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SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

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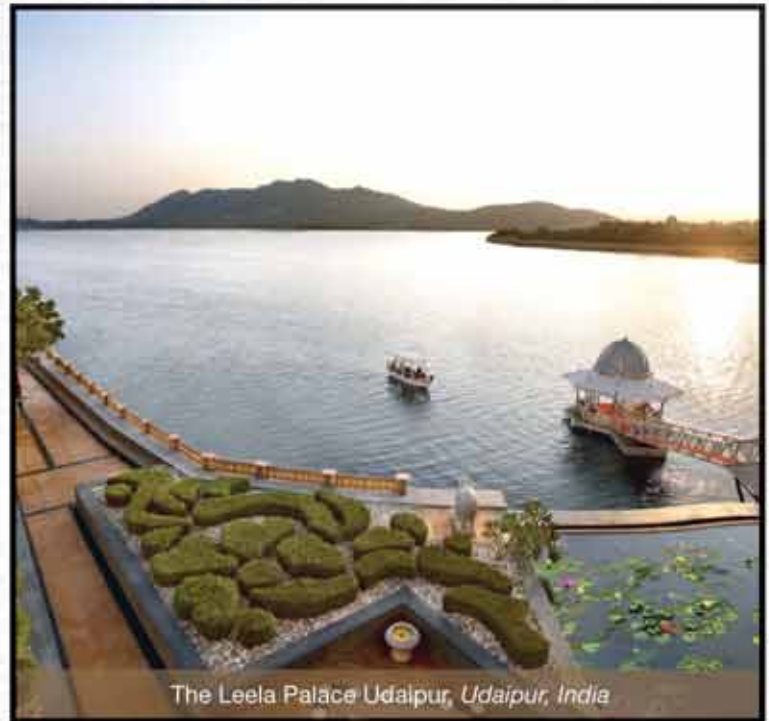
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MoT & Home Ministry discuss eVisa

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and the Tourism Minister met to discuss biometric collection at airports, increase in the number of countries and number of airports for Tourists Visa-on-Arrival, double entry for eVisa applicants and increasing the visa-on-arrival period from one month to two months.



Dr Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State for Tourism
(Independent Charge)

TT BUREAU

The Union Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Civil Aviation and Culture (Independent Charge), **Dr Mahesh Sharma** met the Union Home Minister, **Rajnath Singh** in Delhi on March 25 to discuss issues related to the Tourist Visa-on-Arrival (TVoA) scheme.

Singh also approved a Committee under the Chairmanship of Additional

Secretary (Foreigners) with three Joint Secretaries from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Civil Aviation as members. This Committee will meet periodically and resolve issues concerning visa facilitation and tourism promotion. On the issue of distribution of welcome cards printed by the Ministry of Tourism at Indian airports to tourists arriving in India, Singh assured that instructions will be sent to the Bureau of Immigration for taking

urgent necessary action in this regard.

Regarding the issue of biometric collection at airports, it was suggested that during the next one year 150 countries will be covered under the TVoA scheme, which includes biometric collection on arrival. The issue raised by the Ministry of Tourism will be resolved as far as foreign tourists are concerned. As far as increase in number of countries and number of airports are concerned, the Home Minister assured the

Tourism Minister that these suggestions will definitely be considered in taking the decision very shortly.

Singh also promised that suggestions regarding double entry for TVoA applicants and increasing the period from one month to two months will also be examined keeping in view the security considerations. Dr Sharma suggested that the Bureau of Immigration officials should be given training as they are the first point of contacts with the tourists. Singh asked

the Tourism Minister to submit a proposal to the MHA in this regard so that the same can be considered expeditiously.

Matters Discussed

► The Home Minister approved setting up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary (Foreigners) with 3 Joint Secretaries from MHA, MoT and MoCA as members, to resolve issues concerning visa facilitation and tourism promotion

New Tourism Policy eyes job creation

The new Tourism Policy will be launched on May 15, 2015. TRAVTALK speaks to Dr Lalit Panwar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, about the focus points of the policy.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q National Tourism Policy talks about job creation and tourists' safety, how are you working towards this?

The Prime Minister has been laying special emphasis on skills and also on tourism. Our policy will try to attempt

a synergy between skills and tourism. The thrust will be on how to create jobs for our youth. Any policy for example, Make In India, is basically designed for manufacturing which leads to creation of jobs, so our ministry's thrust will be on creation of as many jobs as possible for the youths of our country. The Himmat app of the Delhi

police already exists, so when I stress on App it means apps like the Himmat App, which can be fine-tuned to suit the requirements of the tourist and take care of their safety and security.

Q What are the other focus points of the Policy?

India is a cultural tourist destination so another focus area will be on how to preserve the past for our future. If the past is not good the future will not be good. We have a common minister so there will be a synergy between these two units. Without culture there is no tourism as well.

Contd. on page 7 ►



Lalit Panwar
Secretary, MoT

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UNIGLOBE Air Travel Bureau holds vision conference in Singapore



"Uniglobe Air Travel Bureau came together and held its vision conference at Mandarin Oriental in Singapore from 14th March to 16th March 2015. All business leaders brainstormed collaboratively to strategise and create the road map for vision 2020. The leadership team also rewarded the 20 years + club for their loyalty, commitment & dedication. Chairman **Sunil. Narain**, complimented and acknowledged people's contribution for making UATB the fastest growing travel brand in India. The team celebrated the success together with fun and frolic with various performances from in house talent team."



MoT sanctions ` 50 cr for Puri Yatra

Union Tourism Ministry is trying to fulfill all requirements to facilitate the Puri Rath Yatra 2015 including sanctioning ` 50 crore for development of tourist infrastructure in Puri.

TT BUREAU

The Union Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned an amount of ` 50 crore for the Nabakalebar Rath Yatra in Puri, Odisha. The Union Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, **Dr Mahesh Sharma** said the funds have been sanctioned under the newly launched scheme 'PRASAD' of the Ministry of Tourism. Dr Sharma said that a museum is being set up by the Ministry of Culture at Lalitgiri. The state will be benefitted by the two circuits i.e. Buddhist Circuit and Coastal Circuit under the new scheme of Swadesh Darshan, he added. Puri will also be developed under the HRIDAY scheme of Ministry of Urban Development, the Minister explained. Dr Sharma said that Orissa will be projected on the international map through its

campaigns. The brochure on PRASAD scheme was also released by the Minister.

Developing Coastal circuit

The union government will focus more on promoting



the coastal tourism circuit. "India has a long coastline of 7,500 km which possesses rich culture and heritage. If this

can be harnessed along with beach tourism, culture and pilgrim tourism, all states particularly coastal states like Odisha will be benefited," Dr Sharma said. According to the minister, India's new initiative

among countries of the group- ing. Noting that India has a great potential of promoting pilgrim and culture tourism under PRASAD scheme, he said the NDA government is giving more stress on developing, deepening and strengthening relations with the IOR countries which have civilisational links with India. "

Sacred Route

- ▶ Holy city of Puri is included in the new 'PRASAD' scheme in which 12 religious and holy cities have been included for development
- ▶ In the scheme of theme based tourist circuits 'Swadesh Darshan', the coastal circuit will benefit the coast of Orissa

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Ringing in the good times

The travel industry stakeholders in our country have been busy all this while. The month of March started with ITB Berlin, which has always been a great barometer of the global tourism business sentiment. Even this time there was a surge in the optimism spirit at the event and business is getting better. The recent TAAI convention also provided a platform for discussion and deliberation on the roadblocks ahead. Both these events opened up the gates for networking, relationship building, business and creating new markets for India. These developments clearly indicate more opportunities for the travel fraternity and business diversification. The moral of the story is that constant innovation is the need of the hour for the industry. Hopefully, the coming times will be more fruitful in terms of business opportunities.

Also, we have more good news for our inbound industry. Fuelled by visa reforms the Indian tourism industry will grow by 7.5 per cent in 2015 according to World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). In 2014, the industry contributed Rs 7,64,200 crore and 36.7 million jobs to the Indian economy. Research released by WTTC forecasts that the industry's GDP contribution will grow by 7.5 per cent and employment by 1.8 per cent this year. This also demonstrates the sector's enduring ability to generate economic growth and create jobs at a faster rate than the national economy. Thus, India will be in the spotlight again.

However, India also needs to recognise its domestic tourism strength and promote and develop its domestic destinations aggressively. It is time that we go beyond depending on just the 'Incredible India' campaign. The domestic traveller now is looking for new attractions and it is time we showcase India to Indians in a different manner. The Indian states should start new campaigns to attract this set of travellers. Exploring India in the most cost effective manner should be the next step forward.

18mn Indians travel abroad in 2014

The average length of outbound Indian traveller is expected to increase significantly. TRAVTALK brings you excerpts of the report titled 'Insights on the India Tourism Market' by Canadean Travel & Tourism Intelligence Center...



TT BUREAU

SNAPSHOT

India's economic rise will introduce a new generation of middle class tourists to overseas travel

Indians made over 18 million outbound trips in 2014, an increase on the 16 million trips made in 2013. Barely two per cent of India's population currently travel overseas but over the past five years the country's middle classes have increased by over 10 per cent. This demographic is set to grow from 32 per cent at present to 50 per cent by 2030, making it a major source market with tourism boards vying to tap into this potential tourist goldmine

India is expected to increase its business travel and tourism following the election of Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) pro-business government in May 2014. However, outbound tourism will be challenged by the domestic tourism industry, which is expected to experience a surge in business confidence, shown by its average of nine per cent annually over the historic period

Indian travelers characteristically have been avid business travelers with 40 per cent of all departures accounted for by business trips. While most of this MICE tourism has been consistently to the Asia-Pacific region, TTIC expects that changing trends in India's

economy will spur a rise in leisure and VFR travel to the Middle East and Europe over the forecast period

Key destinations include Thailand and UAE, as well as increasing visitors to the US. Although outbound tourism is growing, domestic investment could threaten the dominance of international trips

Key Statistics of 2014

Total Population	1.23 billion
GDP per capita	US\$1,564.7
GDP growth	5.4%
Total outbound trips	18 million
Total outbound expenditure	US\$13 billion

LENGTH OF TRIP

Indian outbound trip length continues stable growth

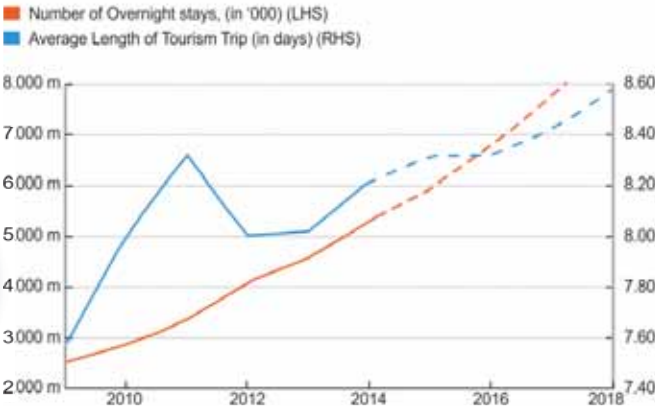
The average length of outbound trips (number of nights) stood at eight nights in 2013, with little change since 2012. However, TTIC expects Indian travelers to increase the length of their outbound trips over the forecast period in line with the potential economic growth currently taking place. Consequently, length of overnight stays is forecast to increase to nine nights by 2019.



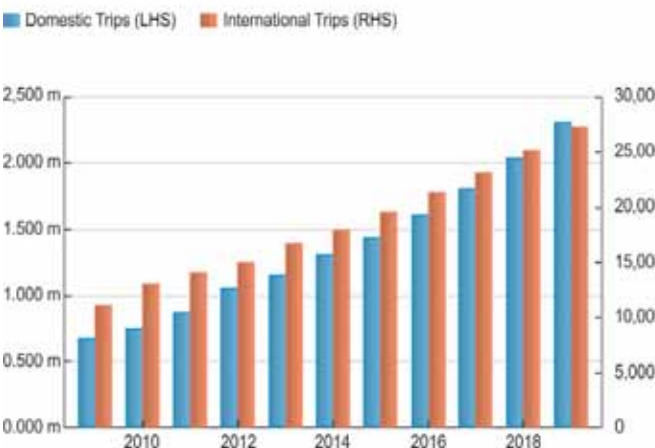
Domestic travel is threatening to overtake outbound trips

India is currently experiencing a domestic tourism boom. The number of domestic trips reached over 1.3 billion in 2014, representing a 14.1 per cent increase on 2013 figures. This accounts for more than three-quarters of India's entire tourism market, more than double the growth rate of outbound departures during 2014. Part of the rise of domestic tourism can be attributed to growth of lower middle class incomes – the type of domestic consumer who cannot afford the flight prices to journey abroad, but who want to turn a religious pilgrimage into a family holiday. Since 2010, many Indians who once had intentions of traveling abroad had their plans curtailed because of the sharp fall in the rupee, which lost much of its value against the dollar, causing planned foreign holiday travel to become too expensive for many of the aspiring middle classes. Interestingly, this has increased domestic tourism throughout the country with international hotel groups reflecting this emerging market as Starwood French Group, Accor and the Hilton Group all look set to benefit.

Length of trip for International Departures



Total number of trips - International and Domestic



Source: Canadean Travel & Tourism Intelligence Center



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MoT for source markets in eVisa list

► Contd. from page 3

QHow are you working towards formulating the National Tourism Policy, 2015?

We had a detailed one-day workshop where all the top brains of the Indian tourism industry were there, we had national-level consultations on tourism. On April 8 we have called all state secretaries of tourism and we'll also be meeting the tourism veterans of our country for their suggestions. So, we'll have 6-7 rounds of consultation before we begin work on it.

QWith the Finance Minister calling for e-visas for 150 countries, how is the MoT working on it?

We already have 44 countries under this scheme and in the last three months 90,000 visas have been issued. The response has been tremendous and now we'll be implementing it in two phases, we have already prepared a list of countries from where we are already getting tourists and sent it to the government. We exactly went by the percentage of our source markets, starting from the country where we get the maximum tourists

and then on. We'll be sending out the list in two phases, the first list has countries which are our top source markets the remaining 50 are countries which are our potential markets. The countries for the first phase will be declared in the next 2-3 months, probably by end June so that we get good bookings for the next season.

QWith work starting on the Indian Culinary Institute what can we look forward to?

The foundation stone of the Indian Culinary Institute has been laid

by the Tourism Minister and within two years the construction will be complete it is being constructed by National Building Construction Corporation

(NBCC), we'll offer degree programmes, post graduate degree, doctorate programmes, anything related to the culinary science and art.

Culture of Tourism

- The ministry is brainstorming with tourism veterans on the new tourism policy
- The Indian Culinary Institute will be ready within two years and will offer degree and post-graduate programmes.
- The countries for the first phase of VoA will be declared in the next 2-3 months, probably by end June

MoT workshop on NTP 2015

■ Tourism Minister Dr Mahesh Sharma addressed participants at a workshop held on the formulation of National Tourism Policy 2015. The representatives from various organizations like Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), FICCI, NASSCOM, FAITH, Travel Agency Corporation of India, Indian Tourist Transporters Authority (ITTA), Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA), All India Resort Developers Association (AIRDA) and Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) were present among others at the meeting.

