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Industry applauds govt's tourism plan

The industry's optimism has doubled after the introduction of Visa Online. Eagerly awaiting the release of the New Tourism Policy, industry stalwarts speak to TRAVTALK about how this will boost inbound arrivals to the country.

MEGHA PAUL

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



Jyotsna Suri
India Travel Award Winner and President, FICCI

Luxury travel is on the rise from markets such as the US and Far East. An important development that we should watch out for is the entry of AirAsia and Tata-SIA airlines in the domestic skies. Also, the introduction of ETA by government has removed bottlenecks for foreign visitors planning to come to India. We can expect more customers opting for experiential holidays as this is the new trend.



Vikram Madhok
Managing Director
Abercrombie & Kent India

With the recent introduction of ETA, we only see happy times for the inbound market. The inbound from many of our conventional markets, especially the US will grow tremendously. However, there has been a sharp decline in Russian tourists due to steep fall in rouble and the Ukraine crisis. Offbeat destinations like North East will see better growth than previous years and so will specialised luxury and wedding segments. Other segments which will see good growth are the adventure and sports segments. Educational travel and incentive travel will show significant increases as compared with the previous year.



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

Contd. on page 10 ►

'It's Visa Online with ETA, not Visa-on-Arrival'



Lalit Panwar
Secretary, MoT

In the wake of the recent confusion relating to the Indian Government's Visa-on-Arrival, subject to Electronic Travel Authorisation policy, the ministry clarified that it will now be called Visa Online (with ETA). **Dr Lalit Panwar**, Tourism Secretary clarified, "We have taken up the issue with the Home Ministry and now we will call it Visa Online. Then there will be no confusion because it means that you will get your visa online in your inbox.

So, it is Visa Online, with Electronic Travel Authorisation."

VoA, as we understand it, is landing in a country and then getting your visa without having to apply for it in advance. However, what the Indian government has granted citizens of 43 countries is Tourist Visa-on-Arrival enabled by Electronic Authorisation, or Visa Online.

❖ Applicants of the eligible countries may apply online minimum 4 days in

advance of the date of arrival with a window of 30 days.

- ❖ Recent front facing photograph with white background and photo page of Passport with personal details to be uploaded by the applicant. The application is liable to be rejected if the uploaded document and photograph are not clear as per specification.
- ❖ The visa fee is US\$ 60 per passenger excluding interchange charge for cred-

it/debit cards. The fee must be paid 4 days before the expected date of travel filled by you otherwise application will not be processed.

- ❖ The visa fee once submitted is non-refundable. Applicant should carry a copy of ETA along with him/her at the time of travel.
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Contd. on page 32 ►

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WTTC spotlight on India

World Travel & Tourism Council-India Initiative, is working together with the stakeholders of the industry through various initiatives. Manav Thadani, Chairman-Asia Pacific, HVS and Chairman, WTTC-II, tells **TRAVTALK** about the recent initiatives of the organisation.

 MEGHA PAUL

QWhat are the new initiatives that WTTC-II is planning in 2015?

WTTC-II and HVS have a State Ranking Survey, produced biennially to identify the State performance on various parameters. Based on this survey, we have an award system in place. This is non-partisan and scoring methodology is based on hard facts leading to rankings obtained by the States in the different parameters. We produce this piece of research to lend weight behind the cause of tourism and encourage the States to compete and perform better on the tourism front. The 4th edition of this Survey is due this year. Among the many other initiatives we will focus on the Southern Zonal Tourism Advisory Council (SZTAC), an initiative we had partnered



“India will have the highest growth of any major country in Travel & Tourism in 2015 due to the recent reform of its visa processes, which has been a barrier to growth till recently.

Manav Thadani
Chairman-Asia Pacific, HVS and
Chairman, WTTC-II

along with Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the UTs of Andaman and Lakshwadeep, with the focus on an integrated development of Travel & Tourism in the Southern Region.

QHow important is the WTTC forecast for India?

The WTTC forecast reinforces the fact that Travel & Tourism contributes to jobs, employment, economy and GDP in India. India will have the highest growth of any major country in Travel & Tourism in 2015 due to the recent reform of its visa processes, which has been a barrier to growth till recently. This will radically

increase the number of international visitors. Improving the international prominence of the ‘Incredible India’ campaign will definitely aid in increasing tourist flows to different places across the country.

QWhat are the other initiatives that the states and other associations could take to boost inbound?

The new Tourism Policy being formulated by the Government of India will be the overarching direction for tourism in India. The implementation of various facets of the Tourism Policy will be a key initiative that the States will have to take. Proper implementation will definitely boost both inbound and domestic tourism. The Associations must play a very important role in supplementing and implementing the responsibilities.



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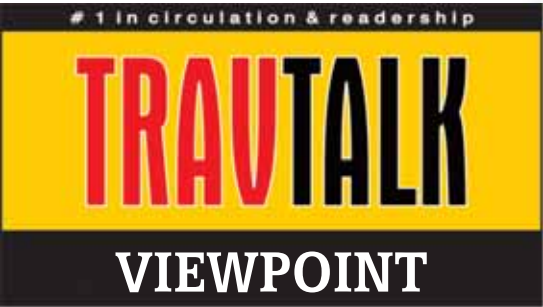
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All that's in the name

The Bard may have famously remarked, "What's in a name?", if only he knew the plight of the Indian Government and the tourists, he'd have got his answer. The nomenclature 'Visa-on-Arrival' has earned a lot of flak of late as confusion surrounds the government's latest move to boost tourism.

However, it may be remarked that while the Finance Minister in his Budget speech reiterated the word 'Visa-on-Arrival', the Ministry of Tourism has always called it 'Tourist Visa-on-Arrival, enabled with Electronic Travel Authorisation'. The name itself explains the main difference in the two methods and the difference in which each visa can be secured.

And now with spring in the air, can summer be far behind? With the depreciation in the euro, Europe suddenly seems like the favourite destination for Indians. Inbound agents too are hopeful of a good business this season, all that they are waiting for eagerly is the government's all-new Tourism Policy.

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) report that was released last month mentions India as an important market and that visa reforms will fuel Indian tourism to grow by 7.5% in 2015. The report says that during 2015, the industry's GDP contribution is forecast to grow by 7.5% and employment by 1.8%. This demonstrates the sector's enduring ability to generate economic growth and create jobs at a faster rate than the national economy, which is due to grow by 6.7% in 2015.

With so many things happening, the mood among industry people is of course buoyant, but even then everyone wants the second phase of the Incredible India campaign to be rolled out soon. A renewed energy runs in the Indian tourism industry and we can only hope that the government's efforts will further bolster this.

Domestic tourism boom in India

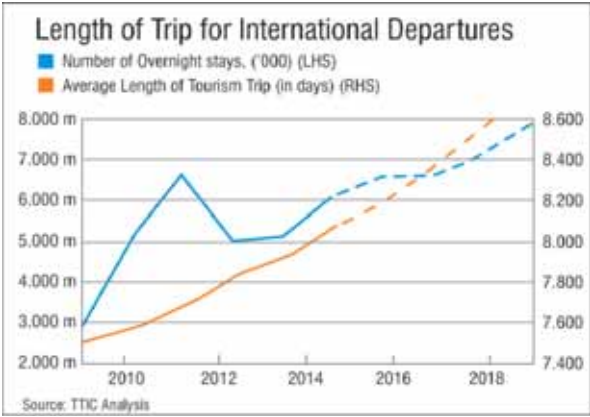
The domestic tourism sector in India registered a 14.1% increase in 2014 over 2013. TRAVTALK brings you excerpts of a report titled 'Insights on the India Tourism Market' by Canadean Travel & Tourism Intelligence Center.



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.



