Travels came highly rec-

## Wed in Turkey this season

Murtaza Kalender, CEO, Travelshop Turkey, says Indians have responded very well to their tours and the wedding crowd and honeymooners are now their target market.



TT BUREAU

### Q How has the Indian market fared so far?

I've been in the Indian market since 2005. This time

pared to 2013 from India which is a very huge growth. When we started in 2005, we had 400 clients coming in from India and now we have 10000 clients from India and we are only growing.

want this crowd to experience various activities like hot air ballooning in Cappadocia, the Turkish bath and private yacht charters.

### Q How closely do you work with Indian agents?

Indian agents are very friendly. We have an online website wherein Indian agents can register and when they register, they get agency prices. The roadshows are also a way to familiarise agents about what Turkey has to offer. We are the only company doing hop-on hop-off bus tours and in most countries, they only do one city, we do such tours all over Turkey. We have flexible bus tours, they can make their own itineraries. These roadshows will possibly help to give the best information that we have. This is also helpful for people who don't know much about Turkey and we try to show them what the various destinations have to offer.



“Indian agents are very friendly, they are very welcoming and Indian hospitality is the best. We have an online website wherein Indian agents can register and when they register, they get agency prices.”

**Murtaza Kalender**  
CEO, Travelshop Turkey

around, I'll be going to New Delhi, Chennai Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru and we are also planning for Kolkata. India is a very good market and the Indian travellers are very receptive. I often tell my friends that in India, every state is like a different country. We increased arrivals by 35% in 2014 com-

### Q What is the customer segment that you are targeting at from India?

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# Reunion Island reunites with India

The French territory, located in the Indian Ocean and about 200 km on the south-west of Mauritius, is planning to cash in on the high-end outbound traveller who doesn't mind splurging while on a holiday.



MEGHA PAUL

One of the latest entrants in the Indian niche tourism market is Reunion Island. The French territory, located in the Indian Ocean and about 200

welcome 5,000 Indian tourists to Reunion Island. Currently, we receive a small number from India. In 2014, about 800 Indians visited us." Serveaux also informed that Reunion Tourism is looking at developing

Elaborating on the USP of the destination, **Loic Oliere**, Deputy Marketing Manager, Reunion Island affirmed, "The highest peak of the Indian

Indian, Chinese, etc. - and the multi-cultural influences are showcased from all aspects, including the delicious cuisine. Reunion Island has a wide

range of accommodation to suit every budget and also offers a plethora of leisure activities." ket here. We are looking at increasing the guest arrivals from India as it is a large market that has great potential," **Ashraf Ghoorun**, Managing Director, Tam Tam Tours which is promoting Lux Island Resorts said. Reunion Island can offer adventure of all sorts, from soft to top end, which no other island destination can offer. The island has the greatest diversity of landscapes and cultures. Visitors can trek along the volcano and at the same time play with dolphins and watch turtles on the beach. Whale watching, deep sea fishing, paragliding, micro flights, etc., are popular leisure activities in the island, he affirmed.

Regarding new initiatives for the travel trade fraternity, **Vineet Gopal**, Representative-India, Reunion Island informed, "We will focus more on training programmes for travel trade. Last year Reunion Island rolled out the Visa on Arrival (VoA) facility to Indians. Indian tourists visiting Reunion are provided with a free Visa on Arrival at the airport, with a validity of 15 days. The VoA is free of charge and can be availed by Indian travellers who have booked packages (flight tickets and accommodation) through an Indian agent or tour operator working with a local DMC in Reunion Island. This is expected to boost arrivals from India."



**Patrick Serveaux**  
President, Regional Tourism Board  
Reunion Island



**Loic Oliere**  
Deputy Marketing Manager  
Reunion Island



**Ashraf Ghoorun**  
Managing Director  
Tam Tam Tours



**Vineet Gopal**  
Representative-India  
Reunion Island

kms on the south-west of Mauritius, is planning to cash in on the high-end outbound traveller in the country. According to **Patrick Serveaux**, President, Regional Tourism Board, Reunion Island, "Reunion Island wants high-value, low-impact tourists from India. Over the next one year, we hope to

activities for the travel trade. "We need to increase our brand awareness in the Indian market. Thus, alongside FAM trips for the travel trade and travel media, we are also looking at the possibility of organising destination training programmes for tour operators and travel agents in India," he added.

