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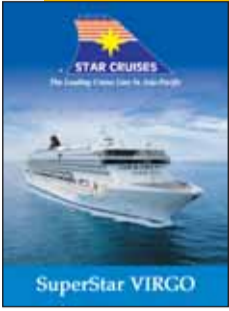
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Next in line nations are China, UK, Spain, Italy, France & Malaysia

Govt mulls expanding eVisa borders

Even as Guinea becomes the 44th country for eVisa, the government is mulling to provide eVisas to six more countries, China, UK, Spain, Italy, France & Malaysia. TRAVTALK spoke to Dr Lalit K Panwar, Secretary, MOT, to find out more about eVisa, FEEs through tourism, ITB Berlin and allocation in the Union Budget.



Dr Lalit K Panwar
 Secretary
 Ministry of Tourism

KANCHAN NATH

The eVisa facility, which was launch by the Govt of India on November 27, 2014 has received tremendous response. Initially Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) was allowed for 43 countries, now one more country, Guinea has been added. Talking about the same, Dr Panwar said, "It is now 44 countries, with the addition of Guinea.

Contd. on page 20 ▶

ITB Berlin

Talking about ITB Berlin trade show, Panwar said, "We have already started preparations for ITB Berlin long back. India pavilion will be well-decorated. Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, MOT, would be in charge of the India pavilion along with the state governments and all our stakeholders. More than ten states will be participating including Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Kashmir among others. We will be highlighting the eVisa there; we would also like to dispel the doubts in the minds of our prospective travellers about the safety and security aspect. We will share with them that we have launched a helpline and have started e-ticketing for many monuments. All these steps have been taken to instill a sense of confidence and safety among the interested travellers."

He added, "MOT participates in all major fairs such as FITUR, ITB among others, we have offices in 14 countries, they are mandated to take part within their jurisdiction in all leading travel marts, so that the presence of Indian tourism industry is ensured. Incredible India campaign has been a roaring success, people want to visit India and we want to facilitate the same."

News Inside

Seaplanes in God's own country

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Walk with the tribe in Chhattisgarh

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Goa coming out with app stations

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eVisas jump by 421.6% in Dec.

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Taj on top, but industry needs more...

See full story page 52 ▶

Leap forward for inbound tourism

eVisas has been the high point for the Tourism Ministry in 2014. Going forward, the ministry has launched welcome cards for foreign visitors and operationalised a long-awaited tourist helpline. TRAVTALK speaks to industry stalwarts to understand how this will boost inbound tourism in 2015.

MEGHA PAUL

Inbound has been a challenge till now. However, with the government's new initiative of the eVoA, things will be back on track soon. The new e-visa system will prevent line-ups in front of the visa desks at airports, reduce the workload of staff working at airports, save time for staff at Indian consulates and embassies, provide easier visa facilitation for foreigners that visit India for tourism and business purposes and increase the number of the visitors as well as tourism and foreign trade revenue.

Jyotsna Suri
 President, FICCI



Contd. on page 20 ▶

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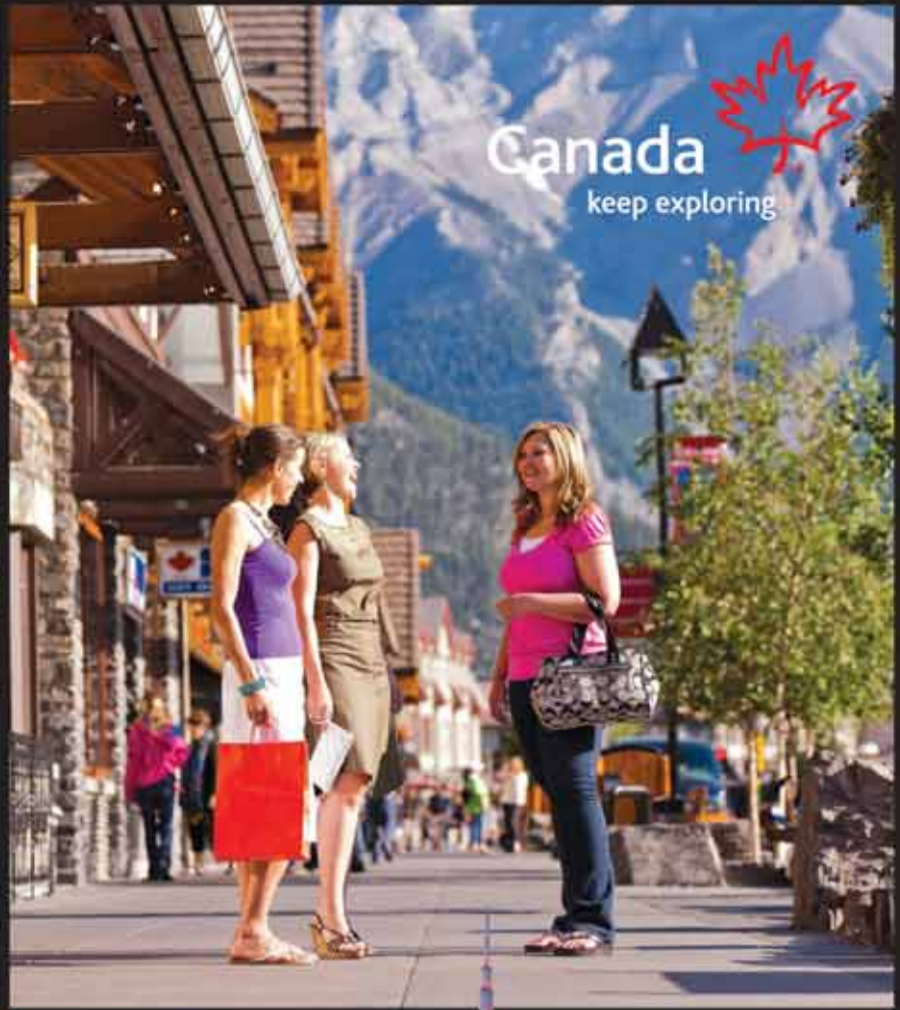
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Showcasing innovation

With a growing popularity from India reflecting market developments and expansion, the 49th ITB Berlin is all set to offer promising business prospects.



More than 10,000 exhibitors from around 190 countries and regions will be presenting their innovative products and services in the 26 halls on the Berlin exhibition grounds. Over 100,000

products and services at this year's event. TRAVELTALK gets details from **David Ruetz**, Head, ITB Berlin.

QWhat do you feel makes ITB different from all other travel and tourism exhibitions?

exhibitors anywhere in the world. We are proud to be able to welcome around 10,000 exhibitors from 190 countries again this year. Only 31 per cent of our exhibitors are from Germany. Over two-thirds travel here from abroad. The show mirrors the industry's entire value chain. In addition to the wide range of products that it showcases ITB Berlin is also a leader when it comes to innovativeness and providing information about marketplace activities. For more than ten years now, it has staged Europe's largest and most important travel trade convention.

QHas the participation in the India region increased this year?

As every year, India's participation is very important at ITB Berlin. There has been demand for places at the world's leading travel show from India. But as the show is completely booked, space is limited at ITB Berlin and we cannot offer more squaremeters to Indian exhibitors. Hall 5.2b, occupied by India, is again booked this year. We keep a waiting list, but unfortunately, we cannot increase the space although there is a huge interest from India.

“The increase in international buyers last year is proof that ITB Berlin continues to be the most important marketplace for the global travel industry. Many buyers come from Europe which is a very important source market for India. ITB Berlin seems to be a must for all Indian tourism players



David Ruetz
Head, ITB Berlin

trade visitors are expected to attend the world's largest travel trade show in order to find out about tourism industry's prod-

ucts. ITB Berlin is truly the world's leading travel trade show: It has the most balanced and most international portfolio of

Contd. on page 34 ▶

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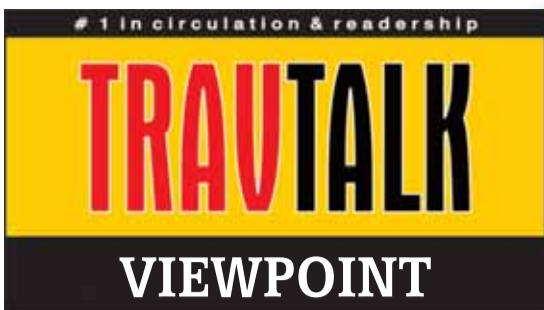
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New boost to Incredible India

India's natural beauty and mystical history continue to charm foreigners. The country has witnessed a substantial rise in the foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) last year. And post the eVoA implementation in November last year, the inbound tourism has taken a new direction.

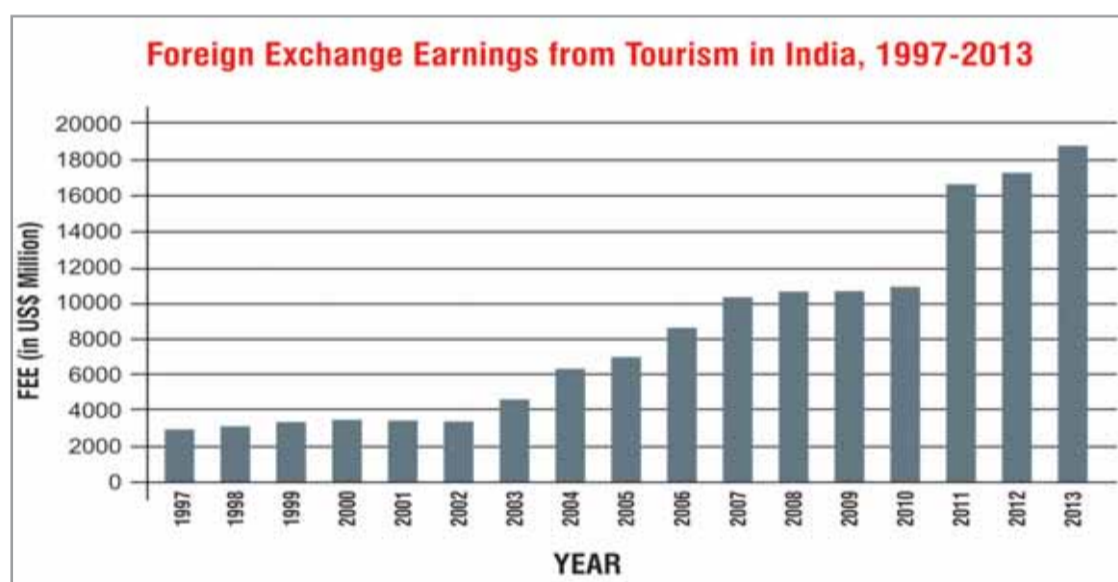
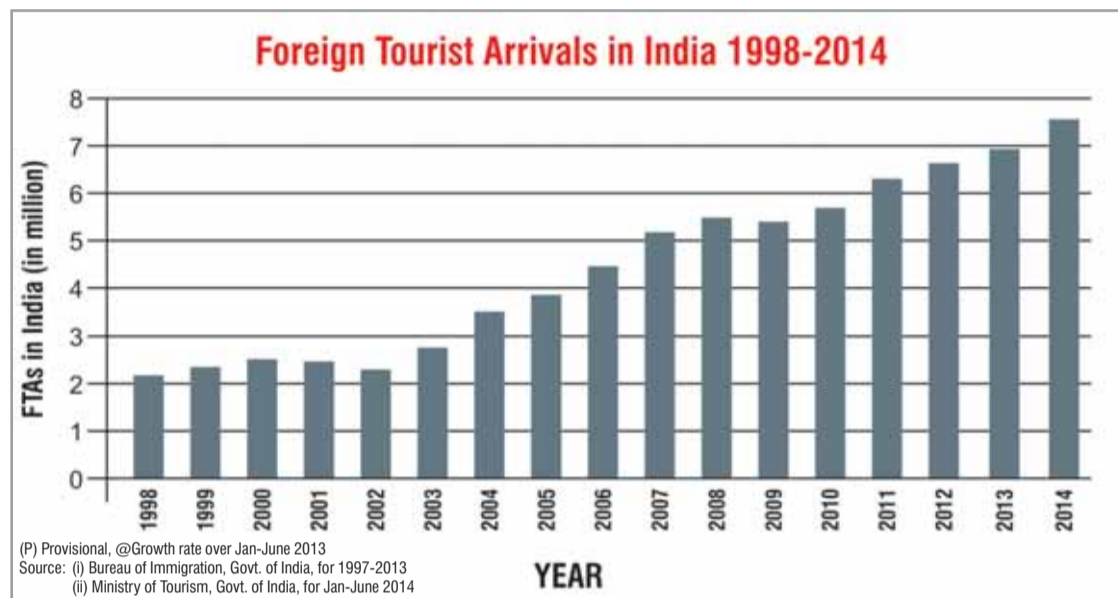
Now, the government is considering offering eVisas to six more countries, namely China, UK, Spain, Italy, France and Malaysia. This is even more good news for the travel industry. Among these source markets, we need to increase our focus in China particularly, which witnessed a rekindling of interest in India after the release of the film, Life of Pi. With the global trend of shorter and more frequent holidays to short-haul destinations, it is imperative for India Tourism to concentrate on more resilient and fast-growing markets of Asia and South East Asia. Government's thrust on pilgrimage and heritage tourism with emphasis on Buddhist tourism circuit centered around Gaya in Bihar will enable India to attract this segment of tourists from South East Asia, Japan and Sri Lanka. A dedicated campaign for the domestic market will also be a welcome change. Exploring India in the most cost effective manner should be the next step forward. Domestic tourism in the country has great potential and it is time that we go beyond depending on just the 'Incredible India' campaign.

India stands out with its unique offerings that can cater to interest of all kinds of travellers. However, the question is, have we really cashed in on this to develop India as a destination for 'all seasons and reasons' and unlock its full potential. Thus, policy-makers really need to make strategies for promoting Incredible India as a 365-day destination.

We also need to develop more airports under PPP in Tier II and Tier III cities. It now depends on how fast the government lays out the roadmap and makes it attractive for private players to bid for such projects. The travel associations also need to bring about radical changes and rebuild confidence among its members. The associations are making efforts to fight for agents' right to commission in varying degrees. Going forward, they have to aggressively work for survival of agents.

FTAs on the rise

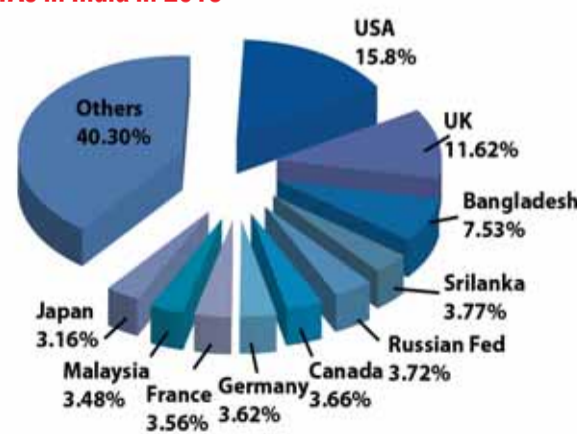
The Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) to India has grown in the last many years. The FTAs to India grew by 7.1 per cent during January to November 2014 over the corresponding period of 2013. FTAs during the period January-November 2014 were 65.85 lakh.



The FEE surge

The Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) from tourism in terms of USD grow by 5.2 per cent during January-November 2014 as compared to 4.9 per cent over the corresponding period of 2013. FEEs in November 2014 were `11,201 crore as compared to `10,663 crore in November 2013 and `9,723 crore in November 2012. The growth rate in FEEs in rupee terms in November 2014 over November 2013 was five per cent. FEE from tourism in terms of USD during January-November 2014 were USD 17.606 billion with a growth of 5.2 per cent, as compared to USD 16.742 billion with a growth of 4.9 per cent during January-November 2013 over the corresponding period of 2012.

Percentage share of Top 10 Countries for FTAs in India in 2013



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'India targets 1.1 billion tourists in 3 years'

Tourism Minister Dr Mahesh Sharma says that India targets to get one per cent share of the global tourist arrivals, which is around 1.1 billion in three years. At present, the country receives about 7 million foreign tourists annually.

TT BUREAU

Tourism continues to be one of the most important socio-economic activities globally and it is very relevant for India's economy as well. An investment of ₹10 lakh generates 18 jobs in agriculture, 45 jobs in manufacturing and 78 jobs in the tourism sector hence tourism plays an important component in the socio-economic development of the country.

tourists annually and the target is to get one per cent share of the global tourist arrivals which is around 1.1 billion in three years. The Union Government introduced Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) for 43 countries on 27th November, 2014, looking at the progress of this." Dr. Sharma adds, "Within few weeks of the eVisa launch, the total number of visas issued

online has multiplied manifold. These 44 countries covered about 42 per cent of the source market for Indian Tourism at the world level and Ministry of Home Affairs has been requested to include China, UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy also in this list of ETA countries. These countries would bring in 20 per cent of world tourism market for India."



Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State
for Tourism (I/C)

Within few weeks of the eVisa launch, the total number of visas issued online has multiplied manifold. These 44 countries covered about 42 per cent of the source market for Indian Tourism

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation says that India is poised to receive one per cent of global tourists in three years. Discussing this at *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*, Dr. Sharma said, "Presently, India receives about 7 million foreign

Smashing Records

► In the first few weeks of the eVisa launch, the total number of visas issued online has crossed the figure of 22,179

► Ministry of Home Affairs has been requested to include China, UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy also in this list of ETA countries

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Seaplanes in God's own country

With a beautiful shoreline on one side, Kerala has decided to get in seaplanes as a means of last-mile connectivity – not just for tourists but for the local travellers as well. 28-year-old Anupama TV, IAS, Additional Director General of Kerala Tourism, speaks to TRAVTALK about its plans for seaplanes and some interesting numbers from last year.

HAZEL JAIN

Q What was the idea behind getting seaplanes?

It was intended as the last-mile connectivity since we have so much of location advantage with respect to seaplanes. We have major aerodromes across the state. At the same time, there are water bodies also. There are many travellers who ask for last-mile connectivity to Kochi but they don't want to stay back. At the same time, they want to fly to Kumarokam. Seaplanes would be an advantage for us.

Q Tell us the status of the seaplane project.

The government of Kerala will be launching seaplanes as a last-mile connectivity by the next financial year starting April 2015. We have already had a soft launch for the seaplane but there were some issues with the local fisherman.

Q What was the problem they were having?

They wanted some sort of assurances from us and we are now looking into it. Their

queries revolved around whether the seaplanes will affect fishing. But it has proved successful in other countries that thrive on fishing. However, we are still doing due dili-

with them and hope to launch the service soon.

Q What routes will the seaplanes be launched on?

Punnamada, Kumarakom, Bolgatty, Munnar and Bekal in the state. The number of seaplanes will be decided only later.

was spent on marketing plus infrastructure-related activities. Most of what is remaining is going to infrastructure activities.

Q Will they be operated by MEHAIR?

The appointment process is through tender and the operators have not been finalized yet. Even the number of seaplanes will be decided only later.

Q How was 2014 for Kerala?

It was indeed good for us. Overall, we have seen a rise in tourism in the last one year. This year, we are looking forward to a better year than 2014 as there is no confusion regarding the liquor policy.

Q What are the priority areas to receive attention?

Last year, we were given a budget of ₹ 210 crore of which ₹ 45 crore was used only for marketing and ₹ 10 crore

Q Can you share some numbers for domestic and foreign tourists?

Foreign tourist arrivals went up from 7,94,696 in 2012 to 8,58,143 during the 12-month period from January 2013 showing an increase of 8.12 per cent. Domestic arrivals also registered a 7.75 per cent variation with arrivals going up from 1,00,76,854 in 2012 to 1,08,57,811 last year.

Foreign tourists in 2013 went up by 8.12 per cent, which led to an increase in forex earnings by 21.63 per cent. This, along with a rise in domestic tourist by 7.75 per cent, earned us a total revenue of ₹ 22,926.55 crore in 2013.

“The government of Kerala will be launching seaplanes as a last-mile connectivity by the next financial year starting April 2015. We have already had a soft launch for the seaplane but there were some issues with the local fisherman.”



Anupama TV
IAS, Additional Director General, Kerala Tourism

gence. We have always focused on responsible tourism, which is not possible unless you take your own people into confidence. We are in the process of discussing this

The immediate plan is to provide service in the priority circuit consisting of the three airports of Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut and the prime destinations like Astamudi,

Flying High on Water

- ▶ The immediate plan is to provide seaplane service in the priority circuit consisting of the three airports of Trivandrum, Cochin and Calicut and the prime destinations like Astamudi, Punnamada, Kumarakom, Bolgatty, Munnar and Bekal in the state
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Walk with the tribe in Chhattisgarh

Boosted by a fifteen-per cent growth in domestic tourists compared to 2013, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board is now gearing up to offer better experiences. It is also looking at tying up with a larger number of GSAs this year.



MEGHA PAUL

To boost tourism in the state and to offer new niche experiences to the travellers, Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (CTB) is now looking at promoting the 'Walk with the Tribe' experience. Visitors can go on a nature walk with the learned and local tribal people who have been living there for years. According to **Santosh K Misra**, Managing Director, CTB, with 80 per cent biodiversity and significant natural abundance, a major focus will be on promoting the 'Walk with the Tribe' experience,



unexplored tourism circuits, and development of collaboration between the locals and the State Tourism Department. "With this

new initiative, major milestones such as job creation in tribal sectors and improved standard of living can be achieved. We also seek to create vistas of awareness for international tourists whom we seek to attract with our engaging packages and specially designed tourism junkets," he added.

As Chhattisgarh aims to be India's biggest eco-tourism hub, the Board wants to partner with a larger number of travel agents. "Currently, we have over 15 GSAs working with us. All they need to do is write to us and we will get back to them soon. We will be offering hand-

Chhattisgarh partner state @Surajkund Mela 2015

At the Surajkund International Arts and Crafts Mela 2015, Chhattisgarh presented a diverse array of experiences for the visitors. The artisans and craftsperson from the tribal areas of Surguja and Bastar narrated their experiences and stories. One could visit the Apna Ghar, a replica of the tribal huts at Surguja where a tribal family was residing for 15 days of the festival. Apart from an exciting lineup of cultural performances, the theme offered an enticing teaser with reconstructions of several attractions. Displays of handlooms, artefacts, kiosks offering Chhattisgarhi cuisine and a fashion show conducted jointly with The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi— there was a lot that the state had to offer at the Surajkund Mela 2015.

some commissions to the agents for promoting the state along with helping them to form new itineraries. We are interested in working with agents across India. However, we will be emphasising on agents working actively in Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh as these form our main source markets," he pointed out. The Board is also looking for Public Private Partnerships (PPP) to strengthen its tourist service sector. "Our state has an abundance of natural beauty and is rich in minerals. To keep it intact, we don't want to attract huge crowd and therefore we are targeting HNIs. Our infrastructure is in place, now we want to strengthen our

service sector, for which we are looking at private investments or projects based on the PPP model," he added.

The state is also betting big on emerging source markets. Talking about the new development, Misra said, "There is immense potential in relatively new source markets of South East Asia such as Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. These are the countries the Tourism Board is looking forward to tapping." This year, the Board aims to capitalise on its relationship with the travel trade associations. Walk with the Tribe' experience, unexplored tourism circuits, and development of collaboration

between the locals and the State Tourism Department. "

Tapping Tourists

▶ With Walk with the Tribe experience initiative, major milestones such as job creation in tribal sectors and improved standard of living can be achieved

▶ The state also seeks to create vistas of awareness for international tourists whom it seeks to attract with engaging packages and specially designed tourism junkets

“ We will be offering handsome commissions to the agents for promoting the state along with helping them to form new itineraries. We are interested in working with agents across India.

Santosh K Misra
Managing Director,
CTB



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Uttarakhand invests in undoing damage

After the June 2013 disaster, Uttarakhand is going all out to promote itself as a safe destination, specially for pilgrims and adventure travellers. Harish Rawat, the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand speaks about the investment trajectory.



HAZEL JAIN

Q What is the agenda of your visit?

I am visiting Mumbai to interact with the travel trade here to share my vision for Uttarakhand, specially tourism. After the June 2013 disaster, we learnt a few lessons and carried on with determination, new investments and new plans. We have now opened new opportunities for tourism and we want to share this with the trade.

Q What investments has the state made since 2013?

We have invested in new hotels and resorts, upgrading existing guest houses, developing trekking trails and eco-tourism projects across the state. We are also developing ropeway projects under the PPP model. More importantly, we have upgraded the infrastructure for Hemkund Sahib Yatra and the Char Dham Yatra, which will start from April 26, 2015. We expect the number of visitors for Char Dham yatra to reach 40 lakh this year.

Q What kind of upgrades will the pilgrims experience?

We have taken various measures to ensure a safe journey for all pilgrims coming to our state. The state government had even issued a few directives making departments responsible for the safety of visitors. Biometric registration counters are already in place at entry points of state and also in yatra routes. The state government has also set up 60 helipads across the state of which four helipads are at pilgrim sites. They have also set up 4,000 shelters with all facilities along the routes for visitors. We have also set up a special control room at the Uttarakhand Tourism headquarters in Dehradun that will be managed by a Nodal Officer.

Q What is the kind of investment you have made for this?

We have earmarked ` 5,000 crore to be spent over five years. Till date, we have already spent ` 700-800 crores.

Next What

► For adventure tourism, they are drafting a special policy which is under process

► They also have a film tourism policy which is under Cabinet discussion at the moment to facilitate film shoots in Uttarakhand

We will double this to ` 1,600 crore in the financial year 2015-16. We have also improved air connectivity with three new air strips that are ready to use plus 50 helipads that will be ready soon. We will be offering a subsidy of 25 per cent for senior citizen pilgrims for helicopters to Kedarnath. The state government is also giving tax holiday for one year to hoteliers on the route of Char Dham.

Q How is the state planning to promote Tehri Dam for tourism?

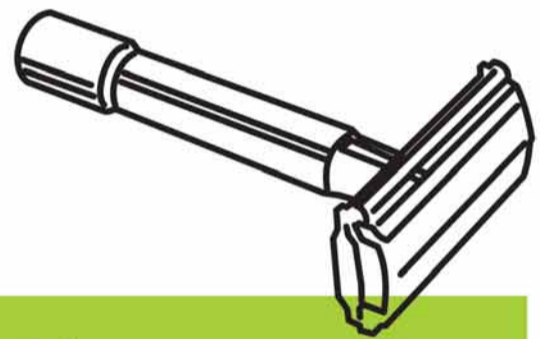
We want to develop Tehri Dam as a tourist spot on the lines of Lake Como in Italy with boat rides, restaurants and shopping around Tehri lake. For this, we have allocated ` 100 crore.

Q What about leisure and adventure tourism?

We now have a tourism policy in place for this. For adventure tourism, we are drafting a special policy which is under process. We also have a film tourism policy which is under Cabinet discussion.

“ The state government had issued a few directives making departments responsible for the safety of visitors. Biometric registration counters are already in place at entry points of state and also in yatra routes.

Harish Rawat
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand



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Goa coming out with app stations

With Goa keen to tap new markets like Spain, Japan and China, Sanjeev Mendes, Member, State Level Marketing and Promotion Committee, says that in two years time, Goa Tourism will present a different side altogether.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q *Despite Russia being one of the top source markets, the rouble trouble has affected tourism in Goa. How are things now?*

The rouble trouble has affected Goa, no doubt about it, but it's not that we have had a very drastic drop in numbers. We still have Russian tourists and tourists from Europe coming to Goa. But now, we are focusing on new markets also and we are looking at tapping markets like Spain, Japan and China and we are participating in international fairs like FITUR, ITB Berlin, etc. The German market is showing signs of revival back again, with flights coming in via Condore, from Munich to Goa. Options have been open now and options are open wide.