Top States for Domestic Tourism, 2013

State	2013	Growth (%)
Tamil Nadu	244232487	32.6
Uttar Pradesh	226531091	34.5
Andhra Pradesh	152102150	-26.6
Karnataka	98010140	4.2
Maharashtra	82700556	10.5
Madhya Pradesh	63110709	18.6
Rajasthan	30298150	5.8
Gujarat	27412517	12.4
West Bengal	25547300	12.3
Chhattisgarh	22801031	51.6

India Outbound Departures (in 000's)

Country	2012	2013	2014
Thailand	985.8	1093.4	1181.9
United Arab Emirates	964.5	1032.5	1088.9
Saudi Arabia	998.7	1007.6	1060.1
Singapore	894.9	931.7	1074.2
Kuwait	826.5	872.6	888.3
United States	724.4	824.8	961.9
Malaysia	691.2	697.3	698.1
China	610.1	619.4	624.6
Bahrain	466.9	488.8	498.2
Hong Kong	429.3	431.6	433.0

DOMESTIC TOURISM

Regional govts are marketing 'staycations'

For many years, all tourism advertising and promotion was handled by central government bodies. However, a few years ago, some states started providing bigger budgets to their own departments of tourism. Realizing that international tourism will always be seasonal, regional tourism boards made a concerted effort to target the expanding domestic tourism market. For instance, in Goa, foreign tourists arrive in October but during monsoon months there are few arrivals so the local government of Goa sold the "Goa in the Rains" campaign as a domestic package, where the state rolled out attractions designed specifically for Indians. The state of Kerala has also packaged the monsoon season to domestic tourists with their "Dream Season" campaign where attractions such as yoga and wellness camps appeal mainly to Indian tourists.

Domestic travel now threatens 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% 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.

Total number of trips, International and Domestic



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Zanzibar activates tourism channels

Having opened its first overseas office in Mumbai recently, Zanzibar Tourism has planned an intensive outreach program for the travel trade in India. Encouraging Bollywood shoots in the archipelago is also high on priority.

HAZEL JAIN

The five-member delegation led by **Said Ali Mbarouk**, Minister of Information, Culture, Tourism & Sports, visited Mumbai recently to open its first international office reflects the seriousness with which Zanzibar is approaching this new market. "While this is a historic moment for us as we open our first overseas office in Mumbai, this market is not new to us. Zanzibar and India

hubs to Zanzibar with a minimum flying time of around 10 hours. But we are in dialogues with the IMC and at the government level to have a direct connectivity from India and have seen a very positive response."

He added that the ZTPC is thankful to all the international airlines – Ethiopian, Oman Air, Air Seychelles, Kenya Airways and Qatar Airways –

that were ready to work with the Centre to promote Zanzibar in India. "I invite them to Zanzibar to discuss the details with the government," Babla said. It is also in talks with two Indian carriers – with Air India to restart its flights and with Jet Airways to start charter flights to Zanzibar.

While the US, Europe and Russia have traditionally

been Zanzibar's mainstay, it is opening up to newer and emerging markets like India due to their stable economy.

Outlining its upcoming trade activities, Babla said, "There is a lack of information and awareness about Zanzibar among the travel trade and we plan to resolve this quickly. While we have been doing a few activities here through the

last decade, we haven't done much and we plan to step on the accelerator starting this moment."

On the cards are training workshops for agents and roadshows as well as participation in key trade fairs. ZTPC will also do a familiarisation trips for 12 of its key trade partners. Visas for Indians (individuals and groups) are available

on arrival at all international airports in Tanzania and Zanzibar. With regards to safety, which is always a worry nowadays, the trade can rest assured that Zanzibar is one of the safest destinations. Addressing another concern, Babla added that Indian dishes are available very easily all across Zanzibar due to the huge Indian community living there.



Said Ali Mbarouk
Minister of Information, Culture, Tourism & Sports, Zanzibar

have had cultural ties two centuries ago with a lot of Indian communities especially from Gujarat living in Tanzania and Zanzibar," he said. The Mumbai office will be headed by **Jilesh Himat Babla**, Director, Zanzibar Tourism Promotion Centre India (ZTPC). The Zanzibar delegation was in Mumbai to meet key trade partners including airlines, travel associations and even film and TV biggies.

While in Mumbai, the ZPTC signed an MoU with the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) as well as the



Jilesh Himat Babla
Director
Zanzibar Tourism Promotion Centre India

Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) on April 2, 2015 for jointly promoting the destination through their respective members. It also signed a MoU with the Indian Merchants Chamber (IMC) for encouraging trade and business in Zanzibar. Highlighting some of the challenges, Babla said, "We do have an issue with connectivity at the moment as we don't have any direct flights but we do have six to seven international carriers flying via their respective

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ATM watchful of family luxury travel trends

■ With a number of wealthy families making travel a high-spend priority, Arabian Travel Market 2015 (ATM) has decided to make it the point of focus in their seminar series. As the region's inbound and outbound travel professionals look to make the most of this niche market

to fly first or business for leisure. This trend is one that Luxury hotels are looking at very carefully as a third of MENA residents opt to stay at luxury hotels.

"This trend for luxury family travel offers opportunities for tour operators to create tailor-made packages that take into account not only family needs, but also the cultural considerations unique to the MENA region, and this opens up tremendous marketing opportunities. Luxury, and family luxury travel in particular, is a trend to watch, and one that will be covered extensively at this year's show," said **Nadege Noblet**, Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market.

Two ILTM@ATM seminar sessions will concentrate on a variety of features of luxury travel: 'Biting into Gourmet Travel' and 'Luxury Family Travel'. The Luxury Family Travel seminar will identify some of the key trends of today's wealthy families. The panel discussion will close with an assessment of the effect and value of the local and international family travel market within the overarching domestic and global luxury tourism industries.

opportunity, ATM 2015 is all set with its special seminar series to assess the impact and value of the local and global family travel market.

The top three luxury holiday destinations for MENA residents are UAE (14%), Italy (10%) and Turkey (5%) according to the latest YouGov report. 25% of the Middle East and North African Region (MENA) residents opt for luxury accommodation and 20% choose



Nadege Noblet
Exhibition Manager
Arabian Travel Market

Money matters of the industry

Revenue management, since its inception in the 80's, has been used as a successful tool by numerous hotels and just about every airline. The tool combines data mining and operations research and patterns with strategy & analysis of customer behaviour.

Revenue management is the application of disciplined analytics that predict consumer behaviour at the micro-market level and optimise product availability and price to maximise revenue growth. It is a technique to optimise income revenue from a fixed but perishable inventory and the primary objective is to sell the right product to the right customer at the right time for the right price. In any business the most important decision is what to sell, when to sell, to whom to sell and for how much. The discipline of revenue management combines data mining and operations research and patterns with strategy and analysis of customer behaviour. Since its inception in 80s numerous hotels worldwide and just about every airline has used this tool successfully.

Before the emergence of the current discipline of revenue management the airline industry experimented with practices that could be loosely termed as revenue management. This was done after the deregulation

by the governments in the early 80s. It was born out of the need to stimulate demand for seats that would otherwise fly empty and BOAC (now BA) was the first one to experiment. Later American Airlines pioneered the practice of yield management which underlined maximising revenue through inventory controlled analysis. Later the mild recession of 80s and introduction of low cost airlines posed different threats and the airline industry devised newer methods like advance purchase and non-refundable fares.

Whereas yield management involved specific actions to generate yield through perishable inventory management, Revenue Management encompasses wide range of opportunities to increase revenue.

The hotels took note of the success of the airline industry as they faced the same issues like perishable inventory, customers booking in advance, lower cost competition and wide swings with regard to balancing supply and demand. A natural extension of hotel management was to rental cars which experienced similar issues of discounts and duration control. This discipline was further developed for not only pricing perishable products maximising profitability by segmenting customers and creating a differentiated and targeted price structure.

By 2000, virtually all major hotels, airlines, cruise lines and rental cars firms had implemented Revenue Management Systems to predict customer demand and optimise available price. The main objective was to select the best combination of forecasted demand given existing prices. It uses the overall principles of supply and

demand economics, in a tactical way, to generate incremental revenues.

It is of high relevance in cases where fixed costs are high as compared to variable costs. The lesser variable costs there are, the more added revenues will contribute to the overall profit.



(The writer is
Harinder Singh, MD,
H S Consultancy)

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Growing scope for MICE, luxury travel

► Contd. from page 3



The PM was talking about tourism even before he came to power. The good news for us is that he understands our sector. But now we are a trifle disappointed as we continue to see the flattening of the tourism curve. Investors are still not too encouraged. The mood is right but we need to see more momentum on the ground.