Dr Sharma said that from now on, a new work culture will be implemented in which a task will be identified and a person be assigned for the task. The timeline will also be fixed and the implementation will be closely monitored. Acknowledging the need for synergy between various ministries of the government, the Minister appreciated the idea of National Tourism Board which is proposed as a part of the new Tourism Policy to speed up and promote tourism in the country.

The Tourism Minister explained that potential of existing policy of 2002 has not been used fully and the new policy will use the framework of the existing National Tourism Policy of 2002 to make it dynamic and meet the challenges that have emerged in today's world including technological and global competitiveness. He appreciated the idea of a 'single window portal system' for making information available to tourists.

Various issues ranging from infrastructure need for connectivity in remote areas, e-ticketing and safety and security were discussed during the workshop. The stakeholders related to hotel industry and transport business demanded tax incentives from the government especially in the off season.

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Platform ticket to cost Rs 10 from April 1

■ The Ministry of Railways has decided to upwardly revise the rate of platform ticket to Rs 10 per ticket from Rs 5 per ticket. The revised rate will be charged on platform ticket to be issued from April 1, 2015. Directions have been sent to all zonal railways to print the revised tickets on top priority and ensure supply to all stations well in time. However, till such time the tickets are print-



ed, the existing stock of tickets may be used with the rate corrected with a stamp. Wherever platform tickets are issued through SPTM & UTS or other machines, their software may to be modified to collect the revised rate. The Ministry of Railways has delegated the power to Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) to increase the rate of platform tickets beyond Rs 10 to regulate rush at platforms during specific requirements like fair, rally etc.

India Travel Awards on Vizag shores

As India Travel Awards now travels to South for its second edition to honour the achievers of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry from the region, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach is all set to host the mega event.



TT BUREAU

After the grand success of its first edition, India Travel Awards is now travelling South to the Vizag shores this April. The second edition of the India Travel Awards will honour the achievers of travel, tourism and hospitality industry from the region. Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach is hosting the first-of-its-kind event on April 16, 2015.

The award statuette, Maya celebrates the grandeur of tourism. It imbibes the best representing the power to change the industry. Based on an online voting system, the winners will be awarded after a thorough jury analysis of the voting, making the awards fair and unbiased. Nominations are awaited for various categories, which include sectors like aviation, domestic and international tourism boards, hotels and resorts, travel agents, technology partners

etc from the southern region of the country.

Sharing more details about the event, **Sanjeet**, Mentor, India Travel Awards

efforts of people who have made the real difference. A first-of-its-kind formal black tie event, India Travel Awards will make a difference to the industry by accommodating recog-

Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, this is a great initiative. "I am really happy that we are the choice for the 2nd India Travel Awards in the South. This gives many an opportunity to travel to see the hotel and experience our services. Recognition of good work always results in motivation and better performance. With the expansion and network of DDP Publications increasing every day, I feel this award ceremony is seen in prestigious light for all in the industry and a great way to give back to the travel fraternity," he opined.

Setting a new benchmark for the hospitality industry, the hotel has made preparations galore for the event. Bellmakonda pointed out, "We are well equipped to host this event with our three USPs. The three USPs of our property are 12,000 sq ft convention hall with seven break-away halls attached to the convention centre; the 225-all sea-facing-room inventory in the hotel and another 400 rooms available within three km radius."

The three USPs of our property are 12,000 sq ft convention hall with seven break-away halls attached to the convention centre; the 225-all sea-facing-room inventory in the hotel and another 400 rooms available within three km radius



Madhav Bellmakonda
General Manager, Novotel
Visakhapatnam Varun Beach

said, "The awards are a true specimen of the contribution of various companies/individuals to take tourism to a different level. These awards are aimed at recognising extraordinary

tion for regional talent, thereby raising the bar."

According to **Madhav Bellmakonda**, General Manager, Novotel

Mark your calendar

- ▶ This second edition of the India Travel Awards will honour the achievers of travel, tourism and hospitality industry from the region.
- ▶ The event will take place on April 16 at Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach
- ▶ Based on an online voting system, the winners will be awarded after a thorough jury analysis of the voting

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OTOAI's new website a hit with members

The newly launched website of the association will give OTOAI members a password and login id. Once they log in, they can view all the recent happenings in the industry. says OTOAI president Guldeep Sahni.

 MEGHA PAUL

Betting big on outbound travel and in a bid to offer more facilities to the outbound travel agents, OTOAI has launched a new website.



Guldeep Sahni
President
OTOAI

Through our dedicated website, we have seen an increase in engagement of members here

Talking about the new development, Guldeep Sahni, President, OTOAI said, "The primary concern is to make our association prominent in the online space. We have now



Sidharth Khanna
Head-IT
OTOAI

We will also have a lot of visa information, training modules and some specialist programs available

geared up to become visible in the social media platform. Through our dedicated website, we have seen an increase in engagement of members here. The site has become more interactive now. We have given our OTOAI members a

password and login id. Once they log in, they can view all the recent happenings in the industry. They will also be able to post discussions about the outbound industry here."

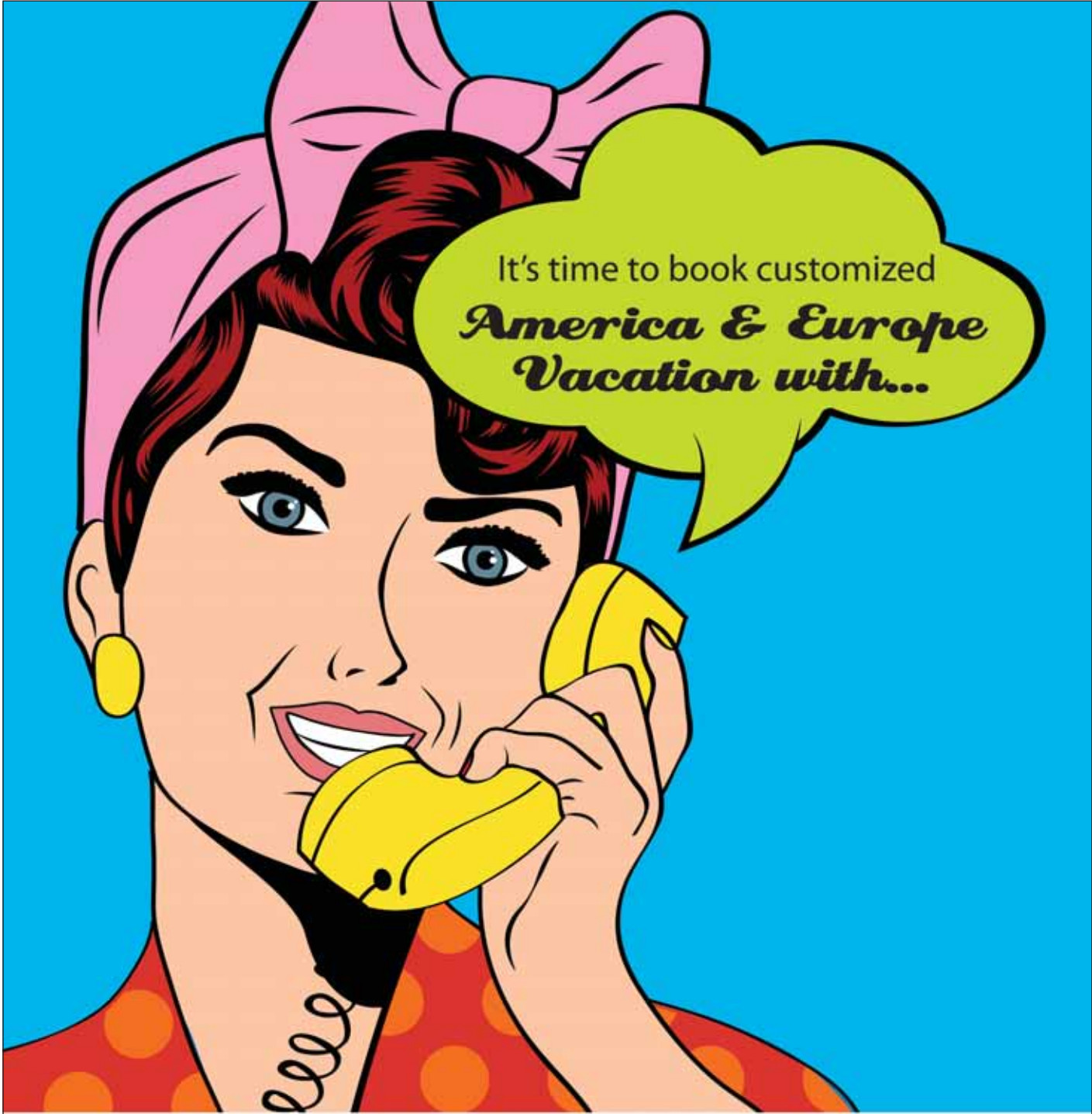
Elaborating on the features of the website, Sidharth Khanna, Head-IT, OTOAI pointed out, "There is a lot of information on the website and we will be putting a lot of added

value in it during the course of time. The members can send messages to us and we can send a direct reply. They will have their own inbox for such interaction. There is also a lot of information on destinations and all of the various workshops and events that happen worldwide. We will also have a lot of visa information, training modules and some specialist programs available."

The launch of the website in Delhi also included a briefing to the members about how they can benefit from the website and all the information available on it. The association is also bringing in two new members to their EC committee – Karan Anand, Head of Global Marketing, Cox and Kings and Ankush Nijhawan, Co-Founder & CEO, Travel Boutique Online, Sahni informed.

Online Wisdom

- ▶ OTOAI members will also be able to post discussions about the outbound industry here
- ▶ They will have their own inbox for such interaction
- ▶ There is also a lot of information on destinations and all of the various workshops and events that happen worldwide



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Air Arabia hosts key travel trade in Mumbai



■ Air Arabia, the first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC) in the Middle East and North Africa and the first international low-cost carrier to fly to India is soon to complete a decade of operations in India. To celebrate this milestone, the airline hosted a travel trade dinner and was attended by **Adel A. Ali**, airline Group Chief Executive Officer and senior management. Air Arabia raised a toast to the continual support extended by the travel trade fraternity resulting in Air Arabia's suc-

cessful operations in India. Air Arabia operates over 112 weekly flights from its hub in Sharjah to the 13 cities in India. Air Arabia has a fleet of new Airbus A320 aircraft with a 32 inch seat pitch, which gives the best leg room of any economy class travel. The airline also provides visa assistance to passengers from India. With Air Arabia Holidays, the airline offers attractive packages to a wide range of international holiday destinations.

Clicking on the digital path

Buoyed by rapid growth in technology, the travel and tourism industry is making advancement in customer experience through the digital platform, to give the service provider more footfalls and a destination more happy visitors.

Danish poet Hans Anderson once said, "To move, to breathe, to fly, to float, to gain all while you give, to roam the roads of land remote, to travel is to live." Travel has been a part of every individual's living, every organisation's need, and every country's growth story. One industry that has only evolved over the vast period of time is the travel and hospitality industry, going hand in hand, progressing day by day.

Through the age, the way people travel has changed and the way decisions are being made has become simpler, thanks to the simplicity of getting access to information in their palms. It's the era of Digital Delight and information available on click of a button. Traditionally, travel has been a need in search of food, clothing and shelter and then adding to business, opportunities, leisure and knowledge. Hospitality industry caters to the need of home away from home, a concept which started as providing shelter to the traveller in

a new land on barter and eventually grew up to becoming world class hotels and accommodation services, providing options to everyone at every budget to find a place to stay, eat, relax and rejoice.

The Gen Y of travel and hospitality has gone digital and how.... not just surfing internet to get information, but doing actual transaction, getting detailed information of every destination on the itinerary, getting reviews on social media, comparing costs and destination, sharing other traveller experience and almost getting the complete picture of the location before even stepping in there. Mobiles, tablets, web services and now electronic wearable are driving sales and suggestive selling, in turn giving returns to the service providers and drawing in more consumers. We now have Mobile boarding passes, Mobile Room key access, Mobile check in and check outs in hotels, electronic tickets, restaurant menus on tablets/mobiles, order taking

and final billings – all in one touch. Today more people have smart phones/mobiles than availability of clean drinking water; run time decisions on distress inventory is being taken on digital platform for both airlines and hotels resulting in maximising revenue and data sharing is fast and efficient.

The Gen Now and the Gen Next is only going to get more technology savvy and fast. People don't want to wait for a travel agent to deliver ticket or hotel to share fares, they want it quick and efficient, they want to be in control of their decisions to travel and living.

Therefore, every advancement in customer experience through digital platform is going to give the service provider more footfall and a destination, more happy visitors.

In our organisation as well, our focus is to constantly upgrade our services using technology and giving better and faster booking and data experience to our agent partners, corporate and direct customers. Our new travel app has been launched recently and we are seeing significant usage and download of the same.



(The writer is Manish Raj, Vice President & Business Head - Corporate Travel Services, Via.com)

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Croatia focusses on MICE groups in 2015

As the latest entrant in the Asian market, Croatia is advancing strategically. It may be a newbie in India but along with Udaan India it has its game plan ready with 'Namaste Croatia' as its first move. In the offing is a roadshow and familiarisation trips for agents.

 **HAZEL JAIN**

In India to promote Croatia among the travel trade, **HE Amir Muharemi**, Ambassador of Croatia, Embassy of Croatia in India, has big plans. His aim is to bring the destination closer to Indians. "Croatia receives almost 12 million tourists from

for Croatian visas, having processed over 1,000 visas daily on an average across India in 2014.

MICE groups main focus

The main focus areas for 2015 are MICE and organised groups but also leisure groups. "Croatia is so beautiful and diverse and once Indians discover it, we will observe what creates the biggest interest

among them – what they like and enjoy the most. We have so many things that we know Indians will adore, like very good climate, good food, warm hospitable people and it is very clean and safe. I'm very confident that we will get excellent response from India," the Ambassador said.

Dua added, "Croatia is an ideal destination for MICE,

FITs, destination weddings as well as film shoots. He also added that July and August are the high seasons while anytime from April to September can be considered for visiting the country."

Footfalls can only go up

While Croatia has observed almost negligible Indian tourists so far with less than 1,000 visitors in 2014 that

included business travellers and family holidays, the recent appointment of the ambassador in September 2014 will speed up better facilitation for Indian travellers. Croatia is also in the process of issuing Schengen visas in the next six months.

"We are now at the very beginning. So far we received Indian tourists who were part

of groups going somewhere else. They were not targeting Croatia. But slowly we are opening Croatia to tourists as a final destination and we are now creating itineraries specially for Indian tourists," Muharemi said. Agents will soon see roadshows and familiarisation trips being organised in association with the Croatian tourism board.