Q *How has the government's eVisa policy helped Goa tourism?*

eVisa has opened Goa in a very big way. If you look at the statistics, we are No 3 on the

list for Visas on Arrival and we have issued close to about 2000-odd visas in the last couple of months and we've got people coming in from USA and all other destinations. It has become a big boost and

time ago; what is happening on that front?

We did a recce for the Hop-on Hop-off during the exposition of St Francis Xavier and we have decided on routes and in the coming season, we

final permissions. By next season, we'll have things in order.

Q *What are you doing about safety for tourists? Is Goa doing enough?*

From what we were almost three or four years ago to now, we have gone several steps ahead in terms of safety. We have tourist police on the beach who restrict people from taking alcohol on the beach. They try and restrict people from littering the beaches; we have got lifeguards now in practically all the beaches of Goa. The lifeguard timings have been extended from 7pm right up till midnight in some crowded beaches. We are doing things in terms of safety as we want visitors to feel safe in Goa.

Q *How is the state tourism department working with travel agents? Are you doing enough?*

Yes we are; we have got a lot of committees. At the

moment, we have now formed a new marketing committee where we are roping in travel agents and taking them to roadshows and making them participate in international events. We are also promoting a lot of hinterland tourism and we are developing sectors and routes for that and very soon we are going to go digital with apps. So, tourists can come with their

smart phones, download the app and they get information about the route. We are also looking at having app stations where you reach a particular point and a pop up will come up which will give you a description of the place you are in. All these might take around 2 years to develop and in that time you'll see a different side of Goa Tourism altogether.

“ If you look at the statistics, we are No 3 on the list for Visas on Arrival and we have issued close to about 2000-odd visas in the last couple of months and we've got people coming in from USA and all other destinations



Sanjeev Mendes
State Level Marketing and Promotion Committee, Goa

supplemented a lot of loss of business because of various economic factors everywhere.

Q *The Goa Tourism Minister had talked about starting Hop-on Hop-off tours and a slew of other initiatives some*

are going to fix those routes and extend it right from Panjim to old Goa and surrounding areas of Panjim. In regard to changing rooms and locking rooms, those are also in the pipeline as land has been identified and work will start soon after issuing of tenders and

Goa goes tech way

▶ At the moment, Goa Tourism has now formed a new marketing committee where they are roping in travel agents

They are taking them to roadshows and making them participate in international events

They are also promoting a lot of hinterland tourism and are developing sectors and routes for that and very soon they are going to go digital with apps

So, tourists can come with their smart phones, download the app and they get information about the route.

They are also looking at having app stations where you reach a particular point and a pop up will come up which will give you a description of the place you are in



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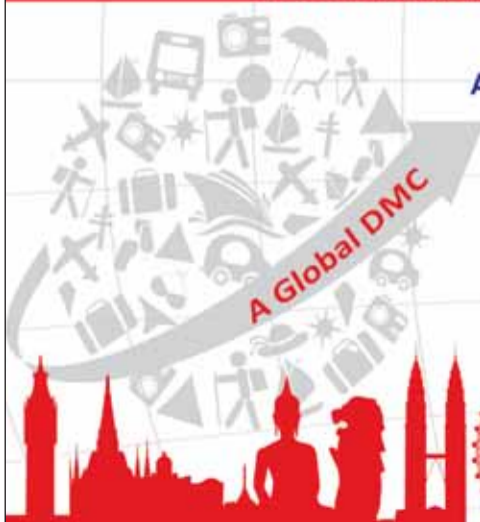
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Now a consultant for tourism infrastructure

After financing over 700 tourism projects and supporting the setting up of 44,000 hotel rooms in the country, TFCI is looking at playing a proactive dual role as a preferred consultant for tourism infrastructure development as well as financing projects.



MEGHA PAUL

Talking about the proactive steps of the new government in tourism and the role that TFCI will play as a dedicated financial corporation for the industry, **SK Sangar**, MD, Tourism Finance Corporation of India (TFCI) said, "For the past 25 years, TFCI has been playing its role in supporting the tourism industry in the country. The company is better equipped than anybody else in making realistic appraisals about projects. TFCI has funded over 700 projects so far and supported creation of 44,000 hotel rooms in the country."

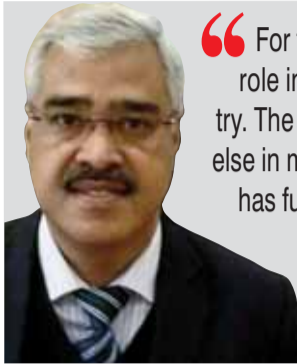
Elaborating on the new initiatives, he added, "Our role as a consultant as well as a financier will become more prominent now considering the positive outlook of the new government. We have stepped up our marketing efforts by participating in various industry events, conferences, exhibitions, etc. in recent months. We are also working closely with tourism departments at the Central and state levels so that we can offer consultancy and financial support to them."

The company is primarily looking at three segments. "One is financing greenfield projects; we finance projects approved by the state governments and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Another segment is financing our existing clients for renovations and upgradations, extensions, etc. Hotels require periodical renovations and upgradations, etc. The third category that we are exploring now, as not too many new projects are happening, is supporting projects which have already completed the construction and started operations but suffering from cash flow crisis. We cherry pick such projects, looking at them in entirety for financing."

There has been ample addition of room inventory in the

3-centric approach

- ▶ First way is financing greenfield projects
- ▶ Another segment is financing existing clients for renovations and upgradation, extensions, etc.
- ▶ The third category is supporting projects which have already completed the construction and started operations but suffering from cash flow crisis



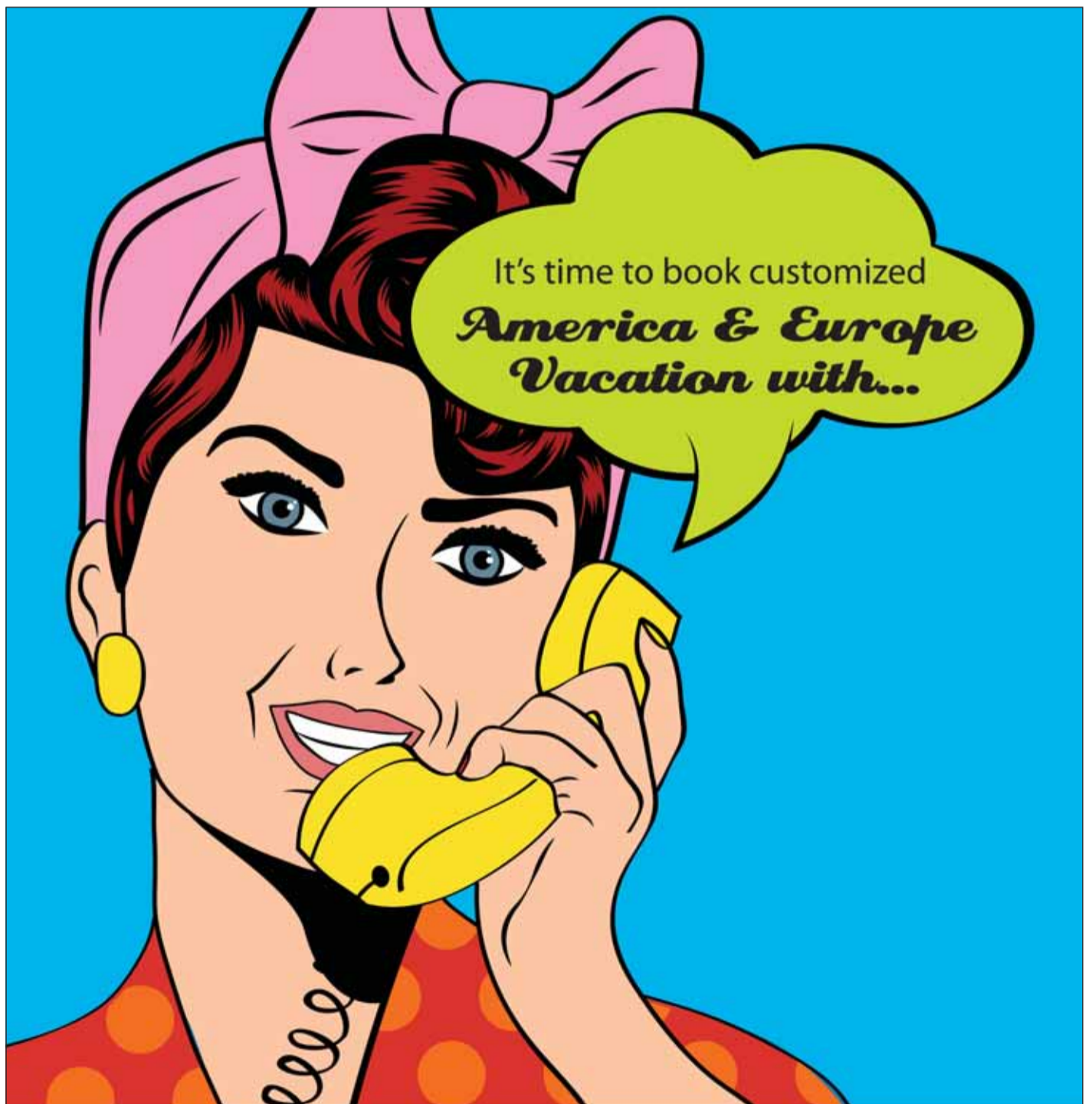
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SK Sangar

Director, Tourism Finance Corporation of India (TFCI)

last five years on the back of phenomenal growth in the hotel industry in India. This has however, led to an over-supply in the market, lamented Sangar. "As the overall economy was going through kind of sluggishness, the market was not able to absorb the additional supply. The excess supply was all the more palpable in the upscale and upper upscale segment, where actual demand for FDI was required. Until and unless

the economic situation improves, commercial exploitation of FDI will not happen. It is good that the economy is finally opening up, and it is expected to boost business travel into India in the coming years. The improved travel sentiments will help in getting the excess supply absorbed over the next one to two years time." Once that happens, there will be another cycle of investments into the high-end hotel segment, he predicted.



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Homestay boost to Bengal tourism

AR Bardhan, Principal Secretary, West Bengal Tourism talks to TRAVTALK about recent initiatives taken by the state tourism board to boost homestays, PPP mode, work with the travel trade and develop new tourism circuits.



MEGHA PAUL

High on PPP mode

West Bengal's leisure sector is likely to see private investments worth around ₹ 2,000 crore in the next few years. In the coming three years, we will pursue ventures based on the public-private partnership model aggressively. Also, we are offering incentives to private players to set up hospitality projects in the state. The state has approved the proposal for setting up five

resorts by Ambuja Neotia Group worth ₹ 300 crore. Ambuja Neotia group will build five premium leisure properties, including one each at Ghoom (near Darjeeling), Makaanbari, Lataguri and Sundarbans. Club Mahindra and Techno India are also building properties in the Sundarbans area. For Kolkata, the state capital, two properties – one by Crown Group and another



coming five years. For the same, we are working on new advertisements to promote tourism in the state and attract both domestic as well as foreign tourists here. This may feature Shah Rukh Khan. Khan is the brand ambassador of the state and also co-owns the city-based IPL team, Kolkata Knight Riders. The proposed new ad campaign will cost a minimum of ₹ 10 crore, without any endorsement from any

Growing tourist numbers

The present government has taken several initiatives to boost tourism in West Bengal. Going by the current trends, tourism is growing fast and thus is an impactful sector for the state economy. The flow of tourist traffic to West Bengal has been steadily increasing. According to India Tourism Statistics 2013, the state stands on the ninth position in the country with respect to domestic tourist footfall. In terms of international tourists, the state ranks No. six, accounting for almost six per cent of inbound tourism to the country.

brand ambassador. The new commercial to promote tourism could be ready in the next three months.

“The flow of tourist traffic to West Bengal has been steadily increasing. According to India Tourism Statistics 2013, the state stands on the ninth position in the country with respect to domestic tourist footfall.



AR Bardhan
Principal Secretary, West Bengal Tourism

er by The Park Group -- have been proposed envisaging an investment of ₹ 1,100 crore. The Public Works Department has taken up a project for building 30 motels in the Northern region of the State. The plan is to build 100 such facilities across the state in the next couple of years.

It's all about home stays

The West Bengal government is bringing out a homestay tourism policy in a few months to financially aid

those who are interested in putting up travellers at their residences. Homestays are a hit with international tourists. Around 100 homestays have come up in the hamlets of North Bengal, particularly in the Dooars region (the floodplains and foothills of the eastern Himalayas in northeast India around Bhutan).

The SRK twist

We are aiming to increase the domestic and international footfalls in the state by about ten per cent year-on-year in the

A Home Away From Home

▶ The West Bengal government is bringing out a home stay tourism policy in a few months to financially aid those who are interested in putting up travellers at their residences

▶ Home stays are a hit with international tourists

▶ Around 100 home stays have come up in the hamlets in North Bengal, particularly in the Dooars region

WB tracks new tourism circuits

Identifying new tourism circuits and developing infrastructure will be the points of focus for West Bengal Tourism industry.



MEGHA PAUL

The two-pronged approach will be used by the state to develop and enhance places like Darjeeling in North Bengal and islands of Sundarbans that offer immense scope for tourism.

After promoting itself aggressively in the inbound market, West Bengal is promoting itself in the domestic market. According to Amlan Jyoti Saha, Joint Director, West Bengal Tourism Corporation, the West Bengal government is keen to participate in various travel and tourism shows being conducted by various travel tour operators, irrespective of volume, genesis, and other dimensions of the festivals.

“The Department has confirmed participation in tourism fairs at Surat, Pune, Hyderabad, Kochi, apart from the ones at metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad in an assertive



Amlan Jyoti Saha
Joint Director
West Bengal Tourism Corporation

The department has confirmed participation in tourism fairs at Surat, Pune, Hyderabad, Kochi, apart from the ones at metro cities

way for ensuring better business to cater to the domestic and inbound market,” he said. The participation in

road shows is expected to be one of the right forums for capitalising opportunities to ensure substantial increase of tourist inflow in West Bengal, Saha added.

Looking beyond conventional hubs in West Bengal, the State Tourism Department is also setting up new eco-tourism hubs. Tourism in Bengal will be developed and enhanced in a two-pronged way, he pointed out. “Firstly, the state will identify new tourism circuits. Secondly, it will develop infrastructure. Places such as Darjeeling in North Bengal and islands of Sundarbans offer immense scope for tourism development. However, lack of adequate infrastructure has always been a bottleneck,” he said. The tourism board is making new eco-tourism hubs in Jharkhali in the Sundarbans, Sabujdweep (an island on the Ganga) and at Jharkhand in West Midnapore district. These will come up on a private-public-partnership model, he informed. ↘

Leveraging Kuoni's core competency

Kuoni's decision to focus on its core business as a service provider to the global travel industry might be a dramatic move but it definitely seems to be a sound business plan. Rajeev Wagle, MD, Kuoni Travel Group India, clears the air.



HAZEL JAIN

Q Why did Kuoni take the decision to exit B2C business?

This was a strategic decision. Kuoni felt that it needs to exit the B2C business in India, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Benelux, UK, and Hong Kong. This accounts for about 40 per cent of the turnover today and hires about 3,800 people. It felt that it doesn't have the ability to finance each of the businesses with full potential and it therefore may be in the best interest of this business to find a new owner. This move has nothing to do with the performance of the unit.

The three verticals that will continue is our visa vertical (VFS) that is handled by Zubin Karkaria and is the B2G (Business to Government) business, Global Travel Distribution (GTD) that does FIT, and Global Travel Services (GTS) that does destination specialists and groups.

Q Is there an update on the new ownership?

We have started the search for new ownership and it is being controlled by the head office. We expect the business to change hands by this year end. They are running a process that will take a good part of 2015. An investment banker will make the Information Memorandum which is a document used to market a business to prospective buyers. He will talk to prospective buyers and then decide along with Kuoni which of them have the most potential. We as management will have to make presentations to these prospective investors.

Q What does a change in ownership mean to your employees and customers?

A change of ownership does not change the business model. When you shift ownership, the owner changes but the business remains the same. It is business as usual for us. We continue doing our Holiday Bazaars; we continue

doing our bookings as well. We have bookings till winter already.

But yes, there is some uncertainty and we need to comfort the employees and customers. Our management team is doing a lot of that. We have 1,200 employees and we have reached almost 70-80 per cent of them. We have had calls with almost all of them in the last two to three weeks. We have also clarified to all our customers. Letters have gone to each customer, employee and partner explaining the situation.

Q What is the situation right now?

It is an uncertain period right now but we are very clear where we are going. We have made presentations to Kuoni's senior team and all the MDs and FDs were told very clearly that they will be accountable for making certain that we hold on to every single customer and key employee and deliver the budget during this interim period. We have been told that they will involve us in the entire process so when the new owner comes in, we will discuss how the transaction will be made.



“3 verticals to continue is our visa vertical (VFS), the B2G (Business to Govt) business, Global Travel Distribution (GTD) that does FIT, and Global Travel Services (GTS) that does destination specialists and groups.

Rajeev Wagle
MD, Kuoni Travel Group India



Changing hands

- ▶ A change of ownership does not change the business model
- ▶ When you shift ownership, the owner changes but the business remains the same
- ▶ It is business as usual for Kuoni India
- ▶ It continues doing Holiday Bazaars



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CTC's B2B Meetings & Education Program in 3 cities

■ The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) will organise meetings and education program in three cities for travel agents in Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru from March 23-26, 2015. The B2B sessions will be attended by Canadian travel partners who will update the travel

Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC), Tourism Calgary, VIA Rail.

SanJeet, India Representative, Canadian Tourism Commission said "In 2015, CTC will be focusing on the newly added Canadian Signature Experiences (CSE). Besides Delhi and Mumbai,



agents on the unique travel products in Canada. These will be followed by destination trainings by our provincial partners.

The sessions will be held at the Four Seasons Hotel in Mumbai, The Lalit Great Eastern in Kolkata and the Taj Vivanta in Bangalore. Some of the participating Canadian sellers are Air Canada, Banff Lake Louise Tourism, Cal Tours, Fairmont, Hornblower, Jasper Tourism, Ontario

we would also be targeting Tier II and Tier III cities through education programs. CSE helps the travel agents package the products better and sell more confidently. Emphasis will also be on first-hand experience of the destination via trade FAM trips and attendance at Rendez-vous Canada (RVC). Joint co-ops are an integral part of our strategy moving forward to work together with our partners helping sell Canada better."

Facilitating \$7- bn deals

The World Travel Market Portfolio facilitated almost \$7 billion (£4.2 million) in travel and tourism industry deals in 2014.



World Travel Market, which takes place in London every November, is the WTM Portfolio's largest event spanning 35 years with almost 5,000 exhibitors and 51,500 participants. World

In total, in 2014 the WTM Portfolio hosted;

- ❖ 1,512 Main Stand Holder exhibitors
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- ❖ 15,263 Buyers (including 479 Hosted Buyers)
- ❖ 46,766 Visitors

Arabian Travel Market, which takes place in Dubai every May, was launched in 1994. ATM 2014 saw over 2,700 exhibitors sign business deals worth more than \$2.1 billion (£1.3 billion) with 23,500 visitors.

Paulo. The April event brings the world to Latin America and promotes Latin America to the world. WTM Latin America's more than 1,000 exhibitors agreed deals worth more than \$341 million (£206 million).

Portfolio offers unrivalled business opportunities for its exhibitors making its events the places where the travel and tourism industry conducts its business.

"World Travel Market is a fixture in the global industry's calendar, attracting the world's most influential



Travel Market 2014 was responsible for \$3.7 billion (£2.5 billion) in industry contracts for exhibitors negotiating business deals with more than 9,100 buyers from the WTM Buyers' Club.

WTM Latin America was launched in 2012 in Sao

WTM Africa, the event that puts the world's spotlight on Africa and promotes Africa



buyers. ATM, WTM Latin America and WTM Africa are all the leading events in their regions, running hugely successful Hosted Buyer Programmes, guaranteeing exhibitors business meetings with only the most relevant buyers. "The fact that the WTM Portfolio generates \$7 billion in industry business deals demonstrates; The WTM Portfolio Means Business."

The WTM Portfolio 2015 schedule of events is;

- ❖ WTM Africa, Cape Town, 15-17 April
- ❖ WTM Latin America, Sao Paulo, 22-24 April
- ❖ Arabian Travel Market, Dubai, 4-7 May
- ❖ World Travel Market, London, 2-5 November

to the world, launched in 2014 and saw almost 4,000 industry professionals negotiate deals worth \$314 million (£189 million). World Travel Market Portfolio, Director, Craig Moyes said: "The WTM



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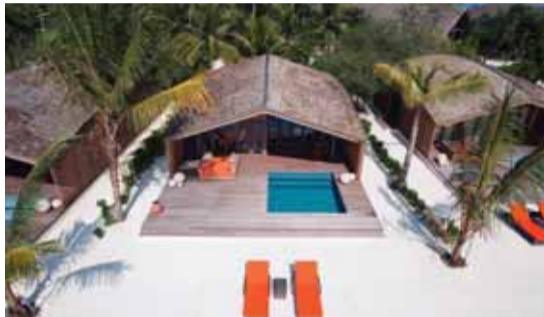


Paradise for honeymooners

Club Med has announced the launch of its new 'Finolhu Villas' in the Maldives, which is set to open soon. This property is especially focussing on couples and honeymooners.

TT BUREAU

The Finolhu Villas, located very close to the Club Med Kani Premium Resort, will offer



guests the most refined, luxury facilities and services as well as access to the Kani Premium Resort. "For honeymooners seeking the trip of a lifetime, or those planning a romantic getaway, the Finolhu Villas without doubt offers one of the most

exclusive and dreamy settings for a holiday," says **Heidi Kunkel**, CEO, Club Med East South Asia Pacific. He adds, "We can guarantee that guests

setting, using energy-saving construction techniques and solar-powered energy."

The adults-only villas are pitched squarely at honeymooners and couples and are the latest addition to the Club Med Kani Premium Resort. Guests can choose from Kani 4 Tridents Resort premium rooms, 5 Tridents luxury space Suites, and new private Finolhu Villas. The property is just a 40-minute speedboat ride from the Maldives' international airport.

will have a truly unforgettable experience in some quite simply idyllic surroundings."

Afeef Hussain, owner, Finolhu Villas says, "All villas are built to the highest eco-friendly standards in a beautiful natural

Meriem Hall, Club Med designer for interior and advisory, describes her interior design concept in four sentences, "My essence is beauty; My passion is natural; My attitude is elegance; My memories are my life."

Addressing India market

Seema Pande, Group Director of Sales and Marketing, The Address Hotels & Resorts, tells **TRAVTALK** why it is nice to come back to India and discusses the group's future initiatives.

SAMAPTI DAS

For The Address Hotels, India has always been an important market. That is the reason why the group loves coming back here to participate in various travel and tourism fairs like OTM, explains **Seema Pandey**, Group Director of Sales and Marketing, The Address Hotels & Resorts.

but we finished very well. We had a great last quarter. 2014 was a good year for us."

Pande informed about the opening of their mid market brand with six to eight hotels under it. She said, "Though budget is not the right word I should be using, but these hotels are going to fit the market with a certain level of

like VIDA but with an Arabic twist. It is a boutique hotel in Dubai which people generally don't get there with shiny buildings like The Address.

Looking positive about the upcoming years, Pande said, "The Address Boulevard opens in the first quarter of 2016. We have also got the whole township being built in

"It's always good to come back to India and meet our regular clients," she said, adding that the year 2014, especially the second half, was amazing. Though it was a bit challenging due to the increase in inventory in Dubai, the group had quite a lot of hotels opened with large number of rooms. Pande said, "It did take us a while to pick up

“ The Address Boulevard opens in the first quarter of 2016. We have also got the whole township being built in Istanbul which is an Emaar township with an Address there

Seema Pande
Group Director of Sales and Marketing
The Address Hotels & Resorts



Mark The Address

► These hotels are going to fit the market with a certain level of spending

► The Address Boulevard opens in the first quarter of 2016

► Address has also been announced in Abuja in Nigeria which is another growing market for us

spending. I think it's going to be a part of the vision of Sheikh Mohammed to make Dubai an affordable place by 2020. Given the fact that they are backed by Emaar, the properties are amazingly beautiful."

Recently **Manzil Downtown Dubai** also reopened at the end of December last year which is

Istanbul which is an Emaar township with an Address there. Address has also been announced in Abuja in Nigeria which is another growing market for us. The most exciting one at the moment is the Opera House, which is going to be opened in the Downtown area soon. It's going to be a part of Emaar Hospitality."

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'Changing feminine work culture'

Empowering women in the workplace has been on the global agenda for over a decade. This is especially important in the travel and hospitality industry, currently among the largest and fastest-growing industries worldwide, forecasted to support 328 million jobs, or 10 per cent of the workforce, by 2022.

Women currently comprise 60 percent of the industry's workforce, and the number will continue to rise to fulfill the exponential increase in opportunities (World Travel & Tourism Council). But while men comprise 25 per cent of the managerial and senior-level positions within the industry, only 18 per cent of women do (HVS Executive Search).

What was once thought to be a 'glass ceiling' for women is now heralded more a misnomer. Recent research indicates that current challenges to advancement in the workplace are really due to an 'invisible obstacle course' that involves womens' self-imposed barriers and the remiss of organisations to help women manage these barriers via a lack of active leadership development (HVS Executive, 2012). This online survey of 54 male and 45 women global industry leaders found the most common self-imposed barriers involved family and

household responsibilities holding a higher priority, as well as work-life balance, whereas the most prominent workplace barriers were lack of mentoring, lack of careful career planning, stereotyping, and perception of feminine traits.

I couldn't agree more. When I first learned I was pregnant with twins, I was attending the World Business Forum in New York City. Instantly overwhelmed with how I would balance furthering my career as a professional with managing the needs of two children (e.g. "having it all"), I found my solace during a keynote by Andrea Jung (who was then the CEO of Avon). She talked about leading a global company while taking care of her young family. She said, "As a working mother, you will miss the little things, but the goal is to never miss the big things." That was it – I thought I had the answer. I would miss the little day-to-day activities as I traveled the

country leading sales for an education company, but I would be there the first time they walked, for their first words, the first day of school and more. I felt relieved. But as the next six years came and went, and I was missing all the "little" things, it was clear to me that I had it all wrong. What I had right though, was knowing that I didn't have to give up on my dream of having it all, but I had to let go of the idea that there would be perfect balance in my life.

That's why it's so important for leaders in the industry to create a deliberate plan to help move women forward, by understanding their self-imposed barriers and working toward a more balanced solution.

As president of Kendall College, Chicago's top-ranked culinary and hospitality school, I have the opportunity to change lives, and specifically, to ensure I develop female leaders who self-advocate, are resilience, inclusive, and can envision themselves running an organization. Leadership development is woven through-

out the curriculum, and it's never been more important.

Kendall's student population is 76% female, so fostering an environment where men and women see themselves as equals is important to the development of these future leaders. One example of how men and women work together

on projects and to solve real world business problems is Capstone, where interdisciplinary teams on a complex consulting project, and it's often the female students who take the lead on a variety of tasks.

Overall, the future is bright for creating more empowering workplace cultures for women, especially in the hospitality education sector.

Coping with Challenges

▶ Current challenges to advancement in the workplace are really due to an 'invisible obstacle course' that involves womens' self-imposed barriers and the remiss of organisations to help women manage these barriers via a lack of active leadership development (HVS Executive, 2012)

▶ This online survey of 54 male and 45 women global industry leaders found the most common self-imposed barriers involved family and household responsibilities holding a higher priority, as well as work-life balance, whereas the most prominent workplace barriers were lack of mentoring, lack of careful career planning, stereotyping, and perception of feminine traits.



