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IndiGo

India Hospitality Awards 2015



The first India Hospitality Awards, for South & West region was recently held in Kerala at the Crowne Plaza, Kochi. The winners were awarded after a fair and unbiased selection process. This includes an online voting platform and jury recommendations. The awards were presented to achievers from different segments of the industry, which included Restaurants, Spas, Suppliers, Hotels, Resorts and Technology providers. The Gallery of Legends award was given to **Ashok Anantram**, Consultant, Sales and Marketing, GRT Group of Hotels & Resorts. DDP Game Changer was **Jose Dominic**, MD & CEO, CGH Earth. DDP Trailblazer was given to **KG Abraham**, Chairman & MD, KGA Group of companies and The Face of the Future was awarded to **Abhishek Verma**, GM, Holiday Inn Express Chennai.

1st India Travel Mart in 2016: Panwar

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

12-12-12, veterans of the tourism industry will surely remember the significance of this date. In late 2011, the then Union Tourism Minister, **Subodh Kant Sahay**, had made the announcement for the debut of Global Travel Mart – India on this date. However, the plan for this ambitious global mart did not materialise.

The GTMI is now getting a new lease of life as **Dr Lalit Panwar**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India, announced that the Ministry of Tourism will be organising an India Travel Mart next year in Delhi. Dr Panwar made this announcement at the Tourism Investors Meet 2015 organised by the Ministry of Tourism in partnership with FICCI and



Dignitaries on the dais at the Tourism Investors Meet 2015 in New Delhi

Tourism Finance Corporation of India in Delhi. Talking about the mart, the Secretary said,

"Every country has its own flagship travel mart and this mart will be on the similar lines.

We invite all the leaders of the tourism industry to join hands with us in this initiative." FICCI and the Ministry of Tourism will also be jointly organising an award for Guide of The Year. This announcement was made by **Dr Jyotsna Suri**, President, FICCI. Dr Suri announced that the annual event would serve as a perfect platform to recognise the services of tourist guides.