Ocean, the extinct volcano Piton des Neiges (3,071 metres), gave birth to Reunion Island millions of years ago. Today, the small and enchanted island offers a variety of landscapes, ranging from the volcanic lunar landscape to forests flourishing with wild orchids, coral reefs teeming with life, and stunning beach vistas. The local population of the island is of a multi-ethnic origin - French, African,

The Lux Island Resorts in Reunion Island is looking at attracting more guests from India across all segments - families, wedding, honeymooners and MICE. "Though our properties have hosted Indian guests in the past, we have just started to target the Indian mar-

## How it Appeared

▶ The highest peak of the Indian Ocean, the extinct volcano Piton des Neiges (3,071 metres), gave birth to Reunion Island millions of years ago

▶ Today, the small and enchanted island offers a variety of landscapes, ranging from the volcanic lunar landscape to forests flourishing with wild orchids, coral reefs etc.

INTRAM

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# How the winners summed it up...

After an eventful night of the India Travel Awards – North, we asked the winners to share their feelings in their moment of pride. Here's what they shared with **TRAVTALK**.



## **Nijhawan Group of Companies**

It's amazing to have received this award. Also I am on cloud nine as I have won two of them. What makes me happy is to be receiving the title of the Face of the Future. It shows that people are looking up to me. It has motivated me to work harder to be able to receive three awards next year. As a first of its kind award, the organisers deserve applaud for encouraging the faces of the industry, old and young and for putting up such a great show.

**Ankush Nijhawan**  
Managing Director

## **TI- Infotech**

It feels great to receive this award. I'm really grateful to the DDP team, especially Mr Sanjeet for giving me this award. A special thanks to all of my team members and mentors who have been with me in the industry and my family.

**Meenu Sachdev**  
Managing Director



## **JW Marriot, Deira, Dubai**

We are honoured to be selected as the Best Hotel in the Middle East. I hear that the probability is that there will be an award ceremony in the Middle East soon. It's a great achievement for us and all the staff members of the hotel. I would like to extend my gratitude on behalf of the hotel to the organisers for doing such a remarkable job.

**Gareth Cummings**  
Director of Sales & Marketing



## **STIC Travel Group**

This is a prestigious award for us. As one of the largest GSA companies in India representing almost 23 international brands and 11 international airlines, we have the largest network working closely with more than 22000 travel agencies in India. We would like to thank Mr. Sanjeet and DDP for bestowing us with this award. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the team of India Travel Awards for turning this event into a successful one.

**Praful Khosla, Head Sales – India**



## **Zillious Solutions**

This fantastic event has given us more and more to do and serve the travel industry. The event was not just beneficial but also thoroughly enjoyable. The efforts by the team are worth appreciating.

**Rajan**  
Director - Sales

## **Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi, Paschim Vihar**

I have to congratulate the organisers for putting up such a grand show. The least I can say is I'm delighted to receive this award because it is the recognition of the hard work that has gone over the years to build this hotel as the best business hotel. Without this initiative of India Travel Awards, the recognition would have not been possible.

**Barun Jolly, General Manager**



## **Travel Spirit International**

I think India Travel Awards is a great move to recognise the dedication of the people in the travel industry. I also appreciate that the focus is on the regional awards. This is a great effort to boost the morale of the people working hard in this industry.

**Jatinder Singh Taneja**  
Managing Director



## **Hyatt Place, Gurgaon**

To be recognised as the best business debut hotel is a great achievement for us. As a new hotel, this award is big boost for our hotel to encourage us in the future. We will ensure that we put our best foot forward and emerge in the market. Now that we have started on a great note, we are going to work much harder, to continue with our success in the coming months ahead as well.

**Sumit Kumar, General Manager**



## **Clarks Inn Group of Hotels**

The India Travel Awards is a great initiative. This event will definitely strengthen the whole fraternity of the industry and will also help the government or non-government agencies for better productivity. Congratulations to the organising team on a successful and memorable event.

**SN Srivastava**  
President & Co-Founder

## **Clarks Shiraz**

It feels great to be the Best Leisure Hotel in northern India. We are keeping up with the best and this award is our reward. We are fortunate to be a part of this well-planned and well-executed event.