HE Amir Muharemi
Ambassador of Croatia
Embassy of Croatia in India

all over the world. It is already very well known in Europe and now we are trying to spread awareness about it outside of Europe in new Asian markets like India," he said on the sidelines of a travel trade exhibition in Mumbai.

Visa facilitation company, Udaan India, has partnered up with Uniline, a South East Europe DMC, to launch 'Namaste Croatia' initiative. Muharemi said, "With the help of 'Namaste Croatia' initiative,



Rajan Dua
MD, Udaan India

we will strengthen the already-existing relations but also start a new chapter. In order to facilitate this, I will also be travelling throughout India this year to encourage tourism and trade ties between both the countries."

Rajan Dua, MD, Udaan India, said, "We plan to market Croatia by designing packages specific to Croatia, combining Bosnia and Austria and with the help of our clientele of over 8,000 travel agents. Promotions for 'Namaste Croatia' will be done aggressively in the Indian market. We will also be organising road shows in India to support Croatia." Udaan India will also soon get the official mandate as accredited visa agent



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Now, visit two nations with one visa!

The British-Irish Visa Scheme, launched last month, has been introduced in India and China. Tourism Ireland and VisitBritain recently held a road show in Delhi to officially launch the scheme and promote the destinations. TRAVTALK asks Feilim McLaughlin, Ambassador of Ireland to India and tourism officials from both the countries about the development.



SAMAPTI DAS



This is a mutual recognition of the visa scheme that we have launched with UK, Ireland's neighbour. There is going to be one visa that will be valid for both the countries. It's an enormous development for us as we are working very hard to increase the visitor's numbers into Ireland.

People in India are not much aware about Ireland being a green and clean destination. I think that it has got a lot of potential in terms of scenery and golf tourism. We are working hard to encourage people to look at Ireland as a destination that they can add on to their trip to Britain. It's only a short hop across the water. Last year we had about 25,000 Indian visitors registering a growth of about 20 per cent. This visa scheme is important for us and it will definitely increase the growth in visitor numbers.

Feilim McLaughlin
Ambassador of Ireland to India

We are very excited to launch the Irish-British visa scheme in India. It's a joint visa and one can travel between Britain and Ireland on either Irish or British visa. If someone is going to Ireland first then he needs to apply for an Irish visa and get into Dublin, finish the tour of Ireland and then move on to UK. For all short stay visa applications, the visas will be stamped at the bottom as BIVS that means British-Irish visa scheme.



The percentage of visitors has been growing at about between 15-20 per cent on a year to year basis. We estimate between 20,000 to 23,000 people visit Ireland annually.

Huzan Fraser Motivala
Representative India, Tourism Ireland

This is a great initiative. It's awesome working together with our colleagues from Tourism Ireland as well as the Irish Embassy. This has been in works for a long time and we are happy that this has been launched finally by both the governments. India is fortunately one of the only two markets globally along with China where this BIVS scheme has been introduced.



The year 2013 was a record year for us as we received around 375,000 Indians. This was a 10 per cent hike compared to the previous year. In 2014 also till September, there was a six per cent hike. It was a record of record for us. So, this year we definitely hope to continue the record with the launch of this visa scheme.

Shuja-Bin-Mehdi
B2B Executive-North & East India, VisitBritain

SA offers 3-year multiple entry visa to travel agents

■ In a bid to encourage business and investment opportunities, South Africa has announced that it has started offering three-year multiple-entry visas to business travellers, including travel agents. Announcing this development, His Excellency **Pule Malefane**, Consul General of South Africa in Mumbai, said, "We want to offer the red carpet instead of

red tape to Indian travellers. The three-year multiple entry visas will be extended only to individual business travellers that includes travel agents as they are required to travel to

South Africa for business multiple times. There is only one pre-condition that those availing this facility do not stay in South Africa for an extended period of 30 days."



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DNSW bets big on trade partners

With a long-term plan in mind, Destination New South Wales is keeping it simple and focussing mainly on the travel trade. Sandra Chipchase, CEO, Destination New South Wales, speaks to **TRAVTALK** about activities and plans for its trade partners in India.



HAZEL JAIN

Q What kind of numbers are you expecting in 2015 post the Cricket World Cup?

Indian visitors to Australia are expected to increase from 160,000 in 2012-13 to 298,000 in 2022-23, that indicates an average annual growth rate of 6.4 per cent. By then, India will move from its current ranking of being Australia's eleventh-largest single source visitor market to eighth. Tourism from India is also currently worth an estimated \$192 million Australian dollars to the NSW economy. The NSW government's goal is to double visitor expenditure to NSW by 2020. In order to achieve this, Destination NSW is developing a long-term strategy.

Q What activities have you planned with the travel trade in India?

We have been working with trade partners to develop and promote 'Jhappi Time' packages. The Indian travel industry has recognized the potential of the campaign, with seven key partners promoting and selling packages and airfare offers. In addition to consumer advertising, a pro-

“ We will continue to engage with the trade through hosted trade programs and events, training workshops, collateral support for marketing and partnership campaigns. We will also continue to work closely with airline partners that offer connections between India and NSW

Sandra Chipchase
CEO, Destination New South Wales



gram of targeted trade advertising was undertaken as well as trade training and education on the range of experiences, events, and products on offer. Destination NSW also conducts regular familiarisations and training for the Indian travel trade to develop new programs to promote Sydney and Regional NSW. In fact, we recently held our 'Focus on India' trade mission in Sydney this February which included the largest-ever trade family to Sydney and Regional NSW destina-

tions for 30 key agents from India in partnership with Air India.

Q What are the other tactics that are part of your strategy?

There is a strong focus on partnership campaigns with airline and travel trade partners. Priority segments are adults 25-55 years, earning 45,000+ AUD per annum, living in Mumbai, Delhi or tier II cities. Our core focus is on VFR, families, and

honeymooners/couples. We will continue to engage with the trade through hosted trade programs and events, training workshops, collateral support for marketing and partnership campaigns. We will also continue to work closely with airline partners that offer connections between India and NSW. These include Singapore Airlines, Air India and Malaysia Airlines. Events such as Vivid also form part of this focus.

Q Do the India initiatives come with an increase in budgets?

Over the past two years, Destination NSW has increased investment in India. Now, we have increased investment in partnership with the Indian travel trade to undertake joint marketing programs to promote travel to Sydney and NSW.

Q Is there any specific reason why DNSW chose to showcase Snowy Mountains this year?

An important part of Destination NSW's work is to encourage visits to our regional destinations across New South Wales, which offers diverse land-

scapes and experiences from coastal cities and drives to pristine rainforests, mountains and the Outback. The Snowy Mountains also known as the Snowies, is just one such famous and popular NSW region. Indian travellers know about Sydney's spectacular harbour and the Harbour Bridge, but this beauty extends beyond our pristine waterways to skiing in the mountains and our pristine rainforests. We are also promoting touring routes including the Legendary Pacific Coast on the NSW North Coast visiting Coffs Harbour and Byron Bay as well as the Blue Mountains and Hunter Valley.

Quick Fact

► Destination NSW has invested in a new film 'Unindian', which stars former Australian cricketer, Brett Lee, who plays opposite Indian actress, Tannishtha Chatterjee. Directed and produced by Anupam Sharma, UNINDIAN has been filmed exclusively in New South Wales

Experience cinematic Scotland

With 23 Bollywood movies that chose Scotland as their backdrop, it is only natural for VisitScotland to choose Bollywood as its selling point. Agents can now use the NTO's Bollywood toolkit in its training program to lure the dramatic Indian traveller.



TT BUREAU

Dressed in traditional Scottish kilt, **Vineet Lal**, Senior Marketing Manager - Emerging Markets, VisitScotland, looks every bit the part. He was recently in India on a sales mission visiting Mumbai and New Delhi with two suppliers from Scotland.

"India represents great potential for us in terms of the growing middle class. The numbers coming to Scotland from India are increasing because Scotland's products like its landscape, whiskey trails and castles have a very good fit with Indian consumers, particularly the HNIs and fam-

ily. It's a market we want to focus on now," Lal says. Latest figures of 2013-14 show Scotland receiving in excess of 30,000 Indian visitors. But there are visitors from London too and getting an accurate figure is difficult.

Bollywood Scotland

Ahead of its 2015 sales mission to India, VisitScotland has created a special online map, Bollywood Scotland, which highlights dozens of Scottish locations that have doubled up as backdrops for some of hit Bollywood films.

Lal reveals, "We have 23 Bollywood movies shot in Scotland and we have incorpo-

“ We are looking to work with a number of trade associations such as OTOAI, TAAI and TAFI and trade partners for our annual travel trade fair in Scotland which will take place from April 22-23, 2015



Vineet Lal
Senior Marketing Manager
(Emerging Markets)
VisitScotland

rated a Bollywood toolkit with banners and buttons into our online agent specialist program 'Scots Agents'. The agents are directed to our website that will have a PDF of the map, itineraries and suggested Bollywood trails."

The map, along with a marketing toolkit, will be made available to the Indian travel trade, while consumers can also access it directly. The map

showcases 23 Indian films that have been shot in Scotland, including Dev Anand's 'Main Solah Baras Ki' and Karan Johar's 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai'.

Qatar Airways, that has sponsored the Bollywood Scotland map, will be starting daily services between Edinburgh and Doha from 1st May, 2015. This will allow Indians travel options between India and Scotland.

India sales mission

VisitScotland is also slowly increasing its interaction with the Indian travel trade. Lal adds, "We are looking to work with a number of trade associations such as OTOAI, TAAI and TAFI and trade partners for our annual travel trade fair in Scotland which will take place from April 22-23, 2015. We want to get our message across to their members and offer them training. We will also conduct familiarisation trips to Scotland and our expo is a great opportunity to bring them to Scotland and make them meet the local suppliers. We are hoping to host about 30 agents from India this year."

The NTO participated in SATTE this year for the first time. "Budgets are always a challenge for us so we look at creative ways of stretching our budgets. We have been conducting workshops in Delhi and Mumbai and hope

to return in autumn by which time we will have a more extensive training program. We can also do it virtually through webinars which we can set up for agents throughout the country. We are thinking of tapping Punjab, Ahmedabad and Pune. We did go to Bengaluru last year and hoping to go back next year," Lal reveals.

Beyond Castles

► VisitScotland has created a special online map, Bollywood Scotland, which highlights dozens of Scottish locations that have doubled up as backdrops for some of hit Bollywood films

► Qatar Airways, that has sponsored the Bollywood Scotland map, will be starting daily services between Edinburgh and Doha from 1st May, 2015

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Egypt back on tourism map

After a long silence from its tourism authority in India, Egypt has restarted dialogue with the travel trade. The NTO has designed an extensive blueprint for the market.

 HAZEL JAIN

Good news came along with the successful culmination of Egypt's Economic Development Conference on March 15, 2015 held in Sharm El Sheikh. The destination received commitments of investment and long-term

Hyderabad. For Chennai, which is a huge pilgrim market for us, we will be making a separate campaign dedicated to the Christians," Hamid reveals.

The NTO participated in OTM this February as well as SATTE. Since the new financial year starts from July, Hamid

ucts like beautiful sea, top diving destinations in Sharm-el-Shaikh, beautiful landscape in Alexandria, MICE facilities, shopping, food, culture, etc that not many travellers know. I want to bring this aspect of Egypt in the forefront," Hamid states.

Another important agenda for Hamid is to make the destination packages cheaper to attract the middle class from India as well. "Since the cost of travel to Egypt is high, it attracts mostly high-end tourists by default. My aim is to reduce the trip budget and we are doing this by introducing more products on the Red Sea. The hotels are cheaper here so I want the agents to suggest their clients to look at Red Sea as their base and make day trips from there to other places like Luxor or Aswan to bring down the cost while enjoying water sports on the Red Sea," Hamid reveals.

The Tourism Counsellor is also looking to facilitate chartered flights and more air connectivity from India. Hamid says, "If we manage to get an LCC flying between India and Sharm El Shaikh or Hurghada, the ticket costs will drop sharply. We have been talking with some Indian LCC carriers but any development will take some time."

Change of image
The priority for Egypt now is to change the image of Egypt as a country of the pyramids and the sphinx. "While Egypt has the pyramids, it also has other prod-

Pyramid tourism

- ▶ Egypt tourism will be conducting road show in April-end in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru and either Kolkata or Hyderabad. For Chennai a separate campaign will be dedicated to Christians
- ▶ Need for LCC flying between India and Sharm El Shaikh or Hurghada for cheaper air travel tickets



“With this initiative, Egypt will be back on the tourism map. We are already seeing good response from India with a 24% increase in Jan-Feb 2015 as compared to the same period last year

Ismail A. Hamid
Egyptian Tourism
Counsellor and Regional
Director
(India & Far East)

loans of more than USD 100 billion from all over the world.

Giving more information on this, **Ismail A. Hamid**, Egyptian Tourism Counsellor and Regional Director (India & Far East), General Consulate of A.R.E. says, "A delegation of 45 delegates from India was also present. With this initiative, Egypt will be back on the tourism map. We are already seeing good response from India with a 24 per cent increase in January-February 2015 as compared to the same period last year," he said. His target for India now is reaching one million tourists by 2017. Egypt has also re-initiated a lot of activities for the travel trade. "We are doing a roadshow in April end-May beginning in four cities. We have finalized New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru so far. The fourth will either be Kolkata or

Indian hotelier in UK honoured



Arun Jaitley, Minister of Finance, Govt. of India (L) presents the NRI Foundation Excellence Award to Ramesh Arora, India Travel Awards Winner and Managing Director, Montcalm Hotels, London in the presence of Baroness Verma, Member of Parliament, UK and Ashok Verma, Chairman, NRI Foundation (Extreme right). Ramesh Arora has seen four decades of transformation in the hotel industry. He was honoured as the Tourism Ambassador at the India Travel Awards 2014 held in London. At the helm of the largest privately owned hotel group in London, Arora has been instrumental in managing the group, consisting of three brands, 24 properties and 2400 rooms. With a strong belief in technology and led by consumer insight, Arora embraced the initial online booking trend. Being ahead of the times, undoubtedly paved the way for the group's enviable growth.



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Nepal Airlines airbus' first flight to New Delhi

■ The national flag carrier of Nepal resumed its commercial operations in India after two years. The Bird Group has been awarded the contract for GSA (Bird

Delhi-Kathmandu routes on February 27 this year, scheduled four flights a week with A320 aircraft. Effective May 1, 2015, RA will be operating 10 weekly



Travels) Pan India, as well as for Ground Handling Services (BWFS) at Delhi. Brand new Aircraft A320 – 'Sagarmatha' of Nepal Airlines Corporation (RA) started its operation on

flights in and out of Delhi. Nepal Airlines has also announced the Introduction of new flights and routes from May 2015 connecting Bengaluru and Mumbai from Kathmandu.

DID YOU Know?

Flying High

Travelling by air is the preferred choice for outbound Indians, with over 17 million trips in 2014, which is expected to increase to 19 million by 2015

IndiGo now flies to Dimapur via Kolkata

IndiGo has announced the launch of eight new flights between Delhi, Lucknow and Patna, besides starting new daily non-stop flights on Dimapur-Kolkata route making it the 38th destination on the airline's list.