(The writer is Emily Williams Knight, President, Kendall College)



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Tigerair claws big on India

The budget airline is looking to increase frequencies on the Hyderabad sector this summer. This was revealed by Teh Yikchuan, Director- Sales and Marketing, Tigerair

MEGHA PAUL

After spreading its wings across Southeast Asia, one of the largest Asian low-cost airlines, Tigerair, is betting

to six flights by this summer season," he said. "Apart from Hyderabad, we do not have any plans to increase frequency or add any new destination in our network in India," he

number of connecting passengers from our interline agreement with SpiceJet. The deal was thus, not yielding revenues for Tigerair as projected. Hence, we decided to call off the agreement."

“We have seen very less number of connecting passengers from our interline agreement with SpiceJet. The deal was thus, not yielding revenues for Tigerair as projected. Hence, we decided to call off the agreement

Teh Yikchuan
Director- Sales and Marketing,
Tigerair



On how the year 2015 will shape up the aviation industry in India, he opined, "We expect the aviation industry in India to grow significantly in 2015 on account of multiple reasons. Apart from improved consumer sentiment, special initiatives taken by the government such as attracting foreign investment, improving airport infrastructure, development of a progressive civil aviation policy, reviewing bilateral agreements with countries to augment capacities and marketing India as a favourable tourist destination overseas will lead to increased flow of traffic." With the country being one of the fastest growing aviation markets, the Indian government has set the right direction to accelerate development and growth through such positive steps, he added.

big on India. After stirring the market in South India with rock-bottom fares for flights to its hub in Singapore earlier, Tigerair is looking at strengthening its India imprint.

added. Other flights offered by Tigerair are daily flights from Bengaluru, four times a week from Cochin and 12 flights from Trichy.

Talking about the airline's stand on scrapping of the three-year interline pact with SpiceJet, Yikchuan, commented, "We have seen very less

The budget airline is witnessing strong load factors on its India routes and is looking to increase frequencies on the Hyderabad sector this summer. **Teh Yikchuan**, Director-Sales and Marketing, Tigerair, said, "We have recorded an average load factor of 80 per cent on Indian routes. Currently we are operating out of five points in the Indian skies — Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi and Trichy. We launched our operations in India with South India. Our Chennai flight has gone up to nine times a week. As of now, we operate five flights out of Hyderabad and will increase it

Future Plans

- ▶ Tigerair expects the aviation industry in India to grow significantly in 2015 on account of multiple reasons
- ▶ Apart from improved consumer sentiment, special initiatives taken by the government such as attracting foreign investment, improving airport infrastructure, development of a progressive civil aviation policy, reviewing bilateral agreements with countries to augment capacities and marketing India as a favourable tourist destination overseas will lead to increased flow of traffic

Vistara takes delivery of its fifth Airbus

Vistara took delivery of its fifth Airbus A320 aircraft recently. Vistara is now on the brink of further increasing its operations to new destinations and expand its world class travel experience to a larger customer base with the addition of this aircraft to its fleet. The expansion is in response to the growing demand on its existing routes - Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.



Vistara offers five daily services between Delhi and Mumbai with a choice of two early morning

departures from Delhi and Mumbai, in response to corporate feedback and demand.

World's 3rd highest air passenger growth

India saw an eight per cent growth in air passenger traffic in 2014 in comparison to 2013, the highest after China and Russia.

Global traffic saw a rise of 5.9 per cent, according to data released by International Air Transport Association (IATA). The pas-

senger carrying capacity in India also saw a rise by 5.7 per cent in 2014 with a 76.3 per cent load factor or capacity utilisation.



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Give impetus to tourism

► Contd. from page 3

Even though we are yet to complete three months of the launch of eVisa, we have already issued 65,000 eVisa, which is very promising and a very impressive figure." He added, "The largest numbers of Visa recipients are the nationals from America and Australia. America is number one and Australia is number two followed by other countries."

eVisa through ETA

Based on MOTs feedback from the travel industry, they have requested the Government of India to add at least five more countries. He adds, "These 44 countries which have been allowed cover our Global Market Share of around 43 per cent. If you add another five countries, then 20 per cent is added and our Source Market Share for eVisa becomes 63 per cent. These five countries include China, UK, Spain, Italy and France."

Tourism as foremost FEE

Talking about tourism as a revenue earner, he said, "Based on the RBI figures, in the calendar year 2014, tourism industry has earned 20 Billion US dollars in foreign exchange

for the Government of India. We are at number three as far as the Gross Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) are concerned. Tourism comes after the IT and textile sector. That is because Foreign Exchange Spending in tourism sector on importing the equipments is less than five per cent. Compared to the IT and textile industries where it is between 15 to 20 per cent depending upon the equipments and machineries, if you are to take into account the Net Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs), we are at number one."

Union Budget

On the upcoming budget, he said, "Due to the priority that Gol has given to tourism, honorable Prime Minister has emphasised on the importance of tourism at most of the international forums as well as the domestic forum. We are quite hopeful that we will get an increase in the budget allocation. It may be ten per cent or 100 per cent depending on the Government's resource position; however, I am quite hopeful it will be an upswing. The allocation for MOT is presently 1,000 crore, I expect it to go up by at least 50 per cent if not more." ↴

Inbound on growth trajectory

► Contd. from page 3



Thanks to the eVoA; we are looking at more international tourist arrivals. We predict 15 per cent growth in inbound. This will help India achieve one per cent of the share of global tourism. Due to enhanced air connectivity, more airlines are also expected to come forward, with India as their hub in Asia. India will be the choicest destination for MICE, Medical, and Spiritual Tourism. All this will mean big business for the travel agents, tour operators and hotel players.

Subhash Goyal
Chairman, STIC Travel Group



With 0.7 per cent share of world tourism, our country ranks 10th in international inbound in Asia. Going forward, we need to remove roadblocks at policy level. We need to revisit policy to eradicate double taxation and ensure GST gets the much-deserved level-playing field. We also have to remove the perception of India as an 'unsafe' destination by sensitising the stakeholders.

Nakul Anand
Executive Director, ITC

Luxury travel is on the rise from markets such as the US and Far East. Experience, which is authentic, is one of the key drivers for travel and this trend will only grow stronger this year. An important development is the entry of AirAsia and Tata-SIA Airlines in the domestic skies. Also, the introduction of ETA by government has removed bottlenecks for foreign visitors. We can expect more customers opting for experiential holidays as this is the new trend.



Vikram Madhok
Managing Director, Abercrombie & Kent India

With the ETA, we only see happy times for the inbound market. The inbound from many of our conventional markets, especially the US will grow tremendously. However, there has been a sharp decline in Russian tourists due to steep fall in rouble and the Ukraine crisis. Offbeat destinations like North East will see better growth than previous years and so will specialised luxury and wedding segments.



Dipak Deva
CEO- Destination Management, India & South Asia, Kuoni Destination Management

The recent increase in hotel inventory at tourist locations certainly is an encouraging initiative. We consider this to be a positive development as this will lead to rate correction at tourist locations and spur demand from the inbound market.

Prashant Narayan
COO and Head-Leisure Travel Inbound Business, Thomas Cook India



I believe that India need not have wait till 2020 to see the international inbound double. It would happen in the next couple of years. As we predict an increased demand for hotels, we are looking at opening 10 to 12 new hotels in 2015. We will bring in our luxury brands like St Regis and W into India soon.

Dilip Puri
Managing Director-India, Starwood Hotels & Resorts

With the recent clearance of eVoA, we understand the importance of tourism as a strong revenue generator for the country. Goa, over the years, has emerged as a tourist hotspot, for Indian as well as foreign tourists. Goa has many other things, and our plan for 2015 is to draw the attention of the world to all that Goa has to offer.

Ameya Abhyankar
Director, Department of Tourism-Goa



Weekend trips, corporate team-building trips, incentives, conferences and annual conventions will facilitate the growth in domestic tourism. The trend towards more FITs and ad-hoc groups will continue. We will also see immense growth from the inbound segment, with the new introduction of the online visas.

Sunil C Gupta
Director, Travel Bureau



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MEHAIR to fly in Goa

Currently operating services in two states, Mumbai-based Maritime Energy Heli Air Services will start a new seaplane service in Goa that will connect the airport to four waterside spots within the state.



After starting intra-city flights in Gujarat and seaplane services in Maharashtra, Mumbai-based seaplane operator Maritime

services within Maharashtra with an approximate investment of ₹ 25 crore, Verma says. But this may soon go up with three new services that it will start soon.

in Mumbai from September 27-29, 2015. The company will be contacting travel agents and OTAs to sell these services.

"We are also contacting hotels and resorts to tie up with them to include the seaplane trip in their packages. It is a radically new service and we are expecting locals as well as tourists to take it to experience travelling on a seaplane. It creates curiosity and we are counting on that. It gives speed and offers seamless connectivity as well. A good example is our service to Ganpatipule that can help visitors reach it in 45 minutes and therefore offers the luxury of a complete two-day (weekend) holiday," Verma says.

"We want to connect the Goa airport to Mandovi, Dona Paula, Coco beach and Chapora. We will start with just one seaplane and gradually increase frequency if required



Siddharth Verma
Director and Founder of MEHAIR



MRO unit in Gujarat

MEHAIR will set up the country's first maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility for seaplanes at Bhadar dam in Gujarat. It has signed an MoU with the Gujarat government in this regard. This makes it India's first MRO for single-engine seaplanes in the entire SAARC region.

Gujarat story

MEHAIR's investment at the moment for Gujarat's intra-city services is approximately Rs 20-25 crore. But if the seaplanes come in, this too will go up a notch. "As part of the contract the Gujarat government is providing subsidy of close to Rs 50 lakh per month. In Gujarat, we have land to land services with two planes (on lease) introduced in January 2015 and one to be introduced in February 2015," Verma adds.

Energy Heli Air Services (MEHAIR) will now start a seaplane service in Goa soon.

Siddharth Verma, Director and Founder of MEHAIR, reveals, "We did a trial run in Goa at the end of January and are looking to launch the service soon. We want to connect the Goa airport to Mandovi, Dona Paula, Coco beach and Chapora. We will start with just one seaplane and gradually increase frequency if required."

He added that talks are on with the Andhra Pradesh government to launch seaplane services off Visakhapatnam coast as well. "Our feasibility report was done and submitted to the state's Ministry of Tourism some months ago and we are awaiting approval and clearances from them," Verma reveals.

Maharashtra expansion

MEHAIR currently conducts daily seaplane

"The Mumbai to Ganpatipule trial is just over and we expect the Ministry of Civil Aviation to approve it soon so we can start services by February 2015. Meanwhile, we have just received clearance for services in Gangapur Dam in

One-on-one with Agents

MEHAIR will be participating in the Maharashtra Travel Mart that will take place in Mumbai from September 27-29, 2015.

The company will be contacting travel agents and OTAs to sell these services. MEHAIR currently conducts daily seaplane services within Maharashtra with an approximate investment of Rs 25 crore, Verma says. But this may soon go up with three new services that it will start soon

Nasik and Dhom Dam in Mahabaleshwar and hope to start services by February or early March 2015," Verma adds.

MEHAIR will be participating in the Maharashtra Travel Mart that will take place

While one connects Ahmedabad to Bhuj, Jamnagar and Porbandar, the other connects Ahmedabad to Bhavnagar, Rajkot and Surat. More cities in Gujarat are in the pipeline, according to Verma, in addition to seaplane services. ↴



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Air France-KLM enhances connectivity to Canada with increased services

■ With the introduction of two new frequencies to Vancouver and Edmonton, Air France-KLM recently announced improved connectivity for Indian passengers to Canada. Starting from March 29 and May 5, 2015 respectively, the frequencies will allow better connectivity for Indian passengers from New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Passengers can now make bookings with all inclusive fares starting at ₹ 64,200 to Edmonton and ₹ 66,000 to Vancouver. From March 29, 2015, Air France will offer up to five weekly flights between Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Vancouver. Flights will be operated by Boeing 777-200 with 309 seats, 35 in Business, 24 in Premium Economy and 250 in Economy. These new services to Vancouver will be in addition to KLM's offering of seven weekly flights to this destination from Amsterdam-Schiphol.

Cashing in on evolving MICE

The newly launched Courtyard by Marriott Agra is aiming to tap the MICE and weekend getaway traffic to Agra, says Vishal Bharti, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott, Agra. The hotel has 189 spacious guest rooms, including 18 contemporary suites.



MEGHA PAUL

Q What is the USP of the hotel?

Courtyard by Marriott Agra is a leisure getaway offering a blend of Indian hospitality experience in a modern setting where unique experiences create eternal memories. Just like every Courtyard by Marriott hotel, this premium one is tailored to provide convenience and comfort during a guest's stay.

Q What are the target segments of the hotel in terms of leisure, MICE travel, etc.?

The target segment will comprise of families residing in North India who would want a relaxing weekend getaway; families on vacation, international travellers; business travellers; leather shoe business, corporate offsite et al.

Q How has the Agra landscape for hospitality evolved?



Home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World and often referred to as the monument of love, Taj Mahal, Agra is located about 204 kilometers south of Delhi. Carrying the artistic heritage of the Mughal Empire into the present day, the streets of Agra are dotted with ancient buildings existing in happy harmony with modern day shops and houses. Other attractions in Agra include wildlife tourism - Keetham Lake, Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and Chambal safari. With the Taj Mahal in close proximity, Courtyard by Marriot, Agra is the perfect

base to experience this city steeped in history.

Q New offerings in your hotel for the traveller?

Located in close proximity to the Taj Mahal, Courtyard by Marriott Agra offers a personalised experience with elegantly structured architecture rooms and suites, perfectly complemented by a selection of dining options, recreation and wellness facilities, and offers state-of-the-art business and leisure facilities to meet the needs of both the business and leisure traveler. In addition, we offer

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“ Located in close proximity to the Taj Mahal, Courtyard by Marriott Agra offers a personalised experience with elegantly structured architecture rooms and suites

Vishal Bharti
General Manager
Courtyard by Marriott
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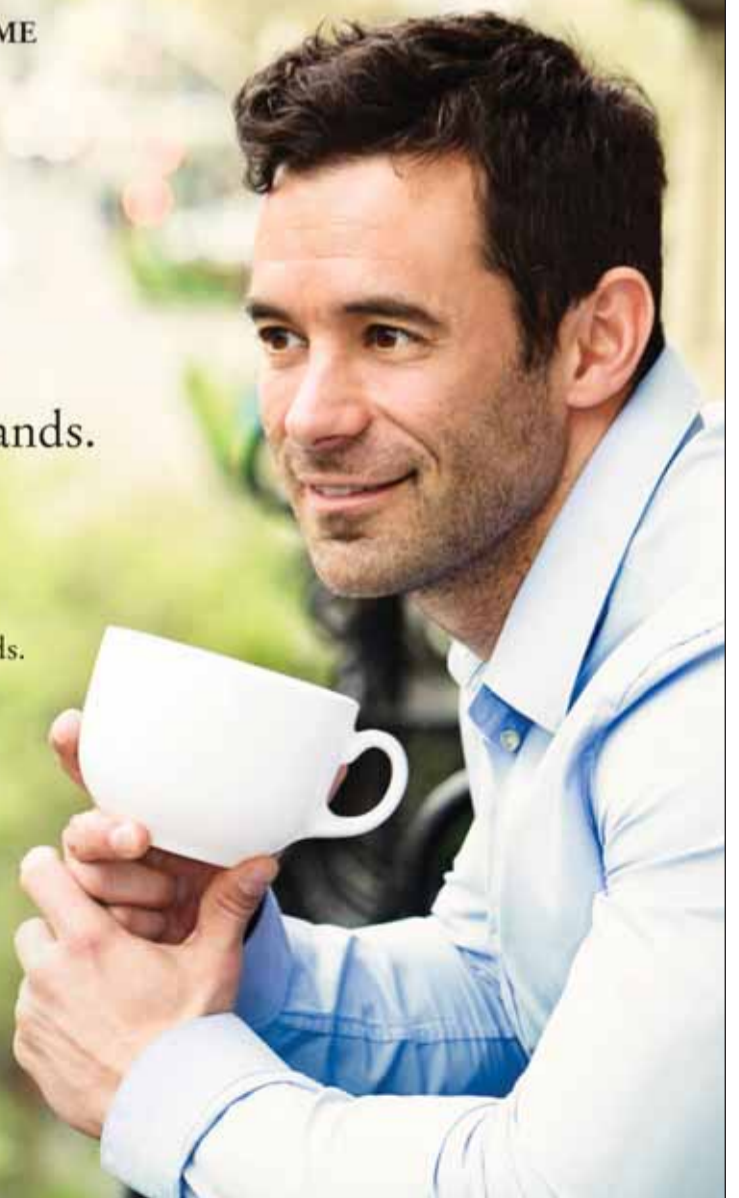
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Now Mysore is a MICE spot

Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, Mysore is cashing in on the increased penetration of IT/ ITes and other industries in the city, Pankaj Saxena, General Manager, Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore discusses the strategies...

TT BUREAU

Q How has CIS Mysore positioned itself in the luxury hotel space?

Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, Mysore is Mysore's first international upper mid-scale hotel. We are a five-star property with the largest inventory of 130 keys in the region. The hotel has been designed to cater to the discerning indi-

Q What is the USP of the property?

Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, Mysore has emerged as a brand with a reputation of contemporary modern hotel offering quality products and value-led services. Convenient location, competitive pricing and the right combination of product/service design are essentially the main factors that make this property worthwhile. We are a five-star prop-

erty with global presence. The property also offers 12 suites with private balcony access for private dining and a state-of-the-art spa with four treatment rooms. Its branded restaurants, modern décor and convenient service design cater to different categories of guests, setting it apart from other hotel chains. In addition, we offer good conferencing facilities, state-of-the-art technology and professional support at Mysore, to ensure that each detail of every business event is seamlessly created.

Q What is the kind of QARR you are looking at?

Apart from being a leisure destination, Mysore is an emerging business destination. The increased penetration of IT/ ITes and other industries in the city has created substantial demand for hospitality in the city. In 2013-14, the ARR reported in the city was INR 3300. We expect to grow marginally as well now. We are focusing on the REV PAR and expect an exponential trend on the same lines as well. The ARR for 2014-15 expectation would be INR 3650.

Q How has the performance of the hotel been in terms of occupancy?

We have seen a steady growth on hotel performance in terms of occupancy where the initial city occupancy levels recorded were 49 per cent. We are predicting a five-per cent growth in occupancy.

Of course, it is profitability, not occupancy, which is the ultimate measure of hotel performance and the link between occupancy and profitability is not a simple one, primarily because of the intervening influence of achieved room rates (ARRs).

“The MICE segment has been a steadily growing market, increasing approximately 15 per cent a year, especially for incentives and conferences. However, leisure and family segments will also be targeted in the market this year.



Pankaj Saxena
General Manager
Country Inn & Suites By
Carlson, Mysore

vidual seeking privacy, personalised service and comfortable elegance of a contemporary hotel. Ever since we have opened the property, the response has been overwhelming.

USP

► Country Inn & Suites by Carlson, Mysore has emerged as a brand with modern hotel offering quality products and value-led services

► Convenient location, competitive pricing and the right combination of product/service design are essentially the main factors that make this property worthwhile

Q What are the important segments that you are targeting?

The MICE segment has been a steadily growing market, increasing approximately 15 per cent a year, especially for incentives and conferences. However, leisure and family segments will

Kerala Tourism makes travel easier

■ In order to make travel planning easy for travellers, Kerala Tourism recently introduced a Quick Response (QR) Code Aided Tourism Search, which makes it easier for travellers to find destinations and information on the department's official website. The new facility has been rolled out as smart phones have started playing a key role in travel planning because of the high degree of convenience and affordable cost. QR Code Aided Tourism



Search optimises the interactive features of the Kerala Tourism website. A total of 1,200 geotagged photos from various parts of Kerala, with around 75 photographs from

each district, have been uploaded on the website of Kerala Tourism. This will help the travellers get visual information on subjects of interest around their current location.

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ETAA, TrawellTag's training programme

Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) recently organised an agent training programme in association with TrawellTag. The event also included a presentation by TrawellTag where they showcased their entire product line and the innovations that they have done with their products. Those attending the training session were certified.



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It's more than just a click

Luxury Living, a travel division of LX Marketing, is trying to make it easier for channel partners to promote luxury hotels and packages. Gaurav Sharma, Director, LX Marketing speaks...

TT BUREAU

What is it that you have done differently in the travel space?

As Luxury Living (The B2B luxury travel consolidation company), our biggest USP is that we are completely offline. It is no rocket science to book a luxury hotel anywhere in the world today but to build and deliver a complete end-to-end travel experience; it takes a lot more than just a click. Luxury Living has also concluded a global tie-up with Cool Tool Europe (leader in market intelligence tools with offices over Europe & North America) to bring the best in market research and intelligence to the Indian travel industry. Together, we will offer tools and solutions that will provide simple answers to the business growth of our hotel partners as well as of dedicated travel agents in our network. Our constant endeavour is to make it easier and simpler for our channel partners to promote luxury hotels and packages

and also, for our hotel partners to get the right business mix from India along with numbers that keep them smiling.

The initiatives taken to spur growth in 2015?

Our most important initiative in 2015 is the launch of our website www.luxuryliving.in. It is not a regular online

tered channel partners that empower them to instantly deliver the right and fitting options to their clients.

Could you elaborate on your portfolio?

We are exclusive and close partners with Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts, Angsana Hotels,



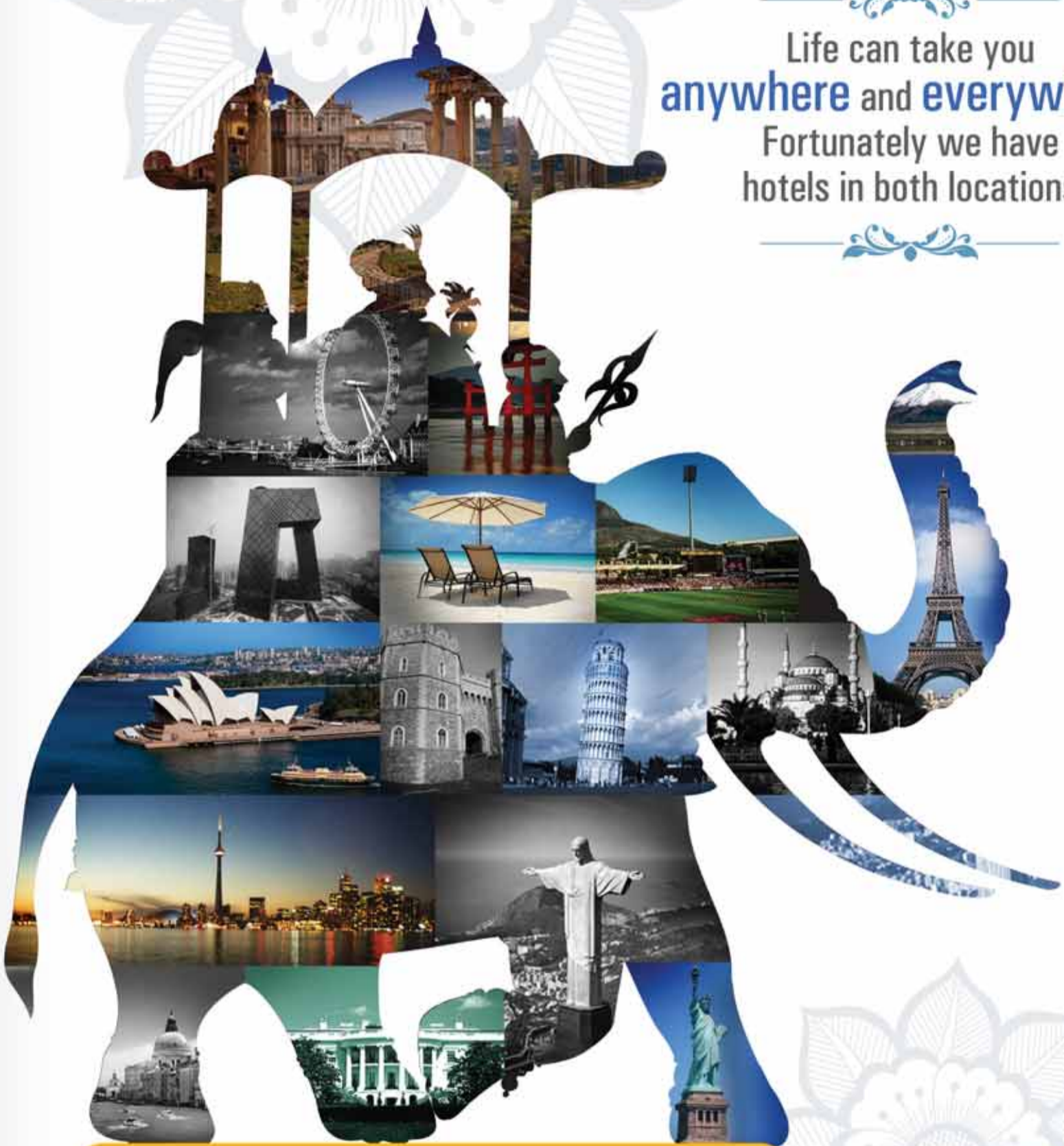
“It is no rocket science to book a luxury hotel anywhere in the world today but to build and deliver a complete end-to-end travel experience; it takes a lot more than just a click.

Gaurav Sharma
Director, LX Marketing

booking tool but it is a pure information-oriented platform that showcases some of the most exclusive products and promotions from our portfolio. We proactively provide this information to our regis-

Anantara Hotels & Resorts and Siam Kempinski Hotel. Our recent tie-ups include brands such as Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, W Hotels & ST. Regis worldwide and more.

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CHOICE HOTELS
 INTERNATIONAL

Visit Philippines Year launched

The Philippines, which has recognised the Indian market as one of the most important contributors, participated at SATTE for the first time this year. Ramon Reyes Jimenez Jr., Tourism Secretary (Minister), Government of Philippines declared the intent of The Department of Tourism of Philippines of 2015 as the "Visit Philippines Year" for a boost in tourism of the country which will feature a calendar of events and an exciting mix of activities.



IndiGo connects Mumbai-Srinagar

Reinforcing its commitment in the domestic market, IndiGo has announced the introduction of new flights connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur and Srinagar.



TT BUREAU

Effective February 17, 2015, the airline will launch its new daily flights on multiple routes. The new schedule sees the introduction of the low-cost car-

Connecting Cities

▶ Effective February 17, IndiGo launches its 16th daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Mumbai

▶ 2nd daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Jaipur

▶ 3rd daily non-stop flight between Mumbai and Jaipur

▶ IndiGo also introduces its 1st daily non-stop flight between Mumbai and Srinagar, while launching its 2nd daily non-stop flight between Srinagar and Mumbai

rier's 16th daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Mumbai, second daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Jaipur, and third daily non-stop flight

between Mumbai and Jaipur. Additionally, the airline will now also connect Mumbai to Srinagar, with the launch of its first daily non-stop flight and second daily non-stop flight from Srinagar to Mumbai.

Both corporate and leisure travellers will now have the opportunity to experience the matchless on-time performance that IndiGo is synonymous with. With 590 daily

flights connecting 37 destinations, these new flights will further consolidate IndiGo's position as the fastest growing airline in India.

Commenting on the launch of the new flights, Aditya Ghosh, President IndiGo said, "It gives me great pleasure in introducing these new flights connecting Mumbai, Srinagar, Delhi and Jaipur. We will continue to

expand our network to meet the requirements of our business and leisure travelers wherever they demand it. It is our constant endeavor to provide more flexibility of choice for our customers as IndiGo continues to offer them on time, hassle free and always affordable flying experience. We are certain these additional flights will prove immensely expedient to our existing and prospective passengers."