**Debasish Bhowmik**  
Senior Vice President



## **Holiday Inn, Aerocity**

We are glad to be a part of this event and to get recognition from our industry and from our guests. I would like to thank the DDP team for appreciating our dedication and efforts. It is a great achievement to have won this in our first year; hopefully, the first of many. It is a testament to all the work that has been put in by the team that built the hotel, the team that is running the hotel and of course the power of the brand.

**Ranjan Malakar, General Manager**



## **Welcome Heritage Ranjit's Svaasa**

It feels excellent to hold this wonderful award; A special vote of thanks to DDP and the India Travel Awards for their enthusiasm. It was a very organised and engaging event and we hope to see more of this in the near future.

**Ved Iqbal Rattan Mehra**  
Director



# Entering the Hall of Fame in 2014

Having travelled to all parts of the country, India Travel Awards was welcomed with open hearts in the South, West, East and North India. The bigwigs of the travel trade marked their presence in this award ceremony and were also honoured for their achievements. This time, TRAVTALK presents pictures of the winners of the **Gallery of Legends Awards 2014** in South, West, East and North India.

## North India Travel Awards



Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson & Managing Director, Bharat Hotels Ltd. was conferred with 'The Gallery of Legends' Award. She receives the award from S. Sohan Singh Thandal, Tourism Minister of Punjab, and Dr. Lalit K Panwar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and SanJeet, Director, DDP Group

## South India Travel Awards



Vivek Nair, Chairman & MD, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, was conferred with The Wall of Legends Award. His daughter, Amruda Nair, Head of Asset Management, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, received the award on his behalf from Chandana Khan, Special Chief Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Tourism

## East India Travel Awards



Jitendra Kumar Mohanty, Managing Director, Swosti Group of Companies, was conferred with 'The Wall of Legends' Award. He receives the award from Bratya Basu, Minister of Tourism and Culture, West Bengal, and Amita Motwani, Mrs. India International 2013 and SanJeet, Director, DDP Group

## West India Travel Awards



Om Prakash Sahgal, Director of Inorbit Tours, was conferred with 'The Wall of Legends' Award. He receives the award from Parvez Dewan, Secretary of Tourism, Government of India, Amita Motwani, Mrs. India International 2013 and SanJeet, Director, DDP Group



# Big bash for travel agents in Delhi

The Trade Bash was organised by Ajay Chhabria-In Time Travels, Ankur Kalra - Wellcome Tours, Rohit Shorey - Destination Travel Services & Siddharth Jain - Click2travel.in at Tribe Vasant Kunj on January 30, 2015. The event was attended by all bigwigs of the trade. It was a fun event with the basic purpose of networking. The travel trade is already eager to witness the next big bash they plan in Mumbai which should be organised soon and they are already in talks on it. A special acknowledgement to event partners, Fiji Tourism, Nijhawan Group, Banyan Tree Hotels, Fly Dubai & Guideline Travels PSA Star Cruises along with all the other prize sponsors for supporting this event.





# Call for Nominations



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# Celebrating Year of Food & Drink 2015

Visit Scotland and Qatar Airways recently unveiled the Year of Food & Drink 2015 at an event in New Delhi. Qatar Airways has also launched its new route via Doha in May 2014. India visitors can now travel to Scotland from 12 different Indian cities, flying five times a week. The event saw a number of travel agents and tour operators.



## Aiming at over 70% occupancy

Sayaji is a hospitality group which creates a friend's place for travellers. At Sayaji, maximum emphasis is towards hospitality. Sayaji Hotels have raised the bar of hospitality services in every city where they are present through innovation and imagination. Hitesh Verma, Area General Manager, Sayaji Pune, gives more details of the group and its future plans...

**Q**How has Sayaji Hotel in Pune been doing?

We have been fortunate to record growth YoY every year since inception in spite of various limitations, competition growth and ever increasing costs. Our patrons have supported us largely this year to perform better. Our occupancy has grown by 15.93 per cent, room revenues by 11 per cent, F&B by 14 per cent and total revenue by 13 per cent.

liers and, Egyptian carpets or Italian marbles; instead he or she would love to have a clean, neat, functional and secured room, WiFi and a nice brasserie or a breakfast room. Pricing & value for money is the song these days. I can see

challenged to identify new ways of alluring guests. As with the business being snatched amongst the competition, skilled manpower too is in scarcity because of the high attrition rates amongst the hotels.