TT BUREAU

Effective from April 15, 2015 IndiGo will launch new daily non-stop flight on Dimapur – Kolkata route which will further operate to Delhi and hence connect Dimapur to Delhi (via Kolkata).

With this, Dimapur will be 33rd domestic and 38th overall destination on IndiGo's list. The airline will also operate 9th daily non-stop flight between Delhi-Kolkata and 4th daily non-stop between Delhi and Varanasi.

Speaking on the occasion, Aditya Ghosh, President, IndiGo, said, "The announcement of new flights to and from Dimapur is a progressive step and a landmark occasion for us. I on



“Adding Dimapur in our network is testimony of our commitment towards connectivity across the country's corners bringing more and more people closer to their dreams and new opportunities

Aditya Ghosh
President, IndiGo

behalf of the IndiGo team thank Hon'ble Chief Minister of Nagaland TR Zeliang for getting IndiGo to launch and connect Dimapur on its network. We are sure that steps taken by the state govern-

ment in order to connect Dimapur with the national capital will boost trade, business and tourism and benefit thousands of customers. Adding Dimapur in our network is testimony of our commitment towards connectivity across the country's corners bringing more and more people closer to their dreams

and new opportunities. It is our constant endeavour to provide more flexibility of choice for our customers as IndiGo continues to offer them on time, hassle free and always affordable flying experience."

IndiGo has also launched eight new flights connecting Delhi to Lucknow, Lucknow to Patna and Patna to Kolkata. Effective March 29, 2015, IndiGo will also commence its second daily non-stop flight between Delhi and Indore and fourth daily non-stop flight between Mumbai and Indore, while also introducing two new flight timings on the Mumbai-Raipur route. "Having flown over 88 million passengers across the globe, we at IndiGo are determined to provide the best travel experience to all our customers. 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," Ghosh added.





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Revamped BritAgent module unveiled

With provisional numbers indicating a six per cent increase in arrivals from India in 2014, VisitBritain continues to be a popular choice. Under the new leadership, the first edition of their international workshop ExploreGB received an overwhelming response.

TT BUREAU

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the UK and the country's seventh highest export earner. The contribution of inbound tourism to the UK economy continued to grow in 2014, with latest provisional figures showing a record 34.8 million international visitors spending a record amount, £21.7 billion.

Taking over this new role, **Sally Balcombe**, CEO, VisitBritain is looking to grow tourism and boost marketing and promotional programs. According to Balcombe, "Britain is forecasting yet another major increase in tourism for 2015. The volume of inbound tourism is expected to be up 2.5 per cent, and spending is expected to be up by 4.5 per cent preparing for another record year".

A step in the right direction is VisitBritain's brand new flagship event, ExploreGB. It

provides Great British & Irish tourism suppliers and destinations with an opportunity to meet and do business with up to 261 hosted international travel buyers from 40 countries. ExploreGB is a two-day workshop filled with pre-scheduled, one-to-one appointments.

Balcombe highlighted the value of ExploreGB in helping Britain boost its tourism. VisitBritain will continue to hold the event at venues outside London to showcase regional tourism. This year the event was held at Ascot, and next year VisitBritain will organise ExploreGB in Liverpool. "First, we wanted to give an opportunity for U.K. businesses of all sizes to connect with buyers and international travel agents in order to reach new markets," says Balcombe. "To put the focus on the entire country, the event location will vary each year to gain regional spread. We also showcase Britain to hundreds of international buy-

“After the launch, the programme will be updated by taking feedback from the agents. The objective is to put together what is best for the agents and deliver it after knowing the requirements of the agents in each market



Sally Balcombe
CEO, VisitBritain

ers through the fam trips". This year VisitBritain planned trips for 261 buyers on 13 unique itineraries throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Discussing their marketing strategy, Balcombe highlights that this year's Countryside is Great campaign is an effort to get visitors something different and focused on rural tourism. "This will be followed this fall by a new campaign, Culture is

Great, which focuses on contemporary British culture and city life, covering the full range of arts, film and TV, performing arts and music. This campaign will be promoted in India by autumn 2015." The year will conclude with promotional activities around the much-awaited James Bond film.

Further highlighting the importance of the travel trade, especially from India,

Balcombe discusses the newly improved BritAgent online destination education program, which will debut at the end of March. The goal of the redeveloped program is to increase interaction, engagement and rewards for the trade. There will be new training models and agents will be rewarded for completing them. She adds, "VisitBritain will roll out the modified BritAgent Programme for the travel trade in March. This new BritAgent Programme will have additional features, which guarantees more rewards for the travel agents who participate successfully in the programme. After the launch, the programme will be updated by taking feedback from the agents. The objective is to put together what is best for the agents and deliver it after knowing the requirements of the agents in each market."

Last year Britain witnessed its best year for inbound tourism, with 34.8 mil-

lion inbound visits and tourism spending of £21.7 billion. India ranked 17th as an inbound source market with provisional figures indicating a 6 per cent increase over 2013's 375,000 visitors. "Our ambition is to welcome 40 million international visitors annually by 2020," concludes Balcombe.

Modified VisitBritain

- ▶ Newly improved BritAgent online destination education program will debut at the end of March
- ▶ India ranked 17th as an inbound source market with provisional figures indicating a 6% increase over 2013's 375,000 visitors.
- ▶ In 2015, VisitBritain plans trips for 261 buyers on 13 unique itineraries throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland



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Discovering the treasure called Britain

VisitBritain organised its first flagship event Explore GB. The two-day event provided British and Irish tourism suppliers with an opportunity to meet and do business with 261 hosted international buyers from 40 countries. TRAVTALK spoke to a few agents and got their feedback on the show and the destination.



DEVIKA JEET



"The core event of ExploreGB was top notch and intense! You meet a lot of suppliers for an initial introduction in a very time effective manner. I have actually come back with a list of suppliers whom I know I will work with, closely. The ExploreGB fam trip was another highlight which was well planned and executed."

Munind Shah
Director
The Travel Planners



ExploreGB was an event which really helped us get in touch with all the various suppliers under one roof. The biggest challenge in our business of organizing FITs is having a reliable partner in Britain. This event gave me a big opportunity of finding the best and most reliable partners across Britain. I even got to learn about so many other very unique suppliers like Capital Centric who would allow you to book a meal for your clients online.

Ajay Kurseja
Director
Fairdeal Travels



ExploreGB was a great platform and I think they succeeded in drawing our attention to other destinations and experiences beyond London and Scotland. We will soon introduce new products as well as further sparkle our existing GB product portfolio, keeping in mind requirements of our clients, who are always in search of new destinations and unique experiences.

Haresh Koyande
India Travel Awards Winner & Founder and Managing Director
Worldtravelstudio.com

"ExploreGB was an eye opener for me in introducing new products to the market. As we have started self driven tours since last year, as UK provides an ultimate environment for travelers who prefer self drive. We have launched an exclusive football package in May, which is a dream football journey, a seven day fully packed exciting journey that would definitely surprise travelers with its inclusions, which is gaining popularity in the Chennai Market."



Sriharan Balan
Director – Administration
Madura Travel Services

"Britain is really 'GREAT' in terms of history, culture, food, sports, and its great attractions all over the country. It's not just London, that is iconic, but other places like Wales, Scotland and Ireland are symbolic of their great history and cultural heritage. Then there is the historic link between the two nations and a prime example is that there are more Indian restaurants in the UK than any other country in Europe."



Lokesh Chawla
Director
Xtra Mile Travel & Education Services

Britain is a must see destination for all travellers who are looking forward to international travel especially from India. Britain is a beautiful country blessed with natural beauty and open surroundings. The weather, although cold, is not unbearable and therefore, attracts Indian traveller.



Vijay Mohan Raj
Managing Director
Uniglobe Sameera Travel & Tours



"Britain offers a complete holiday experience to the customer. Cities such as Birmingham offer vibrancy of a modern metropolis, castles like Warwick and Windsor offer history and culture. The Cotswold countryside offers scenic beauty, serenity. The ease of finding Indian Cuisine and the friendly people adds to the sense of comfort for Indians travelling across Britain."

Anahita Avari
Director
TravelOptionz Holidays



Britain is a perfect blend of history in a modern perspective. From the lively bustling streets to idyllic traditional villages, sandy coastal resorts to wildlife, Britain has everything to offer. Easy access with five international airports and various sea ports and convenient internal travel options with the global local language of English has boosted its value as preferred destination to travel. Splendid shopping experience and the global culinary treat adds to the value to visit Britain.

Sandeep Shetty
General Manager- products and operations, World of Wonders



I discovered there's much more to Britain than what it's famous for. To start off, one can't shrug off its history and culture. It was evident across castles, the famous theatres and universities. Next, the architecture is truly breathtaking. The cuisine was incredible - ranging from European to Indian. Although, the weather was chilly, it was pleasant and I would recommend February / March to be a good time to visit the UK.

Shameem Shaikh
Assistant Manager – Product
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Indian travellers are now going Dutch

Amsterdam Marketing, Chief Executive Officer, Frans van der Avert says Indian arrivals to Amsterdam increased by 34 per cent in 2014 compared to 2013 and that they want to work closely with Indian agents to promote the destination among Indian travellers.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q How is the Indian market responding to Amsterdam as a destination?

The Indian market is getting more and more important for Amsterdam. We have a lot of Indian companies in Amsterdam so we have a lot of Indian people employed in these offices, but now we see more and more tourists coming in

from India to Amsterdam. In 2014, the Indian hotel stays was the strongest climber in Amsterdam. The numbers might not be a lot, but relatively we see that the numbers are steadily climbing up. There has been an increase of 34 per cent year-on-year. We also have French Italians and Americans coming in but there the percentage increase is not so high, this rise in Indian arrivals is huge.

Q Which Indian markets are you focusing on?

We are targeting big markets like Delhi and Mumbai, these are the two most important markets. We are also looking at where people can travel and where we have good connectivity. This is for the first time we are venturing into the India market and we want to see how it works for us, we have started with Delhi and Mumbai, so this is like an experiment. We have a

PR agency here, and we'll see how further we can go. For instance even if we want to concentrate on a market like Bengaluru we do not have any direct connectivity from there, so we need to think about how to take care of that. We have a very big airport, which is the 4th largest airport in Europe after London, Frankfurt and Paris. Connectivity is indeed very important and is a major determinant for this.

Q How have Indians changed the way they travel?

More and more people from India are coming to visit and experience Europe and are comfortable with the idea of visiting Europe. And in order to cater to them we also have many Indian restaurants which are only increasing in number. The restaurateurs also see plenty of opportunities. We are concentrating on the middle class who are now travelling all around and opting for 10-day trips to Europe. We want Amsterdam



Frans van der Avert
Chief Executive Officer
Amsterdam Marketing

In 2014, the Indian hotel stays was the strongest climber in Amsterdam. There has been an increase of 34 per cent year-on-year

to have a bigger part in that. The visa process is also not very complicated; it is pretty easy getting a visa for Amsterdam.

Q How do you intend to work with travel agents?

We want to work very closely with travel agents as well and since this is the first time we are coming to India we want to use this opportunity to build relationships with them.

Exploring I amsterdam

► In 2014, the Indian hotel stays saw an increase of 34 per cent year-on-year

► Amsterdam has the 4th largest airport in Europe after London, Frankfurt and Paris

► Not very complicated visa process

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Off-beat places: Udaan's new mantra

With the completion of 23 years, Udaan India is now gearing up to foray into untapped destinations. Rajan Dua, Managing Director, Udaan India tells TRAVTALK about the strategies and roadmap ahead and how essential it is to have a good pan-India presence.



SAMAPTI DAS

QTell us about the achievements of Udaan over the last 23 years.

We were focused on our core domain - 'visa facilitation' and have scaled heights in our journey of 23 years. We started with visa facilitation at a time when IATA travel agencies used to have runner for visas and the number of visa agencies was quite low. Envisioning the impact of technology in our lives, Udaan India was the first company to launch its Visa Portal in the year 2000. This gave us a leading edge over all other visa facilitators and made Udaan India a distinguished leader in the travel industry. Udaan India has always been a trendsetter in the visa industry and with this innovation we pioneered the online Visa Tracking System. The talents of the industry coupled with innovative solutions and our pro-customer approach help us in delivering quality services while ensuring security and sustainability.

QLike Croatia, would you like to tie up with any other destinations?

“ Namaste Croatia is one of our new initiatives and Foreigner Regional Registration Offices (FRRO) is the domain which Udaan is focusing upon the coming financial year

Rajan Dua
Managing Director, Udaan India



We surely look forward to promote new, offbeat destinations. New things are in the pipeline which will be updated as we move forward.

QHow easy or difficult is it to promote such less popular destinations like Croatia?

A lot of efforts are required to promote less popular destinations. But people nowadays look forward to go to new destinations rather than common ones. You get to explore more in such destinations. Fortunately a good team and support of Amir Muharemi

along with participation in travel fairs, road shows, e-campaigns etc have created a lot of curiosity among people about Croatia.

QHow has the visa scenario changed in India ever since you entered into business?

Tremendous changes have come in the visa scenario. Earlier it was more manual and the documentation was tedious. As Indians are among the top five travellers in the world, a lot of countries have intro-

duced Visa-on-Arrival, eVisa option to frequent them who have UK/US/Schengen visas.

QDo you think it is going to change?

Yes, certainly. We have seen a lot of changes in the span of 23 years and more changes will come in the future. With globalisation, people and places have come closer and hence, the desire and need for international travel for leisure, business, study etc has increased.

QAre there any new initiatives that you are going to take this year?

Namaste Croatia is one of our new initiatives and Foreigner Regional Registration Offices (FRRO) is the domain which Udaan is focusing upon the coming financial year. We will assist foreigners with the following services-Registration/De-Registration of Expats, Visa Extension/Resident Permit Extension, Visa Conversion/Entry Conversion/Exit Permit, Address Change/Duplicate RP/ New Passport Entry, MOHA Clearance etc. With our PAN India presence, process driven approach,

escorted & assisted personalised service, strong language capabilities-special Japanese helpdesk etc, Udaan endeavours to provide best-in class FRRO facilitation services.

QAnything that you would like to add

I think it is high time that visa industry should become more organised and all visa facilitators should have good understanding and healthy competition. Rather than just reducing service charges to gain edge over each other, we should face challenges together and mutually work on making it more organised.

23 and counting...

▶ Udaan India has been a trendsetter in the visa industry and pioneered the online Visa Tracking System

▶ Foreigner Regional Registration Offices (FRRO) is the domain which Udaan is focussing upon the coming financial year



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Eyeing better Indian clientele

Christophe Plantier, General Manager, Constance Le Prince Maurice, Mauritius tells **TRAVTALK** about the USP of the property and the company's new initiatives for this year.

SAMAPTI DAS

Q Tell us something about your property.