Arjun Sharma
MD, Select Group



Indian tourism has reached a stage wherein we should be now talking about ease of doing travel to the country. On the experiential front to the ultimate spenders, we still are not responding well enough to their aspirations. There should be a mechanism in place to improve it. In today's age, we truly need to see a new version of Incredible India. We should

work on safety-related apps and helplines on a pan-India basis in this technology age.

Priya Paul
Chairperson, The Park Hotels



With the recent clearance of eVoA, we understand the importance of tourism as a strong revenue generator for the country. Goa, over the years, has emerged as a tourist hotspot, for Indian as well as foreign tourists. Traditionally, Goa's unique amalgamation and fusion of Indian and Portuguese cultures has made it a very unique and special state. The cheerful and friendly nature of Goans, along with its inherent natural beauty and historic monuments has cemented Goa's position as a top tourist destination. Since the late 60s, Goa has been associated with beaches and parties. While that association continues to be made, we see ourselves as a place which offers a world of experiences to the tourist in some 3,702 sq kms of space. Goa has many other things, and our plan for 2015 is to draw the attention of the world to all that Goa has to offer, such as its rich arts, its fusion of Indo-Portuguese cuisine etc.

Ameya Abhyankar
Director, Department of Tourism-Goa

This year is expected to witness immense scope of growth across MICE, inbound, outbound as well as domestic travel. The recent increase in hotel inventory at tourist locations certainly is an encouraging initiative. We consider this to be a positive development as this will lead to rate correction at tourist locations and spur demand from the inbound market. With the entry of newer carriers and eVoA introduction, there is huge potential of creating a huge competitive space – both a challenge and an opportunity – overall a positive development with correction in pricing, rationalisation and a balanced perspective. Though there is a need for more government initiatives and relaxed taxation policies on products and services, the eVoA for travellers from 43 countries will definitely provide an added boost in the right direction.



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

New visa regime (ETA) is a big game changer for India as a travel destination. I believe that India need not have wait till 2020 to see the international inbound to double. It would happen in the next couple of years. As we predict an increased demand for hotels, we are looking at opening 10 to 12 new hotels in 2015. We will bring in our luxury brands like St Regis and W into India soon. We also see tremendous opportunities in conversion space this year. Hopefully, 2015 will be one of the most successful years after 2007 for Starwood Hotels in India.



Dilip Puri
Managing Director-India, Starwood Hotels & Resorts

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Tennis court: New playground for tourism

Singapore welcomed 10,000 fans from 59 countries last year for the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) final. Now tapping on India’s potential, WTA Finals offer an overall holistic sports and entertainment package, catering to all needs.

TT BUREAU

QWhat do you feel is the impact of sports on tourism?

The inaugural BNP Paribas WTA Finals Singapore presented by SC Global showed that once again, Singapore is a regional leader when it comes to attracting world class sporting events. This was the first time that such a huge tennis tournament, had been held in Singapore and the region and we were delighted that we saw such a passionate atmosphere at the matches.

Nearly 130,000 fans attended the event over the week, enjoying not just the tennis but a full entertainment package that was available. We welcomed nearly 10,000 fans from 59 countries to the tournament and we look forward to building on that solid foundation this year.



Sarah Clements
Director-Operations
BNP Paribas WTA Finals Singapore

As part of that push, we’ve been working with Fans On Stands to help with the overall packaging and fulfillment of the offer we have in place for Indian fans

As one of the most important women’s tennis events on the WTA calendar, the WTA Finals complements Singapore’s suite of lifestyle offerings, strengthening Singapore’s appeal as a destination. It is also a great opportunity to showcase Singapore to the world’s best women tennis players, their fans and global suite of sponsors and investors.

QHow will WTA impact tourism in Singapore till 2018?

This is just the beginning for us. Last year saw an encouraging number of tourists who came specifically for the tennis. As we’ve seen with other major sporting events in Singapore, as momentum builds around the event, the greater the appeal of Singapore to travellers. This

year, the format of the tournament has been enhanced. There will be eight full days of competitive tennis this year, with extended sessions, the return of the WTA Rising Stars competition and the WTA Legends Invitational series all make this a fantastic package.

The contribution of sporting events like the WTA Finals goes beyond tourism expenditure. The WTA Finals has helped to profile Singapore inter-

nationally to viewers and fans from around the world. Local companies can also enjoy business opportunities by creating fringe events and lifestyle experiences for fans. The community is engaged via a programme of promotional and participation led activities, all contributing to a positive social impact.

QWhat are your marketing plans around Indians visiting WTA?

India represents a really important market for the event. With that in mind, we’re working hard to raise awareness with Indian travellers – in particular sports and tennis fans – that Singapore is a world-class destination for them to consider. As part of that push, we’ve been working with Fans On Stands to help with the overall packaging and fulfillment of the offer we have in place for Indian fans. Our partnership with

them is critical for us as they are India’s only dedicated sports travel agency and have already worked for a number of years promoting the Singapore Grand Prix, therefore their knowledge of the Indian market is unrivalled. As of now, Fans On Stands has already begun to seed the offering with travel partners throughout India and is engaging with other industry partners to help promote the event.

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Bangkok	Baiyoke Sky	Deluxe Space Zone Room	Deluxe Room
Hong Kong	Harbour Grand Kowloon	Harbour Club Court View Room	Club Room
Dubai	Atlantis The Palm	Deluxe Room with Palm Beach View	Beach View Room
Rome	De La Ville Intercontinental	Executive Room with Balcony & Garden View	Executive Room with View
Paris	Hyatt Regency Paris Etoile	Deluxe Room with Eiffel Tower View	Deluxe View Room
London	Cumberland	Jimi Hendrix Suite	Suite
New York	Waldorf Astoria	Superior Guest Room	Guest Room
Las Vegas	Caesars Palace	Forum Tower Deluxe King Room	Deluxe Room
Los Angeles	Loews Hollywood Hotel	Hollywood Sign View Room	Hollywood Room
Hawaii	Hilton Hawaiian Village	Rainbow Tower Ocean Front Corner Room	Corner Room

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Conserve past for future

Yogesh Srivastav, Director, PHD Chamber, says the discussions at the 4th India Heritage Tourism Conclave aimed at promoting and propagating Indian heritage potential for both domestic as well as international tourism communities.

 PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QWhat was the outcome of the Heritage Tourism Conclave?

The Conclave was very well carried out. The detailed discussions and deliberations by senior government represen-

QHow can we synergise public and private parties for the conservation of our heritage?

For the successful conservation of Indian heritage, it is imperative to make a collective approach both by public and private agencies. The

QWhat are the challenges in preserving Indian heritage?

The government is undoubtedly facing challenges in preserving its heritage prides. We need to overcome challenges like planning, regulating and implementing reg-



tatives and industry experts have been submitted to the Ministry of Tourism by way of recommendations from the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry for their consideration and for any further necessary action.

QWhat were the takeaways from the event?

The discussions at the Conclave aimed at promoting and propagating Indian heritage potential not only to domestic tourists but also to international tourism communities. We are hopeful that the concerned agencies will work towards proper upliftment of heritage prides to attract foreign tourists in India.

QWhat is the road ahead for heritage tourism in India?

The Ministry of Tourism has so far done a commendable job in promoting Indian heritage in overseas markets. Future endeavours must be focused to tap less inclined tourism markets by showcasing the Indian heritage treasure through workshops and various branding opportunities.

“For the successful conservation of Indian heritage, it is imperative to make a collective approach both by public and private agencies. The funding, management, strategies, etc should be pooled in under Public Private Partnership mode and laid down in the existing policy of the Ministry of Tourism

Yogesh Srivastav
Director, PHD Chambers

funding, management, strategies, etc should be pooled in under Public Private Partnership mode and laid down in the existing policy of the Ministry of Tourism.

QWhat is the relation between heritage conservation and tourism?