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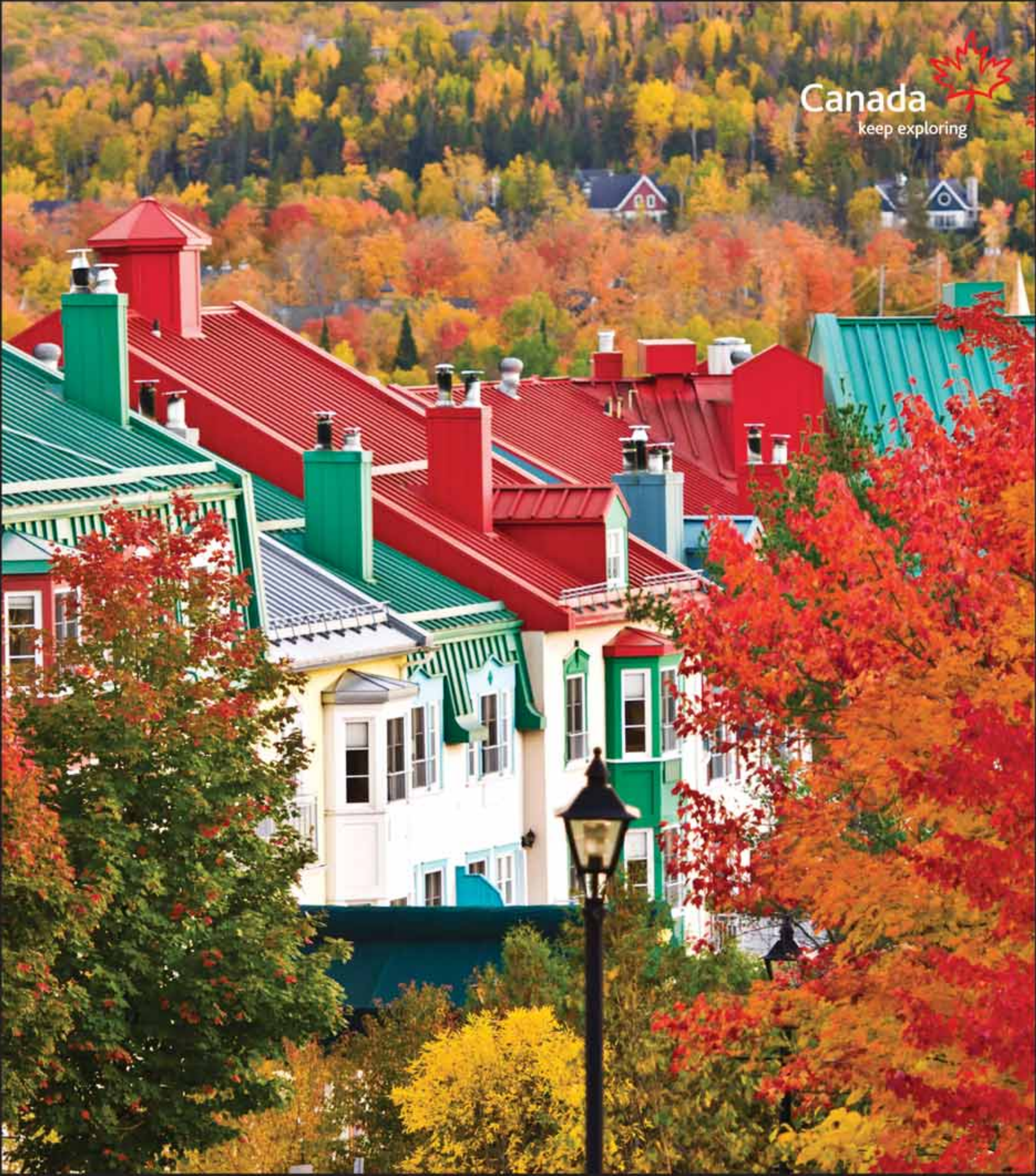
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 MEGHA PAUL

Very MICE

- The event was attended by more than 30 Indian travel and hospitality companies
- In these two days, about 850 meetings were facilitated



The first day of the event comprised a networking session between corporate buyers and exhibitors. Speakers shared their thoughts and ideas on the

Solely focused on business interaction aimed at MICE, the event featured leading B2B suppliers from

According to **Punam Singh**, Promoter-Director, Vkonect Events, Vkonect, is a thought process, honed over years after attending industry events globally. Leisure, MICE, luxury, weddings, wellness and spa tourism come in all forms, but of all, MICE was the most inclusive, demanding and profitable one. It was a conscious decision to have corporate

Contd. on page 16 ►

The image shows the WBI logo, which consists of the text 'WBI' in a stylized font inside a red-bordered box. Below the logo, the text 'WBI' is written in a larger, bold font. To the right of the logo, there is a list of awards and recognitions, including 'Best Corporate Incentive Tours Operator '14' and 'North India Travel Awards'.



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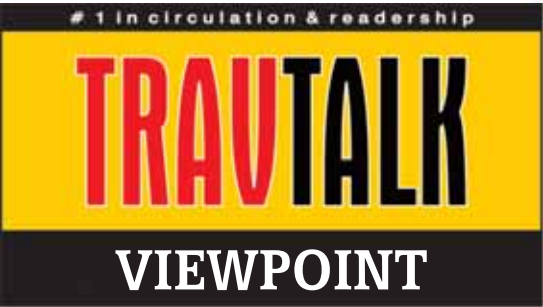
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Incredible India on a roll!

July has been a really busy month for the tourism industry. There has been a spate of events last month - Aviation Day, Tourism Investors Meet, Vkonect, Air India's anniversary celebration of its tie-up with Star Alliance - the list goes on. Important in their own right, these events have also served as the perfect platform for important announcements that will serve to further the cause of tourism in the country. Of them all we are most excited about the Ministry of Tourism's plan to organise Indian Travel Mart in 2016.