Constance Le Prince Maurice is a small property located on a private peninsula. It is a wild piece of land surrounded by mangroves, almost 60 acres. It is a private piece of land, surrounded by a lagoon, neither too deep nor too chirpy and perfect for people who are not great swimmers or for kids. We do propose a lot of water sports facilities here. There are three restaurants and 89 keys with six different room categories. We have one unique floating restaurant which is the only one on the Indian Ocean. The wine cellar holds more than 25,000 bottles coming from 17 different countries. We serve all sorts of food including vegetarian, as we know that it is very important to have vegetarian food for Indians. We also have two golf courses and all guests who stay with us can get access to them for free.

How important is the Indian market for you? What is the percentage of Indian arrivals?

For the time being we are targeting the high end clientele. We didn't really market our property in India as such. We have been focussing mostly on the European market till now. I think China, Russia and India are the forthcoming important



Christophe Plantier
General Manager
Constance Le Prince Maurice, Mauritius

countries so it is important for us to be able to promote our hotels to get more awareness and attract more clientele.

Q What is the USP of the hotel?

The hotel is located on the East coast that is probably the widest coast of Mauritius. Another important thing

is that the hotel is facing the North and people get the sun all day long. It is very sheltered in the winter season because of the major wind blowing from the Southeast side. We have a big kids club and two big golf courses.

Q How was 2014 for you?

It's been much better as we have been suffering since the last four years because of the recession in Europe. The business is picking up. The UK market is still strong in Mauritius alongwith the French and German market. We are targeting occupancy of sixty per cent in the forthcoming year.

Q Are you taking any new initiative this year?

The hotel has been refurbished completely two years ago. Eventually we are planning to renovate and expand the kids club. So this is probably one of the main targets and we are going to be busy consolidating our assets.

Mashobra welcomes Sarovar

Mashobra Hills will soon be home to Marigold Sarovar Portico, with 50 rooms and cottages after the company rebranded an existing hotel, seen as a leap in the leisure segment.

TT BUREAU

Sarovar Hotels has signed a 50 room and cottages Sarovar Portico at Mashobra Hills, Shimla. It is a running hotel which will be rebranded as a Sarovar Portico by May 2015 this year, or earlier. Owned by AB Tools, the hotel will be named as Marigold Sarovar Portico, Mashobra. This development represents an important link in Sarovar's expansion in the leisure segment.

The resort offers a virtual bonanza for nature-walk lovers

and trekkers. The resort offers a platform to its guests to experience nature and his real self on one hand and on the other

acquaint oneself with the country life in Himalayan Villages.

The cottages at the resort are made of Himalayan Stone, which are a unique and specialised specimen of Shimla architecture. Besides, the hotel will offer all modern facilities including all day dining, restaurant, bar, swimming pool, gym and spa, meeting rooms, banqueting facilities, conferencing and destination weddings and other services required for a good four-star hotel.



Across India and Beyond...

- ▶ The company manages and franchises over 70 operational hotels in 48 destinations in India and overseas, under Sarovar Premiere, Sarovar Portico, Hometel, Radisson, Park Plaza and Park Inn brands
- ▶ With 12 regional sales & reservations offices located across India, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts is one of the largest and most diverse hotel management companies in India.

Constance hosts Indian travel trade

Christophe Plantier, General Manager, Constance Le Prince Maurice was recently in India on his maiden visit to promote the property and invite more Indian guests. A fun filled get together was organised in New Delhi by Constance Hotels & Resorts which was attended by some renowned faces of the travel trade.



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Le Meridien debuts in Gurgaon

With many more Le Meridien hotels opening this year, the one in Gurgaon, Haryana has been launched recently amidst fanfare. Brian Povinelli, Global Brand Leader, Le Méridien and Westin and Dilip Puri, MD, India and Regional VP, South Asia, Starwood Hotels & Resorts tell about the brand which continues to mark its presence around the world.



TT BUREAU

Starwood Hotels & Resorts opened Le Méridien Gurgaon, following the rebranding of an existing hotel. In Asia Pacific, Le Méridien is on track to open eight new hotels this year at vibrant locations such as Paro, Bhutan; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Putrajaya, Malaysia and Qingdao and Leshan, China.

"Le Méridien is enjoying a strong growth momentum worldwide, resonating with creative and curious minded trav-

"With a conversion strategy we also expedite on the new properties coming into the Le Meridien brand. We are going to open around 11 hotels in the world this year, among which four are in India

Brian Povinelli
Global Brand Leader
Le Méridien and Westin



ellers who have an affinity for arts, culture and cuisine," said

Brian Povinelli, Global Brand Leader, Le Méridien and Westin. "As India's important hospitality market with tremendous growth potential, Gurgaon has long been on our short list of dynamic Indian cities that share our brand passions. We are confident that Le Méridien Gurgaon will provide a unique experience, unlocking the

destination through locally influenced design, programming and cuisine."

The hotel features 285 guest rooms, including 22 suites, with contemporary furnishings; a renovated signature dining venue, latest recipes; and a new Longitude Bar. Re-interpreting the lobby into a social gathering place, the hub experience is defined by four unique elements: large-scale artwork in high impact areas; the sensory experience, illustrated through Le Méridien's signature scent, sound and use of light and a 24-hour-curated soundtrack by French Bossa Nova band Nouvelle Vague. Other hotel amenities include 1,600 square metres of conference and meeting space, covering a divisible ballroom with



open around 11 hotels in the world this year, among which four are in India. This is a big focus for the brand in India."

Talking about the potential of the brand, **Dilip Puri**, Managing Director, India and Regional Vice-President, South Asia, Starwood Hotels & Resorts said, "It was always a

Puri informed that the next Le Meridien is going to open in Mahabaleshwar. A second hotel will open in Paro in Bhutan and a large Le Meridien is opening in Dhaka towards the middle of the year. **David Hopcroft**, General Manager, Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR said, "It is an important occasion as we welcome our guests to Le Méridien, Gurgaon, Delhi NCR. We look forward to helping our guests unlock this unique destination through a redefined, contemporary experience."

"This year we are likely to open the largest number of Le Meridien hotels in the South Asia region

Dilip Puri
Managing Director,
India and Regional Vice-President,
South Asia,
Starwood Hotels & Resorts



an eight metres tall ceiling and area of 390 square metres that opens to lush green lawns.

Povinelli added, "In long term we are very optimistic about India. It is going to pick a pace. With a conversion strategy we also expedite on the new properties coming into the Le Meridien brand. We are going to

challenge for us to revive and reposition an iconic global brand. It has taken time but today I am proud that almost all of our existing Le Meridien hotels have either completed or in the process of completing some major renovations. This year we are likely to open the largest number of Le Meridien hotels in the South Asia region."

Expanding Starwood

- ▶ Le Meridien is going to open in Mahabaleshwar.
- ▶ Another hotel will open in Paro in Bhutan
- ▶ A large Le Meridien is opening in Dhaka towards the middle of the year.
- ▶ Around 11 Starwood hotels are opening in the world in 2015, among which four are in India

Bangladesh International Tourism Fair BITF 2015
21 | 22 | 23 May 2015
Bangabandhu International Conference Center
Dhaka | 10 AM TO 5 PM

In Collaboration With: Bangladesh International Tourism Fair

Event Theme: Dhaka 2015

Official Airline: Biman Bangladesh Airlines

Partner State: Tripura, India

Partner Hotel: Six Seasons

Hospitality Partner: Dhaka 2015

Think Tank Partner, India: Asian Confluence

Airport Hospitality: MGA

Supporting Partner: Toubi, Rive, BHA, Bangladesh Repatriation Corporation

IT Partner: Aamra

Partner: Dhaka 2015

Security Partner: Dhaka 2015

Event Manager: Encourage

Prime Media Partner: TRAVELTALK

Media Partner: HEAVENLY INDIA, BANGADESH, 10 times

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'Save the Sparrow' initiative launched

■ Sterling Holiday Resorts, India's leading Leisure Hospitality and Vacation Ownership company, has launched a unique edutainment program at its resorts in an effort to contribute to save the sparrow from going extinct. Sterling's 'Save the Sparrow' initiative is a part of the Company's ongoing effort to be eco-friendly. Other initiatives include encouraging Sterling's guests and mem-

bers to help in water conservation and in maintaining a clean environment. Sterling is also actively taking part in the nationwide Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign through monthly cleanliness drives in the vicinity of all its resorts and offices. Speaking on the initiative, **Ramesh Ramanathan**, Managing Director of Sterling Holiday Resorts said, "Our Save the Sparrow initiative is aimed at raising environmental con-

sciousness among children and their families. We focused on the sparrow as its population is depleting at an alarming rate. The initiative is run as an edutainment program at our resorts conducted through a workshop which includes a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) kit. The kit comprises of a drawstring backpack, a bird house, a bird bath and an instruction guide. By doing so Sterling hopes to help impact the sparrow population positively."

"Thailand, My Children Destination for the Perfect Holiday"
Mary Kom (5 Times World Boxing Champion)



Mary Kom & Family at Pattaya Beach Thailand

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Tel: 91-11-46741111, 41663567-9 | Fax: 91-11-41663570
Email: tatdel@tat.or.th | www.facebook.com/tat.newdelhi

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KwaZulu-Natal: New pit stop for movies

The KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Film Commission, that was visiting Mumbai to participate at the India International Film Tourism Conclave 2015 recently, is set to begin fulfilling its mandate to make the province a film production centre. Carol Coetzee, CEO of KZN Film Commission, speaks about her plans to attract more Indian filmmakers to shoot in KZN province.

 HAZEL JAIN

Durban has been showcased in a lot of Hindi and vernacular Indian movies but there are so many more picturesque destinations in the KZN province. This is what the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Film Commission wants to highlight. In fact, Durban is known as 'Little India' because of the large Indian population so the filming crew gets a mix of warm South African and Indian hospitality. The KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission is focussed on making the province a film production centre. Its mission is to offer support throughout the value chain to the local and international film industry stakeholders.

QWhat was the agenda of your India visit?

KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission's agenda was to meet and build relationships with the key decision-makers in the Indian film industry and to promote KwaZulu-Natal as the destination of choice. KZN Film Commission recognizes that India is a big player in the film industry and as a province KZN has a number of synergies with India as we have the highest

“Currently, we offer 20% rebate on qualifying spend in South Africa, if you do post production you get 25%. There is an MOU with the Indian government and if we get a treaty signed with India the rebate increases to 35%

Carol Coetzee
CEO, KZN Film Commission



number of Indians than any other city outside of India. Attending the India International Film Tourism Conclave in Chennai, Hyderabad and Mumbai was a grand experience as we got to interact with different players in India. We are looking forward to hosting some of them in our province soon.

QDid you meet any directors?

We had very good meetings with production houses such as Yash Raj Films, makers of Dhoom, several directors and producers including

Aashish Singh, Marijke deSouza, B. Vijaya Kumar, and Aditya Bhat to mention a few. We plan to invest heavily in marketing ourselves to ensure that key decision-makers are aware of our exciting offering. We believe that we can gain further tourists by specifically packaging those regions and specific locations like hotels, etc where the stars interacted during the production.

QWhat was the feedback you received from the production houses?

This was a successful trip in that we achieved our objectives, but we still have a long way to go. We need to convert the conversations into actual productions in our region. There is a keen interest to explore other regions of the country such as KwaZulu-Natal which provide fresh and exciting locations. The feedback from various stakeholders has been very positive with excellent referrals from well-known Indian filmmakers.

QAre you planning to offer more facilities to encourage film shoots?

We are actively promoting investment into new studios to further attract productions into the region. Currently, we offer 20 per cent rebate on qualifying spend in South Africa, if you do post production you get 25 per cent. There is an MOU with the Indian government and if we get a treaty signed with India the rebate increases to 35 per cent. We have a close working relationship with South African Tourism in India and with our regional body - Tourism KwaZulu-Natal - we explore collaborative marketing of the region.

QHave the previous films led to an increase in tourists?

We are currently undertaking research into the impact of film on tourism and have no doubt that there is a positive influence. Moving forward, we will be more aggressive and focused on packaging specific products around film tourism.

QWhat kind of numbers does the KZN province records from India right now?

As per South African Tourism's report, provincial distribution share of arrivals for Q4 2013, about 22.7 per cent of the total Indian arrivals visited KwaZulu Natal.

Bollywood connection

Some of the popular movies shot in Durban include Race, Welcome, No Entry, Fida, Hera Pheri among others. Upcoming Bollywood films Aankhen2 and Happy Anniversary are going to be shot in Durban







Taking further the decision and commitment of "Make In India" Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in partnership with FICCI and Tourism Finance Corporation of India Ltd. is organizing the first ever **Tourism Investors Meet (TIM)** on **July 22 - 23, 2015** at Federation House, FICCI, 1 Tansen Marg, New Delhi.

In Partnership With



Tourism Finance Corporation of India Ltd.

Presents

Tourism Investors Meet (TIM) 2015

July 22-23, 2015, FICCI, New Delhi



The TWO day event will focus on Interactive meetings where by exhibiting destinations will be showcasing their policy and facilities with respect to soliciting investment in Tourism Infrastructure through pre scheduled structured face to face business meetings between the State Governments and prominent investors.

The Investors from the following sectors will be present

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels Real Estate Developers Multiplexes and Malls Roadways Developers Hospitality Management Institutes Sound & Light Shows organizers Yoga & Ayurveda Centers Cruise & River Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitation & Civic Amenity developers IT enabled service providers for Tourism Desert Safari Theme Parks / Amusement Parks Film Studios Airport Developers Mega Convention Centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helicopter & Air services Food Chains/ Food Parks Night Safari Providers Golf Course Developers Camp Tourism Investors in monument conservation lighting maintenance Cable car Express way consultant Tech backed cab services
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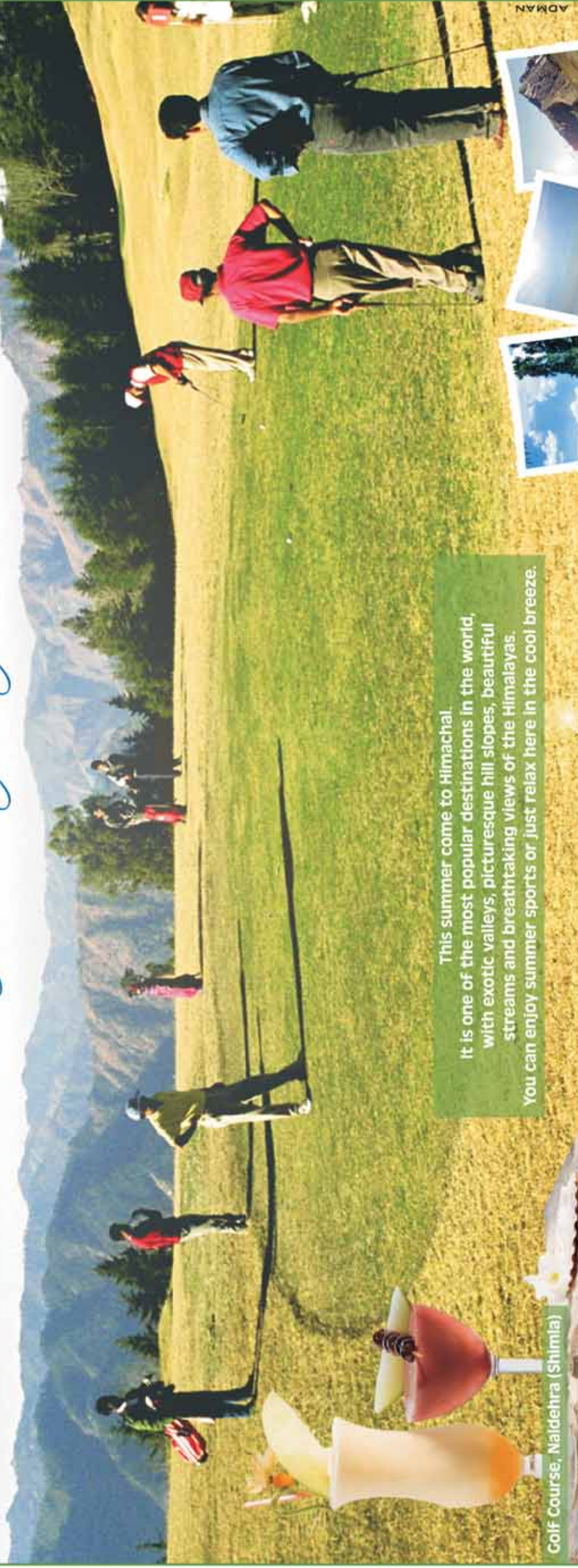



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Fax : 0177-2625456. Website : www.himachaltourism.gov.in. For online booking of hotels, visit : www.hptdc.gov.in; Email : tourismmin-hp@nic.in

Children now travel free in Rail Europe

Rail Europe has made travelling for families and groups in Europe easier and cheaper this summer. Among the many offers it is offering is free rail travel for children and unbeatable prices on a selection of products.