Heritage conservation and tourism go hand in hand. Conserving and preserving heritage will attract more and more tourists. Heritage tourism offers a wide variety of interests to the tourists belonging to diverse region, age, demographic dividend since heritage details the history of different forms of our nation.

ulations in the built environment along with well defined statements of significance in many sites.

QHow can we build and conserve new heritage?

To continue with the current momentum of the Indian tourism industry, it is needed to develop and preserve not only newer heritage sites but also different forms of heritage like music, cuisines, dance, fashion, culture, values, etc. by way of developing advocacy efforts, expanding education and public knowledge, building visibility, streamlining services, and Identifying and protecting historic properties.

OTOAI elections on May 16

■ OTOAI has announced elections for the posts of the Executive Committee and the tenure of the present EC members came to an end on March 31, 2015. They will however, continue to discharge necessary duties till the election of a new Executive Committee for OTOAI. OTOAI has appointed Runeep Sangha, Executive Director, PATA, as the Election

Officer (EO), for OTOAI. Sangha has kindly accepted this responsibility and will start discharging his duties w.e.f April 6, 2015. The election will take place on May 16, 2015. Additionally, permanent resources of Punam Singh, Executive Director and Meenu, Administrative Secretary, will continue to be available for all the day to day running of the OTOAI office



Runeep Sangha
Executive Director, PATA, as the Election Officer (EO), OTOAI

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TAAI redefines relevance at

Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) hosted its 62nd Annual Convention amidst fanfare at the Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, Indonesia, from March 26-29, 2015. Themed 'Reflections- Redefining Relevance', the Convention received over 500 registrations. Chalking out a roadmap for TAAI, Harmandeep Singh Anand, Secretary General, TAAI revealed that the association is looking at about 100 tie-ups by the end of 2015.



62nd Convention



Dining@Hyatt with panache

Hyatt Regency held a MICE & Leisure Roadshow followed by a cocktail evening at the hotel in Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi. The evening was attended by the who's who of the hospitality and travel industry.



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Eyes on Responsible Tourism

WTM Latin America, scheduled for April 22-24, 2015, has witnessed extraordinary interest from both visitors and buyers with pre-registered figures soaring to more than 20% from 2014.

TT BUREAU

The World Travel Market (WTM) Latin America attracts some of the most important executives from the travel industry. The fair is part of the portfolio of Reed Travel Exhibitions. The event this year is taking place at a larger and extremely conveniently located venue, Expo Centre Norte in the city of Sao Paulo. The event is expecting 8,000 visitors and buyers and is also looking to surpass \$341 million in business deals and contracts signed both during and after the event.

With the number of new initiatives that are scheduled to be introduced over the three days of the event, the

increase in visitor and buyer interest does not come as a surprise.

Responsible Tourism is one of the things that have been added to the agenda for 2015. There will be a dedicated programme focusing on the



topic, including lectures and seminars from experts within the field. Another area that has been added to the exhibition is that of Business Tourism. This section has been added to host and include global travel management companies, air-

lines, hotels and technology suppliers. Over a 100 Brazilian business travel buyers are expected to be hosted and conclude deals with the business travel exhibitors. There will also be a large number of new exhibitors attending WTM Latin America for 2015. Some of them include Colombia, the official tourism board of Spain and the city of Istanbul in Turkey.

The key concept for WTM Latin America this year is to "Promote Latin America to the world and bring the world to Latin America." Acclaimed as one of the most internationally renowned tourism events in the Americas, WTM is approaching its third edition in Latin America.

B'desh: The 'final destination'

Rezaul Ekram, Executive Director, Bangladesh Foundation for Tourism Development, tells TRAVTALK about what his country has to offer as a tourist destination, BITF and more.

TT BUREAU

Talking about India as a market as well as destinations for Bangladesh, he said, "India is a vast country, the destinations of which cover old age historical places to modern architectural structures along with mountains, snow, sea, jungles, deserts, rivers and others. It has many colorful events for a wide range of people from different ethnic beliefs, religion and culture. India has become a prime market for Bangladeshi outbound tourists. Most of our people visit India for Leisure, medical, religious, education, seeing cultural & heritage places, meeting friends & relatives, for personal and business trips, MICE as well as for other events. Bangladeshis are further facilitated by the Embassy of India issuing around 2000 plus visas every day."



Rezaul Ekram
Executive Director
Bangladesh Foundation for Tourism Development

India has become a prime market for Bangladeshi outbound tourists. Most of our people visit India for Leisure, medical, religious, & MICE as well as for other events

"It is very important here that BITF is an event where both foreign and local destinations are promoted by the exhibitors and sellers of participating countries like: India, Nepal, Bhutan. Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, along with Bangladesh. The participating foreign countries also send cultural teams in the event", he added. He also gave an insight into how tourism has developed in Bangladesh over the past few years. "The economic contribution by the tourism field has added a new-look to the tourism sector of the country. It has been seen that the domestic growth of tourism in recent years has been around 25%, and outbound 15-20% per year."

"To ventilate new opportunities, all those involved in the tourism sector are pledging Bangladesh as an extended destination to ultimately reach the level of a final destination. In a way we are putting our efforts for widening the scope through regional tourism and as such BFTD has taken initiatives to form SAARC tourism Forum (STF) in the current event of Bangladesh International Tourism Fair (BITF 2015) where we have invited main and active stake-holders of the SAARC countries," Ekram concluded.

that they will be a part of to promote Bangladesh in and around India, he said, "Our events include B2C, and buyers to seller fold. Whenever we receive any query we immediately respond as well as invite buyers to visit our destinations and to our events. However, we promote our destinations/ events through WEB pages, e-mails etc."

Further commenting on the different things one can look forward to if visiting Bangladesh, Ekram said, "Bangladesh is blessed with tourism destinations abundant with lush-green nature, rivers, longest sea-beach, largest mangrove of Sundarbans, culture & heritage oriented events, religious circuits for Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and other small tribal groups.

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TAAI explores Bali and beyond

TAAI's 62nd Convention was held against the backdrop of breathtaking Bali. While reflecting on the past and working towards redefining the industry's relevance, the half-day business sessions were followed by an opportunity to explore the city. TRAVTALK gets views of a few attendees on the high & low points of the event and destination.



DEVIKA JEET IN BALI



Firstly, choosing Bali as the convention destination was an inspired decision. On our visit, we witnessed the rapid transformation of Indonesia into a potential global business hub. Further, our Asia CEO, George Saunders, delivered a powerful keynote speech on tunneled vision and presented the standing of travel ancillary services in the global scenario. We are sure that not only us, but most others who attended the conference, benefited immensely from this session. We also had excellent opportunities for fruitful networking and get conversations going with important industry leaders, learning a lot along the way.

Dev Karvat, Managing

India Travel Award Winner and Director, TrawellTag India



The high point of the convention was the interest shown from Indonesian industry partners. India has been an emerging market for Indonesia and with the recently concluded successful TAAI Convention; we do hope India to get status of primary source market. The low point which, as a tourism office we felt was the short lead-time for the convention. We could have seen more participation from Indian as well as Indonesian industry if the convention was announced at least 4-6 months in advance.

Sanjay Sondhi

Country Director, Visit Indonesia Tourism Office



The high point of the convention was the session on the new distribution capability from IATA. NDC needs to be discussed with agents before the rollout so that agent's interest is protected. The low point was the less than average participation of the active members. TAAI also needs to be focused with airlines in their approach to major industry matters such as fuel surcharge, level playing field for agents and IATA agents' treatment as partners.

Anil Kalsi

Managing Partner, Ambe World Travels



I must compliment the Indonesian and Bali tourism Board for being extremely gracious and forthcoming during the event, the ITTE exhibition had a good collection of the Indonesian hotels and other service providers. My main reason for attending the convention has always been the business sessions. This time, there

was a session by IATA on NDC, which deserved a full session and a reasonable advance disclosure prior to the event. In fact this session saw extensive debate and elicited some very strong and aggressive responses from the audience. The business session could be better constructed and have more value.

Sanjay Narula

Managing Director, Apex Travel and Tours



Being an active member and having attended more than 20 conventions I will be failing in my social duty towards the association by not mentioning the falling popularity and effectiveness of TAAI. There were no high points merely for the simple reasons that no effective business session took place.