“ I can see the future in the mid-market segment business hotels where ARR is ranging between ` 4000 to ` 5500 yet the offering matches a full service hotel.

**Hitesh Verma**  
Area General Manager, Sayaji Pune

**Q**How do you think the hospitality sector has improved/changed?

Hospitality sector has changed drastically over the last one decade with multinational brands checking in to India and seeing the business potentials not only in metros but in all satellite cities across the country. This led to an enormous supply compared to demand in many cities that have resulted in fierce competitions and price wars to sustain. A modern business traveller now not only needs the luxury of Swarovski chande-

the future in the mid-market segment business hotels where ARR is ranging between Rs.4000 to Rs.5500 yet the offering matches a full service hotel. Because of the excess supply, significant change has been consistently brought in the packages. All the hotels are

**Q**What kind of competition do you face?

Competition is fierce over the last one decade with almost all brands having set up business units with similar services & pricing. We still see additional hotel inventory moving up by 500 -700 rooms



every year in organised sector. It keeps you thinking to manage the business & enhance it.

growing at 15.93%. We anticipate closing the year at 70 % plus occupancy.

**Q**What are the occupancies of the hotel?

Ours is a business hotel and gets decent busy from Monday through Fridays. Weekend occupancies are still a challenge as we do not have any leisure travel movement across the city. Therefore, we continue to design and launch many attractive packages for this period. This year, we have seen occupancies

**Q**What are the MICE facilities that you provide?

Sayaji Pune has very limited options for MICE currently as the largest function space can accommodate only up to 75-90 pax. The hotel also has two small meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 35 pax. However, outdoor spaces can take social events up to 4000 pax.

**Q**What are your upcoming ventures?

Sayaji Hotels Ltd has extensive expansion plans in the next few years. We have just opened our new hotels in Indore and Bhopal and now flagging off another 70 keys hotels in Kolhapur by April this year. In Pune, we are coming up with a Convention Centre & Apartments that will take care of all MICE requirements and also help in improving occupancy levels where we can capitalise on long stay segments. ↴



## EVENT TALK

## FEBRUARY 2015

## NATIONAL

16	Chennai	Tourism Malaysia, B2B Roadshow
17	Hyderabad	Tourism Malaysia, B2B Roadshow
17	Chennai	India International Film Tourism Conclave 2015
19	Hyderabad	India International Film Tourism Conclave 2015
20-22	Kolkata	India International Travel Mart
20-22	Bhubaneswar	Indian Tourism Fair
20	Bengaluru	Tourism Ireland and VisitBritain, B2B Roadshow
20	Delhi	PHDCCI
21	Mumbai	India International Film Tourism Conclave 2015
21-23	Ahmedabad	India Travel Mart
22-24	Lucknow	Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart
23	Bengaluru	Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, B2B Workshop
24	Mumbai	Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, B2B Workshop
24	Chennai	Tourism Office of Spain, Presentation & Networking Dinner
25	Kolkata	Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, B2B Workshop
25	Mumbai	Tourism Authority of Thailand, Trade Workshop and Press Conference
25	Hyderabad	Tourism Office of Spain, Presentation & Networking Dinner
26	Cochin	Tourism Office of Spain, Presentation & Networking Dinner
27	Delhi	Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation, B2B Workshop
27-1 Mar	Vijaywada	India International Travel Exhibition

## INTERNATIONAL

16-19	Johannesburg	IPT World Symposium
22-24	Jerusalem	TAFI convention
24-25	Melbourne	AIME