TT BUREAU

Rail Europe, the leader in distribution of train tickets and rail passes, has announced that families travelling with a selection of rail passes to visit Europe now have access to free rail travel for children. This offer is available for Eurail Passes, the Swiss Travel Pass, German Rail Pass and BritRail Pass.

Family-friendly advantages:

Up to two children between the ages of 4 and 11 can travel for free with an adult who is a

Kids Day-out

For several BritRail Pass products, one child aged 5 to 15 can travel free with an adult on a BritRail Family Pass. All additional children ages 5 to 15 will receive a special reduced rate

- holder of a Eurail Global Pass, Eurail Select pass, Eurail Regional Pass and Eurail One Country Pass.
- Families traveling with kids under the age of 16 in Switzerland can book a Swiss Travel Pass and save with the Swiss Family Card, which
- allows children 6 to 15 years of age to travel free when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. The card is free, simply request one at the time you purchase your Swiss Travel Pass.
- The German Rail Pass offers a free child travel
- for up to two children aged 6 to 11 accompanied by their parents.
- For several BritRail Pass products, one child aged 5 to 15 can travel free with an adult on a BritRail Family Pass. All additional children ages 5 to 15 will receive a special reduced rate.
- The interactive map on the new Rail Europe website will help customers select the country of their choice and the rail passes which best corresponds to where they want to go will be displayed. Customers just need to know the number of days they are planning to stay in a
- particular country or region to book the appropriate pass and validity. Pass holders also benefit from bonuses which are included in their rail pass. They can get hotel discounts, free public travel or ferry discounts, when available.

Rail Europe spring promotions

In partnership with major European railway companies and Eurail, Rail Europe is lining up several promotions, including deals for top sellers like Eurostar, Thalys, France Rail Pass, German Rail Pass and Eurail Global Pass.

Thalys exclusive fares: First Class - 64€ between Paris & Brussels, 74€ between Paris & Cologne, 78€ between Paris & Amsterdam and 48€ between Brussels and Amsterdam. Sales dates: 27/03/2015 Travel dates: 01/03/2015 – 30/06/2015	Eurostar exclusive fares: Travel between London and Paris or Brussels for 39£ in Standard Class or 99£ in Standard Premier with Eurostar. Sales dates: until 20/03/2015 Travel dates: 02/03/2015 – 27/08/2015 Rail Passes: 20% discount for France Rail Pass Sales dates: Until 06/04/2015 Travel dates: Up to 6 months from issuance date. Valid on 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 days within 1 month passes.	Free additional days included in the Eurail Global Pass Travellers get 2 to 5 additional days of travel included for free in their Eurail Global Pass. Conditions: 2 additional days offered for a 15-day pass. 3 additional days offered for a 21-day pass. 5 additional days offered for a 1 month rail pass. Sales dates: 1 February – 31 March 2015 Travel dates: Pass must be activated within 6 month.	20% discount for German Rail Pass Sales dates: 01 February 2015 – 31 March 2015 Travel dates: 01 February 2015 – 31 May 2015.	One free day for a selection of Eurail One Country Passes and Eurail Regional Passes Until 28/04/2015, when booking a Eurail pass, one free additional day of travel is offered! Sales dates: Until 28/04/2015 Travel dates: Up to 6 months from issuance date
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Expedition Voyages launched

With the launch of the new company – Expedition Voyages, Cruise Norway is celebrating an exciting phase in the eight years they have operated in India. With this the team looks forward to making exotic and pristine locales easily accessible to the clients.

TT BUREAU

Cruise Norway has carved a niche for itself in the Expedition Voyage sector with over 27 years of combined experience in the USA and India. With an overall growth of 84 per cent in 2014, and their client's increasing desire to explore the remote and exotic, they have decided to position themselves as a dedicated operator for

2014 has been a successful year for us, with an overall growth in USD turnover of 84 per cent as compared to 2013.

Revenue margins too have shown a healthy growth of 59 per cent over the previous year."

says, "We continue to represent Silversea, the Ultra-Luxury shipping company, who sail to over 500 destinations World Wide, including some new exotic new destinations mentioned earlier. Partnering with G-Adventures and Poseidon Expeditions, we offer a wide spectrum of Expedition voyages to the dedicated adventure seekers, right from the North Pole to the South Pole."



Espen Fjermoros
CEO
Expedition Voyages



John Ambat
Executive Vice President
Expedition Voyages



Shanthini Manohar
General Manager (Marketing)
Expedition Voyages

Authentic Expedition Voyages to untouched lands.

John Ambat, Executive Vice President, Expedition Voyages says, "We are very proud to announce the launch of our new company Expedition Voyages.

Expedition Voyages will continue operations seamlessly. It will remain the oldest travel partner in India (2007) as well the GSA for the hundred year old Norwegian Shipping Company Hurtigruten, whose fleet of 12 ships sails to the eco-fragile Polar Regions of the Arctic and Antarctic. Ambat

He adds, "One of our major strategies is to invest substantially on web marketing through Google ad-word campaigns, besides other forms of marketing. Innovative initiatives, like purchasing 'marketable' domains, have led to creating dedicated websites, which are product specific."

Thai Airways and Tourism Authority of Thailand support Caddies golf tournament



Thai Airways International, Tourism Authority of Thailand and Royal Thai Embassy supported Caddies Welfare Trust Members Charity Golf Tournament that was held at the Delhi Golf Club on the February 27, 2015 to raise supporting funds for medical care of caddies. Thai Airways sponsored a grand prize consisting of two return air tickets sector Delhi/Bangkok/ Delhi and two nights three days stay in Thailand.

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Recognising powerhouse of talent

India Travel Awards supports, promotes and develops the Indian travel and tourism industry by identifying and rewarding excellence in the travel industry. Award winners from all the four regions share their moment of pride with **TRAVTALK** after receiving the award.



Ramoji Film City

I am very glad that India Travel Awards has come to South India. It is a big encouragement for any organisation to receive an award. Tourism is a business which certainly requires more boost. As compared to the GDPs of all the countries worldwide, I think we have a lot to learn in India. India Travel Awards will encourage the organisations to put their best to the business.

Rajiv Jainapurkar
CEO

Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore

I think it's very important because South India is a key market in tourism whether it is Kerala, Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka. All these states are upcoming tourist destinations and I think they all have potential. This award will give a lot of visibility to our hotel and the kind of facilities that we have. It will also boost Mysore as a destination with garden and palaces.

Pankaj Saxena
General Manager



roomsXML Solutions

India Travel Awards is very encouraging and a big step taken. West India is a big market which is gradually developing and with awards being organised specifically for this region, I am sure everyone here in the travel industry will get encouragement to keep up the good work.

Prakash Bang
Managing Director



World Travel Studio.com

West India has a lot of potential. I think it contributes about 30 per cent to pan India. With Visa-on-Arrival being launched by the government, tourism will get a big boost. Similarly, after achieving the India Travel Award, everyone in the travel industry will get a big encouragement and work harder.

Haresh Koyande
Founder and Managing Director



South Africa Tourism

We are absolutely moved to get this award. It means something when you know that over three lakh people are voting for this award. It is an encouragement for everyone in the office. We have an extremely hard working team for South Africa tourism in India. There is a huge commitment from the head office so, the confidence that one has on the destination is worth it.

Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager

Centrum Direct

All the regions of India have equal potential. We need to encourage more on that. We need to make it convenient for the foreign tourists wherever they travel. All facilities should be present there. I see a lot of potential in this field and this kind of awards will encourage us to make it better. It will help us to connect with the travel community and will take us an inch forward to know the travel industry better.

Harendra Choudhary
General Manager (North & East)



Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills

It is a great initiative that has been taken to recognise the travel trade in South India separately. Otherwise, we generally see that most of the awards happen for pan India. Many hotels are coming up now in each of the regions so they can be recognised and encouraged to do better work.

Rajneesh Malhotra
General Manager



Summit Hotels and Resorts

I think it is a good thing to have awards to felicitate people who work so hard. This is the first time that I've seen this initiative being taken. There are so many people who are working in different fields, from village tourism to getting tourists to this region from different parts of the country. If we can improve the infrastructure, then we will be among the best.

Sumit Mitraka
Managing Director



Incentives and Conference Planners

I think it is great to have an award ceremony organised specifically for East India. I would like to give a 'Thumbs up' to this as it is recognising the achievements in the travel industry in this region. The awareness about a certain region depends on proper campaigning and the award will surely lead to the same for East India.

Sunaina Chatterjee
Chief Executive



Clubside Tours & Travels

It is an excellent idea to organise awards region wise. Each and every region has potential. But East India especially, is a budding market and has mostly been ignored as compared to North or South India. So, I think East deserves to be a part of the travel industry and this award will turn out to be a huge encouragement.

Sumit Periwal
Chief Executive Officer

Call for Nominations



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DEVIKA JEET

2014 was a momentous year for Etihad Airways and the first quarter on 2015 has continued to be exemplary. The year ended with the launch of its new aircrafts A380 and B787 taking the skies and welcoming the much-awaited Residence by Etihad. "As we have done so many times in our short history, we are reshaping the landscape of modern air travel in our own way. This is a culmination of many years of hard work and tremendous endeavour by hundreds of people both in our airline and outside," says **James Hogan**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Airways



The flagship aircrafts ushered in the New Year with distinctive new livery and all new cabin interiors, which include the ultra-luxurious

Residence by Etihad, the only three-room suite in the sky.

"Inspired by traditional Emirati design patterns and facets of our home Abu Dhabi, the bold and exciting new aircraft livery reflects our strong and proud Arabian heritage in a fresh and modern way," adds Hogan.

The Residence by Etihad features a living room, separate ensuite shower room, and bedroom, and as another first in the airline industry, a dedi-

cated Butler. Measuring 125 square feet in total, The Residence by Etihad is located on the forward upper deck of the A380 and is for single or double occupancy.

The A380 is also the only Etihad Airways aircraft to offer the first apartment, which is a complete living space with a reclining lounge chair and an ottoman.

"With the launch of these aircraft, we usher in a new era of unparalleled luxury, comfort and service. These innovations represent our vision for the future," he adds.

Etihad Airways has also completed a Korean Finance Lease for its second new Airbus A380 aircraft and is gearing up to add to its fleet. The transaction, which is structured as a 15-year, fixed coupon full-payout finance lease, is the first ever Korean financing to be arranged covering the entire cost of a brand new A380 aircraft. Hogan adds, "We are delighted



The Lobby, A380 Upper Deck

to have engaged so positively with Korean investors, thereby securing strong interest from Korean institutions in the course of our first entry into the Korean market, which we see as a potentially fruitful longer term partnership for us in the future."

Etihad Airways will take delivery of four A380s and three Boeing 787-9s in 2015. The airline also unveiled a new cabin crew uniform. It's the first major uniform re-launch since the airline's formation in 2003 and incorporates the same colours used for the cabin interior and new aircraft livery.

Growing Fleet

▶ The much-awaited Residence by Etihad launched along with aircrafts A380 and B787 taking the skies

▶ Ultra-luxurious Residence by Etihad: the only three-room suite in the sky with a dedicated butler

▶ Etihad Airways has also completed a Korean Finance Lease for its second new Airbus A380 aircraft



The Residence A380



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The tussle of the trade

The cricket match hosted by Emirates Airlines for its trade partners saw impressive turnout even on a weekend. Even though the winning team took away the tournament trophy, the travel fraternity was the ultimate winner.

TT BUREAU

Cricketing skills counted the most on this pitch as 384 members of travel trade con-

verged as part of 32 teams over the weekend at the Emirates Airlines' two-day cricket match titled 'Emirates

Cricket Trade Tournament 2015 in Mumbai.

Held at the Police Gymkhana Grounds, the match



Marzban Antia
Managing Director
Fans on Stands



Jeetendra Sawhney
Managing Director
Abacus India



John Nair
VP and Head (Corporate Travel
India), Cox & Kings

There was so much camaraderie on the ground on those two days between players. Everyone forgot who they worked for and just enjoyed the game

Emirates Airline tapped into a national passion. What a metaphor for our space! Players forget who they worked for and it was all about team effort

It was a very good initiative by Emirates. The cricket match brought members of the trade together and what better way to do this than cricket



started at 9 AM on March 21 with Mumbai Masti emerging as the winners late evening on March 22. Abacus co-sponsored the Emirates Cricket Trade Tournament including tech gadgets to the Best Batsman, Bowler and Fielder. The main prize was, however, the magnificent Emirates trophy that was revealed at a networking party on Friday.

Never a dull moment

After the first day of clashes between the various teams, it all boiled down to two semi-final matches on March 22 for six overs each with Brussels Diamond v/s Mumbai Masti and Amsterdam Magic v/s Rio Rogers. While Mumbai Masti defeated Brussels Diamond by making 52 runs, Rio Rogers won their match with 65 runs in just 5.3 overs. However, Mumbai Masti was the clear favourite and won the final match by 13 runs amidst loud cheering. India's famous ex-Test Cricket Captain, Dilip Vengsakar was present to give away the final prizes.