“ We will continue to expand our network to meet the requirements of our business and leisure travellers wherever they demand it

Aditya Ghosh
President, IndiGo



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Excel Software Consultancy Pvt. Ltd. is a reputed software development company dealing in accounting software solutions since 1991. Established as a Pvt. Ltd. in 1995, the company today specializes in designing & developing financial accounting solutions for the Travel & Tourism industry.

Why Should You Deal With "Excel"

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- 02. Single Invoice**, all services like INT. Air Ticket, DOM. Air Ticket, Car Rentals, Hotel Bookings, Visa Charges, Insurance, Package Tour, etc. can all be Invoiced in one single invoice, giving your customer full details in one single invoice and also benefits you as payments will be cleared together.
- 03. Customer satisfaction**, as all statements sent to the customer are accurate, visually appealing and display all relevant information which allows your customer to scan their statements with minimum effort. Accurate statements normally increase the efficiency collections.
- 04. Points of contact**, Excel has a dedicated Help desk based in Mumbai. We also have about 15 support executives across major cities of India who collectively speak 12 languages like Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu & Urdu.

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DID YOU Know?

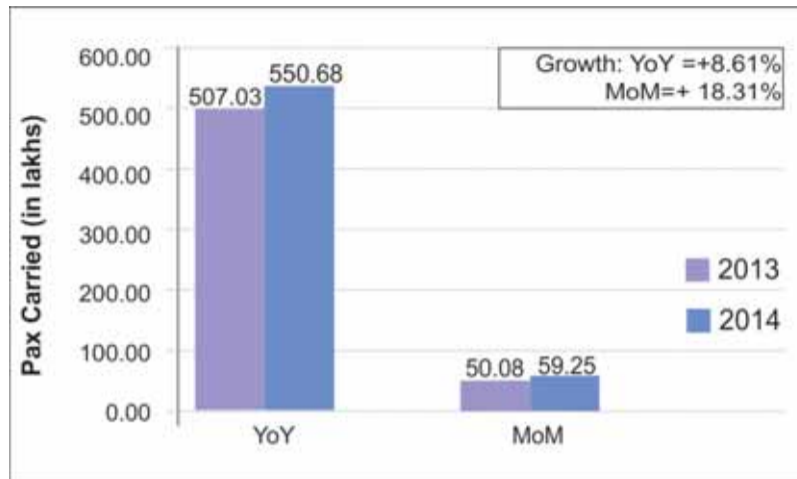
FTAs to India up 4% in January

According to a report by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during January 2015 was 7.90 lakh as compared to 7.59 lakh during January 2014, recording a growth of four per cent. The percentage share of FTAs in India during January 2015 among the top 15 source countries was highest from USA (16.35 per cent) followed by UK (11.82 per cent), Bangladesh (9.29 per cent), Canada (4.70 per cent), Australia (3.63 per cent), Russian Federation (3.50 per cent), France (3.16 per cent), Germany (3.12 per cent), Sri Lanka (2.93 per cent), Malaysia (2.91 per cent), Japan (2.63 per cent), China (2.30 per cent), Republic of Korea (1.89 per cent), Afghanistan (1.76 per cent) and Oman (1.54 per cent). The percentage share of in India during the same time among the top 15 ports was highest at Delhi Airport (28.72 per cent) followed by Mumbai Airport (21.87 per cent), Chennai Airport (8.39 per cent), Bangalore Airport (5.83 per cent), Goa Airport (5.09 per cent), Haridaspur Land check post (4.99 per cent) and Kolkata Airport (3.60 per cent).

Domestic air traffic up by 8.61 %

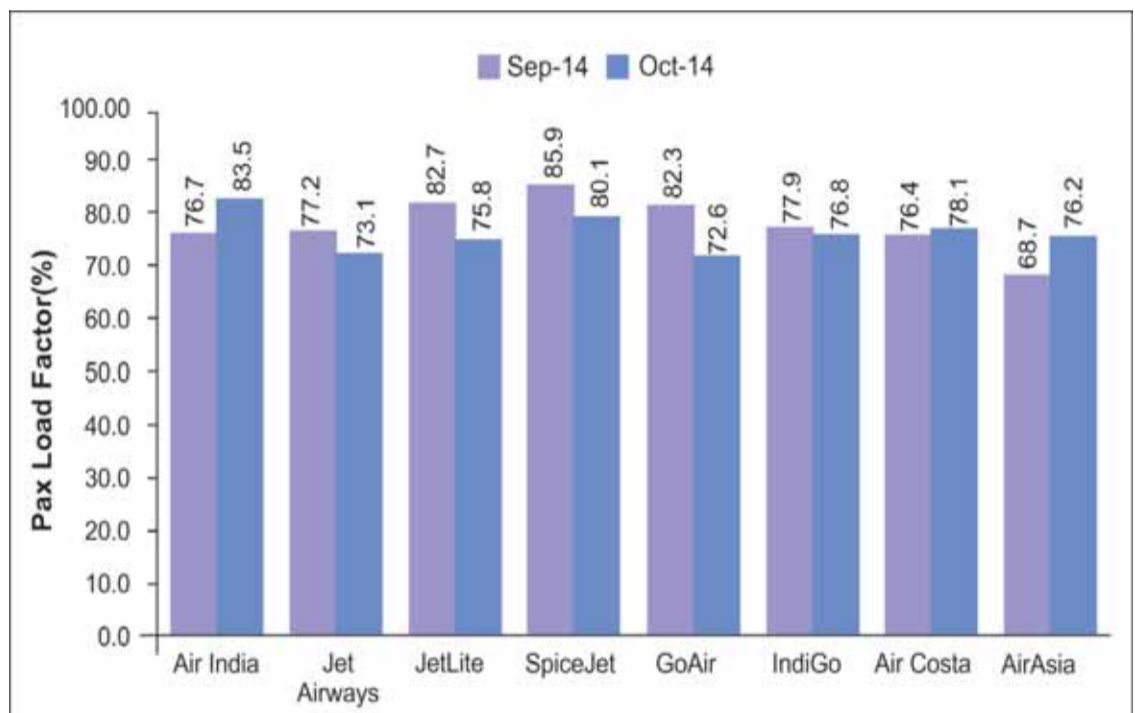
The Ministry of Civil Aviation has analysed the air traffic data submitted by various airlines for the month of October, 2014 and registered a rise of 8.61 per cent. **TRAVTALK** presents excerpts from the report.

TABLE-1



The passenger load factors of various scheduled domestic airlines in October 2014 are given in Table 1. Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January-October 2014 were 550.68 lakh as against 507.03 lakh during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering a growth of 8.61% (Ref Table 2). The passenger load factor in the month of October 2014 has shown a decreasing trend compared to the previous month due to additional flights during the festive season.

TABLE-2



7.13 million passports issued

Recording an increase of over 14 per cent, the 37 Passport Offices in India issued 71.30 lakh passports, including 2,092 Diplomatic Passports and 23,038 Official Passports between January and December 2013. **TRAVTALK** presents a detailed report of number of passports issued in top ten cities.

Details of the report

Moreover, approximately 13.83 lakh passport-related services have been rendered by Indian missions/Posts abroad. The Government of India, in total, rendered about 85.19 lakh passport services last year. This is an all-time high and amounts to over three-fold increase since 2000. As on 31 December 2013, 5,19,29,139 citizens held valid passports. The total revenue expected to be generated from all passport services in 2013-14 is ₹1600 crore. An amount of ₹429.47 crore was allocated to Central Passport Organization in the financial year 2013-14.

Passports issued in Top Ten Cities January 01 - December 31, 2013

S. No.	City	No of Passport issued	S. No.	City	No of Passport issued
1	Hyderabad	5,86,204	6	Mumbai	3,40,566
2	Bangalore	4,25,010	7	Kolkata	3,28,602
3	Lucknow	4,02,048	8	Ahmedabad	3,22,400
4	Delhi	3,95,774	9	Chandigarh	2,81,673
5	Chennai	3,54,608	10	Cochin	2,69,291

Total number of passports issued pan India in 2013 68,05,109
Total number of passports issued in 2012 - 5.24 million

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Dutta now IATO WB Chapter head

■ The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has appointed Debjit Dutta as the Chairman of its West Bengal Chapter. Talking about the strategies that he will employ this year, he says, "The pres-



Debjit Dutta
India Travel Award Winner &
Director & CEO, Impression
Tourism Services (India)

ence of the leading national body of tour operators in one of the most promising destinations in India certainly offers lot of opportunities for the IATO members in West Bengal. My primary target is to develop synergy among the organisation and the members. I think this is extremely important to understand the limitations and possibilities so that we can work out a sustainable plan to take things further. Also, going through the membership profile. The association needs to encourage them to join this national movement." Currently the IATO chapter has 48 registered members in West Bengal. Dutta is Director and CEO of Impression Tourism Services (India).

Touring Israel the Eshet way

One of Israel's leading tour operators, Eshet Incoming has witnessed a big spurt in India outbound travel to Israel. In a tete-a-tete with TRAVTALK, Amnon Ben-David, President, Eshet Incoming, speaks about tapping this growing market further post the TAFI Convention in Israel...



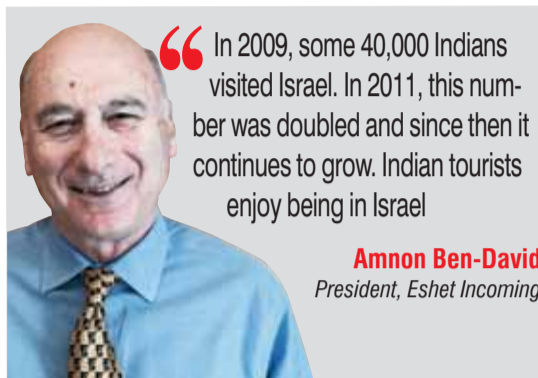
MEGHA PAUL

Serving Israel on a platter

Eshet Incoming was established in 1987 and is today recognised as one of the leading incoming tour operators in Israel. The company specialises in the handling of a full range of incoming movement, including individuals, groups both interested in the religious sites and in the historical and cultural aspects, escorted tours, special interest tours, business meetings, incentives and delegations. Our head office is located in Tel Aviv and we have full-time representatives in Jerusalem, and at Ben Gurion Airport. We specialise in the upmarket segment and MICE. We deal with groups and individuals from all over the world and have excellent multi-lingual guides, beautiful and modern hotels of various categories and private cars driven by licensed guides.

Growth in India outbound

In 2009, some 40,000 Indians visited Israel. In 2011,



Amnon Ben-David
President, Eshet Incoming

“ In 2009, some 40,000 Indians visited Israel. In 2011, this number was doubled and since then it continues to grow. Indian tourists enjoy being in Israel

this number was doubled and since then it continues to grow. Indian tourists enjoy being in Israel. Those of Christian faith have of course an added value and they feel the spirituality of this country in every corner. All Indian tourists whom we have met and interviewed find the Israelis very friendly and helpful. They find our streets and markets very attractive and clean. Our Ministry of Tourism has allocated large amounts of money in order to market Israel a tourist destination for Indians. It seems that half of

the visitors are pilgrims, while the rest chose Israel for a vacation or a cultural tour.

The TAFI edge

Meeting with the Indian travel industry will definitely help the Israeli tour operators to better understand the special needs of the Indian market. This will help us in improving and developing specific programmes, which in addition to pilgrimages, vacations and cultural tours, will also deal with agriculture, eco-tourism, technology, medicine, fashion and more. It will also help in getting

more information that will enable us to get more acquainted with this market and offer the products which suits the India market best.

New trends

We have seen an influx of FITs in the recent past. More individuals are coming to Israel and touring either in a private car driven by a guide which is definitely an expensive proposal. Also there has been a rise in the packaged tours segment, which is also a more economic option. Since Israel received new immigrants from all over the world, each one of them bringing in what they were used to eat in their country of origin, it is obvious that you can find

any kind of food you like or that you would like to try. Thus, culinary tours have also picked up. We are also seeing more interest in wine tourism and boutique hotels.

Lately Israel has won some wine competitions. The steadily rising profile of Israeli wines reached a global crescendo when Carmel Winery garnered the 2010 Decanter World Wine Awards trophy. The winery won the award for its red Rhone varietals in the upper price category. Also, we are promoting Tel Aviv's nightlife. It is rated the best along with New York, London and Bangkok.

Israel & India Connect

▶ Its Ministry of Tourism has allocated large amounts of money in order to market Israel a tourist destination for Indians

▶ It seems that half of the visitors are pilgrims, while the rest chose Israel for a vacation or a cultural tour.

Tourism Ireland and Visit Britain invites you to a workshop presentation on the newly launched British Irish Visa Scheme.

Visa officials from the Irish Department of Justice and the UK High Commission will also be present.

The workshop dates are :

Friday, 13th March 2015 – New Delhi

Tuesday, 24th March 2015 – Mumbai

Tuesday, 21st April 2015 - Bangalore

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Tourism Toronto on a sales mission to India



Tourism Toronto recently hosted some of India's leading corporates to an exciting evening of cocktails and dinner. Mark Crawford, Director, International Business Development, Tourism Toronto was participating in a sales mission to India for the first time.



Enhancing travel experience

IDMS Tours offers best quality holiday packages at the most reasonable prices. The price factor has always been the USP of this company, claims Pramod Bhatnagar, Director, IDMS Tours...



TT BUREAU

Committed to enhance your travel experience, be it business or leisure or both, IDMS Tours provides tour packages, comfort and economy hotels, expert tour manager, local guides and carefully-planned itineraries that suit specific requirements and schedules. The company that has been operational for the last three years can deal with incentive programmes, corporate group meetings, performance programmes or family holidays.

Talking about the USP of the company, **Pramod**

“We have seen an increase in inbound tours in our company after the launch of eVoA facility. We hope the government introduces eVoA for countries such as The Netherlands, Belgium, etc.

Pramod Bhatnagar
Director, IDMS Tours



Bhatnagar, Director, IDMS Tours said, “We offer best quality holiday packages at the most reasonable prices. The price factor has always been our USP in this industry.” IDMS

Tours also organises package tours within the boundaries of India, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, he added.

The recent eVoA implementation has also boosted the company's business. “We have seen an increase in inbound tours in our company after the government launched eVoA on November 27. We have registered a growth from markets such as Germany. Going forward, we would hope the government introduces eVoA for countries such as The Netherlands, Belgium, etc.,” he

informed. The company is looking at developing its business from markets such as Europe, South Africa, China, Australia and New Zealand this year.

Tourism operators need to invest some time and money into new forms of tourism marketing, he felt. “Social media drives tourism nowadays. People are able to do their own travel research using the internet and social sites such as TripAdvisor, Facebook and Google+. One of the benefits of social media is its ‘word-of-mouth’ aspect as users post reviews and engage in dialogue about their travel experiences. Thus, it's important for the travel agents to recognise that social media sites are based around online community and relationships. For airlines and other operators to be successful in this arena, they may need to invest substantial time and money into building good business models rather than just using these sites as quick advertising platforms,” he commented.

Future plans

- ▶ IDMS Tours organises package tours within the boundaries of India, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka
- ▶ The company is looking at developing its business from markets such as Europe, South Africa, China, Australia and New Zealand this year.

Governors' Camp Collection
Serengeti, Tanzania

The setting is magical. Almost a century ago it was reserved exclusively for Kenya's colonial Governors. Governors' Camp nestles in the forest along the winding banks of the Mara River; it's waters teeming with bird-life, hippo and crocodile, in the heart of Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve. Some of the best in the riverbank, tucked into the forest they enjoy uninterrupted views over the Mara River others have views across the sweeping plains of the Masai Mara. Home to the BBC's Big Cat Diary the camp enjoys an unrivalled location with plenty of big cats and the annual wildebeest migration arriving on its doorstep every year.

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A game changer for roomsXML

Here comes yet another feature that's a first in the online accommodation segment. Room Type Matching has come up as a game changer for the industry.



TT BUREAU

RoomsXML.com has invested thousands of dollars and man-hours in building the feature that now displays the room types exactly as per the hotel's very own room names.

Each hotel has its own nomenclature to identify a room. But hotel booking systems hardly retain the original name. So, instead of calling a 'Rainbow Tower Ocean Front Corner Room'; other systems find it safe in showing the room simply as a 'Corner Room'.

Matchmaker

- ▶ Room names for over 3,900 most popular hotels around the world have been correctly matched. Hundreds more are added to the count every week



At roomsXML.com, innovation is the key differentiator. That's what keeps us leading the pack. Till date, we have introduced 9 specific features that were industry's first – and many of them still are

Prakash Bang
Managing Director,
roomsXML.com

Well, the simplified room name is not wrong, but it leads to confusion when the travel agents or their customers call up the hotel to double check their booking - a mismatch in the room type may cause heartburns to the traveller as well as the travel agent. From a travel agent's perspective, this feature not only removes the guess work whilst making a room booking, but also keeps their customers happy! Room names for

over 3,900 most popular hotels around the world have been correctly matched. Hundreds more are added to the count every week. **Prakash Bang**, Managing Director, says, "At roomsXML.com, innovation is the key differentiator. That's what keeps us leading the pack. Till date, we have introduced 9 specific features that were industry's first – and many of them still are!"



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Indian travel trade explore biz

► Contd. from page 5

Q What makes ITB Berlin an apt platform for Indian exhibitors?

Last year, sales in excess of around six billion euros were generated at ITB Berlin. No other place in the world gathers so many leading representatives from the private and public sector. This

Q What was the number of buyers visiting the show last year? What are the growth expectations for this year?

Last year, ITB Berlin sent out very positive signals for the international travel industry. The show reported a four per cent rise in trade visitors and an

world's leading travel trade show had an even more positive impact on trade buyers and holidaymakers than in previous years. Overall, some 114,000 trade visitors travelled to Berlin. There was a slight increase again in buyers from the USA and the Middle East. We expect the number of trade visitors at ITB Berlin 2015 to be stable.



Q How would you differentiate between ITB Berlin and ITB Asia keeping in mind the business generated from India?

Both shows have a different focus. ITB Berlin is the place where Indian exhibitors can do global business very effectively, whereas ITB Asia is the perfect platform for the Asian travel industry. For the time being, there are many more exhibitors from India at ITB Berlin than at ITB Asia.

is where the tone is set for the future of travel for a billion people. The increase in international buyers last year is proof that ITB Berlin continues to be the most important marketplace for the global travel industry. Many buyers come from Europe which is a very important source market for India. ITB Berlin seems to be a must for all Indian tourism players. This makes us very happy.

increase in business volume, which Messe Berlin estimates reached 6.5 billion euros. The

Why ITB Berlin is important

- It sends out a very positive signals for the international travel industry
- The show reports a four per cent rise in trade visitors and an increase in business volume, which Messe Berlin estimates reached 6.5 billion euros

New office for MP Tourism



Madhya Pradesh Tourism recently inaugurated its new office in New Delhi. Senior officials from Madhya Pradesh Tourism including Ashwani Lohani and Mamta Pandey marked their presence on the occasion. Girish Shankar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism was also present to grace the occasion.



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Revamping Chhattisgarh Tourism

The Tourism Minister has promised Chhattisgarh Chief Minister a few sops for developing the tourism industry in the state during his recent visit. **TRAVTALK** gets you a detailed report of the minister's visit to Raipur.



TT BUREAU

Dr Mahesh Sharma, the Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge), Tourism (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation made several announcements while speaking at Raipur airport during his offi-

monuments and well-developed connectivity to boost tourism.

He also held a meeting with the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Dr. Raman Singh, in which several issues were raised related to promotion of tourism and culture in the state.



Tourism will be used to fight terrorism and generate employment in the country. There is a need for beautification, security and cleanliness of monuments

Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State
Tourism & Culture (I/C)

cial visit to Chhattisgarh. The Minister said that tourism will be used to fight terrorism and generate employment in the country. He once again emphasised the need for beautification, security and cleanliness of

Singh requested Dr Sharma to include the important historical site of Sirpur in the Buddhist circuit. He promised that the Centre will seriously look into the demand to include Sirpur in its ambitious Buddhist Circuit

Chhattisgarh CM to Tourism Minister

- ◆ Include the important historical site of Sirpur in the Buddhist circuit
- ◆ One more tourist circuit should be sanctioned to Chhattisgarh in addition to the Bastar circuit already sanctioned

project. He also assured that funds will be sanctioned for Sirpur site development, especially for the construction of a museum and said that the ₹ 48 crore proposal will be sanctioned on priority for the 7 amphitheater projects in the state for which DPRs have already been sent by the state government.

The Chhattisgarh Chief Minister has requested that one more tourist circuit should be sanctioned to Chhattisgarh in addition to the Bastar circuit already sanctioned. He also proposed that an international Tribal

festival should be held in Raipur. The State Tourism and Culture Minister of Chhattisgarh, Ajay Chandrakar, was also present at the meeting. In the Civil Aviation sector, the Chief Minister raised the issues of upgrading Raipur airport into an international airport, the issue of Bilaspur airport as well as raising Jagdalpur as green field airport to which Dr Sharma assured all possible help. The Minister also sanctioned Swamy Vivekanand's statue for Swamy Vivekanand airport of Raipur. Earlier Dr Sharma dedicated the third aero-bridge at the Raipur airport to the nation. ↘

Next time in Goa, catch 'Ho-Ho'

Tourists-magnet Goa has a slew of services to offer to visitors including Hop-On, Hop-Off (Ho-Ho) bus service, besides toilets, changing rooms and locker facilities on its beautiful beaches, says Nilesh Cabral, Chairman, GTDC.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

How has 2014 been for you?

The year 2014 has been very good for Goa Tourism; there have been a lot of initiatives, like the introduction of taxis driven by women drivers. This doesn't mean that Goa is not safe for women, but it is an initiative that we have



Nilesh Cabral
Chairman
GTDC

taken. The IRB battalion in Goa is also doing a good job. Likewise, we have lot of initiatives in the pipeline, due in the next two-three months, especially the season that is coming. The recession has hit us badly. Some Russian charters were also cancelled. But we have seen a lot of FITs coming,

'eVoA can take up numbers to 6 million in Goa'

Goa is a very popular place and we get tourists 365 days a year. According to **Dilip Parulekar**, Tourism Minister, Goa, "We get domestic as well as international tourists throughout the year. In the last two years, there has been a significant growth in tourism. Goa is a well-known beach destination, which also promotes hinterland tourism and adventure activities and is also ideal for families and corporates."



Dilip Parulekar
Tourism Minister
Goa

"We have increased the number of IRB policemen in tourist spots, we have also got

beach safety, night patrolling. Whenever tourists come down to Goa for holidays, they can move around at night without any fear, which makes the destination a favourite among tourists. Last year, 4 million tourists came to India, after VoA the numbers will definitely be more, we are looking at around 6 million. Goa has a lot of potential to cater to the increased number of tourists; we can comfortably accom-

modate all of them. With e-Visa facilities, tourist numbers may go up to 6-7 million by 2017. That is why we are discussing about additional infrastructure," he adds.

that's a very good sign. Over a period of time, the FITs will increase in Goa, as we have done a lot of improvement on the beaches.

What are the new initiatives that you are planning to launch?

Shortly we will start toilets, changing rooms and locker facilities on the beaches of Goa. Before May 2015, we will have these beach facilities in place. We are

focussing on infrastructure right now. Secondly, we have lifeguards in place, but so far they are only on the beaches, we have beautiful waterfalls and lakes. The second move is streamlining the lifeguard system in places other than the beaches. The third focus is road development - beautification and maintenance of roads. We have ancestral houses on roads, we are trying to make a core network. We also want to include hop-

on hop-off services for tourists in Goa.

Are you taking any steps to increase the international air connectivity to Goa?

We are working on getting more aircraft - flydubai recently started flights to Goa, Emirates is starting new flights and AirAsia wants to set up a base in Goa, it'll take some time but we have things falling in place. ↘

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A lot is **Happening** in **Hyderabad!**

Pro-tourism policies of the new Telangana government have given momentum to the industry in the state. In conversation with **TRAVTALK**, Sumeet Singh, Managing Director, Telangana Tourism reveals that a slew of measures are in the pipeline to meet the surging tourist demand in the young state.



DEEPA SETHI

QWith the formation of new state of Telangana, what are your plans for tourism?

We are a very young state, only a few months old. We have 10 districts with Hyderabad being the biggest

There is a lot of demand from the software industry. There are many people, including expatriates, coming for weekends. A lot of things will be happening in Hyderabad – festivals, music concerts. Besides Hyderabad, the other major city is Warangal where we already have a sound and light show.

I think Hyderabad airport is one of the finest in the country and it is already becoming a hub. We are concentrating a lot on religious tourism

Sumeet Singh
MD, Telangana Tourism



number of tigers is in the Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary. We are close to the border of Nagpur so the highway passes through Nagpur, Hyderabad and the rest of Telangana. So we are going in for Highway Tourism. Like Haryana Tourism, we are really developing our highways, with cottages, hotels, restaurants and parks on either side of the highways. It will probably take about two years to really come into shape.



catch. We have planned 52 weeks of 'Happening Hyderabad' (not only by the government but also private participation) – and have set up a separate organisation to manage this.

There is growing tourist demand so we are developing a religious circuit for it. A lot of people visit the Yadagiri Temple, which is about 40 km outside Hyderabad.

QWhat is the mode of transport you will use for travel on these circuits?

It's going to be package tours because the Hyderabad Transport Unit is with us. We still have the USP of selling packages to Tirupati and to Srisailem, now with Andhra Pradesh. We have Mercedes and Volvo buses, our own caravan and other transport. We are now starting a Sikh pilgrimage package tour. A lot of Sikhs come to visit Hazur Sahib Nanded (in Maharashtra) and the Bidar Gurudwara (in Karnataka), but the closest point is Hyderabad, which has excellent connectivity.

QWith the new airport, do you think it could become a hub for the country?

It already is becoming a hub. I think Hyderabad airport is one of the finest in the country and it is already becoming a hub. We are concentrating a lot on religious tourism; we have one of the biggest and oldest Jain temples called Kulpakji, 40 km from Hyderabad. Then we have the Medak Church built by a British missionary way back in 1920.

QHow is MICE tourism developing in the region?

MICE tourism is very big in Telangana, with the Hyderabad Convention Bureau which has plenty of hotel rooms around it. We recently had the Metropolis conference, which was a big international conference and we have some more major conferences in the pipeline. We are visiting Barcelona now to market conventions there. For MICE, as we all know, HICC is the biggest Convention Centre in the country and we have plenty of hotel rooms around it. We have heritage hotels and modern hotels, like the Falaknuma, the Palace Hotel run by Taj, two Hyatt hotels and three Taj hotels.

QHow do you think of promoting tourism in Telangana?

We have thick forest cover like Hazirabad where we have started an eco tourism resort. In fact, the largest



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Inspiring new ways

New tourism policy from MOT in 6 months

■ According to Dr Lalit K Panwar, Secretary – Tourism, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is looking at formulating a new tourism policy in the next six months.



Dr Lalit K Panwar
Secretary – Tourism,
Government of India, Ministry
of Tourism (MOT)

The tourism policy will be a comprehensive action plan and roadmap for Indian tourism for coming times, Dr Panwar said.

He was speaking at the Hotel Investment Forum India (HIFI) Conference. Seeking contribution from industry stakeholders, he also asked industry stalwarts for valuable suggestions to make the new policy really help drive the industry forward. Prior to this, the tourism policy was made in 2002.

eVisas jump by 421.6% in Dec

In 2014, India issued 39,046 VoAs as compared to 20,294 in 2013, registering a growth of 92.4 per cent. The eVisa launch has worked wonders for tourism in India.