## MARCH 2015

## NATIONAL

3	New Delhi	Trinidad & Tobago, B2B Workshop
4	Mumbai	Trinidad & Tobago, B2B Workshop
4	New Delhi	Brand USA, Discover America Educational Program
9	Chandigarh	Kenya Tourism Board, B2B Workshop
11	Bengaluru	Kenya Tourism Board, B2B Workshop
13	Ahmedabad	Kenya Tourism Board, B2B Workshop
13-15	Raipur	India International Travel Exhibition
17	Bengaluru	Tourism Office of Spain, Presentation & Networking Dinner
21-23	Chandigarh	India Travel Mart
23	Kolkata	Canadian Tourism Commission, B2B Roadshow
24	Mumbai	Canadian Tourism Commission, B2B Roadshow
24	New Delhi	Vietnam Embassy, Presentation and Roadshow
26	Bengaluru	Canadian Tourism Commission, B2B Roadshow

## INTERNATIONAL

4-8	Berlin	ITB
26-28	Bali	TAAI Convention

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

## Train tours romanticise Switzerland

With the recent launch of Grand Train Tour (GTT) of Switzerland, the tourism board hopes to appeal to the romantic Indian. **TRAVTALK** speaks to Reto Rostetter, Manager - Foreign Markets for Rhaetian Railway, about the India market.



HAZEL JAIN

### Q How are you involved in the GTT?

The Grand Train Tour covers 1,200km covering eight different routes throughout the country. We are involved with both our scenic day trains – the Bernina Express between St Moritz and Lugano – and Glacier Express between Zermatt and St. Moritz. Both these trains are included in the GTT of Switzerland. They can be enjoyed all year round starting January 1, 2015. Travellers only need one ticket – the Swiss Travel Pass. Indian meals are available on the Glacier Express.

### Q How are you promoting this in India?

This tour is promoted by Switzerland Tourism together with all suppliers, including us. Our product is also included in the brochure recently released by Switzerland Tourism. On our

“One of our big goals is to partner with trade partners in India. We are confident that GTT will take off in India because we know that Indians like train journeys. It is a lot easier and a lot more relaxing than driving

**Reto Rostetter**

Manager - Foreign Markets  
Rhaetian Railway



part, we promote it through our trade partners as well as our e-newsletters to the trade. But the most effective method is the sales calls that we do here through our representative sales and marketing office of Aviareps.

### Q What is your agenda for this visit?

One of our big goals is to partner with trade partners in India. We do an exclusive story with Swiss Tours right now where for the first time we have St Moritz as an

overnight destination in a fixed program including the Bernina Express.

### Q What are your expectations from India?

We are confident that this will take off in India because we know that Indians like train journeys. It is a lot easier and a lot more relaxing than driving. Plus, we don't know how experienced Indians are at driving on the mountains, which can be challenging. So we see a lot of potential for this product.

### Q What cities are showing a lot of potential?

Two cities – Mumbai and New Delhi – are looking good. The interest in other cities is not that big. On this trip, I will also visit Kolkata and Pune. We do want to travel to other major metros as well as tier II cities this year. But it is in the planning stage right now.

### Q Are you looking to increase budgets this year?

We are not looking to increase budgets for India this year despite the potential we see. We can stretch it a bit – put in a few thousand Swiss francs more – but I have to share my budget with five different countries in Asia plus UK, so it doesn't give me much to play around with. If I see a very interesting marketing activity, I can take the budget from one country and put it here but not otherwise. ↘

## Konnichiwa Hankyu, says SDU Travels

Hankyu Hanshin, Japan and SDU Travels, India, have signed a JV agreement for handling Japanese corporate business in the country. **TRAVTALK** tries to find out how this collaboration is going to help the two companies.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

**Ryuichi Nabae**, President, Hankyu Hanshin, Japan, seems confident about his knowledge in B2B Business and he gives this as a primary reason for signing this agreement. Nabae says, “There are so many Japanese companies which have entered India. We are one of the largest travel agents in Japan. We know how to handle B2B business there. While using our knowledge of travel business, we want to penetrate in Indian market now and we are sure that the outcome is going to be positive.”

He adds, “Hankyu Hanshin is in India for the last seven years and we want to do our work more aggressively now. We want to target all Japanese companies, who have offices in Japan and in India too.”

**Sunit Suri**, MD & CEO, SDU Travels explains the purpose of this agreement. “Basically HHBT is one of the leading travel companies in Japan and in business travel, they are the leaders. And in India TWX is one of the fastest growing companies. It has a very strong network. Basically it's a strategic alliance



Sunit Suri with Ryuichi Nabae after signing the pact

between HHBT and SDU Travels and through their experience we are looking at expanding in the business travel segment especially in the Japanese market.”