Winning Team

Mumbai Masti emerged as the final winner after defeating the opposing team by 13 runs

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Taking centrestage at ITB Berlin

ITB Berlin in Germany this year witnessed an increase in trade visitors, longer duration of stay of trade visitors and exhibitors. The India Pavilion also won the second prize for the Best Stand in the Asia, Australia and Oceania category. Showcasing its cultural heritage at the fair, brand India was projected through marketing 'Incredible India' with the help of outdoor media by branding buses and outdoor backlit billboards. Evoking the Buddhist heritage of India, the Pavilion was built with the Sanchi Stupa in the middle and trade partners all around.



Travel trade converge in Berlin



Easy visas, better connections to Israel

With the recently-concluded TAFI convention it is time for Israel to take feedback and work towards making the destination easy for agents to sell in India. Hassan Madah, Director (India), Israel Ministry of Tourism, talks about the measures it is taking for this.



HAZEL JAIN

Q Any takeaways from the TAFI convention?

The convention was successful despite all the obstacles especially the weather challenge in Istanbul airport

Also, when you have professional speakers and an interesting schedule, people will attend and you will have a fruitful convention. The convention was an eye-opener for the agents where they saw with their own eyes how safe the country is, even safer



“We are expecting to reach 50,000 this year with more MICE and leisure travellers. We think that it will be 45 per cent pilgrimage, 35 per cent leisure and 20 per cent MICE

Hassan Madah

Director (India), Israel Ministry of Tourism

and the heavy snow and rain in the region a few days before the convention. We realised that we should have a plan B, which we did and because of that we succeeded in holding the convention as per plans.

than their own cities, and how modern and developed with well-maintained attractions Israel is. They also saw how Indians were welcomed in Israel. The impact is greater when people experience it for themselves.

Q Is the budget for India likely to increase this year?

The final budget for this year is still unknown because of the election that happened on March 17. We are now waiting for the coalition to be formed and the budget to be approved. Till then, we will work as per last year's budget. According to plans, the budget will increase during the years and we will invest in projects after we evaluate them.

Q What kind of visa relaxations is Israel looking at?

Israel has facilitated the visa process in India in recent years and the visa is done through VFS. Regarding group visa which is done by the DMCS in Israel through the Interior Ministry in Israel, we want to reduce the number of members from 10 to five people. We are working on that and hopefully it will happen soon.

Q What is the ministry doing to improve air connectivity between India and Israel?

The Ministry is offering a safety net agreement to the companies and we are trying to convince Indian carriers to fly to Israel. It's a financial decision and we claim that if it is economically worth it to ELAL to fly all these years, then it should be worth it for others as well.

Q What activities have you planned for the agents this year?

We will conduct roadshows and cultural events in different cities. We have also increased our budget for joint promotional activities. Familiarisation tours will also happen for those who are keen to invest in the business along with corporates for the MICE segment.

Q What kind of numbers are you expecting this year?

We are expecting to reach 50,000 this year with more MICE and leisure travellers. We think that it will be 45 per cent pilgrimage, 35 per cent leisure and 20 per cent MICE. The cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad,

Kolkata, Cochin, Vadodara and Nagpur have shown good potential.

Q Can you share details about your specialist program?

So far, more than 720 agents have registered just two months after its launch. We will soon announce the winners of the tickets. We will come up with a second program in the near future with more information about the destination. We are promoting the program with our media partner who is distributing more prizes for agents who register and complete the program.

Discover Israel

► Israel has facilitated the visa process in India in recent years and the visa is done through VFS. Regarding group visa which is done by the DMCS in Israel through the Interior Ministry in Israel, chances are the number of members may be reduced from 10 to five people

TrawellTag forays into non-risk products

The company is planning to integrate a lot many specialist travel-related non-risk products that Cover-More already has in its current offerings. Among them are products like the Cover-More Global SIM card that is currently being tested in India.



TT BUREAU

In India to officiate the opening of TrawellTag Cover-More's second office in Mumbai, Group CEO of Cover-More, Peter Edwards said that Cover-More will grow operations in India to tap into the growing outbound travel volumes and continue investing in the Indian business, without revealing any figures for this. He said, "My aim was to visit Mumbai and Delhi to meet key existing and potential business

partners and understand the Indian market."

Global SIM for India

Revealing plans for the India market, Dev Karvat, MD of TrawellTag Cover-More, India, said, "The agenda with CoverMore coming in is not to expand in terms of offices but to bring in more specialised products – risk and non-risk both – within the travel insurance space. There are a lot of products that we want to launch. On the non-risk side, Cover-More



“We are looking to partner with Indian airlines and are already in discussion with a couple of them. There are about four airlines in India and we would like to work with all four of them

Dev Karvat

MD, TrawellTag Cover-More, India

has specialist travel-related products like medical assistance and Cover-More Global SIM card. These are the products that we would look at to be integrated into our current offerings."

"The Cover-More Global SIM card has been running very well in the Australian market so we are in the process of testing the same thing in India and creating the right infrastructure to actually start selling that product. We don't have a timeline in place at the moment but I would say

about six to 12 months' time. We are in the testing phase right now," Karvat added. TrawellTag is currently focused on the B2B platform and committed to its travel agent partners. "We are not thinking of going B2C and have been conducting our travel agents engagement program quite successfully. We completed eight cities last year and we plan to cover another 15 cities this year, engaging those who actually sell travel insurance across the counter," Karvat said.

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EVENT TALK

APRIL 2015

NATIONAL		
9	Mumbai	MICE Roadshow, Korea Tourism Organization
14	Jaipur	Best of Australia, Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria
15	Chandigarh	Best of Australia, Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria
16	Visakhapatnam	South India Travel Awards
17	Indore	Best of Australia, Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria
19-21	Jaipur	Great Indian Travel Bazaar
21	Coimbatore	Best of Australia, Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria
21	Bengaluru	Tourism Ireland- Visit Britain
INTERNATIONAL		
14-16	Beijing	China Outbound Travel & Tourism Market
14-16	Shanghai	IT & CM China 2015
15-17	Cape Town	WTM Africa
22-24	São Paulo	WTM Latin America

MAY 2015

NATIONAL		
8-10	Cochin	Hoteltech Kerala
25	Chennai	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
27	Bengaluru	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
29	Delhi	B2B Roadshow Oman Tourist Office
INTERNATIONAL		
4-7	Dubai	Arabian Travel Mart
9 - 11	Durban	Indaba 2015, South African Tourism
21-23	Dhaka	Bangladesh International Tourism Fair (BITF)
26- 29	Ontario	Rendezvous Canada 2015, Canadian Tourism Commission

JUNE 2015

NATIONAL		
1	Mumbai	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
10	Kolkata	Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade
10-12	Bengaluru	India International Travel Mart
11	Ahmedabad	Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade
11-13	Pune	India Hospitality Expo
12	Pune	Why Spain? – Presentation & Networking Dinner for Travel Trade
INTERNATIONAL		
21-25	Melbourne	Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)

JULY 2015

NATIONAL		
13-14	Mumbai	Kiwi Link India workshop, Tourism New Zealand
13	Goa	Learn South Africa
14-15	Ahmedabad	Learn South Africa
16	Jaipur	Learn South Africa
17-19	Chennai	India International Travel Mart
20	Jalandhar	Learn South Africa
20	Kolkata	Thailand Road Show
22	Lucknow	Learn South Africa
22	Delhi	Thailand Road Show
23	Kolkata	Learn South Africa
24	Mumbai	Thailand Road Show
24	Mumbai	Learn South Africa
24-26	Hyderabad	Travel & Tourism Fair
25	Pune	Learn South Africa
27	Hyderabad	Learn South Africa
28	Chennai	Learn South Africa
29	Trichy	Learn South Africa
30	Chennai	Learn South Africa
31	Bengaluru	Learn South Africa
31-Aug 2	Kolkata	Travel & Tourism Fair

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

6 must-visit places in Thailand

Exotic, yet cultured and historic with spectacular islands, Thailand attracts many tourists round the year. **TRAUTALK** features a quick review of top 6 places you must experience while in the kingdom.



TT BUREAU

Amphawa District

Amphawa is 63 km west of Bangkok and it makes a day trip destination. It is home to floating market which cuts through Khlong (canal) Amphawa and a small community of vintage cafés, restaurants and wooden shop-houses selling artsy souvenirs, books and Thai sweets. Besides the floating market, the riverside scenery, laid-back ambience reminiscent of a past era and a lineup of waterfront boutique guesthouses are the reason for its popularity.



Resort Bann Amphawa Resort & Spa at Samut Songkhram

Baan Amphawa Resort & Spa offers a retreat on the bank of the Mae Klong River which blends traditional Thai houses with contemporary Thai luxury to create a haven of historical elegance among the lush tropical landscape. It invites to get close to the river of life with the comfortable and relaxing privacy home-like 61 units in traditional Thai house. Each unit is placed in tropical garden creating the perfect hideaway from the crowd.



Wat Khanon Temple

More than 300 Nang Yai puppets are well preserved in this temple near Amphoe Photharam. Nang Yai is an old form of Thai entertainment with shadow play puppets. The performance involves manipulating puppets made of cowhide in front of a backlit white screen with musical and narrative accompaniment. It prompted master craftsmen of the Royal Court to create a set of Nang Yai puppets which they called Phra Nakhon Wai, or Shaking the City. The puppets were used for royal functions and special occasions.



Ractchaburi's local factory of Dragon Earthen Water Jars

Ratchaburi used to be the hub for ceramic wares. For years, they used water jars and slowly due to the Thai people's changing lifestyle, the jars started to diminish. Ratchaburi's ceramics ware market was also affected by world economic crisis. The demand in ceramics ware had decreased by 30-40 per cent. At present most of the jar makers, including small-scale ones, are wiped out by this wave of lifestyle changes. There are some surviving handful ones in Ratchaburi.



Sampran Riverside Resort

Sampran Riverside, formerly known as Rose Garden Riverside, is a family-run property near Bangkok. Visitors can experience authentic Thai way of life here. It is a 70-acre riverside property which is more like a community rather than a typical resort. The facilities in the property include a four star hotel with 160 rooms, six Thai houses around a lake, Arusaya Spa, four restaurants, 10 meetings rooms and a 10-acre Organic Farm.



Farmer's Market (Talat Sukjai)

Sampran Riverside got engaged with the local community to open a weekend farmer's market called 'Talat Sukjai' in November 2010, for those who practice organic farming. Regular tests are carried out every two weeks to ensure toxic chemicals are not used and monthly workshops related to organic farming and holistic health are provided to visitors. The community market has its own direct entrance and is open every Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs.



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VISA TALK



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Angola: Visa Outsourced Application Centre

The submission & collection of Angola visa application has been outsourced to 'Unified Visa Assistance Pvt Ltd-Delhi'. Henceforth, all Angola visa applications will be submitted to the aforesaid visa application centre and a service charge of Rs.3100 will be charged per application apart from the visa fees.



Belgium: Change in Payment Procedure for D-Visa

Applicants applying for Belgium D-Visa (long stay) will now have to pay administrative fees apart from the normal visa fees. This administrative fees has to be paid directly on the Home Affairs' Belgian bank account, in EURO and all the bank/intermediate bank charges has to be borne by the person making the transfer. For Belgian Bank Details, Administrative fees & Payment modalities kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com



France Visa Update

Embassy of France, Delhi has announced that hotel confirmation is no longer required for France short stay visa. Also, the Embassy would try to process the visa applications within 48 hours. While applying for France Group/MICE visa, the courier charges can be waived off if one has authority letter from applicant to collect passport on his behalf from VFS.



South Africa High Commission Waives off Jurisdiction

High Commission of the Republic of South Africa, Delhi has announced that there will be no jurisdiction applicable for the submission of South Africa Visa applications. Therefore, South Africa Visa Application Centre in New Delhi and Mumbai will accept the applications from anywhere in India.



Ethiopia: Business Visa Update

Applicants seeking Business Visa to Ethiopia, have to apply for aforesaid visa category post immigration approval has been arranged by the invitee. Invitee will approach the immigration office in Ethiopia with invitation letter to seek approval for Business Visa. Immigration Office will issue permission for issuance of type & duration of Business Visa and forward it to Ethiopian Embassy in New Delhi. Post receiving the approval from immigration office, the consular section will issue necessary visa as per the instructions.



Work Permit for Spouses of H1B Visa Holders

The US Government will now provide work permits to the spouses of H1B visa holders beginning May 26th 2015. Under the existing laws, spouses of H1B visa holder are not eligible to work in US. The eligibility for employment authorization (EAD) will be extended to certain H-4 dependent spouses of H1B non immigrants (principal H1B worker) who are the beneficiaries of an approved 'Form I-140', Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, or satisfy one or more of the three conditions. The condition also include that the principal H1B worker has an approved 'I-140' or is currently on an extended H1B status beyond the 6 year limitation based upon I-140 petition application pending for at least 365 days. The US citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will begin accepting application for work visas from H1B spouses from 26th May 2015 onwards.

Visa Snippets:

a) Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, Mumbai has been relocated to 1202, 1203 & 1204, 12th floor, Lodha Supremus, Dr.E. Moses Road, Worli Naka, Mumbai-18

Visa Bytes by



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Byke Group to add more hotels in 2015

A fast-emerging name in the hospitality sector with luxury resorts and boutique hotels under its banner, The Byke Hospitality is leveraging its years of experience to expand and add more properties to its portfolio.



TT BUREAU

Equipped with years of experience, Mumbai-based The Byke Hospitality now owns and manages eight hotels across categories ranging from three-star to four-star properties in popular tourist destinations. Having perfected the art of

Growth Story

▶ Byke Hospitality owns and manages 8 hotels across categories ranging from 3-star to 4-star properties in popular tourist destinations

▶ The hotel company is now about to launch two more properties

▶ Religious and tourist sectors have been the group's stronghold for a long time

“Our aim is to grow in the metros where there is a vacuum of good hotels in terms of quality accommodation facilities with customized budget

Mihir Sarkar
Vice President
The Byke Hospitality



hospitality, the hotel company is now about to launch two more properties.

Speaking about the new expansion plans is **Mihir Sarkar**, Vice President, The Byke Hospitality. “We will be adding two more properties to our fold this year. The first one will be a business hotel in Thane in Mumbai and the second one will be our first international resort in the United Kingdom. This will be in the Isle

of Wight in the coming few months,” he revealed.

Explaining the strategy for promoting these properties, Sarkar adds, “Our aim is to grow in the metros where there is a vacuum of good hotels in terms of quality accommodation facilities with customized budget. Each of our properties harnesses the best-in-class technology in tune with global trends so that we can deliver service as per international

standards. We employ a team of highly-trained staff that displays efficiency and competence, while extending warmth to all our guests.”

All properties of The Byke takes pride in serving vegetarian, multi-cuisine dishes enriched with natural and authentic flavours. “Our chefs delight in using the finest of ingredients to excite the palette of all our patrons,” Sarkar says.

Revealing the demography of its clientele, Sarkar says that the religious and tourist sectors have been the group's stronghold for a long time. “As far as the metros were concerned, we have generally stayed away from them. But now with new properties coming up, we want to tap that market as well. We will therefore venture to cover major metros. We are currently looking at destinations of touristic importance like Lonavala, Mahabaleswar, Agra and Shimla,” he states.