Dr Panwar's announcement was met with a lot of cheer from the audience and we are hopeful that this time around the mart will be a reality and will truly be on international lines.

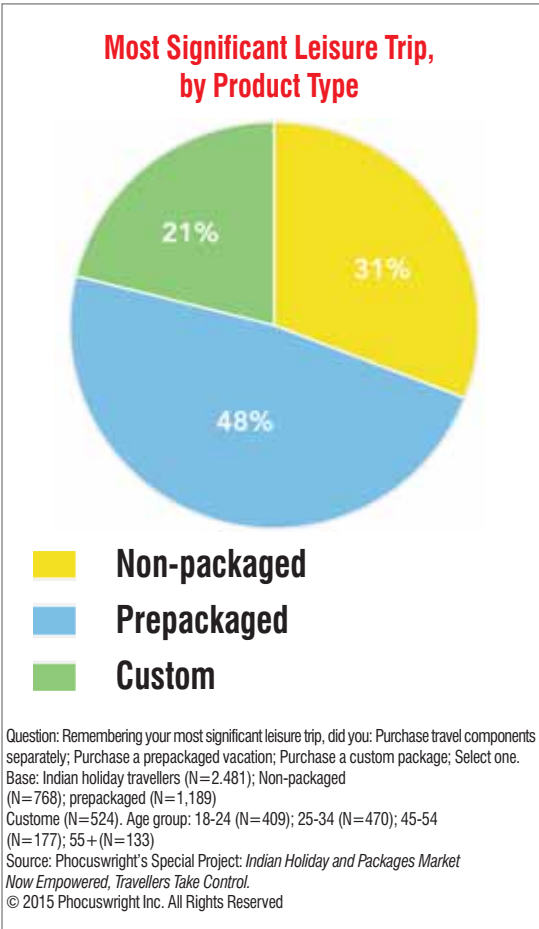
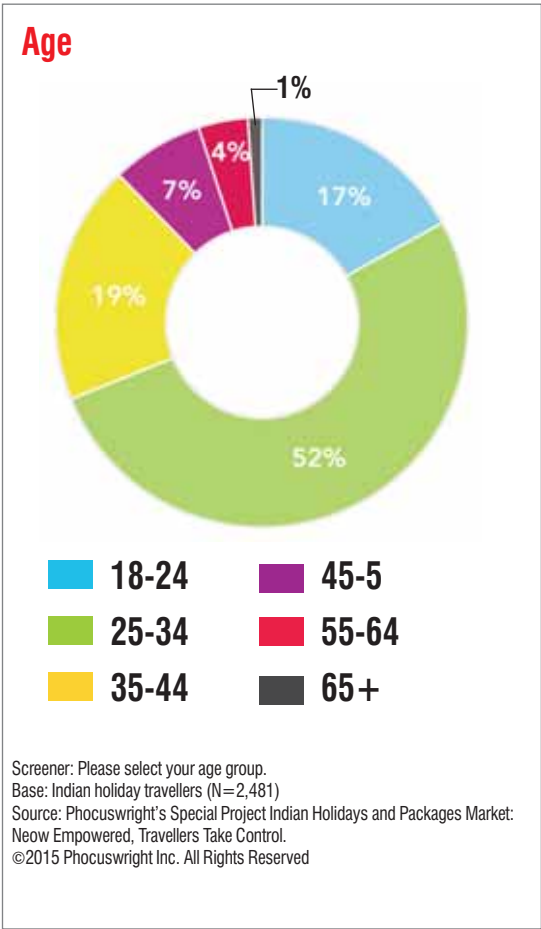
The Aviation Day, which was organised to address aviation fundamentals to drive India's emergence as the 3rd largest global Aviation Market, highlighted many issues plaguing the Indian aviation industry. In his keynote address, **Tony Tyler**, Director General and CEO, IATA, highlighted three priority areas where work is needed to reduce costs in India.