The only good and fruitful discussion which took place was that on the New Distribution Channel being introduced by IATA, which surprisingly was till date not shared by the Association with its members.

Kavi Kohli

Director, Enkay Group

TAAI Convention 2015 Bali was a wonderful event. I would say it was one of the most well organized events after TAAI Pongal Southern Region 2015 this year. Mr. Sunil and his team did a commendable job. All our schedule were very well organized without any hassles. Still there were some confusion in terms of room allocations and last minute confirmations and registrations, which are unavoidable in any convention but TAAI pulled it up real well this time. The B2B interaction with the suppliers helped us a lot to design new exciting tours. Indonesia has got different shades in terms of satisfying the thirst of any traveller.



Sriharan Balan

Director – Administration, Madura Travel Services

The destination Bali was fantastic and good value for money. A chance to meet the local suppliers was an opportunity for the delegates to get first hand information about the destination. The method that TAAI implemented was a good and ensured serious meetings. The business sessions were informative, and kept the delegates engaged. The exchange of information and ideas shared, updating trends and industry statistics would be helpful in developing the right business strategies in the cutthroat business scenario while adapting to change.



Madhu Saliankar

Director, EntReps Solutions

The platform given to TAAI in Bali was very encouraging. The way countries are welcoming Indians has changed and people are keen to work with Indian Market. Overseas conventions are good as it solves dual purpose. One is that travel fraternity comes together to discuss important topics and second travel agents get opportunity to explore the destination. A few sessions were also very enlightening especially the session on IATA where audience had put their queries also. In my opinion TAAI has to push to resolve internal politics and encourage union among Chapter Chairman before TAAI loses its shine.



Rajan Dua

India Travel Award Winner and Managing Director and co-founder, Udaan India

Bhutan Journeys appoints Global Destinations as India representative



■ Bhutan Journeys, an official tour operator of Bhutan licensed under the Tourism Council of Bhutan, has appointed Global Destinations as its Sales and Marketing representative in India. Bhutan Journeys is a member of the Guides Association of Bhutan and a member of the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators of Bhutan.

Pranav Kapadia, Founder, Global Destinations, says, "It feels incredible to be part of the whole changing travel experience where Indian travellers are waking up to new destinations and in turn these beautiful, mysterious, exotic destinations are investing in the Indian market."

Sonam Chophyel, Managing Director, Bhutan Journeys, says, "We will start working with Global Destinations in order to develop the Indian market and to show the local Indian tour operators what Bhutan has to offer. Bhutan Journeys is a dynamic company with over 20 years of experience in the tourism industry."



Pranav Kapadia
Founder, Global Destinations

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Visiting Great Britain

VisitBritain organized its flagship travel trade event, ExploreGB 2015, at the Ascot Racecourse in the UK. This landmark event provides international buyers with a unique opportunity to meet and do business with over 260 British tourism suppliers. The workshop took place over two days and was followed by a fully hosted familiarisation trip to Birmingham, Shakespeare's England, Oxfordshire & the Cotswolds.



Photo Courtesy: Ajay Kurseja

Looking Middle East with Lama Tours

Lama Tours recently held their annual roadshow in four cities, including the first one held on April 6, 2015 at Le Meridien, New Delhi. This also happened to be the 13th year since the group arrived in India. The event witnessed the presence of big and popular faces from the travel trade both from India as well as the UAE.



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skiing events, or take the family hiking on the Rangger Köpfl. We strongly recommend a ride on the brand new Nordkette funicular and cable cars that takes you in a mere 20 minutes from the centre of town up into high-alpine terrain - and fabulous panoramic views. Furthermore, card holders are entitled to special price reductions at several shops, for example at Studio Tyrler on Marktgraben or the Höbel gift shop located in the historic Old Town. Also included in the price of your Innsbruck Card is access to the Bergisel Olympic Ski Jump, an Innsbruck landmark which is well worth visiting all year round. In addition you can travel by shuttlebus to the glittering Swarovski Crystal Worlds in Wattens and get free admission.

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Bonding over cricket

Emirates Airlines hosted a cricket match for its trade partners at Police Gymkhana Grounds, Mumbai, recently. The event saw an impressive turnout. Even though the winning team 'Mumbai Masti' took away the tournament trophy, at the end of the day the travel fraternity was the ultimate winner.



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Air Canada's Boeing 787-900 for India

Canadian national carrier, Air Canada is resuming direct flights to India. Currently flying only the Boeing 787-800 series, the first delivery of the 787-900 series will be pressed into service to New Delhi from November 2. Duncan Bureau, Vice President-global sales, Air Canada tells TRAVTALK about the carrier's expansion strategies in India.

 MEGHA PAUL

Direct links

The airline plans to operate the newly-acquired Boeing 787-900 from Toronto to New Delhi from November 2nd. The

seats, 247 economy class seats and 21 in premium economy. Initially, the airline will operate four flights a week. We will gradually increase the frequency of the flights to seven times a week.



Vancouver flight as well.

Then and now

For us, the big difference between when we operated in India historically and what we are doing with this new service is the capability of the aircraft. The 787-900 is a state-of-the-art aircraft. Until we had the 900 in place, it was extremely difficult to be profitable here. Air Canada currently flies only the Boeing 787-800 series and the first delivery in the 787-900 series is being pressed into the New Delhi service.

India in its game plan

Air Canada is acquiring 50 787-900 aircraft and India is the first market where the airline will operate the newly delivered

“Air Canada is acquiring 50 787-900 aircraft and India is the first market where the airline will operate the newly delivered aircraft

Duncan Bureau
Vice President-global sales
Air Canada



Boeing 787-900 aircraft has the right mix of passenger configuration to make travel on the route profitable. The configuration of the aircraft will include 29 business class

After launching the 13.5 hour flight to New Delhi, we will also consider operating the Toronto-Mumbai flights. Eventually, Air Canada will consider a New Delhi-

To India With love

- Direct flights from Toronto to New Delhi from Nov 2
- The shorter direct flight to last 13 hours
- Initially the airline will operate four flights a week and will then increase frequency to 7 times a week
- 29 business class seats, 247 economy class seats and 21 in premium economy

aircraft. Currently, travellers between the two countries fly on Asian or European carriers. The shorter direct flight lasting around 13 hours would weigh in our favour. It is an expensive aircraft and we are making enormous investment in the Indian market. We expect it to outgrow other markets and increase 25 per cent in the next two or three years. The direct link is also part of Canada's plan to bring more Indian tourists to its destinations this year. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Canadian visit in mid-April is also expected to spur travel and contacts between the two countries.

Category-I status for DGCA

Secretary, US Department of Transportation, **Anthony Foxx**, has informed Minister of Civil Aviation, **P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju**, that Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has conveyed that Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has been upgraded to Category-I status. He was leading a high level US delegation for a meeting with the Civil Aviation Minister and key officers of the Ministry. This meeting succeeded a series of meetings between US President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On the occasion, a presentation was made on the growth of civil aviation sector in India to identify areas in which partnership, technical cooperation and "Make in India" can be developed. During the meeting, opportunities of collaboration in development of infrastructure, air safety, aviation security, skill development, MROs, National Aviation University and manufacture of aircraft were discussed. The two sides agreed to develop a productive relationship by establishing a Joint Working Group between the two countries.



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Lights, Camera, Action in Scotland



With the historic buildings and wild landscapes, Bollywood film makers have an enduring love affair with the cities, castles, lochs and glens that Scotland has to offer. The perfect stage for dreamy love songs and elaborate dance numbers, VisitScotland has created the first-ever Bollywood Scotland map with Bollytrails highlighting some of the locations that have been featured in over 20 Indian movies to date!



With its unique and grandiose castles and spectacularly breathtaking scenery - a perfect concoction for love on screen – Scotland has provided an unparalleled backdrop for a number of Bollywood films, stealing the hearts of many Indian filmmakers and fans from around the globe. India's love for Scottish

esque Eilean Donan Castle, serene Glencoe in the Highlands and Edinburgh's Princes Street amongst many other scenic film sets.