The Residence: Home away from home

The Residence by Cenizaro offers guests a new online experience to explore the group's four luxury hotels. Represented in India through Outbound Konnections, it is aggressively tapping the India market.



TT BUREAU

Inspired by a mission to enrich every guest experience, one person and one moment at a time, The Residence collection is renowned for creating relaxing environments that reflect

talks about how it promotes the product in the growing luxury outbound market in India. “Mainly operating in the B2B market, we promote the resorts in the traditional and emerging markets through road shows, trade fairs,

weddings and the events segments.

3-city roadshow

The company recently concluded a three-city roadshow in New Delhi, Mumbai and Nagpur and hosted agents over cocktails and dinner to thank them for their support. “The response was very good as The Residence brand is well established in the market now. Nagpur is an emerging market for us. This year, we have planned familiarisation trips for the trade. We also plan to reach out to tier II and III cities and conduct product training. We are looking at substantial growth as the market is now familiar with the brand and its services,” Lokhandwala adds.

holidays and honeymooners are the trend and they are seeking luxury getaways. Indians are now more focussed in terms of choosing the destination they want to travel to, and from the destination the right products they want to experience. The Residence being a luxury product has huge potential in this changing Indian market,” she adds.

Lokhandwala says that destination-wise there is an increase of almost 20 per cent in terms of Indian arrivals. “These numbers look to double up in the coming season,” she predicts.

Slated to expand the collection further are four new openings: a resort on the island of Bintan in Indonesia, a second resort in Maldives, and two in Tunisia – one will be a desert resort in Douz which is the gateway to the Sahara, while the other will be a historical gem in the UNESCO World Heritage-protected The Medina of Tunis.

“Indians are now more focussed in terms of choosing the destination they want to travel to, and from the destination the right products they want to experience

Anjum Lokhandwala
Founder and CEO
Outbound Konnections



the destination, complemented by bespoke hospitality that makes every guest feel as if they belong.

Anjum Lokhandwala, Founder and CEO, Outbound Konnections, that represents The Residence luxury hotels,

tele-marketing, co-branding, direct sales through meeting B2B agents and familiarization trips.”

She adds that while the focus has always been the leisure market, they will now also target the incentive,

Observing some trends in the market, she says that India is now a mature luxury market and the number of high net-worth traveller's are growing at a fast pace. “Family



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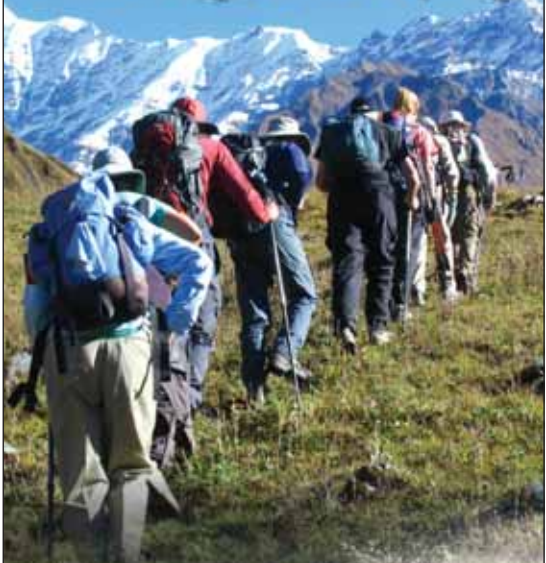


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Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group

Gurgaon

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has appointed **Zubin Saxena** as Vice President, Development, South Asia. Zubin is based in Carlson Rezidor's Gurgaon office in the National Capital Region. In his new role, Zubin is responsible for driving development in South Asia and growing its hotel portfolio through management and franchise opportunities. Zubin has over 15 years of experience and expertise in real estate finance, development and strategic planning and operations in the hospitality sector. Prior to joining Carlson Rezidor, he held the role of Director, Development, Southwest Asia at IHG.



ITC Hotels

Chennai

Anil Chadha has been appointed as Area Manager South & General Manager for ITC Grand Chola. In his new capacity, Chadha will oversee the hotel's operations and also provide insight about the nuances of the ITC Grand Chola Dynasty, its Responsible Luxury and to elevate the hotel to a world class luxury hotel. In addition to this he will also oversee operations of other ITC Hotels in Bengaluru, Kerala, Hyderabad and Chennai. With over 22 years of hospitality experience, Chadha's previous roles spans successful terms with other ITC Hotels including ITC Maurya, New Delhi, ITC Gardenia, Bangalore, ITC Windsor, Bangalore, ITC Mughal, Agra and ITC Sonar, Kolkata.



Hyatt Regency Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Roger Wright has been appointed General Manager of Hyatt Regency Gurgaon. He joins the 451-room Hyatt Regency Gurgaon with over 30 years of international hotel experience. Wright has led twelve 5-star and 5-star deluxe business and leisure Hyatt and internationally branded hotels across the Asia and Pacific Region. His knowledge of hotel operations, positioning, financial and strategic focus will play a vital role in further developing the hotel. A native New Zealander, Roger first joined Hyatt as pre-opening Director of Rooms of the Hyatt Regency Fiji, moving on to various Hyatt Regency properties including the Hyatt Monterey in California.



JW Marriott Hotel, Aerocity

New Delhi

Dilpreet Singh Bindra has been appointed as Director of Operations at JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity. Bindra started his career as a management trainee in 1996 at Taj Mahal Palace and Towers Mumbai and worked as Assistant Manager In Food and Beverage operations at the hotel for two years. Following a long stint at Taj Palace, he became the GM at The Gateway Resort, Damdama Lake in Feb 2014, opened the new resort and worked there for 6 months before he left Taj group to join J W Marriott, Aerocity as Director of Operations in November 2014.



The 523-room JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity has appointed **Ashish Nehra** as the Food and Beverage Manager at the hotel. Ashish Nehra started his career with the Oberoi Group at The Oberoi, Amarvilas, Agra as a Front Office assistant from February 2004 to May 2006. Graduating from Oberoi Center of Learning and Development in 2008, he joined The Oberoi, New Delhi from July 2008 to December 2011 and held various responsibilities as the Assistant Manager Food and Beverage. In December 2011, he moved to Wildflower Hall, Charabra, Shimla as the F&B Service Manager before moving to The Oberoi, Udaivilas, Udaipur in August 2013.



Aakar Lords Inn, Saputara

Gujarat

Aakar Lords Inn, Saputara, Gujarat, has appointed **Prabir Chaki** as Operations Manager. He brings with him more than 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry with specialisation in F&B Operations. Prior to his new role, he served as Executive Assistant Manager at The Duke Retreat. He is a Hotel Management graduate from IHRM, Kolkata. In his new assignment, he will be independently responsible for the entire operations and F&B of the hotel.



The Orchid Mumbai

Mumbai

Raj Panda has joined The Orchid Mumbai as the F&B manager. Before joining Orchid he was working in the same capacity at Ramada Gurgaon Central, Gurgaon. His key skills include pre-opening of various restaurants, administration and operations of food and beverage, staff training, troubleshooting and implementing improvement procedures as well as documenting operating procedures and financial management. Raj started his career at Marriot Welcom, New Delhi. He also worked for Soy, Dubai as an assistant manager.



The Ramada Plaza JHV

Varanasi

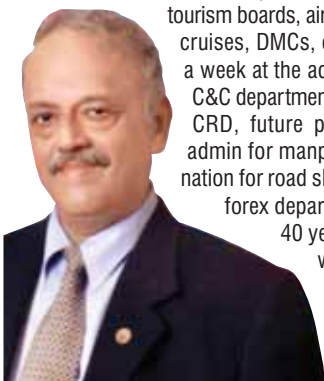
Sandeep Bhatnagar has been appointed as General Manager at The Ramada Plaza JHV, Varanasi. In his new role, Bhatnagar will be responsible for creating high standards, engaging experiences for guests and foster innovation to create differentiating guest experiences. He comes with over 15 years of experience in setting up operational excellence and key deliverables across cross-cultural teams. Prior to this, Bhatnagar was with The Grand, New Delhi as EAM rooms division, The Jai Mahal Palace as Front Office manager, among others.



Kesari Tours

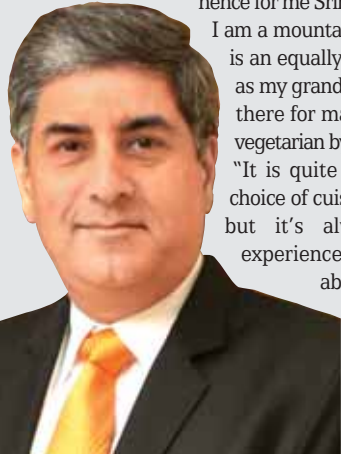
Mumbai

Pramod Dalvi has been appointed as VP, Public Relations at Kesari Tours. He will be responsible for co-ordination with tourism boards, airlines, government bodies, cruises, DMCs, conducting lectures once a week at the academy, value addition to C&C department, managing social media, CRD, future plans, assisting HR and admin for manpower selection, co-ordination for road shows, and overseeing the forex department. He has more than 40 years of experience, having worked with Thomas Cook India, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Korean Airlines and FCH Centrum.



TALKing People

Vijay Wanchoo, Sr Executive Vice President & GM, The Imperial New Delhi says he is a hill-lover. "I love heading out to lesser known spots. Having roots in Kashmir, hence for me Srinagar is a heaven, truly. I am a mountains person and Shimla is an equally attractive destination as my grandfather and father lived there for many years," he says. A vegetarian by choice, Wanchoo says, "It is quite difficult to find your choice of cuisine in many countries but it's always a memorable experience, each time I travel abroad." In his free time, Wanchoo likes to follow up on sports, specially cricket, and surf the net.



Anne Busfield, General Manager, Holiday Inn Golden Mile Hong Kong, says she loves to go for hiking in Hong Kong whenever she is not working. Anne says she also loves to travel in India to experience its rich culture. "The best thing about Hong Kong is you can go in the wilds and go hiking, out in the vegetation, in the fresh air. One can take a bus or tram upto The Peak, which is the highest point in Hong Kong. Also, travelling comes with my job but I love to travel to India. This is because of its rich history and the friendly nature of people here. So every time I am here I long for extended trips," she says.



Though this was his first visit to India, **Christophe Plantier**, General Manager, Constance Le prince Maurice, jokingly says that he is mostly working all the time but when he is not he escapes to India. He says, "I am mostly working but if I am free I love doing a lot of water activities like kite surfing, wind surfing, diving and water skiing." Plantier loves visiting South Africa and Singapore, especially for shopping. He also loves going back to Europe but not very often as he believes that after 20 years of work experience, he is now more Mauritian than French.





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Mega desert circuit @ ` 50 crore

Talking about the focus areas for promotion of tourism in 2015, Principal Secretary Tourism, Government of Rajasthan, SK Agarwal says they are looking at better air connectivity, developing new circuits, and the launch of the revised Tourism Unit Policy.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q*In his budget speech the Finance Minister mentioned providing resources to Kumbhalgarh and other hill forts in the state. What is happening in that direction?*

Kumbhalgarh and other hill forts like Amber, Chittorgarh, Gangron, Jaisalmer, and Ranthambore have been declared World Heritage Sites by the UNESCO. The state government will be doing the needful to develop these hill forts. That the Union Budget has earmarked funds for its development is surely a welcome step. We are also making efforts to enlist fresco paint-

ments. Adequate arrangements are being made for security. The Sound and Light Show is already operational at Amer Fort, Jantar Mantar, Kumbhalgarh and Akbari Quila in Ajmer. More monuments will soon have this facility.

Q*What is the tourist influx that you are looking at this year? Have you developed any new circuit for promotion this year?*

There has been an increase of 9% on the arrival of tourists in the financial year

Q*The Archaeological Survey of India is planning to open the 5,000-year-old Kalibangan site for tourists. How are you planning to develop the site?*

Since ASI is opening the Kalibangan site, the state government will surely look into how the area can be developed and its connectivity improved.

Q*What are the MICE opportunities that you plan to tap?*


We will be pitching Rajasthan as an ideal destination for MICE. In fact, a large number of hotels have been successfully organizing prestigious international conferences and conventions. The newly-developed Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre (JECC) at Sitapura near Jaipur has become a popular venue for MICE events. Jaipur's Birla Auditorium is known pan-India for its prestigious and international conferences.

Q*How has swine flu affected tourism in Rajasthan?*

There has been negligible effect of swine flu in tourist arrivals in the state. The situation is under control.

Q*What are your expectations from Rajasthan Divas 2015?*

The expectations are that the event becomes a popular annual draw for the visitors and tourists. We are hoping that the Rajasthan Festival will attain the same dimensions as the Jaipur Literature Festival in terms of popularity.



“ The state is developing the mega desert circuit (Jaisalmer-Jodhpur-Bikaner-Sambhar-Pali-Mount Abu) at the cost of ` 50 crore. The state is also planning new circuits on ‘handicrafts’, ‘birding’ and ‘spirituality’

SK Agarwal
Principal Secretary, Tourism
Government of Rajasthan

ings of Shekhawati region and step wells of Abhaneri, Bandikui and Bundi in the UNESCO heritage list in the future.

Q*How is the Central Financial Assistance of ` 10,781.01 lakh given to the Rajasthan Govt. during 2009-14 being utilised?*

The funds are being used to develop tourism infrastructure, new circuits, upgradation of museums and monuments.

Q*What are your focus areas for promotion of tourism in 2015?*

There are a number of focus areas for Rajasthan, among them are MICE, spiritual, health and wellness, adventure, wildlife and wedding. It would be appropriate to mention here that in the latest budget the state government has given high priority to the tourism sector. For instance, there is a 68% hike in allocation for tourism art and culture in 2015-16 vis-à-vis the last financial year. A sum of ` 35 crore has been earmarked for the development of tourist destinations while another ` 20 crore has been earmarked for the development of various museums and panoramas. The travel mart, Great

2014-15. With concerted efforts both in marketing as well as development of infrastructure and new circuits – it is hoped that increasingly more tourists will visit Rajasthan. The state is developing the mega desert circuit (Jaisalmer-Jodhpur-Bikaner-Sambhar-Pali-Mount Abu) at the cost of ` 50 crore. The state is also planning new circuits on ‘handicrafts’, ‘birding’ and ‘spirituality’.

Q*For the first time, forts and monuments will remain open at night. What was the tourists’ reaction?*

Well, we have recently begun night tourism with the Amer Fort. The response has been encouraging with over 200 tourists and visitors each evening. The number is gradually increasing. In times to come Night Tourism will also be introduced in other forts and monu-

Tourism Oasis

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- ▶ ` 35 crore has been earmarked for the development of tourist destinations while ` 20 crore has been earmarked for the development of various museums and panoramas
- ▶ The Sound and Light Show is already operational at Amer Fort, Jantar Mantar, Kumbhalgarh and Akbari Quila in Ajmer



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