Top 10 source markets for VoA in Dec' 2014

A total of 14,083 Tourist Visas on Arrival (VoAs) enabled by Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) were issued by the Indian government last month, as compared with 2,700 VoAs during December 2013, registering a growth of 421.6 per cent.

The percentage share of top ten source countries for VoA during December 2014 were USA (24.26 per cent), Russian Federation (15.06 per cent), Republic of Korea (11.01 per cent),



Country	%age
USA	24.26
Russian Federation	15.06
Republic of Korea	11.01
Ukraine	8.16
Australia	7.98
New Zealand	5.08
Japan	4.30
Singapore	4.27
Germany	4.05
The Philippines	3.10

Ukraine (8.16 per cent), Australia (7.98 per cent), New Zealand (5.08 per cent), Japan (4.30 per cent), Singapore (4.27 per cent), Germany (4.05 per cent), and the Philippines (3.10 per cent). The

percentage share of different ports for VoA last month were New Delhi (35.78 per cent), Mumbai (21.05 per cent), Goa (18.24 per cent), Chennai (7.17 per cent), Bengaluru (5.76 per cent), Kochi (4.54 per cent), Hyderabad (3.13 per cent),

Percentage share of VoA's in different ports

Country	%age
New Delhi	35.78
Mumbai	21.05
Goa	18.24
Chennai	7.17
Bengaluru	5.76
Kochi	4.54
Hyderabad	3.13
Kolkata	2.35
Thiruvananthapuram	1.98

Kolkata (2.35 per cent), and Thiruvananthapuram (1.98 per cent).

In the entire calendar year 2014, 39,046 VoAs were issued as compared with 20,294 in 2013, registering a growth of 92.4 per cent.

This high growth was due to introduction of ETA-enabled VoA for 43 countries, launched by the Centre on November 27, 2014. Prior to that, only the VoA scheme was in operation for 12 countries.



Contd. on page 42 ▶


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2. Passport Size Photograph
3. Air Ticket

Dubai:- Emirates, Jet Airways and Spice Jet Airlines – **INR 5400/-**
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For all other airlines OTB Charges Rs. 300/- per Application extra

Dubai Visa Requirement for 96 Hrs:-

1. Passport's First & Last Page / Observation Page (Minimum validity 6 months)
2. Passport Size Photograph
3. Air Ticket

Dubai:- Emirates, Jet Airways and Spice Jet Airlines – **INR 4100/-**
Including OTB Charges per Application (3 to 4 working days)

For all other airlines OTB Charges Rs. 300/- per Application extra

Dubai Visa Requirement for 90 Days:-

Tourist visa with 60 Day validity & stay for 90 Days

1. Passport's First & Last Page/Observation Page (Minimum validity 6 months)
2. Passport Size Photograph
3. Air Ticket

Dubai:- Emirates and Jet Airways Airlines – **INR 26,500/-**
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5. Compulsory hotel stay required
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7. Clear scanned passport copies front & back are required (JPEG Format)
8. Visa approval purely depends on our PRO response for which we need passport copies first

Bahrain – **INR 8255/-** per Application (4 to 5 working days)

OMAN VISA OFFERS

OMAN Visa Requirements:-

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1. Passport's First & Last Page/Observation Page
2. Passport Size Photograph (with Blue Background)

Oman – **INR 24,500/-** per Application

QATAR VISA OFFERS

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Tourist Visa Single Entry (1 Month stay & 3 Month visa validity)

- 1) First & last page colored scan of valid passport. (Minimum validity 6 months)
- 2) One colour passport size photograph with White Background
- 3) Confirmed return air ticket

Qatar – **INR 10,000/-** per Application (6 to 7 working days)

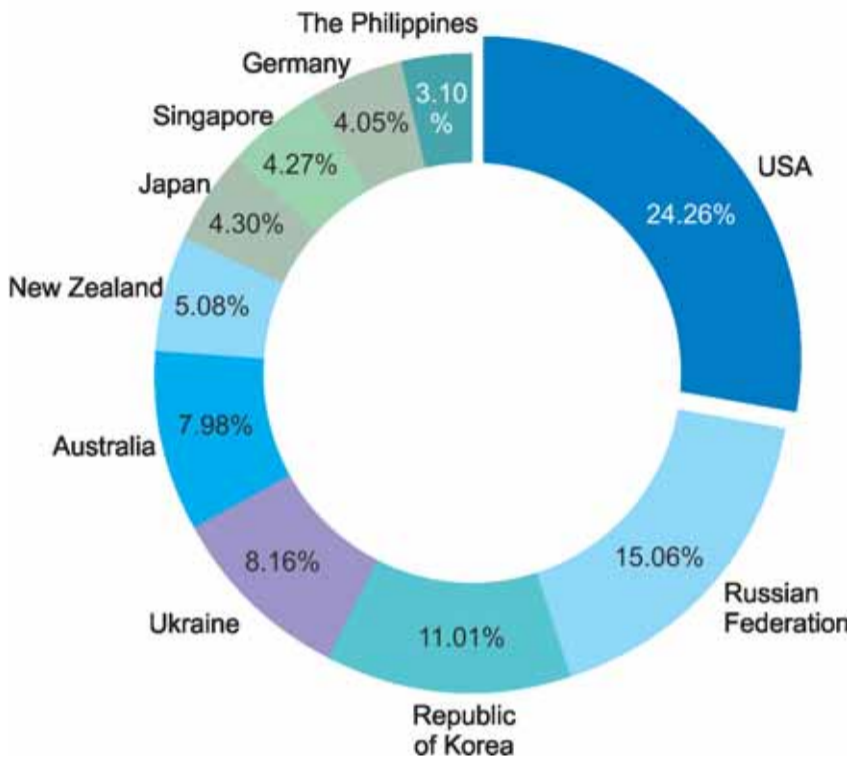
Opening Soon in Mumbai & Chennai

421.6% hike in eVisas in Dec'14

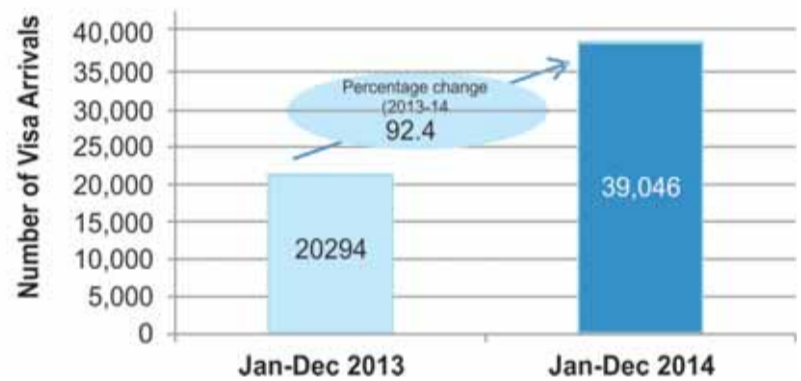
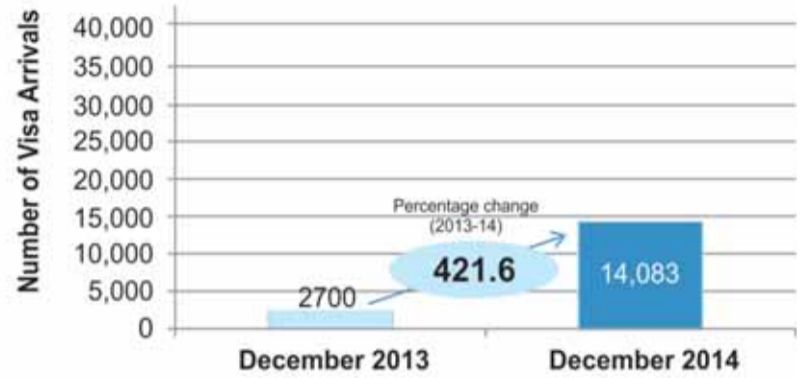
VoA registers an increase of 421.6% during December 2014 over the same period last year while the VoAs issued between January and December 2014 registered an increase of 92.4% over the same period.

► Contd. from page 40

Percentage share of different countries



VoAs issued



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GPS 2015 scripts a success story

Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) 2015 organised in Nagpur recently has been a hit. With an overwhelming participation from exhibitors and buyers, the event scripted a success story. A few excerpts from those who attended the event...

TT BUREAU



GPS is doing really well. It is good to see someone promote a destination and do GPS in a destination which is not much visited by industry leaders. It is an eye opening experience for everyone. Central India has a huge potential. Most parts of India remain unexplored in terms of travel and tourism. We need a lot of entrepreneurs to begin with. We need people who can inspire others about tourism.

Sunil Kumar
India Travel Award Winner & Acting President, TAAI

GPS has been good for us. Our team is happy. They have had meetings with people from inside as well as outside Nagpur. Mauritius had a seven per cent growth in 2014. We have seen growth in luxury segments. This year we have good enquiries for both luxury and wedding segments and expect about six per cent growth.



Sanjay Sondhi,
CEO, OM Tourism

It was a fantastic show. We did not expect so many participants and visitors, but there were many. I thought a Tier-II or Tier-III city would not have so much participation but I think I've seen more than 300 to 400 people here and it looks fantastic. Probably for our products also I would ensure that my company has a stall and some kind of representation here next year.



Jai Bhatia
India Travel Award Winner & Member of Managing Committee, TAAI



GPS is quite an important show and we've been attending it since the inception. Considering central India market which covers Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, handled by Jagsons and some of the other wholesalers in Nagpur, we like to come to this event to meet all these travel agents. It is not possible for us to visit them otherwise.

Vasudha Sondhi
Managing Director, Outbound Marketing



I think the commitment from Harman and Jagsons is tremendous. There is potential in the region. I think the region is still virgin so there is a lot to be explored by most of the B2B players. We look forward to get a lot of visibility

and business out of the region.

Anju Tandon
CEO, Ark Travels



I think it is a great effort coming from somebody from the trade. I convey my compliments to Harman for putting up such an amazing show. I think it's a great market. From whatever I have seen, it is an affluent area. And as money is growing in India, spending

on tourism would also grow.

M S (Kuki) Chawla
Chairman, Siddharth Travels-Interserve

This is the first time in GPS and it is a good opportunity to come and interact with the suppliers and the hoteliers. The people around this area from the Tier II and Tier III cities are looking up for a new future and a new market. This really helps and improves business. India is growing in every segment. There are rich people everywhere. So, they should be informed and educated about the new markets booming in India.



Anil Kalsi
Owner, Ambey World Travel

This is a great platform where you can interact with new agents, new hotels and get to know about new products. The agents that are not able to come to metropolitan cities can come here. So, this is really helpful for our business. We have all our best wishes to the organisers of the show.



Gurmeet Singh Vij
Proprietor, Nova Tours and Travels, Nagpur

We own and operate 14 DMC's across the globe. This is the second time we are participating in GPS. It is a very good show where you get acquainted with the central India tour operators and this is one market that we have been looking out since we have been active in most of the metros. We are also planning our road show in September this year, in a Tier II city.



Sujit Nair
CEO, Akquasun Holidays



This is the first time I'm participating in the show. I think it's been very interesting. This is a new market. We haven't tapped this market at all before. So, we are very keen to get into this market and start building relationships as our business runs on relationships. The idea is to start exploring the market and we will definitely invest here in the market.

Pranav Kapadia
Founder & Director, Global Destinations



I participated in GPS last year also and that is why I've come back. I think this market has a huge potential. This time it was much bigger and there was more foot fall. I am overall very satisfied with the show. We are developing this market. Our endeavour is to tap the Tier II cities like Nagpur.

Nitin Sachdeva
Marketing Manager, India Representative Office, Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau



We have never had any such event happening in central India before. This is the second year and I really think that the effort put in by the team Jagsons is fantastic. Since this is a private effort, I hope that support comes in from the government agencies.

Anil Agarwala
Director, Tathastu Resorts

The show is good and of course the central India market which was untapped till now has a great B2B potential. It is a big player and would help us in our business.

Aarish Khan
Vice President-Sales, Travel Boutique Online



GPS is a grand success. We got good updates on products. Harmandeep has done a good job. The footfall here is mostly from Tier-II cities. Although there have been other fairs like OTM before this, the footfall has not got affected. It has been tremendous.

Harvinder Singh
General Manager-India, Lama Tours



It is a fantastic show and a great initiative. It focusses on central India and the Tier II market which is really gearing up. It's a cash rich market and I think it's a great opportunity to network. I can see the great participation here and I think GPS has done something really good.

Vineet Gopal
Managing Director, Engee Holidays





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The 'Heart of India', where the majestic Indian tiger once roamed unchallenged, is the largest state in India, dazzling with forests and is a haven for wildlife. The region accounts for one-third of the total forest cover in the country.

Madhya Pradesh

Call of the wild

Every year, thousands of tourists from around the world, armed with fancy cameras make a beeline to Madhya Pradesh to see one of the most popular Indian attractions – the tiger. Madhya Pradesh is home to a large number of tiger reserves offering an opportunity to admire the royal tiger in its natural habitat.

Tiger reserves are open again to tourists! The Supreme Court has lifted the ban on tiger tourism in core areas of reserves

and sanctuaries. According to the new guidelines, tourism is allowed in at least 20 per cent of the core areas of tiger sanctuaries and NTCA has proposed a new conservation fee for the tourism industry, which will be used in improving the ecology and the quality of life of the local community living nearby.

Madhya Pradesh is a multi-faceted state, offering incredible wildlife reserves, intricate temples and palaces, and a dazzling tradition of arts, crafts and cuisine. The forests of Madhya Pradesh are a haven for wildlife. Madhya Pradesh is a pioneer

state in the national movement for conservation of the Tiger. Madhya Pradesh is also known as the 'Tiger State' as it harbors 19 per cent of India's Tiger Population and 10 per cent of the world's tiger population. At present, there are five Tiger areas in the state namely – Kanha, Panna, Bandhavgarh, Pench and Satpura.

Bandhavgarh was the hunting preserve of the Maharajas of Rewa: their old fort still dominates a hill rising out of the forest. Tiger-Spotting is virtually guaranteed at Bandhavgarh as it has the highest tiger density in India.



km in dramatic natural splendour which form the core of the Kanha Tiger Reserve created in 1974 under Project Tiger. This was the park that the Central Indian Barasingha, also known as the hard ground barasingha, was brought back from the virtual edge of extinction.

Pench Tiger Reserve comprises the Indira Priyadarshini Pench National Park, the Mowgli Pench Sanctuary and a buffer. The Park nestles in the Southern slopes of the Satpura ranges of Central India. The river Pench, which splits the National Park into two, forms the lifeline of the Park. The area of the present tiger reserve has a glorious history.

By a special statute in 1955, Kanha National Park came into being. Since then, a series of stringent conservation programmes for the protection of the park's flora and fauna has given Kanha its deserved reputation for being one of the finest and best administered National Parks in Asia, an irresistible attraction for all wildlife lovers and a true haven for its animal population.

Panna is home dominated by the splendid Ken river, altering valleys and plateaus, grasslands, gorges and escarpments, Panna National Park is an ideal tiger country. Relics of Gondwana period (rule of the tribal people of Central India) are scattered all over the Reserve. Besides the wildlife watchers (around 12000 annually), Panna gets visitors (around 20000 annually) who exclusively visit the famous Pandav Fall.

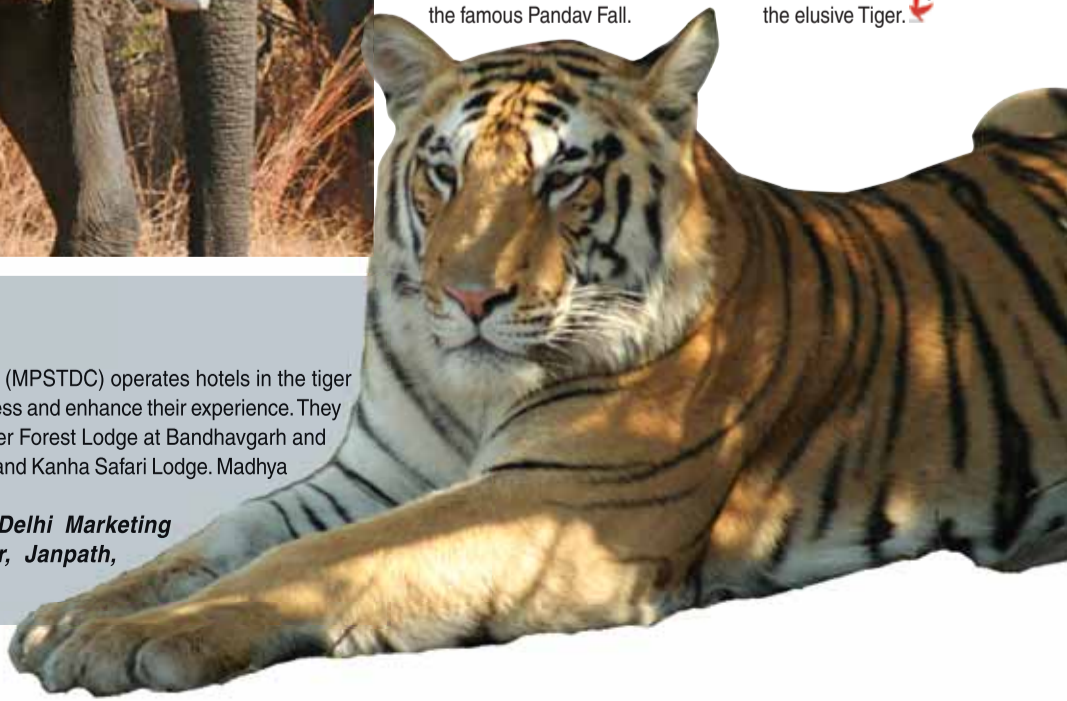
Satpura Tiger Reserve is a welcome change to the regular wildlife circuit in India. The reserve is spread over 1,500 km of pristine wildlife habitat and is truly one of the few modern day wilderness spots left in the country. What makes Satpura unique is the variety of options it offers, to experience the flora and fauna is this magnificent forest. It is the only park in central India which allows people to explore tiger country on foot. Further the forest department is working towards offering non-motorized ways of discovering the tiger reserve. In addition to walking, guests can also opt for jeep, canoeing, elephant and motorboat safaris. At the park, one will get to see close glimpse of animals like sambar, cheetal, nilgiri, wild boar, barking deer, black buck sloth bear, wild dogs, leopards and the elusive Tiger.



Where to stay

The Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation (MPSTDC) operates hotels in the tiger reserves providing an opportunity for visitors to live near the wilderness and enhance their experience. They include Kipling's Court in Pench, Jungle Camp at Panna, White Tiger Forest Lodge at Bandhavgarh and properties at Kanha which include Baghira Log Huts, Tourist Hostel and Kanha Safari Lodge. Madhya Pradesh Tourism also operates special packages to the Jungles.

For more information and bookings, contact the Delhi Marketing office at Room No. 12, Hotel Janpath, Ground Floor, Janpath, New Delhi 110 001.





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Travelling to the desert is never a tempting proposition for tourists visiting locales with parched barren lands and inhospitable weather. But this perception is now changing with the staging of desert festivals across the world as a part of tourism promotional endeavours.

Scintillating white fiesta in Rann of Kutch



The success of heritage tourism is inspiring and encouraging a large number of travellers to make a beeline to desert festival venues to savour good music, dance and food in chilly stillness of the desert nights.

One such emerging global tourism destination is the Rann of Kutch in Saurashtra region of Gujarat, thanks to the innovative initiative of the State Tourism Department to hold 'Rann Utsav', a three-day festival in December.

The imaginatively packaged carnival is proving to be a big hit with tourists, both domestic and foreign. The carnival depicts the diverse Kutchi culture whose swirling sound and rhythm senses the pulse and heartbeats of the tourists making it an experience to remember. The Rann

of Kutch, like any other desert, sizzles in summer and is harsh. But in winters, this mass of land turns into a glistening silver sheet of white as if by some mystical magic. With icy-cool winds blowing through the vast barren landscape becomes a visual delight. The festival focusses on those travellers who are culturally sensitive and find ancient ballads and Indian dances dating back to medieval times enthralling. It also offers visitors a vintage opportunity to explore the history, culture, archeological sites and geography of the Rann.

The Rann Utsav has re-invented Kutch as a cultural hub. The vibrant festival shares the stories, songs and the unique Kutchi folk dance and music concepts, showcases artisans at work creating quintessential marvels. The visitors get to experience the rich cultural tradition and heritage of

Kutch and a unique exposure to adaptations to the natural environment and of lifestyles, aesthetic expression and social values.

Carnival visitors for once can forget the swanky five star hotel accommodation and services as they have an option of staying in a tent which is as cozy as can be. Both air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned tents are available. The tourists can enjoy camel rides in the village.

The festival begins on a full moon night amid the awe-inspiring and contrasting landscape.

Creating a mosaic of exquisiteness, the event symbolises the innate spirit of the Kutch region, which is one of the most ecologically and ethnically diverse regions of the state. It is an event where one enjoys the real music and dance transcending any language barrier.

Ever since its launch, the festival has fascinated visitors by scintillating performances in their pulsating vitality. And the visitors return home as brand-ambassadors of Rann Utsav ever will-



ing to present the glory of Kutch before the world. This is amply reflected in the ever larger number of people flocking to the festival each year.

The Rann Utsav is also a story of how the people of Kutch as custodians of age-old craft and traditions have preserved them with all its authentic Kutchi aesthetics in their pristine glory. Known as a 'cradle of craftsmanship', Kutch has earned the name and fame as the land of weaving, block-printing, bandhini - tie and dye, Rogan-painting and home to various styles of embroidery, pottery, wood-carving, metal-crafts, shell-work and other handicrafts.

For those with the inclination, the festival is also an opportunity to learn making block prints, door hangings with threads and tiny mirrors and get an insight into Toran embroidery. For musicians, craftsmen, artists, it is time to share know-how, develop markets for their products and promote greater cultural diversity.

The 'Utsav' begins in Kharaghoda village because of its

proximity to the Little Rann sanctuary. This palm-fringed village which has been a base for salt manufacturing since colonial times, has bungalows and warehouses, a magnesia factory which is more than a century old, a cricket pavilion and other historic buildings as relics of the colonial period.

The carnival then takes to different locales within Kutch, introducing visitors to the indigenous cultural and ethnical flavour of the people. While an array of folk music and dance recitals enchants the audience, the shimmering moonlit landscape provides the most exhilarating experience. The colourful fairs held near the beach or the banks of a lake swings one with the spirit of festivity.

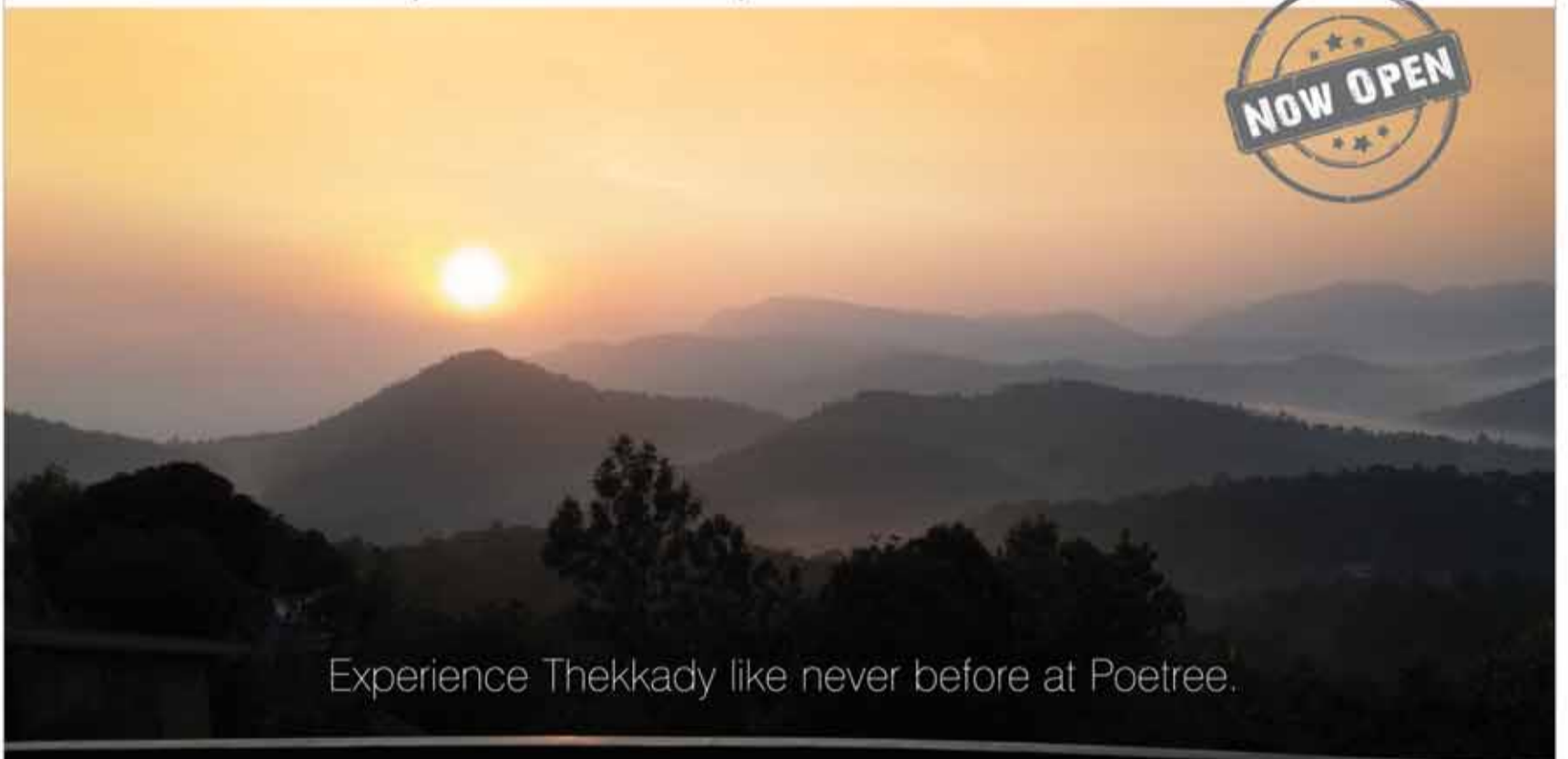
On the third day, the tourists are taken on five optional sight-seeing tours. These tours include visit to Mata Na Madh, Narayan Sarovar, famous bird sanctuary of Chhari Dhundh, a thousand-year-old Kera Shiv Temple, archeological site of Dholavira, Wild Ass Sanctuary in Kutch and others. ↪





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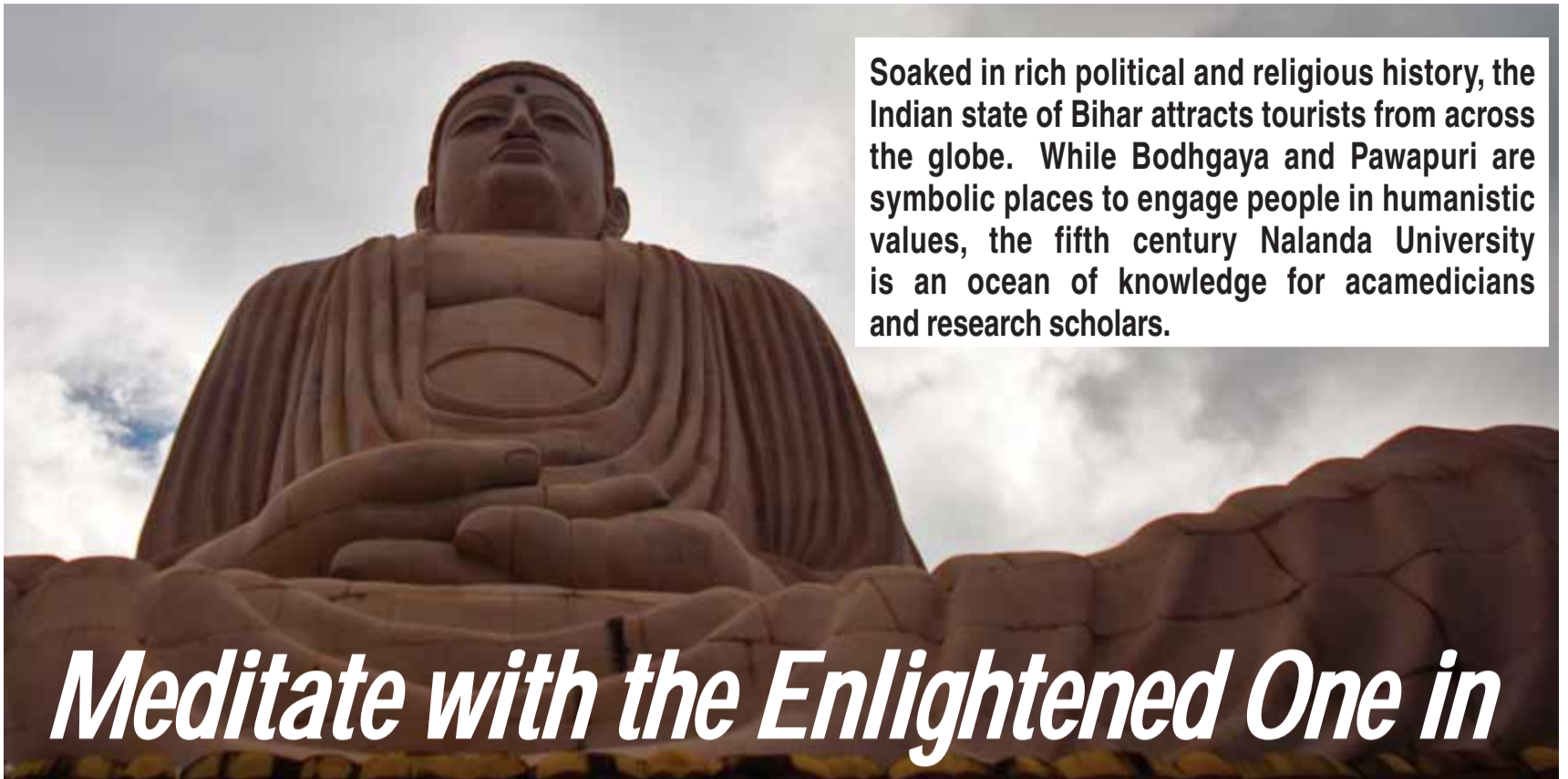


aroma of spices and wild flowers. Relax to the soothing symphony of the cicadas. At Poetree, happiness is like the mountain ranges. Unending.