VisitScotland has created the first-ever Bollywood Scotland map with Bollytrails highlighting some of the locations that have been featured in over 20 Indian movies to date!

Desi Flavour

- VisitScotland has created the first-ever Bollywood Scotland map with Bollytrails
- The two Bollywood itineraries include the best that Scotland has to offer from Whisky distilleries to castles and on top the best Bollywood locations in the country!
- The Bollywood Scotland Toolkit has all the relevant marketing tools to help Indian tourism professionals to capitalise on Bollywood to promote Scotland



landscapes can be seen in productions such as Karan Johar's *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and Dev Anand's *Main Solah Baras Ki* featuring the world-famous pictur-

The two Bollywood itineraries include the best that Scotland has to offer from Whisky distilleries and castles to stunning scenery; and on top; the best Bollywood locations in the country! Ask your preferred DMC to price them and get your clients to explore Bollywood's magic in Scotland with an unforgettable trip to the

country that inspires Indian cinema. Get them to re-live the romantic dances and sweet verses performed by the movie stars and treat them

with plenty of sweet memories from Scotland. Supporting the map, VisitScotland has also

put together the Bollywood Scotland Toolkit that has all the relevant marketing tools to help Indian tourism professionals to capitalise

on Bollywood to promote Scotland as a holiday destination to your clients, from posters to online banners feel free to take the most of these assets to promote Bollywood and increase your Scotland sales.

Key Links

Bollywood Scotland Map & Toolkit : www.visitscotlandtraveltrade.com/bollywood
SCOTSagent Programme: www.visitscotlandtraveltrade.com/scotsagent/



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Motivating the regional tourism stars

India Travel Awards recognises and encourages the powerhouse of talent across the country and has put the spotlight on deserving tourism stars. TRAVTALK speaks to some of the award winners to share their moment of pride.



Udaan India

To have awards for the travel industry is a fantastic idea. It gives a lot of encouragement. We keep watching film awards all the time but nothing for travel. But now we have something for our own field and fraternity.

Rajan Dua
Managing Director



Alliance Hotels & Resorts

I am glad to receive this award, especially which is organised by such a reputed publication house. It is a good system that has been started by SanJeet which also focusses on low profile business people who otherwise don't get the deserved recognition. This unique initiative will help everyone from each region to bring out the best for the whole country.

Zia Siddiqui
CEO

STIC Travels

I think India Travel Awards is a great initiative. This is happening for the first time particularly for a specific region. It is motivating for all the travel companies and we look forward to have this every year.

Praful Khosla
Head of Sales-India



Cox & Kings

We believe that these initiatives are good and we heartily welcome it. It encourages the travel industry and it is important to have awards for all regions. India is a huge country and while limiting ourselves to national level is not good. Region wise a lot more travel agents can participate in the awards.

Thomas C Thottathil
AVP-Corporate Communications & CSR



Sunderbans Tiger Camp

The India Travel Awards East is a very good initiative it being held for the first time. It gives boost to the tourism industry and it will also bring in a new level of luxury to actually be recognised all over India.

Akanksha Garg Dewan
Director



Tulsidas Khimji Holidays

This is a great initiative by India Travel Awards. Western circuit has a lot of potential especially with Goa, Aurangabad, Mumbai and also Gujarat and Rajasthan falling under it. The Konkan Bed is increasing and so is the tourism initiative.

Jay Bhatia
Director



Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere

We feel so proud after getting India Travel Award. We became the number one only six months after we opened. So getting an award makes us very happy and encourages us to keep up the hard work.

Dr P Vasudevan
Managing Director



Novotel Kolkata Hotel

This is probably one of the best that could happen for East India as this region is a natural wonder. It has been neglected because the pride is most of the time taken by rest of India. So, now we also have got an opportunity to shine and this gives an insight to shine and probably a lot more which we actually deserve.

Jai Kishan
General Manager



Mystifly Consulting (India)

The award gives us an opportunity to recognise the entrepreneurship in every part of India. I think awards are mostly held for whole India but when all regions are given equal recognition it's really good to see. This brings an opportunity for all in the travel industry to bring into limelight what they have done and contributed for the trade.

Rajeev Kumar G
Founder, MD & CEO



Clarks Exotica Resorts & Spa

It feels great after getting award, especially when all your hard work is recognized under such a big platform. With so many international Five Star chains coming up day by day and competition rising, the award tells us about our potential and where we can position ourselves.

M Balaji
CEO



Go Explore

I think the award happening for a specific region is an awesome idea. It is a huge nation and it's not fair that only one region gets recognised. Everyone should get a due share of recognition. North India is a good market and so many new companies are emerging here. Ours is just a two and a half years old company and getting an award on such a big platform is a huge achievement.

Shalini Dugar
Managing Director



Just Holidays

India Travel Awards (ITA) has done an excellent job. I am grateful to it. It will definitely motivate and recognise the efficiency of our juniors and make them work harder. This will also increase the capacity of the company.

Shyam Sunder Agarwal
Director



Kudos to best among business hotels

India Travel Awards honours the best of business hotels in the country to recognise the hardwork and professionalism that goes behind the making of the ultimate giants of the hospitality industry. **TRAVTALK** features top four Business Hotels from South, West, East and North regions in India.

South India Travel Awards



Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills was awarded the Best Business Hotel in South and the award was received by its General Manager, **Rajneesh Malhotra**

West India Travel Awards



The award for western region was given to Novotel Pune and received by its General Manager, **Bandish Mehta**

East India Travel Awards



The Peerless Inn, Kolkata was awarded Best Business Hotel in eastern region and the award was received by its Regional House Keeper (East), **Sweta Bhaduri** and F&B Manager, **Imran Siddiquee**

North India Travel Awards



Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi, Paschim Vihar got the Best Business Hotel award for northern region and it was received by its General Manager, **Barun Jolly**

Air India honours travel agents

Air India's Northern Region awarded top performing travel agents for their exemplary service during a get together organised recently, at Officers Club, Safdarjung Airport, New Delhi. Delhi's top travel agents as well as business partners and top officials of Air India's Commercial division attended the function. Pankaj Srivatsava, Director Commercial, Air India and the Board Member along with his team, including Pankaj Kumar, Executive Director, Sales & Marketing; Seema Srivatsava, General Manager, Marketing Hqrs; Abhay Pathak, General Manager, Commercial Northern Region and Anil Kaul, Deputy General Manager Sales & Marketing, Northern Region, strengthened the bond further with business partners, while interacting with the travel and trade fraternity.



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EVENT TALK

APRIL 2015

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
22-24	Kazakhstan	Kittf

NATIONAL

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
27	Hyderabad	B2B Presentation and Roadshow, Vietnam Embassy
28	Chennai	B2B Presentation and Roadshow, Vietnam Embassy

MAY 2015

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

NATIONAL

8-10	Kochi	Hoteltech Kerala
25	Chennai	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
27	Bengaluru	B2B Roadshow, Oman Tourist Office
29	Delhi	B2B Roadshow Oman Tourist Office

JUNE 2015

INTERNATIONAL

21-25	Melbourne	Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE)
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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

JULY 2015

NATIONAL

13-14	Mumbai	Kiwi Link India workshop, Tourism New Zealand
13	Goa	Learn South Africa
14-15	Ahmedabad	Learn South Africa
15	Mumbai	Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training
16	Delhi	Tourism New Zealand Frontline Training
16	Jaipur	Learn South Africa
17	Delhi	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
29	Trichy	Learn South Africa
31	Bengaluru	Learn South Africa
31-Aug 2	Kolkata	Travel & Tourism Fair

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

Howzatt winners take it all

The recently-held Howzattt Contest has taken roomsXML.com to a new height. Prakash Bang, Managing Director, roomsXML.com, shares his moment of joy and pride.