On catering to Japanese tourists, Suri says, “Last year, we did around 8,000 pax for Japanese tourists and we are expecting marginal growth this year.” ↘

## ‘India is a valuable market for Britain’

▶ Contd. from page 16

Business travel from India is also not just about business. The business traveler extends his travel to the weekend and also acts as leisure tourist.

### Treading the online route

We are the only NTO probably to have an online

shop. VisitBritainShop.com is a platform we have created to allow UK suppliers to sell their products online. We have about 250 products onboard currently across all of Britain. We do not sell accommodation or airline tickets. We sell attraction and museum tickets, tours, London

transport, rail tickets, etc. Currently there are 14 online shops in 11 different currencies and seven languages. For the current financial year 2014-15, we are looking at a turnover of 18 million pound. Thus, the online shop is a significant part of Visit Britain. This is mainly for the con-

sumers but seven per cent of our revenues come from the travel trade as well. We have facility where the travel agent can buy it online from us. On an average, we give commissions of about five-eight per cent to the agents. But our BritAgents get extra discount as well. ↘



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**Reed Travel Exhibitions**

**London**

Reed Travel Exhibitions has appointed **Nick Pilbeam** to the position of Divisional Director – Travel. Pilbeam, who brings with him an enormous amount of growth strategy knowledge and industry insight, will head up the travel division of the world's leading events organiser. The renowned industry events that fall under Reed Travel Exhibitions include International Luxury Travel Market portfolio, World Travel Market portfolio and the newly branded ibtm events portfolio of global and regional events providing business solutions on 5 continents.



**Vivanta by Taj, MG Road**

**Bengaluru**

**Ravi Pillai** has been appointed as the General Manager for Vivanta by Taj, MG Road by the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL). He has previously worked as the Head of Operations in Ginger Hotels. Pillai comes with 34 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He holds a Diploma in Hotel Management, Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition, Bombay, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Specialised Hotel Management, Bombay. Previously, he has worked as General Manager at Princeton Hotel, Dubai; Taj Deccan, Hyderabad, among others.



**Courtyard by Marriott Agra**

**Agra**

Courtyard by Marriott, Agra announced the appointment of **Vishal Bharti** as the new General Manager. With a rich hospitality experience of over nineteen years, Bharti will be responsible for the day-to-day operations and help achieve the vision of this hotel. His experience encompasses innumerable skills in the hospitality industry through various levels. Right from recruitments, selection, training and development, performance appraisal and employee relations, developing annual objectives, he has been a part of minute functions and has gained a lot of experience through it all.



**Musafir.com**

**Mumbai**

**Nayan Patel** has been appointed as General Manager - Products, Musafir.com. Patel has over 9 years of experience in the travel industry and has been associated with a gamut of departments within Products and Marketing. He has earlier worked with the companies like Thomas Cook and L&T Limited. He has completed his Masters in Business Administration from Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai.



**Hilton Chennai**

**Chennai**

**Rakshit Sharma** has been appointed Director of Human Resources for Hilton Chennai. Sharma has more than a decade of experience in Human Resources, which has been spent spearheading hotel openings, talent development, team member engagement, compensation and benefits, and performance management. He has worked for organisations like Wipro Business Process Outsourcing, Lemon Tree Hotels and Hyatt Hotels Corporation. Most recently, Sharma led the Human Resources function at Hyatt Amritsar.



**Sayaji**

**Kolhapur**

**Abhijit Rege** has been made in charge of the latest offering from Sayaji in Kolhapur, Maharashtra and oversees planning & setting up the hotel to be ready for offering the same standards of service that Sayaji is known for. Rege is an alumnus of IHMCTAN, Dadar, Mumbai, having completed HMCT in 1990. He has a rich experience of 24 years plus, having worked in various verticals of the hospitality world. Before joining Sayaji, Rege was General Manager of Sun N Sand, Nagpur for 4 years.



**Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai**

**Vashi**

**D. Pratap Singh** has joined Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai, Vashi as Front Office Manager. With over 13 years of experience in hospitality industry, he has worked with renowned brands across the country such as Oberoi-Trident Hotel, Intercontinental Hotels, Starwoods Hotels and Resorts. Singh has exposure in front office with airport hotel (Joined venture of Singapore Airport Terminal Services and Maldives Airport Company Limited) located at Republic of Maldives. He has done his hotel management from IHM, Patna. Singh holds post graduate diploma in Business Administration.



**Courtyard by Marriott Gurgaon**

**Gurgaon**

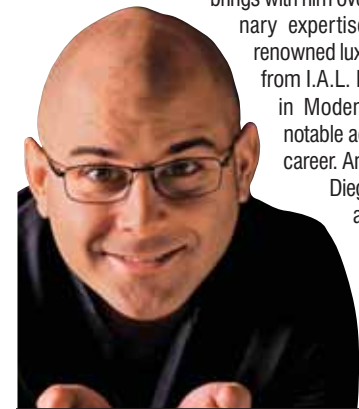
**Venus Patni** has joined the team at Courtyard by Marriott, Gurgaon as the Housekeeping Manager. In this role, he will be responsible for managing all aspects of the Housekeeping department to deliver impeccable services to its guests. A highly-motivated, pro-active individual, Patni believes in delivering seamless guest service. Venus has been associated with Marriott International for more than 2 years. Previously he worked with The Oberoi Group and Jaypee Sports City.



**The Leela Palace New Delhi**

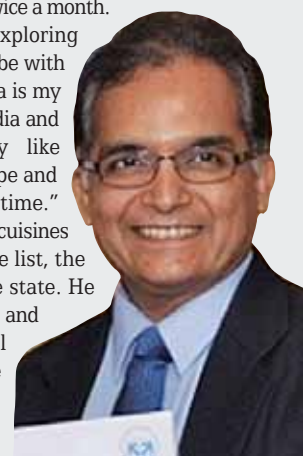
**New Delhi**

The capital's most celebrated fine dining restaurant, Le Cirque at The Leela Palace New Delhi has appointed **Diego Martinelli** as the new Chef de Cuisine. A quintessential culinary personality, Diego brings with him over 16 years of strong culinary expertise working with world-renowned luxury brands. An alumnus from I.A.L. Institute of Culinary Arts in Modena, Italy, he has made notable achievements through his career. An expert in Italian cuisine, Diego has attained considerable experience across Europe, Middle East and Asia working with 5-star luxury hotels including Bulgari Hotels & Resorts and The Fullerton Hotel.



**TALKing People**

**Jagat Mehta**, President, ETAA, loves watching cricket or football matches with his family, when he is not working. He also makes sure that he goes to the theatre to watch a Bollywood movie once or twice a month. He loves travelling and exploring new places around the globe with his family. He says, "Kerala is my favourite destination in India and outside India, I mostly like exploring all parts of Europe and also a new place every time." Mehta loves eating Indian cuisines but Gujarati dishes top the list, the state being Mehta's home state. He adds, "I love Thai, Chinese and all Indian food. As I travel alot, I make sure that I taste the special dish of that particular place, I travel to."



**Rajeev Menon**, Area Vice President- South Asia- Marriott International loves to travel extensively. He says, "Being a hotelier, I love my wines, I have spent many years in Australia, I'm married to an Australian girl, we like to explore wine country, we obviously love food and all different cuisines." He has three very young kids, and he enjoys playing soccer with them on weekends. Menon says, "We just finished a great skiing holiday. It's all about sport, taking the boys to a great soccer match or a cricket match. With some great hotels opening up around the country, there is great opportunity to travel around. We have been travelling to places like Mussourie and Shimla, I would love to take the family to Kashmir."



**Ramon R. Jimenez, JR.**, Tourism Secretary, Philippines has spent 35 years of his life in the advertising business. By education, he is a painter. He comes from the college of Visual Communications, University of Philippines and college of journalism. Ramon and his wife are very much into creative pursuits. He adds, "I am not your usual business person, I have a very strong bias for creativity and music, my wife is a songwriter in her spare time. We are all in the creative business." In his spare time, he loves taking care of dogs, "We own part of the dog school in Manila. I have an Alaskan Malamute, who is huge but very gentle. My wife has her own dogs. Our two daughters also have their own dogs."