With India focussing on developing the MICE industry, Vkonect MICE was the perfect opportunity for buyers and sellers to interact with each other and also meet corporate players. This event strictly meant business for the top MICE agents and corporates. The e-Tourist Visa (eTV) facility has found many takers and from January-June, 2015, a total of 126,214 tourists arrived on eTV as compared to 11,953 during January-June, 2014 registering a growth of 955.9 per cent.

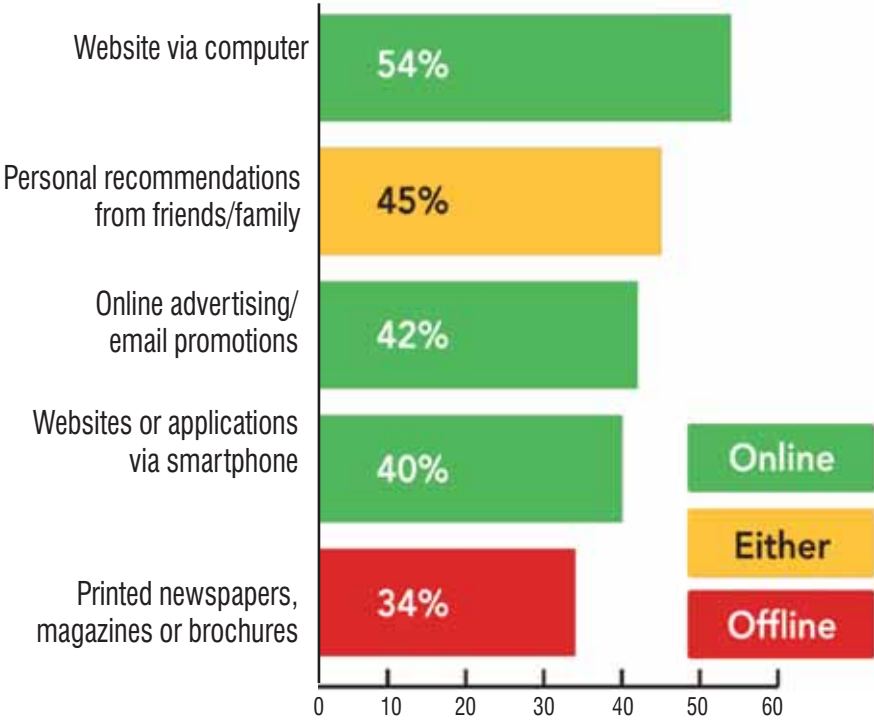
Our goals are set high and we have been seeing significant improvement in tourist inflow to the country. However, infrastructure and security continue to plague us and we want something significant to be done on that front as well. Like Karnataka is involving professionals to develop tourism, other states too should emulate the same model. The initiatives are being made in the right direction and with everyone working towards one goal, we guess it's time Incredible India 2.0 made its way into the tourism model of the country. Anybody listening?

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Most Significant Trip: Information Source Used to Search/Shop



Question: Thinking about that most significant leisure trip, what sources of information/media did you reference when searching and shopping for travel components? Select all that apply.
Base: Indian holiday travellers (N=2,481)
Source: Phocuswright's Special Project: Indian Holiday and Packages Market: Now Empowered, Travellers Take Control
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1st year of Air India's Alliance with Star

With the completion of one year of partnership with Star Alliance, Air India is looking forward to grow more with new routes and aircraft. Abhay Pathak, General Manager (Commercial) Northern India, Air India, talks to TRAVTALK about the airline's new initiatives.



SAMAPTI DAS

Air India, on July 11, completed a year of partnership with Star Alliance. It was on this day last year that India's national carrier formally became the 27th member of the Star Alliance network and with it opened up a completely different world to its passengers.

Abhay Pathak, General Manager (Commercial) Northern India, Air India, says, "We are celebrating this first year anniversary of Air India joining Star Alliance, which is one of the biggest alliances in the world. It has 27 prestigious members."