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Soaked in rich political and religious history, the Indian state of Bihar attracts tourists from across the globe. While Bodhgaya and Pawapuri are symbolic places to engage people in humanistic values, the fifth century Nalanda University is an ocean of knowledge for academicians and research scholars.

Meditate with the Enlightened One in

BODHGAYA

Bihar, the state packed with interesting stories from rich history, has marked its place on the global chart. 'Non-Violence', the most enchanting thought in the history of mankind first emanated from this land. The Buddha and Mahavira, the pioneering propagators of this idea, pronounced this solemn solution of human suffering about 2600 years ago and resonate even today to brace humanity. Bodhgaya and Pawapuri have become symbolic places to engage to this uplifting mood.

The festivals of Bodhgaya, Rajgir are the special attractions to mingle with the enormous confluence of humanity.

The numerous stupas and pillars that were built mostly by the Great Emperor Ashoka as a tribute to the Buddha are testimony of not only the magnitude of earnestness and power but also the refined aesthetics that hold the spectator spellbound. The National symbol which adorns Indian currency, the Four-Headed Lion was erected atop an Ashokan Pillar that stood tall once in this land of Bihar.

The oldest functional temple of India Mundeswari still abuzz with the clanging of bells around the fascinating four-headed Shivlinga, a wonderful artistic expression of male-female union has mystical tales around it. The Shrines of the Sufi tombs as the Tomb of Sher Shah Suri and Maner Sharif are among the finest gems of the Mughal architecture that should not be dropped out of the travellers' itinerary.

The Sikhs' very revered pilgrimage Harmandir Takht Saheb, the birth place of the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh, is an enchanting shrine at the heart of the capital city Patna. The landscape of Bihar with the majestically widespread of the river Ganga along with the tributaries with the fertile wide emerald plain waving at the traveller is sure to steal the hearts.

With the present Bihar Government's improved governance for security and well laid roads makes the Bihar travel one of the most cherishing experience.

Mahabodhi Temple

The Mahabodhi Temple Complex is one of the four holy sites

related to the life of Lord Buddha, and particularly to the attainment of his Enlightenment. The temple stands on the eastern side of the Bodhi Tree and is an architectural marvel. The four 'chatras' on top of the temple symbolise the sovereignty of the religion. The temple is an edifice to the pious efforts made by Buddha in eliminating human miseries. The prime attraction of the temple is the colossal gilded statue of Buddha in a sitting posture, with his right hand touching the earth.

Ratnagarh

Ratnagarh is a must-visit for all Buddhist tourists as it is said that Lord Buddha attained enlightenment here after the five colours emanated from his body.

Getting There

By air: Gaya is the nearest airport and is located only 7 km away.

By rail: Gaya is the nearest railway station and is located 17 km away.

By road: Bodhgaya is well connected by road to Gaya, Nalanda and Rajgir.

Chankramana

This marks the sacred spot of the Buddha's meditative perambulations during the third week after pious enlightenment. It is believed that wherever the Buddha put his feet, lotus flowers sprang up.

Nalanda University

Established in the fifth century during the Gupta dynasty, Nalanda University has been reopened after 800 years. Tourists can now visit this incredible university. Students from all parts of the world such as China, Korea, Tibet, Mongolia and Turkey visit here. The revived Nalanda University began its first academ-

ic session from September 1, 2014 with 15 students, including five women, and 10 faculty members, its Vice-Chancellor informed.

The university will come up in Rajgir, 12 km from where the ancient Nalanda University stood till the 12th century, when it was razed by an invading Turkish army.

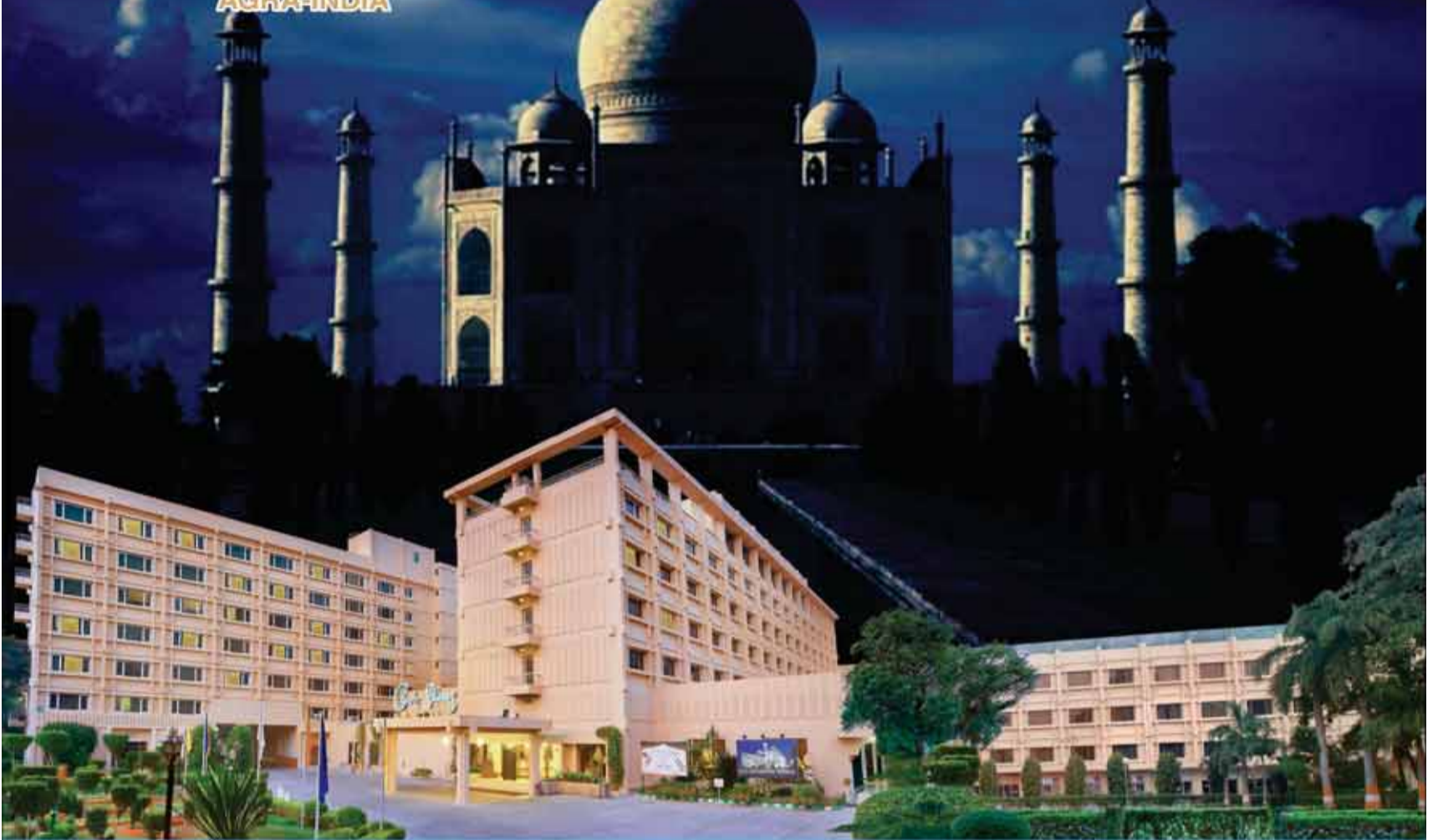
Apart from Bodhgaya, tourists can also visit places such as Vaishali, East and West Champaran, Vikramshila (Bhagalpur) and Barabar Hills (Jehanabad).

Courtesy: Bihar Tourism Website



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Taj on top, but industry needs more...

US President B Obama was unable to make it to Agra during his recent visit to India but the City of the Taj got the much-needed sprucing up in preparation for his visit. But the vibrant travel industry of the iconic city has many more concerns, which will be addressed in the interest of lakhs of domestic and international tourists, not to mention the local people living in Agra, perhaps one of the most famous names in the tourism world.



ANIL MATHUR

The opening of the Yamuna Expressway making travel from and to Delhi easier and quicker has no doubt helped boost domestic weekend travel for leisure, MICE and weddings and has to some extent compensated for the decline in

have contributed to decline in foreign arrivals.

But much more needs to be done before Agra gets its due place. Infrastructure and connectivity has to improve and more steps taken to see better image of the city. Steps like making CNG compulsory

such body in the country, has written to the Prime Minister listing some of the demands, which, if met, will make things better for the visitors and the locals.

Who says what

Debasish Bhowmik, President, TGA, and Senior



Debasish Bhowmik
President, TGA, and Senior Vice President, Hotel Clarks Shiraz

TGA is active in Clean Agra, Green Agra campaign but would like the authorities to pay heed to the demands



Arun Dang
Joint Secretary, Hotel and Restaurant Association of North India

Greater efforts are required to promote more monuments among the visitors



Ashok Jain
Veteran Travel Trade

The good days for tourism are yet to come and higher taxes and package costs are to be blamed for it

foreign arrivals, points out **Sunil Gupta**, of Travel Bureau, an industry leader, and member of IATO executive committee. Gupta feels that the economic conditions in Europe

for vehicles plying in the Taj area by July 31 are welcome, as is the E ticketing booking facility for Taj and other monuments, but the Tourism Guild of Agra(TGA), one of the oldest

Vice President, Hotel Clarks Shiraz, says that Agra as a prime tourist city should have its share of infrastructure development in the form of better roads, connectivity and



Agra Walks

One recent development in Agra has drawn much national and international attention and praise. This is the Agra Walks introduced by young **Suyash Gupta**. Most major cities in the world have walking tours, which give a good idea of the personality of the city. This is what Suyash Gupta



Suyash Gupta
Director, Agra Walks

has tried to do, in the 2 to 3 hour tours, which have got high ratings, and reviews, by all who have experienced them. The walking tours give experience of rickshaw ride, spice market, Mehtab Bagh, musicians' balcony, temples and mosque. The imaginatively designed walking tours include sampling the best of local delicacies and the pan. Suyash says that there is much interest in the tours from all segments of the industry and the tourists, who are delighted to take back spices and recipes back home.



TGA memorandum to Prime Minister

That not all is okay with the tourism industry in the city of the Taj is evident in the strong memo sent by the Tourism Guild of Agra to the Prime Minister, in the hope that things will improve. The TGA points out that 'Agra is the house of pinnacles of India and the world, which is also the face of Incredible Indian tourism and if tourism cannot be done here, it cannot be done anywhere in India. The only natural resource of the city is tourism generated due to optimal use of its monuments or killed due to the misuse of the same.'

The Guild, which has members from all sections of the industry, feels that 'It is high time that Agra is looked at differently from rest of UP and treated as a national resource, face and brand of resurgent India on an international scale and for arresting the declining inflow to India.'

The Guild wants single point officer for tourism in Agra, empowered to appoint technical consultants for global concerts and convince authorities like the ASI, security and local government. Interestingly, the TGA has given the example of Dubai, pointing out that it has gone from camel to Rolls Royce not because of their

own people but by relying on the expertise of global experts and international consultants.' Another issue that needs to be taken up is the proper lighting up of the Taj, as is done abroad.

Air connectivity is of vital importance and a new international airport is required for better connectivity. Agra gets about four million foreign and eight million domestic tourists a year. Among the places that need to be airlinked with Agra are Varanasi, Lucknow, Khajuraho, Jaipur, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Goa. Mehtab Bagh, Taj Nature walk and the Yamuna River should be used for fairs and cultural activities and sound and light shows should be mounted at monuments.

Boat tourism can be developed when the Agra barrage on Yamuna project is executed, feels the TGA. For a hassle-free experience to the tourist, accessibility to monuments should improve and encroachments removed, to make for a memorable 'Agra Experience'.

Online tickets to various monuments and availability in more locations would avoid rush at ticket windows at the monuments..

airport. He adds that the TGA is active in Clean Agra, Green Agra campaign but would like the authorities to pay heed to the demands so that arrivals and stays increase, both domestic and international.

Arun Dang, Joint Secretary, Hotel and Restaurant Association of North India, who owns The Grand Hotel, points out that the room inventory in one year has increased by 600 rooms, with major chains coming in. He feels that the investments were decided when the tourism scene was looking up and hopes that the situation will improve again to justify the increased room capacity of over 3000 rooms in star category and another 3000 in guest houses and non star hotels. "Greater efforts are required to promote more

monuments among the visitors," he adds.

Ashok Jain, who has done much for the transport and entertainment, among other segments, says that the good days for tourism are yet to come and blames higher taxes and package costs for tourism not picking up. He predicts that by 2017, the demand--supply mismatch will be balanced.

The Oswal Group of Ashok Jain has done much to make Agra more attractive for the tourist. The Kalakriti Cultural and Convention Centre organises a grand musical-dance show for most of the year, with a cast of over 100 artists, staging the Mohabbat the Taj. He has done much to preserve the marble and other heritage of the area and train the younger

generation. The Mohabbat the Taj show has 10 languages to choose from, in the comfort of a plus auditorium. Ashok Jain has also tried to see that the stay of tourists is prolonged.

Charter of Demands

► It is high time that Agra is looked at differently from rest of UP and treated as a national resource, face and brand of resurgent India on an international scale and for arresting the declining inflow to India

► Air connectivity is of vital importance and a new international airport is required for better connectivity

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Exploring the Heart of India at GPS

The Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) opened on February 8-10 in Nagpur. The show's theme of 'Explore the Heart of India' highlighted Nagpur as the hidden jewel of India and among the cash-rich markets of the country.



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Aussies bet big on cricket World Cup

As Australia hosts the Cricket World Cup, Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager, India and Gulf, Tourism Australia, talks about how they are planning to woo Indian cricket fans and how Australia aims to witness up to 300,000 visitors and up to AUD 2.3 billion in spend from India by 2020.

 PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q How is the Indian market growing in importance for Australia?

India is currently Australia's 10th largest inbound tourism market, and features prominently on the Indian travellers bucket list of global holiday destinations. India is the 12th largest source market in terms of expenditure. For 12 months ending June 2014, Indian visitors contributed AUD 752 million to Australia's total expenditure. Arrivals from India are expected to perform well, with an average annual financial year growth rate of 7.2 per cent through to the financial year 2020-21. As per the 'India 2020 Strategic Plan', it is estimated that Australia will witness up to 300,000 visitors and up to AUD 2.3 billion in spend by the year 2020.

Q How was the response from India to Australia in 2014? (Figures, if possible)

“ For the nine months, till September 2014, Australia received 140,400 Indian visitors, an increase of 18 per cent relative to the same period previous year.

Nishant Kashikar
Country Manager, India and Gulf Tourism Australia



Australia has witnessed a steady increase in Indian visitors in recent years. For the nine months, till September 2014, Australia received 140,400 Indian visitors, an increase of 18 per cent relative to the same period previous year. India is currently the 10th largest inbound market for arrivals. The Tourism Forecasting Committee (TFC) is forecasting 190,000 visitors from India for 2014-15, a 6.4% increase over 2013-14. With the media activities and the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 opportunity, we aim to achieve over 200,000 arrivals during 2015.

Q How is the response from the Indian market for the Cricket World Cup?

According to feedback from accredited Travel agents for the ICC World Cup, there has been a significant increase in demand and bookings for the CWC packages and over 6,000 cricket enthusiasts from India are expected to travel for the event. With a strong and stable government and positive consumer sentiments, outbound travel out of India is expected to rise during 2015. The ongoing tour of the Indian cricket team to Australia, offers significant

engagement opportunities for Tourism Australia.

Q How are you planning to woo travellers who will be visiting Australia during the 2015 World Cup to extend their stay or visit the country a second time?

Tourism Australia has associated with Yatra.com to specially curate a portfolio of 30 travel packages showcasing the Best of Australia experiences for

travellers planning their trip Down Under during the current & upcoming cricket season. These itineraries will give tourists an opportunity to indulge in uniquely Aussie activities on the sidelines of the cricket matches and will be reflective of popular Star Sports commentator – Gautam Bhimani's exciting journey in Australia.

To leverage the attention and viewership that cricket events are slated to receive in

India, Tourism Australia has planned a robust integrated media campaign, to increase visibility for the country as a tourism destination. Strategic airline and travel agent associates will supplement the appealing imagery and brand content advertised by providing a strong call-to-action and attractive packages for potential travellers to book their holiday.

Any new initiatives for 2015 for the Indian market?

The 'Restaurant Australia' campaign will be continued with a strong tactical focus on media vehicles including television, print, out-of-home and digital platforms, to coincide with the planning periods for Indian summer holidays. Tourism Australia will continue to build our partnerships with our key aviation and distribution partners, as well as drive advocacy through our Public Relations initiatives and our International Media Hosting Program. 

India means business

▶ India is currently Australia's 10th largest inbound tourism market, and features prominently on the Indian travellers bucket list of global holiday destinations

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Kolhapur gets a 5-star property



Abhijit Rege
General Manager
Sayaji Kolhapur

Till now, there was a dearth of space for conducting any major MICE-related events. In Kolhapur, keeping this vacuum in mind, we have created facilities for organising major conferences like medical conferences wherein CMEs are held. We also had pharmaceutical conferences in mind, as they too require live transmission of the events to the other cities

With D Y P Hospitality joining hands with Sayaji Group of Hotels to operate its first five-star hotel in Kolhapur, another feather has been added to their cap. Abhijit Rege, General Manager, Sayaji Kolhapur, discusses how the hotel will cater to travellers from all walks of life coming to the city in the southern part of Maharashtra.

Q What is the USP of Sayaji Kolhapur?

We will be the first five-star hotel in the southern part of Maharashtra, based in Kolhapur. The hotel has a helipad for the convenience of the high flyers coming into the city. The hotel has various banqueting areas like the ball-room which has a capacity of 800 pax (floating), lawn of 45,000 sq ft having a capacity of around 1,500 pax (floating). These are the largest venues available in the city. We have planned a lounge on top floor of the hotel which is at a height of 40

metres, offering a 360 degree view of the city. This is the highest point in the city. We would be providing one-stop shop solutions for banqueting events.

Q What market are you going to cater to, in this area?

We will be targeting multiple areas since the city has an industrial belt around it with a lot of corporate travellers coming in. The city is mid-way from Pune to Panaji entertaining transit travellers and it is home to a



in existence for many years and who have an established clientele.

Q What are the MICE facilities that you provide?

Till now, there was a dearth of space for conducting any major MICE-related events. In Kolhapur, keeping this vacuum in mind, we have created facilities for organising major conferences like medical conferences wherein CMEs are held. We also had pharmaceutical conferences in mind, as they too require live transmission of the events to the other cities. We also would be a one-stop-shop for all kinds of events.

Q What is Kolhapur famous for and how are you going to capitalise on the same?

Kolhapur is known for its food. With the presence of Barbeque Nation, a popular barbeque joint around the country and our well renowned Sayaji food, we should be able to target the right mix of clients. The city, as mentioned earlier, has a Mahalaxmi Temple, where pilgrims from all walks of life arrive for

blessings. We can organise a comfortable stay for the pilgrims and a visit to the temple along with a trip to the historical sites in and around the city.

Q How leisure activities are involved in and around Kolhapur?

There are a lot of leisure activities that travellers can involve themselves into, including trekking around the hills of the Sahadri range of mountains, boating in Rankala Lake, go-karting, visiting nearby historical forts of VShivaji Maharaja era.

Q Anything you want to add about the property.

The hotel has a spa, a well-equipped gymnasium, a swimming pool, a heli-pad, a small café serving bakery products, a coffee shop, Barbeque Nation and a lounge located on the top floor of the hotel. Apart from these, the hotel has the largest banquet hall and lawn in the city which is attached to hotel. There are 66 well-furnished and comfortable rooms and four suites.



popular Mahalaxmi Temple which is visited as a pilgrimage point by a huge number of religious travellers. The city is a popular destination for various social events like weddings, for people from the surroundings.

Q What kind of competition do you face?

We are the first to set up a luxury five-star hotel in Kolhapur. The competition per-se is from the smaller stand-alone hotels who have been



Goa #6 among world's top 10 nightlife cities

■ Dilip Parulekar, Tourism Minister, Goa recently announced that the state has been positioned sixth in the list of top 10 nightlife cities in the world by 'National Geographic'. He said that the city's night bazaars and music festivals are popular and the tourism department will encourage and promote such events which are conventional to all laws of the land. Dublin in Ireland has been ranked first in National Geographic's 'Top



10 Nightlife Cities' list, followed by Belgrade in Serbia, La Paz in Bolivia, Sao Paulo in Brazil, San Juan in Puerto Rico, Goa in India, Ibiza in Spain, Houston in Texas, Thessaloniki in Greece and Baku in Azerbaijan.

Agra beyond Taj

■ Uttar Pradesh Tourism has announced forward-looking initiatives to develop Agra beyond Taj and the Heritage Arc of Uttar Pradesh which runs across the heart of the State covering three district regions – Agra, Lucknow and Varanasi. The Agra Development Authority is

building an inner ring road from Kuberpur to Fatehabad Road that will connect the Yamuna Expressway to the Taj and will reduce the travel time. The Archaeological Survey of India has initiated online ticketing. Key attractions near Agra like Sur Sarovar Sanctuary and Keetham Lake are also being promoted that are home to woodland and wetland birds. The Sanctuary, which is home to 250 rescued bears, attracts tourists from across the world.



Hurray! 7.46mn FTAs in 2014

In a significant rise in numbers, FTAs were recorded at 7.46 million in 2014 as against its target of 7 million. TRAVTALK asks Tourism Secretary and his predecessors about their thoughts on the future of the tourism industry.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA



We are very happy with inbound figures touching the 7.46 million mark. Ever since its launch on November 27, 2014, more than 26,000 ETAs have been processed till the first week of January. And if the response continues, we expect the foreign tourist arrivals to double in the next three years.

This is a great impetus for tourism and the Prime Minister in his speech at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has again talked about tourism.

Dr Lalit K Panwar

Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India

Indian tourism has finally acquired the momentum where every two years you can expect an additional 1 million foreign tourists, and with a gamechanger like the eVisa, the growth will only be faster. If things remain the same and there are no untoward incidents, I expect the FTA to go up to 8 million in 2015. The 7.46 million figure that we have right now is provisional, once the real figures come out by March 2015, I expect this number to be around 7.5 million.

Parvez Dewan

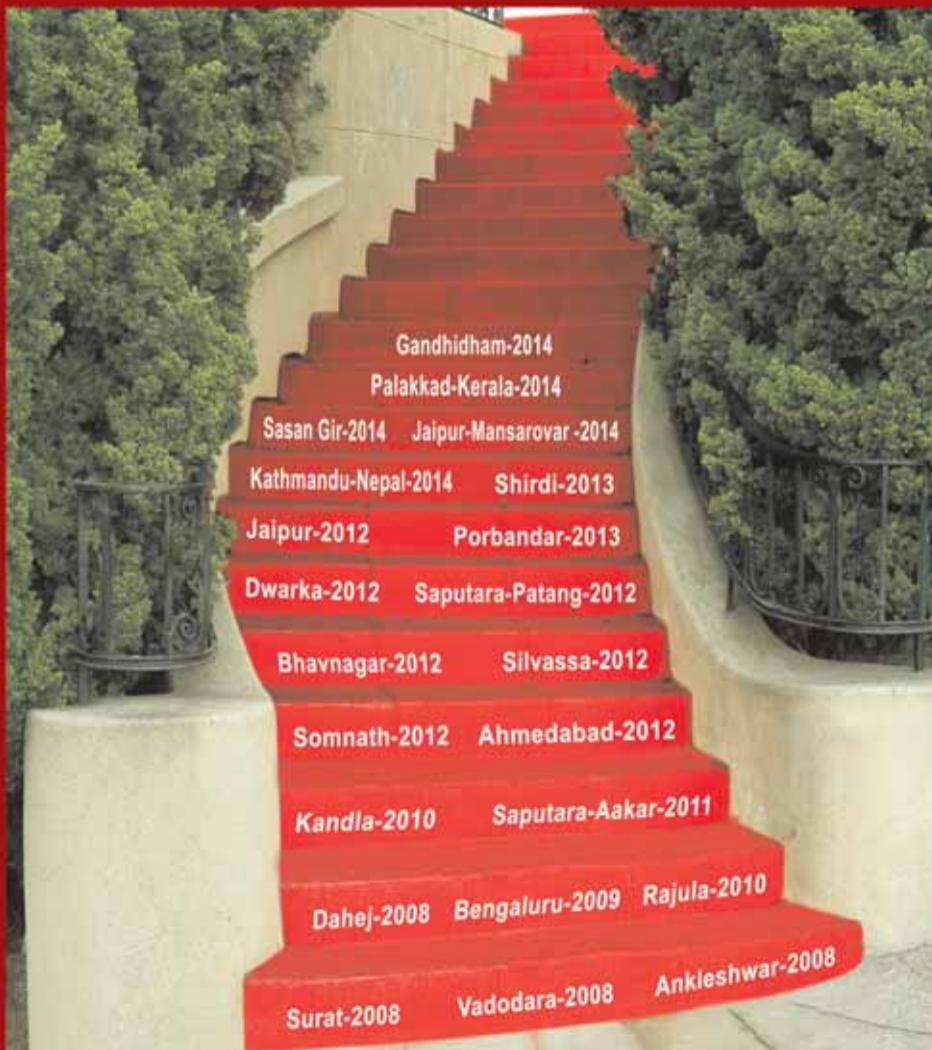
Former Secretary MOT



This is great news. The new government is giving emphasis to tourism. Now is the right time to apply a synergistic approach to tourism, we need to have a single vision where all departments should work towards a common objective. The state governments should all be onboard. Hygiene is also important and campaigns like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan should help.