In the land of Lord Krishna they say you attain enlightenment. As I climbed the 56 steps toward mine, there were so many questions I wanted to ask. But as I reached the top, I received the only answer I will ever require - Salvation.

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# Open invitation to Indians

On the launch of 'Visit the Philippines Year 2015' in India, Secretary of Tourism (Philippines), Ramon R Jimenez, Jr talks to **TRAVTALK** about his meeting with his Indian counterpart, Tourism Minister Dr Mahesh Sharma and how the growth of 16% from India has proved to be a big boost for the Philippines.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

**Q** You are in India for less than 24 hours and you've had a hectic day; as the Philippines Tourism Minister, how has your experience in India been so far and how important is the Indian market?

The experience has been very energising. I always like coming to New Delhi especially this time around because we are presiding over some very important things, primary of which is to invite the people of India to come to the Philippines. To answer how important Indian market is for us, we should first ask, how important a country is India. India is one of the most important countries in Asia. The feeling in the Philippines is that we should have a larger share of the very

**Q** How fast has the growth in the Indian market been for the Philippines?

In 2014, the India market grew by 16% that's faster than most critical markets for the Philippines, we are very proud of that. Soon, we will have taxi cabs with the Philippines brand all over and that has never happened before.

**Q** Every foreign tourism board is busy wooing the India MICE sector, how important is the Indian MICE crowd for the Philippines?

The space that the Philippines has created for MICE business conventions has grown by over 200% in the last four

involved six million people. We are very optimistic about the MICE business and one of the major advantages is that the Philippines has a very experienced and professional MICE staff. It's very easy to organise a meeting in the Philippines because the language barrier is of no issue.

**Q** You have also met Indian Tourism Minister Dr. Mahesh Sharma, what transpired during the talks?

The Minister pointed out that there have been very



**Ramon R Jimenez, Jr**  
 Secretary of Tourism (Philippines)

The feeling in the Philippines is that we should have a larger share of the very rapidly growing Indian market. India is definitely one of our top 10 priorities, and for 2015, it is on top of our priority list

rapidly growing Indian market. India is definitely one of our top 10 priorities, and for 2015, it is on top of our priority list.

**Q** What is your target for the Indian market and how do you hope to achieve it?

We want the growth of the Indian market, which is now below a 100,000 people a year, to be at a quarter of a million people by 2016. We are determined to do some very serious communication and marketing promotions to bring it to that level and one of the very clear indications that we are very serious about it is that India is the first place we are launching the 'Visit the Philippines Year 2015'. We think, in the next few months and hopefully for the rest of the decade, the Philippines will be able to fix all the connectivity problems and visa facilitation problems that persist up till today. The Philippines Government policy is to make sure that we are working harder to make it easier for the people of India to enjoy the Philippines.

years. We have almost two times the number of convention centres that we used to have. The Philippines is one of the most experienced MICE operators in Asia. We are veterans of all kinds of very important meetings like APEC, which we are hosting again this year for the third time in its history. We have hosted ADB, World Economic Forum, IMF, World Bank and very recently we hosted the Pope, if you consider that a MICE convention as it

significant gains in visa facilitation and Visa-on-Arrival for Indian tourists and he expressed hope that it would become easier soon. He also offered to do as much as he can to encourage the people of India to visit the Philippines. I, in turn, promised that I would help him convince Filipinos to go to India. This exchange is very important because very few people know that the Filipino tourist numbers going in to India grew at the same rate as the Indians going in to the Philippines. There is this reciprocity taking place. I also extended an invitation to the Indian minister to visit the Philippines and he said he's looking forward to pay us a visit. There is already a very strong memorandum of understanding to develop each other's tourism products. One very specific agreement is that we have both agreed to have a very concrete specific exchange programme on culinary arts and hotel and tourism management between the two countries. The minister expressed great interest in people from India learning something from our institutes from Manila and other places.

## All Eyes on India

▶ India market grew by 16% that's faster than most critical markets for the Philippines

▶ India top on priority list for the Philippines in 2015

▶ Space for MICE in the Philippines increases by over 200% in last 4 years

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**Punctuality: expected.**  
**Precision: expected.**  
**Everything else: unexpected.**

More Indian  
than you think