Air India became the first Indian carrier to be inducted into Star Alliance network. This partnership gave the passengers an opportunity to travel to 1,316 destinations across the network and enjoy world class services, better connectivity and seamless travel.

It has earned the globe-trotter innumerable perks besides seamless connectivity across the globe with more than 18,500 daily flights in 193 countries. The frequent flyer benefits between Air India's Flying Returns programme and those of the existing member carriers have benefitted customers a great deal in earning and redeeming, upgrading and obtaining Star Alliance Gold Status. Flying Return members who hold Maharajah Club or Golden Edge Club status are automatically upgraded to Star Alliance Gold status, giving them access

to more than 1,000 lounges across the global network.

Pathak adds, "We have a flying returns programme of Air India. So, any alliance air member or our members can redeem and also can accrue the mileage across the world for any airlines or 26 members. We have completed

all those parameters which are required to become a Star Alliance member."

Talking about the airlines' future initiatives, Pathak says, "We have a number of aircraft joining including the brand new aircraft 787 with new technologies. We also have a number of routes which will be unfolded

in the upcoming months. This will further spread our wings and help us to network and provide our seamless products to all over the world."

Air India celebrated the occasion across its offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

"We have a number of aircraft joining including the brand new aircraft 787 with new technologies. We also have a number of routes which will be unfolded in the upcoming months."



Abhay Pathak
General Manager (Commercial)
Northern India, Air India

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Conquering Skies

Air India became the first Indian carrier to be inducted into Star Alliance network

The airline has presence across the globe with more than 18,500 daily flights in 193 countries.

Air India has a number of aircraft including the brand new aircraft 787 with new technologies

Flying Return members who hold Maharajah Club or Golden Edge Club status are automatically upgraded to Star Alliance Gold status

Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel opens doors

■ Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide announced the opening of Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, a newly renovated property set to welcome business and leisure travellers visiting the world-renowned heritage city that has quickly become one of India's industrial hubs. Owned by SAMHI Hotels (Ahmedabad), Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel marks the 44th Starwood hotel in India, the third Starwood hotel in the south-central Indian city, and the third Sheraton in India. Sheraton Hyderabad, the second Starwood hotel owned by SAMHI Hotels (Ahmedabad), is strategically located in the heart of the city's financial district and conveniently adjacent to the area's key convention centers, such as HITEX Exhibition Centre and the Hyderabad International Convention Centre. Surrounded by multinational corporations, the property is also within walking distance of numerous upscale restaurants, retail shops and business offices. Only a 30-minute drive from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (HYD), the hotel is easily accessible for business and leisure travelers alike.

Technology at the fore@PTM

As the PATA Travel Mart travels to Bengaluru, India, **TRAVALTALK** catches up with Mario Hardy, CEO, PATA, about the preparations afoot for the mart. He says the Technology Forum and the Investment Forum at the mart will be some of the new elements that the attendees can look forward to.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QHow does it feel to be hosting PATA Travel Mart in India? Will we be seeing the Indian Prime Minister at the mart?

It's good for PATA to be back in India, a country that has so much to offer as a tourism destination with great potential. We are indeed expecting the Prime Minister to be present, however there is always a chance of last-minute changes by the PM's office.

QHow have you been preparing for the mart?

“The purpose of the mart is for international buyers to get to know the destination and help promote it. The state of Karnataka and India in general needs a tourism boost and this is why destinations host this event.”

Mario Hardy
CEO, PATA

I must admit that organising an event in India is a challenging and stressful experience. We are used to long-term planning and tight preparation, but practices in India are different. This means that all activities are now condensed in a much shorter period of time.

QHow has the reaction to the mart been so far?

The international response has been good and plans are moving along really well. The local response had initially been slower, but is now picking up. We understand that traditionally local organisations tend to plan at the last minute, which is something we have expected.