TT BUREAU

To enable travel agents to enjoy and participate in the World Cup Cricket, roomsXML.com had organised the 'Howzattt Contest', wherein people from the travel trade were asked to predict the winners at various stages of the game. The response to the roomsXML.com 'Howzattt Contest' was more than overwhelming. Thousands of entries poured in from across the globe. The winners were from 11 countries and roomsXML.com is happy to announce the 51 winners who take home exciting prizes that include

Apple iPhone6, Harmon Kardon Bluetooth Speakers, Samsung Cameras and Amazon Kindles. roomsXML.com is amongst the world's leading accommodation wholesalers catering exclusively to the travel trade. It was established in 2007 and since then has gradually entered various global markets quite successfully. The company is ISO 9001:2008 Certified; ranks amongst Dun & Bradstreet's Leading 100 SMEs of India and has also been rated by Inc. magazine for being amongst the Top 100 Innovative Companies.



Prakash Bang
Managing Director
roomsXML.com

Prakash Bang, Managing Director, roomsXML.com, says, "Innovation is the key differentiator. That's what keeps us leading the pack. Till date we have introduced 10 specific fea-

tures that were the industry's first. Even the 'Howzattt Contest' is a fun innovation. We believe that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!"

Bang adds, "In such a high competitive segment that we are in, it's good to know that we are not competing on the price plank. While low price and extended credit terms are the norms in our segment, we are happy that we are far away from all that. I like to believe that there are two key parameters that keep us leading the pack, product innovation and service."

MoT clarifies on Visa Online

► Contd. from page 3

Immigration on arrival in India.

- ❖ The validity of visa will be 30 days from the date of arrival in India.
- ❖ The visa is allowed for a maximum of two visits in a calendar year.
- ❖ The visa once issued on arrival is only single entry, non-extendable, non-convertible and not valid for

visiting Protected/Restricted and Cantonment Areas.

- ❖ Applicants can track the status of their application online by clicking visa status.
- ❖ Please be careful while making payment of the visa fee. If the number of unsuccessful attempts is more than three,

then the Application ID would be blocked and the applicant would be required to apply afresh.

- ❖ Before re-applying, the applicants are requested to wait for 4 hours for payment status updating, after final submission of the application form and payment of the fee.

OBITUARY

Veteran tour operator Kai Suri passes away



Veteran tour operator of Kashmir, Kai Suri recently passed away at the age of 86. Born in Rawalpindi, Suri, who was the Managing Director of the Valley's premier travel company, Kai Travels, breathed his last in Gurgaon. The travel trade fraternity has condoled Suri's demise, terming it as a great loss to the industry. He was the Founder Member of Travel Agent Society of Kashmir (TASK) and played a vital role in the development of tourism in Kashmir especially to the Ladakh region, when it was thrown open for tourist. A joint statement by travel and tour operators said Suri has been one of the pioneers of tourism fraternity who have great regard for the services provided by him and his team to the intending tourists to the state. Tour operators said he was well known for handling tourists for trekking, mountaineering, jeep safari to Ladakh.

Visa reforms to give 7.5% boost to Indian tourism

■ Fuelled by visa reforms the Indian tourism industry will grow by 7.5% in 2015 according to an international report. In 2014, the industry contributed ` 7,64,200 crore and 36.7 million jobs to the Indian economy. Research released by World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) forecasts that the industry's GDP contribution will grow by 7.5% and employment by 1.8% this year. "This demonstrates the sector's enduring ability to generate economic growth and create jobs at a faster rate than the national economy, which is due to grow by 6.7% in 2015," the report said.

By the end of 2015, the travel & tourism sector will contribute ` 8,21,500 crore, 7% of India's GDP, and 37.4 million jobs, almost 9% of total employment, once all direct, indirect and induced impacts are taken into account. The strong increase in the size of the travel and tourism industry in India is fuelled by visa reforms introduced in November 2014, which expanded the Visa-on-Arrival scheme to 43 nationalities. Visitors from those countries no

longer have to queue up at local consulates but can instead apply for visas online, the report said. Speaking about the report WTTC president and CEO **David Scowsill** said, "India is one of the biggest travel and tourism economies in the world contributing signifi-



David Scowsill
President & CEO, WTTC

cantly to economic wealth and job creation. Much needed reforms to its visas rules will provide the foundation for very strong growth in the sector during 2015." WTTC has urged the government to ensure the continued prioritization of the sector, by focusing on safety and security of citizens and tourists, recasting the Incredible India campaign, greater investment on high speed rail infrastructure and stress on visa liberalization reforms.

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Holiday Inn Cochin

Cochin
Kunal Shanker has been appointed as General Manager of the Holiday Inn Cochin from April, 2015. He was previously serving at Holiday Inn Amritsar Ranjit Avenue as the General Manager. After completing 18 months in in Amritsar and setting a strong foundation for the hotel and success in the first year of operations, he is moving to Cochin.



Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa

Gulmarg
Sujith Herbert has been appointed as the General Manager of The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa, Gulmarg. Prior to joining The Khyber, Sujith Herbert was General Manager- India Head at JHM Interstate India Hotels & Resorts. In his earlier assignments, he has also served successfully in different capacities at Hilton, Delhi, Danat Hotels & Resorts in Abu Dhabi, Accor Hotels in Dubai and Le Meridien Mina Seyahi in Dubai. During his tenure at JHM Interstate India Hotels & Resorts, he played an instrumental role in revenue management and e-distribution.



The Westin Mumbai Garden City

Mumbai
Vinay Singh has been promoted as the Director of Sales & Marketing for The Westin Mumbai Garden City. He comes with an experience of 11 years in the hospitality industry. Singh's association with The Westin Mumbai Garden City started since January 2013 as Account Director, later talking helm of the property as Director of Sales effective March 2014. Singh's approach to the hotel business partners and guest is credited to his myriad exposure with hotel and corporate brands like Hilton Worldwide, Le Royal Meridien, Sai Palace Hotels, KHPL Group, Mumbai and a strong 4 years association with the Starwood Hotels & Resorts.



Mövenpick Hotel & Spa

Bangalore
Mövenpick Hotel and Spa Bangalore has appointed **Rahul Makhija** as Director, F&B. He has over 11 years of experience in the industry specialising in food and beverage and has gained a reputation of creating innovative dining experience for guests. Makhija has worked with renowned names from international hospitality groups, such as Oberoi Rajvilas, Leela Palace, Kempinski Ambience New Delhi, Labriz Silhouette Seychelles and Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, to name a few. In Mövenpick, he will be overseeing the operations for My Place, Mezzaluna, Obsidian and Sky Brew.



Meandering Vacations Pvt Ltd

Kochi
Sarath Aravind has been appointed as the Area Manager for Kerala and will manage the team in Kochi. He brings with him over 14 years of extensive experience in the hospitality and tourism industries. His earlier associations with tourism majors like Bolgatty Palace, The Great India Tours Company Pvt Ltd, Kerala Tour Mart and Akqua Sun Holidays will definitely add value to the services offered by Mumbai-based Meandering Vacations. His major responsibilities will include driving sales in Kerala, vendor relationships and operations.



Sarovar Group of Hotels & Resorts

New Delhi
Abhishek Chanda has been appointed as Marketing and Communications Manager by Sarovar Group of Hotels & Resorts. In his last role, Chanda was Communications Manager at the Modi Group of companies. He comes with eight years of work experience. Chanda has also worked with the Lalit Group of Hotels & Resorts looking after their Marketing and communications section.



Top 3 Lords Resorts Bhavnagar

Bhavnagar
Alok Awasthi has been appointed as Operations Manager at Top 3 Lords Resorts, Bhavnagar. He brings with him 13 years of rich experience in the hospitality industry with specialisation in Front Office Operations. Prior to his new role, he served as Manager Operations at a prominent Resort at Jodhpur. He is a Hotel Management graduate from NIHM, Deharadun. In his new assignment, he will be independently responsible for the entire operations and F&B of the hotel.



Hyatt Regency

Delhi
Hyatt Regency Delhi has announced the appointment of **Somnath Dey** as the Executive Assistant Manager - Food and Beverage. In this capacity he will be responsible for leading the food and beverage operations, and will also provide strategic guidance and leadership in areas of business profitability, marketing and employee satisfaction. Prior to this, he has held various positions in the company's food and beverage portfolio. He began his career at Taj Bengal Kolkata in 1997.