RH Khwaja

Former Secretary, MOT



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- Skanda Purana

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The heart of Incredible India

Maya mesmerises all

Those giving an outstanding contribution to the travel trade were awarded with the India Travel Awards. The winners felt pride when asked about their feedback. A few excerpts...



Lufthansa German Airlines

This award feels like an Oscar. It did come as a surprise to us but I am really happy to have received it. I would like to thank on behalf of the whole team. It's absolutely special. I think North India Travel Award is absolutely amazing to come forward and put together something like this. This is something very genuine and authentic.

Sangeeta Sharma
Manager Marketing-Communications

Tourism Authority of Thailand

It is really good that DDP has organised this award regionally. In this way everyone gets individual credit for the hard work that they have done. We are also thankful to DDP for giving us this award. It is very exciting to get this award.

Runjuan Tongrut
Director



Udaan India

I am so glad to have won the award and this is all hard work of the whole team. My family attended me at the event for the first time. They were really excited. This award feels fantastic, a very nice way to finish the year 2014. Hoping to have a great 2015 too.

Rajan Dua
Managing Director



Nidra Hospitality

I am thankful to India Travel Awards for organising this. It feels good to receive an award. It fortifies the hard work that we have done and assures us to continue working with the industry. It is really encouraging and the show that was put up was outstanding. DDP has raised the bar among the other such kind of shows.

Sunil Ghadiok, CEO



It is fantastic and great to receive an award for being the Ambassador of my own country. We want to promote India worldwide. I love India and would like to say something in Hindi, "Hai preet jahan ki reet sada, hum geet wahan ke gaate hain. London ke rehne wale hain, Bharat ki baat sunate hain."

Ramesh Arora
Tourism Ambassador -Overseas

ibis Delhi Airport Hotel

It is lovely to have such award shows. We are a new hotel, just three months old and we had a very good launch campaign called 'pay what you want'. It was a great start which was a contribution of the whole team and I am so honoured that this has brought us here. We look forward to many more awards.

Kumar Preetam Jaiswal



TrawellTag Cover-More

We are feeling on top of this world after receiving this award and giving a tough time to many big players in the market. We are very delighted to get this award. We would like to thank our whole team for the hard work and DDP for organising the award.

Deepak Singh
Area Manager Delhi



RezLive.com

It is definitely a very good feeling. It is a reward for the hard work we have done. The credit goes to the entire team of Rezlive.com. I would like to bestow a special thanks to the Group Managing Director of the company. It feels really great and I would also like to thank TravTalk for this award.

Tirath Shah
Associate Vice President



BRYS Hotels

I'm really excited about getting the award. I would like to thank TravTalk on behalf of my company. This is very encouraging for me as I am willing to come up with a hotel chain. The award motivates all of us to keep our work go on like it already is or even in a better way.

Rahul Gaur
Chairman and Managing Director

Centrum Direct

This is a very encouraging step taken by TravTalk for the travel fraternity. We are very hopeful that this is going to gain a lot of weightage and a good recognition to the people who have been doing really well. Travellers from all over the world are looking at India as a booming tourism destination. So, with the convenience of eVisa, they will be encouraged to come here more and more.

Harendra Chaudhary
General Manager (North & South)



Ramada Udaipur Resort & Spa

It is a moment of big pride for us to hold this beautiful black lady, Maya in our hand. I am so proud to achieve India Travel Award and would like to thank the DDP Group for this amazing initiative. It is a great way to felicitate people of the industry for keeping up the right work.

Ratan Taldar
Managing Director



Group Concorde

It feels great to receive North India Travel Award. We are happy that the industry supports us and we will continue to see hope. This encourages us to work harder and harder to achieve more success in this industry with the help of all other stalwarts of the industry.

Prithviraj Chug
Director

DDP Game Changer Awards 2014

The industry continues to function on set rules tirelessly, day in and day out. But those who transform the accepted strategies and functions for a brighter future are always looked up to. We, at DDP recognised four such 'Game Changers', who led a movement of change to inch travel trade to greater heights.

South India Travel Awards



Sunil Kumar, CEO, Travel World and Acting President, TAAI, receiving the DDP Game Changer Award from **Chandana Khan**, Accompanying her are **Amita Motwani**, Mrs. India-International 2013 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Publications

North India Travel Awards



Ajay Bakaya, Executive Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts receives the 'DDP Game Changer' Award from **S. Sohan Singh Thandal**, Tourism Minister of Punjab, and **Dr. Lalit K Panwar**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, **Amita Motwani**, Mrs. India International 2013 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

East India Travel Awards



JT Ramnani, Managing Director, Vensimal World Travel Agents Pvt. Ltd receives the 'DDP Game Changer' Award from **Bratya Basu**, Minister of Tourism and Culture, West Bengal, accompanied by **Amita Motwani**, Mrs. India International 2013 and **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group

West India Travel Awards



Sanjay Kaul, Commissioner of Tourism and Managing Director of the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, received the 'DDP Game Changer' Award



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India in top 3 markets for Ocean Park

Having recently opened a representative office in India, Phyllis Lai, Senior Sales Manager, Ocean Park Hong Kong, spoke to TRAVTALK about their focus on Indian MICE and FIT groups and how they are keen to work with Indian travel agents.



TT BUREAU

QYou now have a representative office in India. What prompted the move?

In the past, we have had four offices in China and now we have a representative office in India and Korea, so we are looking at these mar-

kets. These countries figure in the Top 4 markets in South East Asia for us. Since 2008, Indian guests at Ocean Park Hong Kong have more than tripled, making the country a top-three source market, excluding China. The first half of 2014 has increased double digit to Ocean Park, ranking 4th among the South East Asia market. These encouraging figures indicate how important the Indian market is to us. To further expand the Indian market, Ocean Park has appointed Nijhawan Group as its first-ever sales and marketing representative

QHow are you trying to create more awareness about Ocean Park in India?

We are very keen to work with the India market and to this effort we work very closely with the tourism board to participate in roadshows and trade fairs. We are also looking forward to more cooperation from airlines, as well as some fast scoring consumer goods product in order to create more brand awareness in India. We are looking for more Indians to come over to Ocean Park and we also have an Indian chef at Ocean Park. Apart from Indian menus, at the venue we have 6 different restaurants so we are looking forward to have more MICE groups from India to Ocean Park. The reason that we have an Indian chef at the venue is also so that we can cater to more requirements from the Indian corporate sector.

care of the FIT guests. As Ocean Park, we understand there are more FIT guests travelling with their families. But we are also looking at travel agents who have the potential to do ticket arrangements directly with Ocean Park so we have online rates too for them. In case they are interested, they can purchase directly in order to cater to FIT guests. As Ocean Park's representative, Nijhawan Group will identify and work with high potential travel agents and tour operators to ensure Ocean Park is incorporated into the FIT (frequent individual travellers), group and MICE itineraries

arranged by these agents. Nijhawan Group will keep the travel trade informed about Ocean Park's latest offerings through trade fairs, roadshows, product presentations and digital outreach. They will also work closely with airlines and the tourism board to drive tourist traffic to Ocean Park.

coupon that can be redeemed at the kiosks, there are also discount coupons for food and beverage, retail etc. For over 100 people we arrange a welcome from our mascot and they can also click a picture with it.

“ We are very keen to work with the India market and to this effort we work very closely with the tourism board to participate in roadshows and trade fairs



Phyllis Lai
Senior Sales Manager, Ocean Park Hong Kong

kets. These countries figure in the Top 4 markets in South East Asia for us. Since 2008, Indian guests at Ocean Park Hong Kong have more than tripled, making the country a top-three source market, excluding China. The first half

of 2014 has increased double digit to Ocean Park, ranking 4th among the South East Asia market. These encouraging figures indicate how important the Indian market is to us. To further expand the Indian market, Ocean Park has appointed Nijhawan Group as its first-ever sales and marketing representative

QHow will you work with Indian travel agents?

We work very closely with the Hong Kong travel agents and we understand that agents are very keen to take

QYou say you are keen to tap the MICE crowd, so what incentives are you providing to MICE groups?

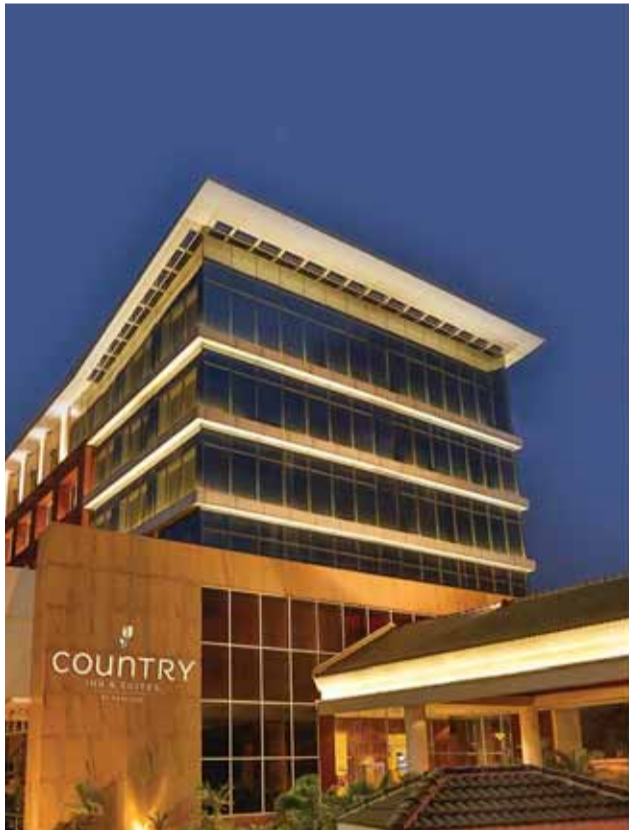
We have a few incentives for MICE groups. For a group of minimum 30 people, we offer a complimentary soft drink

QWhat are the new attractions that Indians can look forward to at the Ocean Park?

In March-end, we will open another new attraction - Adventures in Australia. Eight koalas from the South Australian government were gifted to the Hong Kong SAR Government and Ocean Park has been appointed as the trusted caregiver to these koalas. Three koalas have already arrived; we will also have species like red necked wallabies and laughing kookaburras inside this exhibit. Apart from that in the later stage, we will also have an educational tour for the new exhibits. This also strengthens our commitment to connect the people with nature. We also have a new Marriott hotel which will open in 2017 in front of the Ocean Park entrance.

India for Ocean Park

- ▶ Since 2008, Indian guests at Ocean Park Hong Kong have more than tripled, making the country a top-three source market, excluding China
- ▶ The first half of 2014 has increased double digit to Ocean Park, ranking 4th among the South East Asia market
- ▶ To further expand the Indian market, Ocean Park has appointed Nijhawan Group as its first-ever sales and marketing representative in India



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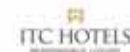
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S Africa's 19-city roadshow in India

Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager, India, South Africa Tourism, talks about bouncing back after visa issues and the Ebola scare. Talking about a 19-city roadshow in India this year, she says that they will use the period from May to August to train the trade.



TT BUREAU

QWith visa issues and Ebola scare affecting tourist arrivals from India, how is South Africa faring so far?

The year 2014 was absolutely spectacular for us up until August. We had an oversupply into the country and we did have some visa issues. We have sorted it out now but we definitely did slow down a little then and after that, of course we got hit by Ebola. We weren't prepared for it because we were four and a half thousand miles away from the Ebola outbreak; we didn't expect people to say we don't want to travel into Africa anymore. But then, we spread the education in India to make people understand that there is absolutely no Ebola inside South Africa, never has been, we scan all our borders. The market recovered quite quickly but by the time Indians decided that they want to travel, South Africa was in high season. . But in January this year, the market is definitely up, so we are very happy with the market.

QWhat is your marketing strategy for 2015 in India?

We are currently in a sale cycle in India so all the promotions between now and April will be very much sales driven. The roadshow in Delhi recently had 63 South African products in the ground; more than a 1000 agents came through the four-day roadshow. We have the television campaign along with one of the biggest Google campaigns ever run by a tourism board. We are excited about our 2015-2016 season which will start on the April 1. We have really major campaigns coming up. We are launching our first major consumer and trade combined campaign in September. We will use the period from May to August to train our trade. We will be back in 19 cities in India.

QWhat can the trade look forward to from South Africa Tourism in 2015?

We have a roadshow, just on a smaller scale, in July

to make sure that we are absolutely ready for the new season. The roadshow includes smaller towns all over from Lucknow to Cochin. Three years ago, we did 30 cities and what we found better is that we should come in with products that represent a spectrum of work. It is incredibly important for us that we do numerous cities and numerous sessions in each city. We actually get to the trade in a smaller environment and in an environment where they can ask questions, where there is time. For us, it's important that we have different itineraries for different ranked peo-

ple. We have 60,000 products in South Africa and they've all done specific adjustments just for the Indian market and its important for us that we get that information out, that people understand what it is that they're buying, that they understand how they need to use the product. They also need to understand what is the combination that works out with the product and when do they need to sell the product. So that when the product gets to the Indian traveller, it's sleek, it's polished and it's no fuss movement in terms of getting them into the country.



“ The roadshow in Delhi recently had 63 South African products in the ground; more than a 1000 agents came through the four-day roadshow

Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager, India, South Africa Tourism

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Training The Trade

- ▶ South Africa Tourism is launching its first major consumer and trade combined campaign in September
- ▶ It will use the period from May to August to train the trade so that when we break, people actually know about South Africa

GPS 2015: Exploring Central India





HOTEL PUSHKAR PALACE



- Hotel Pushkar Palace is running under the ownership of Tikai Thakur Jagat Singh Rathore of Khanpur.
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Tech affair to continue in 2015

Travel industry had posed immense faith in technology in the year 2014 and it is likely to spill over to the year 2015. TRAVELTALK finds out how agents feel about this new force and whether it is worth reckoning with.



HAZEL JAIN

The shroud surrounding technology among the travel trade is slowly lifting as more and more agents are assimilating it in their businesses.

Speaking about how things have changed over the years, **Om Prakash Sehgal**, Director of In-Orbit Tours, says, "I started my career in 1977

gence of "e-world". "Now, we have paperless offices, paperless airline tickets, email and SMS hotel confirmations. All this requires technology and almost everyone relies on computers and different software to provide accurate information," he says. Bhatia is also the Chairman of Tourism Council for the Travel Agents Association of India.

gy, from e-tickets, high-speed internet and mobile internet for faster, cheaper communication, especially long distance, to improved storage of sensitive data, online marketing, net banking and online payments.

"These advancements have helped the industry go a long way in servicing clients, attracting larger business

and increase productivity," Bhatia reveals.

Meanwhile, Karvat's core product, TrawellTag, is a metallic luggage tracking device. "Our team of IT professionals has improvised our existing technical features. Travel agents will now experience more refined user-interface with better API integration while using our platform to issue our plans to their customers," he says.

In 2015, TrawellTag Cover-More will launch its state-of-the-art e-commerce and m-commerce platforms to enable agents and customers

media. It not only helps create awareness and promote our product to a larger audience but also get timely feedback, help HR with recruitment and other matters that help develop and improvise our product. Technology equals evolution," she sums up.

As a representation company, Benchmark Travel Representations' focus is on making the process between agent and DMC as seamless as possible. **Savio Pereira**, Director, Benchmark Travel Representations, opines, "We use technology in communication, information dissemination and promotional activities to

ers to keep in mind. Bhatia alerts, "One must keep in mind that competitive advantage doesn't just materialise through the use of new technology. It only makes possible new forms of organisation and new ways of operating."

Karvat also voices his concern as well. "Business owners should not look at technology as just a tool to get an edge over their competitors. Adopting technology is necessary to give customers a seamless experience when they avail your services," he says. Meanwhile, Daruwalla too urges the trade to not adopt technology blindly. Technology is the new buzzword in any business today, particularly in travel, says Pereira. "It's not to say that businesses cannot thrive in an environment sans technology, however it is the sheer dynamic nature of the businesses today that requires technology to give them the edge. Technology cannot be for technology's sake and successful adopters are those who can apply relevant technology to practical use thus achieving optimum results," he adds.



Om Prakash Sehgal
India Travel Award Winner & Director, In-Orbit Tours

Adopting the latest technology has become essential for convenience and survival

when technology was as good as absent. Since then, we have travelled a long way into the modern era of technology in the travel business. Adopting the latest technology has become essential today not only for convenience but for survival."

Those who came after him agree. **Jay Bhatia**, Director and CEO of Tulsidas Khimji Holidays, who walked away with the 'Entrepreneur of the Year' award at the India Travel Awards – West India in August 2014, refers to these changing times as the emer-



Jay Bhatia
India Travel Award Winner & Director and CEO Tulsidas Khimji Holidays

Now, we have paperless offices, paperless airline tickets, email and SMS hotel confirmations

The young ones blaze the trail. **Dev Karvat**, MD of TrawellTag India, says, "In today's fast-paced world, technology and business go hand-in-hand. New-age customers have increasingly become tech-savvy and want access to all information and avail services in the least possible time. This is where marrying the latest technology with your business gives you a superior edge in today's competitive world."

How it helps them

Sehgal's company has taken advantage of technolo-



Dev Karvat
India Travel Award Winner & MD, TrawellTag India

New-age customers have increasingly become tech-savvy and avail services in the least possible time

opportunities, and saving on time and energy. Also, easy flow of data between the agency and airline, hotel or other service allows quick bookings that might have taken hours or days," he adds.

Tulsidas Khimji Holidays has also embraced technology to improve time management and turnaround time. "A new generation of tools for virtual business operations is helping companies achieve important goals and change their operating models. By adopting new technology, we tend to innovate



Jenaifer Daruwalla
General Manager of Maison de Voyage - the Sales and Marketing arm of Zaka Group

Technology helps create awareness and promote our product to a larger audience

to use its services online and via mobile devices.

Jenaifer Daruwalla, General Manager of Maison de Voyage - the Sales and Marketing arm of Zaka Group - feels that one should either get on the technology bandwagon or get extinguished. "We use it mainly for social



Savio Pereira
Director Benchmark Travel Representations

We use technology to enhance productivity for both the agent and the DMC

enhance productivity for both the agent and the DMC. Another area that we actively seek to use technology is educating the trade through webinars and online training."

Be warned though

While advocating technology though, each one of them warns of important point-

Tech Alert

▶ Technology is the new buzzword in any business today, particularly in travel

▶ Adopting the latest technology has become essential today not only for convenience but for survival

▶ Technology cannot be for technology's sake and successful adopters are those who can apply relevant technology to practical use thus achieving optimum results



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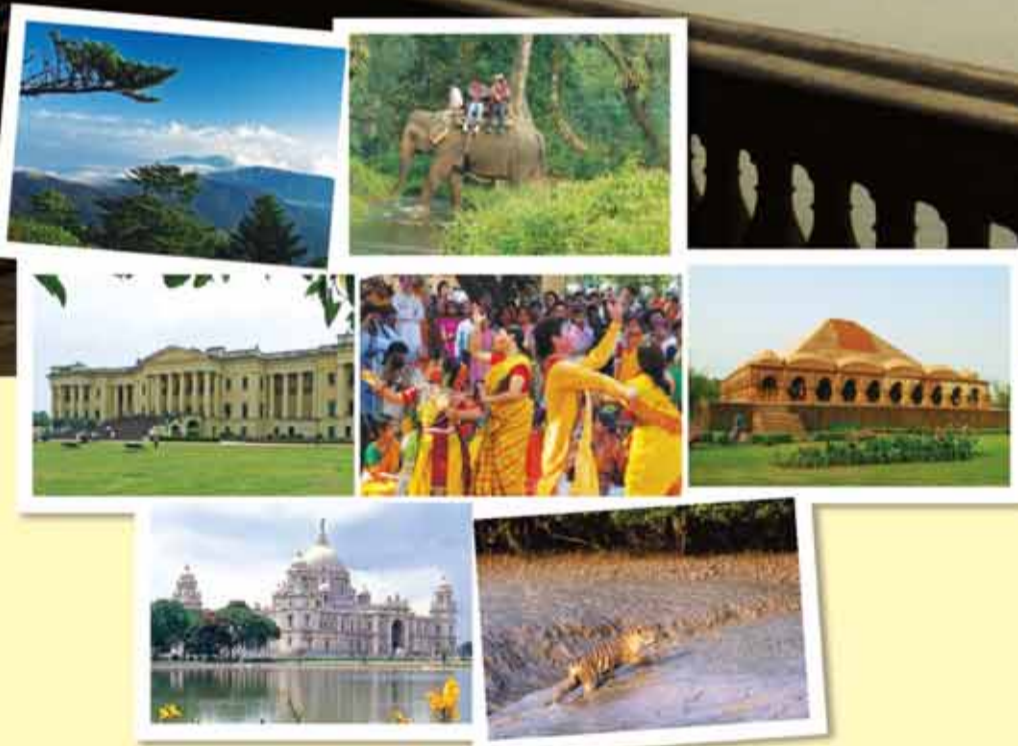
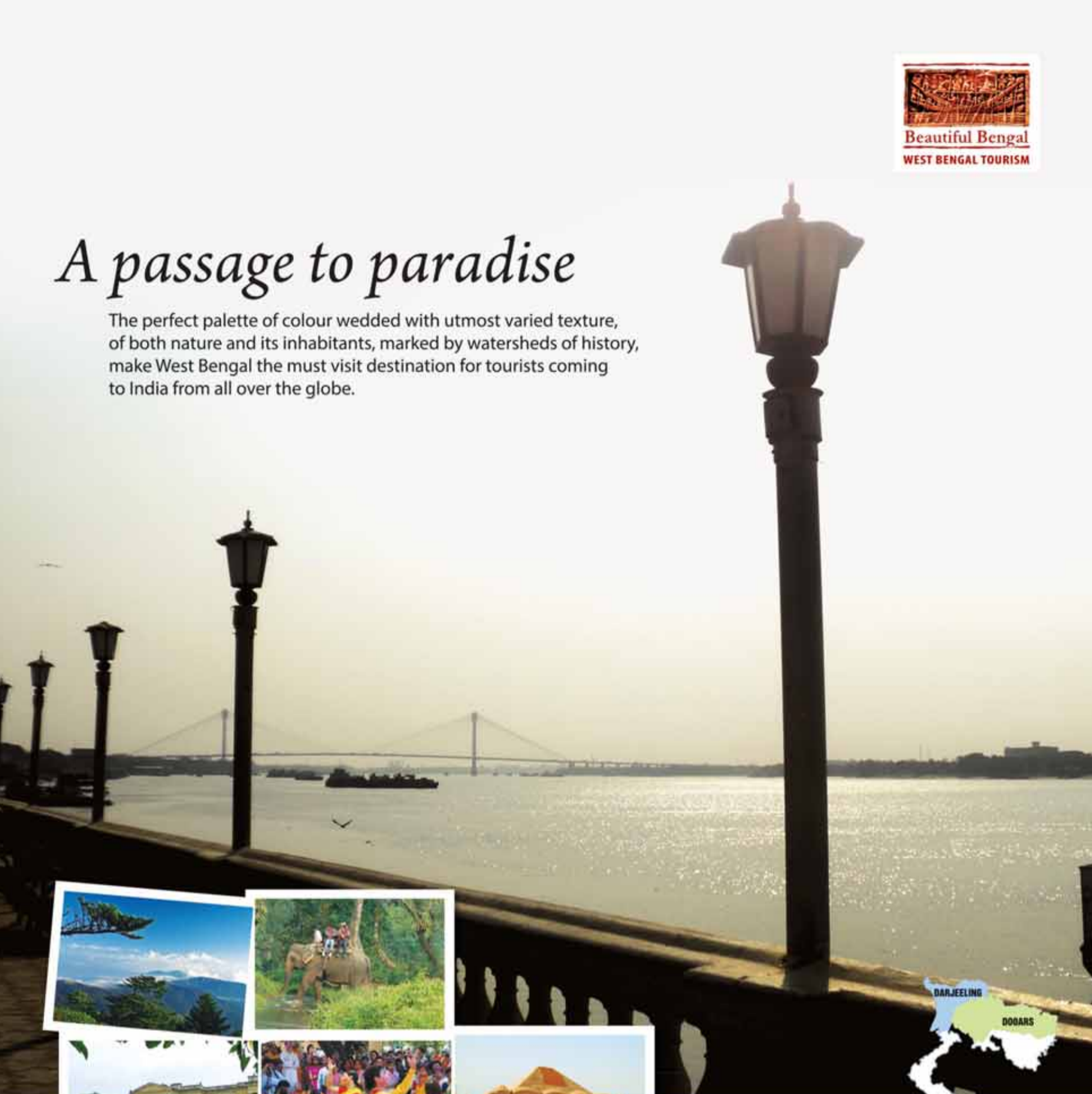
World tourism industry together at FITUR

FITUR 2015 was organised from January 31 to February 1 in Madrid, Spain. The trade show concentrated the offering of around 9,107 companies from over 160 countries and the presence of around 200,000 visitors from around the world, of which 120,000 were professionals, generating revenue for the city of 200 million euros .



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'Quality tourism education is crucial'

At the 7th Director's Conclave at IITTM, Gwalior, much emphasis was put on tourism education with the Tourism Secretary suggesting setting up of five tourism universities in the country to meet the growing demand of skilled resources in the industry.

ANIL MATHUR

At the Indian Institute Of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM) Director's Conclave, **Lalit Panwar**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism noted that better education in tourism is the need of

campaign of the Prime Minister. During technical sessions at the Conclave, a lot of emphasis was put on the need for better education in tourism. **Sandeep Kulsheshta**, Director, IITTM said that efforts are being made in this connection including signing of MoUs

Students at IITTM, an autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Tourism (approved by AICTE), are manning the important helpline set up by the Government of India to handle queries from tourists. Many delegates including academicians from

tourism was linked with the ambitious Make in India.

"Tourism manufactures dreams, packages paradise, processes the mind, soul and body and exports happiness. See and experience India and then Make in India, which is

...and ideas run in plenty

The technical sessions generated many new ideas which have to be followed up, be it the need for revision of curriculum or greater interaction between national and international bodies and the industry itself. Quality of the teachers must be improved, was the message, as was the fact that tourism education is special and different. This must be borne in mind.