60 nationalities at PTM

PATA Travel Mart has changed the format this year, so there will be three major events — The Technology Forum, the Investment Forum and the PATA Travel Mart in itself. The number of registrations numbers are still being finalised, but over 60 nationalities will be participating at the mart. The enthusiasm to attend PTM is pretty much on the lines of what was expected, this is a good opportunity for local players to get on to an international platform and showcase their products and services to the marketplace.



Runeeep Sangha
Executive Director, PATA India Chapter

QWhat are your expectations from the mart? What do you aim to achieve by hosting this mart in India?

The purpose of the mart is for international buyers to get to know the destination and help promote it. The state of Karnataka and India in general needs a tourism boost and this is why destinations host this event.

QWhat is new at this mart?

This year, we are co-organising a Technology Forum with a leading organisation specialising in this area —

Phocuswright. We are also planning an Investment Forum and we will soon announce a partnership with a leading event organiser in this field.

QHow important a role will travel technology play at this mart?

Bengaluru is known as the Silicon Valley of Asia and we couldn't host an event in this destination without having a technology component. The speaking panel organised by Phocuswright will give everyone a fantastic perspective on the start-up opportunities in the country.

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'Visit Rajasthan Roadshows' in 10 cities

A Memorandum of Understanding for promoting tourism in India as well as abroad was recently signed between Department of Tourism and Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan. This will be done through 'Visit Rajasthan Roadshows' pan-India.

TT BUREAU

In the presence of **Shailendra Agarwal**, Principal Secretary-Tourism, Department of Tourism (DOT) and Federation of Hospitality and Tourism of Rajasthan (FHTR) have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for promoting Rajasthan pan-India as well as abroad. The signatories to the MoU were **Anil Chaplot**, Director Tourism, and **Bhim Singh**, President, FHTR.

On the occasion, Agarwal said that the marketing of Rajasthan, as a preferred tourism destination, should not only be the responsibility of the government but it should be a collective effort along with the stakeholders. He expressed satisfaction at the fact that FHTR will be marketing the state's tourism potential with support from the DOT. He said that for the time being the 'Visit Rajasthan Roadshows' will be held in 10 cities of the country. Later, they will also organise similar roadshows abroad.

The Principal Secretary, Tourism, said that the Tourism Unit Policy 2015 was already in place and will play a pivotal role in attracting investment for tourism units. The Policy will also be highlighted during the Resurgent Rajasthan Partnership Summit being held in Jaipur in November this year. He further informed that the Department is collecting information for projecting the state as a MICE destination. By the time of the Resurgent Rajasthan Summit all the MICE facilities available in the State will be compiled and published.

Chaplot said despite Rajasthan having enormous

potential the state doesn't get the number of tourists. He hoped that with the signing of this MoU the state will get a proactive promotion all over the country. The domestic tourists, he said, were as important as the foreign tourists for the state.

Singh said that the objective of the new body was to promote tourism and organise activities related to it. He said FHTR will organise marts, roadshows and work on the marketing, ideating and exploring more means to strengthen the tourism in-flow in Rajasthan.

Gyan Prakash, General Secretary, FHTR, moderated the event. He also informed that the 10 cities in which the 'Visit Rajasthan Roadshow' will be organised are Ahmedabad, Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Guwahati.



(L-R) Bhim Singh, President, FHTR, with Shailendra Agarwal, Principal Secretary-Tourism, and Anil Chaplot, Director-Tourism with the MoU documents.

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Hitting the Road

The 10 cities for the 'Visit Rajasthan Roadshow' are Ahmedabad, Delhi, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Guwahati

Rajasthan's new Tourism Policy will be highlighted during the Resurgent Rajasthan Partnership Summit in Jaipur in November

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Now, inbound tourism on TAAI's radar

The Travel Agents Association of India has been traditionally known to promote outbound, but at its recently concluded Bali convention the organisation began to focus its energies on promoting inbound tourism. It's using its membership cards to promote inbound and domestic tourism.