Shangri-La Hotel

Bengaluru
Antonio Tardi has been appointed as Executive Chef at Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru to oversee all of the hotel's culinary operations. Chef Tardi brings with him over 20 years of culinary experience in five-star hotels and luxury hotels. Chef Tardi gained precious experience at Michelin one- and two-starred restaurants in Italy and France under well-renowned chefs and then mastered the Asian style of hospitality at Shangri-La hotels in Taiwan and Guangzhou.



TALKing People

Sanjay Razdan, Director, Razdan Holidays has successfully completed the Desert Storm Cross Country Extreme Car Rally and secured second position in class (up to 1350 CC) held from February 23 to March 1, 2015. He was also the 6th fastest driver overall competing with highly modified and powerful cars like Vitaras, Pajeros and Polaris. Maruti Suzuki Desert Storm Rally is one of the toughest and longest running for almost a week covering almost 3500 kms where lots of Indians as well as foreign competitors participate. This year only 11 out of 47 starters could complete.

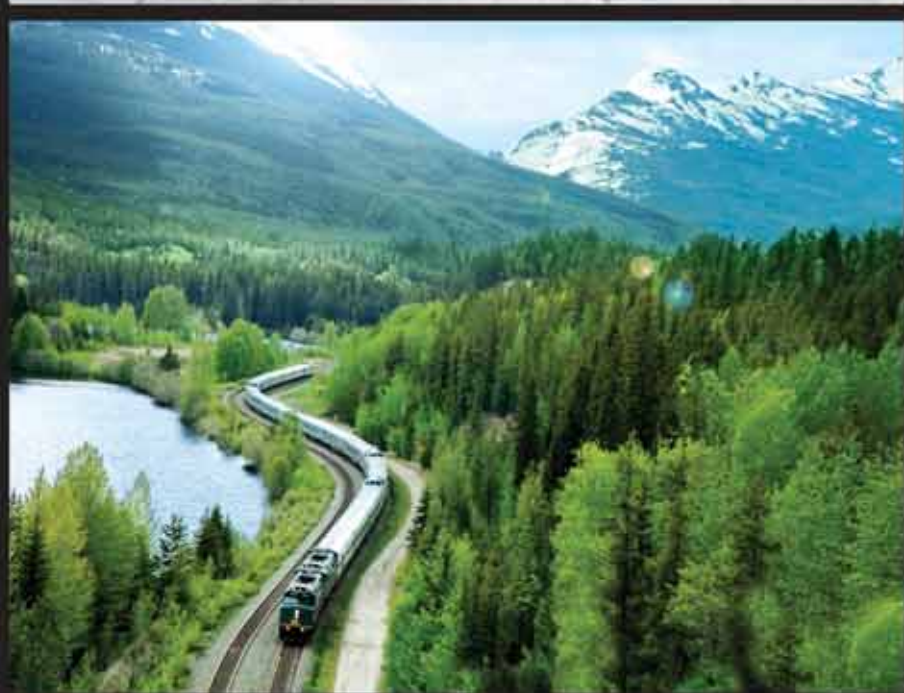


Bharat Kapoor, Director, Global Account Management Southern India has been in the travel trade for nearly nine years. He has worked with GSA, GDS and is currently working with Hahn Airlines GmbH. Travelling has been his passion since childhood, he says, "Probably that is the reason I'm in love with our aviation sector." Besides working, Bharat loves to discover new eating joints. "I'm a big time foodie. I like gorging on different cuisines and trying new eating outlets." He also plays table tennis and basketball in his free time. "Been in sports has helped me a lot in developing my skills and confidence and has made me an organised person," he says.



Ranju Alex, GM of Goa Marriott Resort & Spa, is a fitness enthusiast and her daily workout in the gym is her biggest stress-buster. "My most effective action plans are conjured on the treadmill," she reveals. One thing not too many people know about her is that she is a "big softie at heart even though I come across as very firm at work". Her favourite holiday destination in India is Kerala. "Its beauty never tires me out and I have grown to love the food there. Internationally, it is the Rockies in Canada and the Fjords in Norway. The drive from Stockholm to the Fjords has been my most memorable holiday moment."





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Becoming the travel doctor

The world is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous and travel trends have become closer, shorter, cheaper and later. While the tourism industry is set to achieve great potential, survival of the evolved fittest will become the key. Ashwini Kakkar, Executive Vice-Chairman, Mercury Travels, shares his views.

TT BUREAU

The US army was asked to reflect and redefine the world and they coined the term VUCA world. Volatile, uncertain, complex and an ambiguous (VUCA) world and in this situation we have to create a better and brighter future.

The tourism industry already has the ability to deal with the VUCA world. Crises such as Ebola, swine flue, emerging wars and rampant terrorism have added a cost of safety and security to our work. We are being told to manage problems and do the best for the customers. The ability to deal with uncertainty separates us, the travel community, from the rest of the world, as we are very good at it. If we can combine this ability with asset we have the perfect recipe for survival and sustainability.

The industry is changing so much around us. Products and technology is changing. A normal traveller is not available any longer. We have to look at new segments such as, IT techies, wedding tourism, religious tourism. The consumer travel behaviours is changing a lot. Closer, shorter, cheaper, later, are

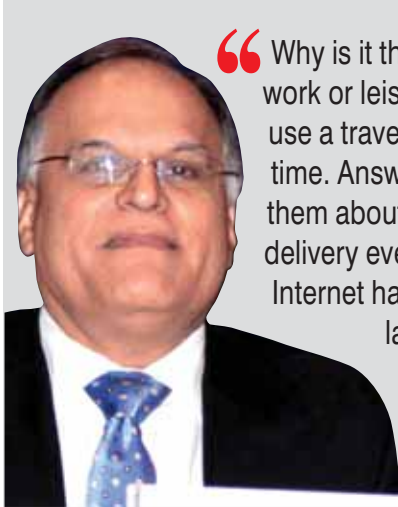
the new trends. People are travelling much more, for a shorter period and looking for better value for money. Impulse buying and booking as late as possible is now a trend.

In this evolving scenario, where are the new world travel agents and enlightened travel associations to lead them? Are we changing

treatment and don't use the Internet to treat us. We trust the doctor and we don't argue about the fee he is going to charge. Why is it that when people want to travel for work or leisure, we cannot convince them to use a travel company, time after time after time. Answer lies in our inability to convince them about our knowledge, protection and delivery every single time they travel.

and will only take you in one direction.

Tourism industry is one with the greatest potential in the world and we are extremely lucky to be part of the travel and tourism industry on a whole. This industry is the fastest growing and largest in the world. We are poised to reach 2 billion international travellers in a decade.



“ Why is it that when people want to travel for work or leisure, we cannot convince them to use a travel company, time after time after time. Answer lies in our inability to convince them about our knowledge, protection and delivery every single time they travel. The Internet has a lot of information but what is lacking is insight

Ashwini Kakkar
Executive Vice-Chairman, Mercury Travels

enough, are we enlightened enough to lead them? Are we making ourselves relevant for the future?

If you are not well we go to a doctor for diagnosis and

The Internet has a lot of information but what is lacking is insight. We also bring the human network and business network, especially during and emergency where we can pull a customer out from anywhere, any time. But is all this enough?

Are we not showing our capability and bringing them to the table? Once this is acknowledged our clients are likely to stay with us and pay us the honest fee we demand.

Airlines are getting bigger but are they getting stronger? Our relationship is like a marriage and its better to keep it in a happy place than a lousy place. Airlines should realise that agents have the possibility of loyalty but software is looking for cheapest

Corporate travel in India is at \$25 billion and this market is growing at 7.6 per cent per annum for the next 10 years. Our outbound numbers are expected to go from 18 million to 50 million by the end of the decade and inbound is predicted to reach 15 million. The icing on the cake is that Asia is crucial for world growth in travel and tourism

While 50 per cent of the travellers will use the online and mobile platforms in the future, the other 50 per cent will be double of what it is today. Travel through structured business will double. In the next 20 years the industry will change as much as it did in the last 20,000 years.

(Excerpts from the key note address at the 62nd TAAI Convention)

Analysing Tourism

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