- ❖ Prof S P Bansal, Vice Chancellor, Maharaja Agrasen University, Baddi, Himachal Pradesh, felt the need for a separate council to regulate tourism education, and called for upgrading tourist academics.
- ❖ Prof Sitikhanta Mishra of IITTM felt that expectations were high and that quality was more important than quantity
- ❖ Prof Manohar Sajani of Amity University said that planning and delivery of effective curriculum was important
- ❖ Ms Poonam Sadekar from Goa explained how case analysis in every course helps the students apply theory to the practical aspect. She pointed out that social media plays a vital role in the desire of a person to undertake tourism.
- ❖ Prof Kapil Kumar of IGNOU called for better research and the need of it to percolate down to the students. Impact of tourism, crisis management and tourist profile were some areas where serious research should be done.
- ❖ Dr Rajshree Ajith, Director, Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies spoke of involving local communities and creation of resource directories.
- ❖ Kiran Yadav, Chairman and Managing Director, Success TryAngles, who was earlier with IATA, said that the education system was Marks Vadi, but tourism was not. Smile and fulfilling the need of the tourist would fetch revenue.

From a long term perspective, the MoUs hold much promise, especially for places like Kashmir, where joint research and faculty exchange can play an important part. The MoU with the Laxmibai Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior, can be important in promoting sports tourism-- which is a growing segment.



the hour. He suggested setting up of five tourism universities in the country (North, East, South, West and center) to meet the growing demands of this dynamic sector.

The two-day conclave, held from January 17-18, focused on the theme, 'Exploring quality assurance in tourism education for the 21st Century' and closely linking tourism trade with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Panwar articulated how tourism was closely linked to the ambitious 'Make in India'

“Tourism manufactures dreams, packages paradise, processes the mind, soul and body and exports happiness See and experience India and then Make in India, which is good for making money, creating jobs and giving employment

Lalit Panwar
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

with various states and institutes. It was also revealed that such pacts will be signed with countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Singapore soon to enhance tourism education in India.

across the globe suggested that IITTM itself should be made a University. The Tourism Secretary recalled that the Prime Minister had put tourism on the main agenda of the country and explained that

good for making money, creating jobs and giving employment," Panwar quipped.

Churning Out Talents

► Demand for converting IITTM into a Tourism University

► Govt plans to sign MoUs with Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Singapore to enhance tourism education in India



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India outbound to Indonesia up by 17%

Indian visitations to Indonesia registered a record growth of 17%. A total of 2,37,990 Indians travelled to Indonesia in 2014 as compared to 2,04,756 in 2013, which clearly indicates that it was a good year for the destination for India outbound market.



Shelly Chandhok, Country Manager, Visit Indonesia Tourism Officer - India added, "Last year, we covered metros



Shelly Chandhok
Country Manager
Visit Indonesia Tourism Officer

We will focus on newer markets this year and concentrate on all segments of travellers as Indonesia is a destination to be experienced by persons from varied interests and all walks of life

and Tier-II cities and organised destination seminars to educate the travel trade fraternity. We will focus on newer markets this year and concentrate all segments of travellers as Indonesia is a destination to be experienced by persons from varied interests and all walks of life."

Sanjay Sondhi, CEO, OM Tourism said, "India is a fast growing source market for Indonesia and we are hopeful



Sanjay Sondhi
CEO
OM Tourism

that we will achieve our tourist arrival targets from India this year. It is overwhelming to see a substantial growth rate in the

arrival numbers from India. It is a team effort and we will strive to continue to work towards achieving the target

number with a consistent and impactful strategy".

Visit Indonesia Tourism office India will continue to promote places Beyond Bali such as Lombok, Bandung, Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Bintan, and Batam. The aim this year is also to be visible in the Digital medium. Indonesia has many untold secrets which the tourism board plans to promote through various campaigns.

India is a fast growing source market for Indonesia and we are hopeful that we will achieve our tourist arrival targets from India this year



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World's first robot-staffed hotel to open in Japan

A fleet of robots will be providing 'personal' touches to guests checking into a new hotel scheduled to open in southern Japan this July. The Hen-na Hotel – which literally means "strange hotel" – is nearing completion at the Huis Ten Bosch theme park outside Nagasaki and will be the world's first hotel staffed by humanoid androids. Three uniformed robots or 'actroids' will run the reception desk at the 72-room hotel, while four porter robots will be on hand to take guests' luggage to their rooms. Actroids will also staff the cloakroom, clean the hotel, and serve meals in the restaurant. The androids, which bear the features and mannerisms of a young woman, will be able to speak Japanese, Chinese, Korean and English, make hand gestures, and determine a customer's mood based on their facial expressions.

The actroids were developed by Osaka University and built by Kokoro, with the first version dating back to 2003.

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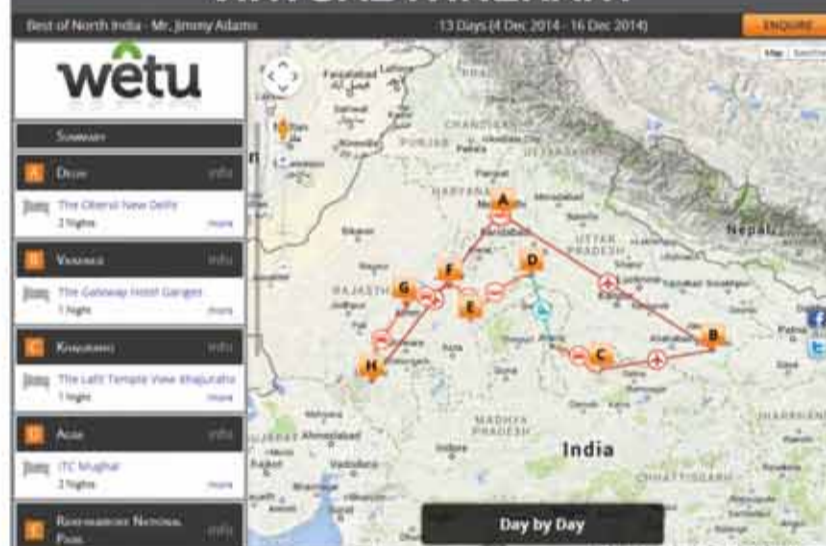


Web based itineraries for the Digital Age

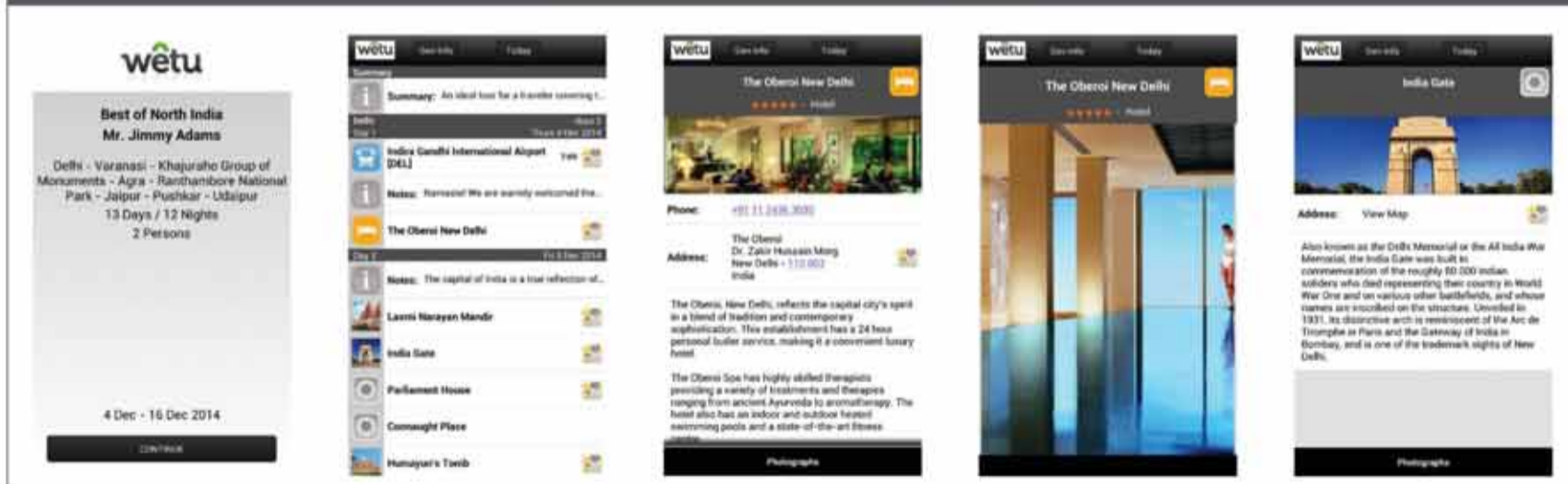
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Showcasing Filipino delight

The Philippines has now become the ultimate destination for Indian travellers in 2015 with the recent launch of Department of Tourism's 'Visit the Philippines Year 2015' which is an invitation to experience "It's More Fun in the Philippines." To showcase the same, the Department of Tourism (DOT) from The Philippines hosted a lunch at Le Meridien and dinner at the Embassy premises for the travel trade fraternity and ministry officials.



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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
12-14	Raipur	India International Travel Exhibition
13	Ahmedabad	Kenya Tourism Board, B2B Workshop
13-15	Raipur	India International Travel Exhibition
17	Bengaluru	Tourism Office of Spain, Presentation & Networking Dinner
20-22	Guwahati	India International Travel Exhibition
21-23	Chandigarh	India Travel Mart
23	Kolkata	Canadian Tourism Commission, B2B Roadshow
23	Mumbai	CTC Roadshow
24	Mumbai	Canadian Tourism Commission, B2B Roadshow
24	Kolkatta	CTC 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

APRIL 2015

NATIONAL

19-21	Jaipur	Great Indian Travel Bazaar
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INTERNATIONAL

22-24	São Paulo	WTM Latin America
15-17	Cape Town	WTM Africa

MAY 2015

NATIONAL

1	New Delhi	VKonect Weddings, VKonect Events
8-10	Cochin	Hoteltech Kerala

INTERNATIONAL

4-7	Dubai	Arabian Travel Mart
9-11	Durban	Indaba 2015, South African Tourism
26-29	Ontario	Rendezvous Canada 2015, Canadian Tourism Commission

For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

Hola from Argentina!

Pablo Cagnoni, Asia, Oceania & Africa Market Coordinator, Argentina and Medha Sampat, India Representative-Argentina Tourism, say that they realise the importance of Tier-II and Tier-III cities in India.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q What is the importance that you accord to the Indian market?

Pablo: The Indian market is very exciting and it is a growing market. We have been visiting India for four years now and we are the first South American country to show interest in India. Our plan is to grow bigger as the numbers have been growing for us. Year on year, we have more visitors from India com-

Pablo: 2014 had been a good year and we are expecting this to grow in 2015. That is why we have started our campaign here very early in January. First of all, we need to educate the trade and tell them what our country has to offer. We need to tell them and familiarise them with what all we have, once we do that we are confident the numbers will grow.

Q How has the Indian market developed for you in these 4 years?

“Year on year, we have more visitors from India coming to Argentina, and these are especially high-end travellers and MICE travellers. We have also been participating in travel fairs in India and educating the trade and the general public about Argentina

Pablo Cagnoni

Asia, Oceania & Africa Market Coordinator, Argentina

ing to Argentina, and these are especially high-end and MICE travellers. We have also been participating in travel fairs in India and educating the trade and the general public about Argentina.

Q How did Indian travellers respond to Argentina in 2014?

Pablo: More travel agents come to our road shows. We have been getting more queries from India after every road show. Also, since Argentina is a long-haul destination we mostly attract high-end and luxury travellers as well as a lot of MICE groups.

Q Is Argentina being promoted as a luxury destination?

Medha: Argentina is a long-haul destination so the cost of airfare is higher, but the land

shortly be coming up with training workshops in cities like Pune, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chennai, so, we are looking at those markets also. We are also planning to do some e-learning

“Argentina is a long-haul destination so the cost of airfare is higher, but the land arrangements costs are as comparable to something in Europe. It's a value-for-money destination

Medha Sampat

India Representative-Argentina Tourism



arrangement costs are as comparable to something in Europe. It's a value-for-money destination. It is something for a niche travel market at this stage and by educating the travel trade we are trying to get more interest into Argentina. We have hosted some very hi-end MICE groups, but there's also a lot of interest in the market for Argentina.

possibilities to reach out to the travel trade in smaller cities like Jaipur and we have seen a lot of interest from Tier-2 cities. There's a lot of potential in these markets and we have well travelled people in these cities. What we need is to educate the travel trade in these markets and we are stepping on it very soon.

Q How aggressively are you promoting the destination in smaller cities?

Medha: Argentina has at a very early stage realised the potential of Tier-II and Tier-III cities. We did a road show in September in Bengaluru and Kolkata and we got a great response from that. We will

Tapping Small Towns

▶ There are well travelled people in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities

▶ Workshops, e-learning opportunities, road shows to apprise people in these cities about Argentina is garnering huge response

Indian arrivals to Turkey cross 1 lakh

Ozgur Ayturk, Coordinator, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, talks about 25% growth from the Indian market to Turkey.



TT BUREAU

Q How has the growth from the Indian market been?

We have witnessed more than 25% growth from India to Turkey. With this, we have crossed the 1 lakh mark from India in terms of tourist arrivals. Most of the travellers come from Delhi and Mumbai,

but that is also because these cities offer daily direct connectivity to Istanbul. The ones who are flying with Turkish Airlines have to come to either Delhi or Mumbai to fly to Istanbul. Other than that, we have travellers coming from Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad.

Q How are you marketing Turkey in India?

We are running our own media campaign like we have every year. Apart from that, we are participating at various roadshows and organising cultural events. With regard to weddings, honeymoon and Bollywood, we have plans to host some big events in Turkey.

so many members, it'll take some time for them to plan it out, but they'll definitely come to India as it is a very important market for them. The Indian MICE and leisure crowd is big in Turkey, especially the wedding segment which has lately become very popular.

Q How do you plan to promote Turkey in Tier II cities?

The Tier-2 cities cannot be ignored; whenever we have the chance, we go to these cities, but planning something especially for those markets takes more investment time and human resource, so our main focus is still the main cities, but we do acknowledge the importance of these cities.



“With regard to weddings, honeymoon and Bollywood, we have plans to host some big events in Turkey

Ozgur Ayturk

Coordinator, Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Q The Turkish Hoteliers Federation had come to India two years ago and they seemed keen to visit again, will we be seeing them soon?

The Turkish Hoteliers' Federation is very much interested to come again to India, but being a federation having

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VISA TALK



British-Irish Visa Scheme

Indian citizens can now apply for one travel permit to visit both the UK and Ireland following the commencement of British-Irish Visa Scheme (BIVS) in India. The scheme only applies to short-term visas. It does not apply to student or work visas. As per BIVS, applicants should apply for the visa of the country they wish to visit first. If you have an Irish short stay visa and you want to also visit the United Kingdom you must travel to Ireland first. If you have a British visit visa and you want to also visit Ireland you must travel to the United Kingdom first. The scheme remains in its "Pilot Stage" and so far is open only to Indian and Chinese citizens applying for British or Irish short-stay visas in India or China. The scheme will eventually be rolled out world-wide.



Change in Ireland Visa Application Submission Procedure

Embassy of Ireland, Delhi has announced a change in visa application submission procedure. Applicant will now have to fill online visa application form, make online payment & book an appointment for biometric and submission of visa application at Ireland Visa Application Centre.

Note:

- No visa fees/service charge will be accepted at the visa application centre.
- Ireland Visa application centre has been relocated to the new address. For more information kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com



Acceptance of Visa Applications by Honorary Consulate of Philippines-Kolkata

Honorary Consulate of Philippines, Kolkata has started accepting visa applications for Business & Tourism purpose, only for Eastern region of India. For more details kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com



UAE Immigration Waives off the Cooling Period

UAE immigration has announced that applicants, who have stayed in Dubai for more than 24 days, need not have to wait and stay out of Dubai for 30 days to apply for their second visa application as the cooling period rule has been waived off by immigration. Hence, travelers can immediately apply for their second visa application and can travel accordingly.



Change in Passport Collection Procedure: France & Austria

Consulate General of France in Mumbai & Puducherry and Austrian Embassy, Delhi have announced that representatives cannot collect the documents on behalf of an applicant from the respective Visa Application Centre except in following conditions.

- Immediate Family Member (i.e. Parents, Children, Siblings)
- One member of a group collecting for the entire group.
- A person collecting on behalf of Govt. officials if authorized on the Govt. letter head or department.
- Representative of a company - Authorization letter on the letter head of the company and the official ID card.

However, applicants who do not wish to collect their documents in person and whose documents cannot be collected by one of the above will get their passports back by courier at an additional cost of Rs. 300/- to the dispatch address mentioned in the courier form and covering letter which has to be submitted along with the visa application. In case no specific address is mentioned on the covering letter and courier form, the passport will be sent to the address mentioned on the Visa Application Form.



Jurisdiction for South Africa Visa Applications

With immediate effect, all South Africa visa applications from Northern & Eastern region of India will be applied from Delhi and Western & Southern region of India will be applied from Mumbai.

Visa Snippets:

- Indian Nationals can now avail Saint Lucia Tourist visa on arrival. The On arrival visa Fees is USD 50.
- High Commission of Malaysia, Delhi has been relocated to the new address - C-3/13, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-57

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Vikram Mago has been appointed as the Vice President and GM at Radisson Blu Hotel Greater Noida. He has more than 27 years experience as the 'General Manager'. His first tenure as a GM was at Taj Coromandel & Taj Connemara (I.H.C.) in the year 1987. He has been General Manager The Windsor Bangalore, ITC Hotels Division 2006 -2010, General Manager : The Blaxland Hotel (La Cordon Blue Hotels) 1999-2006. He has Associate Diploma in Hotel Management - Business Careers College – Sydney, Australia; Bachelor of Teaching - University of Technology – Sydney, Australia; MBA - Macquarie University Sydney among others.



Hilton Jaipur

Jaipur

Rahul Joshi has been appointed General Manager for Hilton Jaipur, the upscale, full service hotel located in the heart of Jaipur in Rajasthan. In this position, Joshi will report to Daniel Welk, Vice President, Operations - India. Joshi brings over two decades of experience in the hospitality sector. Most recently, he was General Manager for Holiday Inn Pune Hinjewadi. Prior to that, he has held General Manager positions at Radisson Blu Agra Taj East Gate; The Park Turon, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Goa. He holds a post graduate diploma in Marketing Management from Himachal Pradesh University.



JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar

Mumbai

With a career span of 16 years in the Hospitality industry, **Ayesha Bhalla** has recently assumed the position of the Director of Sales & Marketing at the JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar. Ayesha began her career with Holiday Inn Worldwide as a Sales Executive assigned handling a vast portfolio of accounts to help generate rooms revenue and to improve performance in the marketplace. She later joined Oberoi Hotels and Resorts and has worked across positions, responsible for property reactive sales, proactive account sales and segment sales, etc.



Kuoni Business Travel

Mumbai

Clevio Monteiro has been appointed as Business Head– DVMS, in the Kuoni Business Travel division of Kuoni Travel India. Monteiro has over 22 years of experience working with travel, aviation & technology solutions companies in various functions. He has worked with companies such as Air Sahara, Interglobe Technologies and Suvvidhahnfoserve. In his last assignment with Go Airlines, he managed a pan India responsibility as General Manager for their online business & consolidators. As a part of the Divisional Leadership Team at Kuoni Business Travel, he will grow & establish DVMS's market.



Golden Tulip Hotels

Gurgaon

Golden Tulip Hotels appoints **Vaneet Wadhwa** as the new Director of Food & Beverage, South Asia. Vaneet Wadhwa has been associated with The Louvre Group of Hotels since October 2013. Prior to his new role, Vaneet worked as the Corporate Chef with the group and was involved in opening of new hotels and its food & beverage avenues. In his new role, Vaneet will be responsible for elevation of operations and services of food & beverage for the Golden Tulip Hotels. Vaneet was recently felicitated with a Silver Hat at the 11th Annual Chef Awards organised by Indian Culinary Forum (ICF).



Neesha Mohapatra has been newly appointed as the Director of Human Resources for the newest edition to the Marriott Mumbai portfolio – JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar. Prior to joining the JW Marriott Hotel Mumbai Sahar, Mohapatra was the Director of Human Resources at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel and Lakeside Chalet Marriott Executive Apartments. Neesha brings to the table, a vast amount of experience that enabled her to manage the Human resource function at various prestigious hotels right from training and nurturing the right talent, formulating HR and administrative policies.



Musafir.com India

Mumbai

Musafir.com India has appointed **Rahul Almeida** as Marketing Manager. Almeida has over 12 years of experience in the travel industry and his last stint was with GoAir. He has also worked with Alitalia Airlines and Travelguru.com in the past. In his current role, Almeida is responsible for driving Musafir.com's strategic alliances, partnerships and network as a preferred OTA in the Indian market. Almeida holds a degree in Masters of Management Studies from the University of Mumbai.



The Claridges New Delhi

New Delhi

Sandeep Verma has been appointed as the Director Operations at The Claridges, New Delhi. A career spanning over 18 years across the hospitality space, Verma will assist the leadership team in achieving the goals and objectives of the group and ensuring brand standards are maintained. He has a plethora of experience in the fields of Training, Process Management, Financial Planning, Strategy and Operations Excellence. In his current role, he will be responsible for identifying key drivers in achieving business success, using his expertise to create and manage a business environment.



Courtyard by Marriott, Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Courtyard by Marriott, Gurgaon appoints **Saroj Muduli** as Executive Sous Chef. Professionally trained Sous Chef, Saroj comes with vast experience and expertise in all aspects of kitchen operations in an international hotel chain. In this role, he will support Chef Amit Dash, Executive Chef, Courtyard by Marriott, Gurgaon in overseeing the operations, trainings and ensuring excellence in the kitchen department. Having served in various hospitality food and beverage positions, Saroj is a seasoned culinary professional bringing over a decade of experience.



TALKing People

Rajeev Khanna, General Manager, Vivanta by Taj, Surajkund says, "With whatever little free time I get while working, I like to spend time with family and close friends. This is typically on weekends. I also like to read, listen to music, play the guitar and cook sometimes. On vacations, short or long, I am generally out of town. I like to travel a lot and preferably to the hills as I love to trek. This is sometimes with friends and occasionally with family, which is a safe leisurely trek. I love to drive in India."



Greesh Bindra, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, speaking on his hobbies, says, "Ever since I can remember, I have always been passionate about Golf and that's my way of keeping work at bay. It's an ironic story, but Golf was what has got me into this industry in the first place. During one of my games at the golf course, I happened to be playing with Ramesh Johar, then the GM of Taj Mansingh; where their conversation pertained to work and the hotel. It turned to a point where he handed me a card and asked me to meet him if I ever wanted to join Hotels. As I got onto my bike to head back towards college, I saw myself taking a U-turn towards the Taj Hotel. I walked straight into his office and there started my journey with hotels."



HE Amir Muharemi, Ambassador of Croatia, Embassy of Croatia in India, when asked about his favourite holiday destination, quickly replies, "Being a Croatian is very difficult because we are extremely spoilt. So it's not very easy to impress us. But I must admit there are unique places in the world – like Istanbul. It has such a deep and rich history and at the same time, it is a financial centre. He has also travelled within India. "I visited Orissa and I was impressed by the sandy beaches on Bay of Bengal and its huge, open spaces. India is so big and diverse. Once the standards of the average Indian population starts to rise, tourism will grow – inbound and outbound. There is no place like India on earth and I am in love with India," he adds.



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Batting for increased connectivity

As Madhya Pradesh grows on travel map, **TRAVTALK** speaks to Ashwani Lohani, who was recently appointed as the Commissioner and Managing Director of Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (MPTDC) to know more about the state's future plans and strategies.



KANCHAN NATH

Q What are your priorities in your new position?

I have two main priorities; firstly, the state of Madhya Pradesh should remain at the top of tourism in the country. We should continue to be the best state in tourism. As far as the commercial operations of the corporation go, we should be the finest hospi-

We are developing the Indira Sagar Sports Complex at Indira Sagar dam, the biggest man-made lake in the country near Hanumantia village as well as an aqua sports destination in Omkareshwar as Sailani island in Khandwa. We are looking at the PPP model of development. We are looking at the private sector coming in; we will give the land on long term lease. They will build the infrastructure and we will give

small planes, 9 seater, 10 seater planes. However, ultimately how do more airlines come in? They will come in only when it is financially viable. When will it be financially viable? When we create a Convention Centre in Bhopal, then MICE tourism starts. With our tourism campaigns, we are trying to change the image perception of our state. Then more airlines will also come in.



“MP has many destinations that are yet to be explored by tourists. We are basically a mini India, within India. We have everything which India has in one state. I feel tourists should come to MP and experience India in totality.

Ashwani Lohani
Commissioner and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation

Q What MICE facilities are you planning to build?

We are planning to build a MICE Convention Centre in Bhopal; consequently more hotels will come up in the city with more tourists. We are looking at two convention centers right now, one with a capacity for 500 and the second with a capacity for 2000 in the city of Bhopal. If we get it through the private sector, it is good; else we will build it ourselves. We need them because they will act as a catalyst for tourism.

Q What new innovative ideas do you have in mind?

We will do a lot of innovative and creative things, like the rail coach restaurant, we created. It was the world's first broad gauge. We will put two more in

tality corporate in the country. These are the two ultimate goals we have to achieve and with God's grace, we will achieve them.

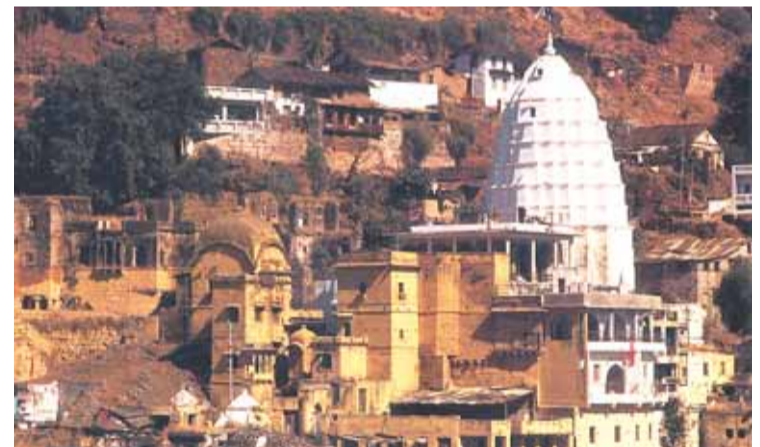
them concessions. I want tourists to have the desire to visit MP and when he returns, he should go and tell people about his pos-

Q 2015 has been declared as 'MP Tourism Year'. Can you tell us about that?

We have got a major event next year, which is SIMHASTHA 2016, that is Kumbh at Ujjain. It will be organised from April 21-May 22. And till the period up to that, we are calling it as Visit MP Year. Consequently we will be showcasing MP's culture, destinations, cuisine and crafts through events. The intention is to bring a lot of focus to the state, so that we can bring in more tourists.

Q Which are the newer destinations that you are promoting?

MP has many destinations that have yet to be explored by tourists. We are basically a mini India, within in India. We have everything which India has in one state. I feel tourists should come to MP and experience India in totality. As you must have seen, our logo carries the tagline, Madhya Pradesh: The heart of Incredible India. We have a large number of water bodies in MP and we are using those for tourism purposes. Resorts can come up on the sides of these water bodies and we will develop adventure sports, nature cure etc. One major site is Indira Sagar in Khandwa district.



Omkareshwar, Madhya Pradesh

itive experience. This will help in bringing more people to the state. We will be promoting MP as a brand.

place. We are looking at use of alternate energy for hotel air-conditioning and geo thermal energy. I want to make the first hotel with geothermal energy, in which there is no running expenditure and the initial expenditure is also very low. I am looking at creating India's first bus which has solar panels on top. We are looking at creating India's first vehicle that cleans roads as it passes. So we are looking towards some great innovations. ↴

Q Tell us about the initiatives you have taken to improve connectivity in MP...

We will be starting small planes between Bhopal, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Indore and connecting them to other states. That service should start in the next one or two months. These would be

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