TT BUREAU

Dispelling all talks about the association promoting only outbound tourism, Harmandeep Singh Anand, Secretary General, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), says that it is re-training its focus on encouraging inbound and domestic tourism for its members. "We did this on a big scale during our Bali convention recently through the 'Namaste India' dinner where three state tourism boards and Incredible India participated by making presentations on India to the Indonesian travel trade. Through this, we have re-initiated promotion of inbound tourism," he adds.

The dinner was sponsored by 'Queens of India' and gave the Indonesian buyers a taste of India by serving authentic Indian food with more than 80 dishes under different state cuisines highlighting the local culture.

He admitted that TAAI's focus was more on outbound all these years. "When I came in as an MC member, my portfolio was Tourism Council Chairman. So I started developing programmes with NTOs mostly because the state tourism boards were not that receptive during that period while the NTOs took us in with open arms," Anand adds.

Membership card benefits

Of the total database of 2,300-odd members, TAAI has a lot of allied and active members who also do inbound. "They have realised that inbound is essential to their business. When they do

domestic ticketing, they up-sell and offer the client other services like hotel reservations, transfers, etc.," Anand adds.

TAAI is also promoting inbound and domestic tourism through its membership card. Explaining this, Anand says, "All the tie-ups we have for our membership card are domestic products – that include top brand hotels like Taj, Oberoi, Starwood, Accor, top-end restaurants, and retail brands. We have just added a golf course in Gujarat and are now in discussions with ITC Hotels. So our members can take advantage of this and experience all these products and incorporate them into



"They have realised that inbound is essential to their business. When they do domestic ticketing, they up-sell and offer the client other services like hotel reservations, transfers, etc."

Harmandeep Singh Anand
Secretary General
Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

their packages. The card gets them a discount of 30-70 per cent off."

TAAI also conducts activities like roadshows and educational workshops for inbound member agents just like we do for outbound. The secretary general adds, "We are in talks with some of the state tourism boards and plan to start some sort of certification for this down the line. State tourism boards also participate in our ITTE show. We have initiated dialogues with Maharashtra, Telangana,

Kerala, Goa, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The problem is that they are already doing their own roadshows and have their own presence as they have a good network here. Of course, they do need help from time to time and we share our database with them. The talks are still in initial stages."

He however adds that TAAI's Chapter chairmen are already taking initiative and actively getting the tourism board of the state they belong to involved more and more so that members from other

states can benefit from it too. "For our members, it is easier to sell a domestic product. First, all payments are in rupees. No bank charges are involved in the payment, so profits are better and so are the opportunities. There are various channels from where they can pick up services – if they want to book a hotel from one, transfers from another, sight-seeing from a third vendor, they can do that easily. Replicating this for an international package is very expensive and not feasible," Anand explains.

Elections around the corner

TAAI has initiated elections at the chapter level for all four regions and 17 chapters that will be completed by July 31, starting with the southern region in Chennai on July 14. Post this, it will start the process for the national level elections with its AGM. TAAI urges all its members to make exercise their rights and vote.

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Philippines' 4-city roadshow from July 30

■ The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines will organise a four-city roadshow for the travel trade partners based in Nagpur, Chandigarh, Lucknow and Delhi on July 30, August 3rd, 5th, and 7th, respectively. The objective of these B2B sessions is to educate and update the trade



and August 1st in Manesar. The aim is to network and highlight Philippines as a premium wedding destination to the high-end wedding planners. **SanJeet**, Tourism Attaché, Philippines Tourism, said, "As a part of 2015 marketing strategy to boost the overall number of Indian trav-

partners about Philippines' existing and new tourism product offerings and to aid them in planning itineraries and handling customer queries. DOT Philippines along with a 15-member delegation will interact with over 300 key travel and tour operators, MICE and up-market leisure operators. DOT Philippines will also be participating at the International Convention of Wedding Fraternity (ICWF) on July 31

and August 1st in Manesar. The aim is to network and highlight Philippines as a premium wedding destination to the high-end wedding planners. **SanJeet**, Tourism Attaché, Philippines Tourism, said, "As a part of 2015 marketing strategy to boost the overall number of Indian trav-

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Park gets into a new 'Zone'

From Kolkata becoming the 1st city to welcome The Park Hotels in 1967, the group has come a long way. In a freewheeling interview with **TRAVTALK**, Vijay Dewan, MD, The Park Hotels, speaks about charting a new roadmap with its brand 'Zone by The Park' in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Excerpts:



Luxury gets boutique

Pioneers of luxury boutique five-star hotels in India, The Park Hotels are present in India's major cities like New Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Navi Mumbai and leisure destinations such as Goa and Vishakhapatnam. Kolkata was the first city to welcome The Park Hotels in the year 1967. A year later, with a beautiful beachside property, was born The Park Visakhapatnam, the group's second hotel and the first deluxe hotel of Andhra Pradesh. The Park, New Delhi came into existence in 1987, in the throbbing heart of the Capital, Parliament Street. The Park Collection encompasses The Park Calangute (Goa) and The Park Pod (Chennai). The new hotels are under development in Kolkata, Pune, Jaipur, Wayanad and Corbett National Park.

Rebranding strategy

In 2013, we introduced a refreshed brand experience with a new visual identity and promise. This was done to communicate the strength of our brand in more coherent manner. As a part of our rebranding exercise,

Stay' experience to all touch points in the hotel including 'The Spa'. All these standards are designed such that from the moment guests arrive, to the moment they leave, no matter where life takes them; they take a part of The Park with them.

December 2014 and launched the second property in Jaipur in April 2015.

Charting growth with Zone

We have received positive response for our Zone brand in Coimbatore and Jaipur which has become the social hotspot within these cities in a short span of time. We are looking forward to expand more in Zone brand through management contracts. In the next five years, we hope to have 20-25 in Zone. Our occupancy levels in Coimbatore have seen a sharp rise within the six months of its launch and the food and beverage business has picked up really fast.

Message from the leader

As part of our rebranding exercise, we introduced 'Anything But Ordinary' experiences. 'Anything But Ordinary' experiences continue into each of the service touch points in the hotel including 'The Arrival' experience that seamlessly continues into 'The Stay' experience to all touch points in the hotel including 'The Spa'.



we introduced 'Anything But Ordinary' experiences. 'Anything But Ordinary' experiences continue into each of the service touch points in the hotel including 'The Arrival' experience that seamlessly continues into 'The

Furthermore, we recently launched a new brand 'Zone by The Park' in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. It is an upscale 'design-conscious, price-conscious brand' and the first property was launched in Coimbatore in

Park Connection

➔ The new hotels are under development in Kolkata, Pune, Jaipur, Wayanad and Corbett National Park



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'NDC a standard, not product'

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) dispelled the cloud surrounding its New Distribution Capability (NDC) program, with its head Tony Tyler addressing Indian agents directly in a historic first.



HAZEL JAIN

In a bid to clear away confusion and inaccurate information about its New Distribution Capability (NDC) program among the travel agent community, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently conducted a seminar on it in Mumbai. It was organised jointly by the two big travel agents associations in India – Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI).

Titled, 'Future Aviation Trends', the half-day seminar was conducted by four senior executives from IATA, including **Tony Tyler**, Director General and CEO, IATA, himself who also addressed and took questions from the travel agents.

Giving a detailed presentation on NDC was **Yanik Hoyles**, Director (NDC Program), IATA. Apologising for not engaging the travel trade earlier while developing the program, he said, "NDC is about giving the travel agents the same capabilities in airline retailing as the airline's own websites. It is an XML-based data transmission standard that will enhance communication between airlines and agents."

Hoyles clarified to the agents that IATA was not suggesting bypassing the GDSs. "The NDC standard can be used to develop a product or software by a technology provider. In fact, three main

"NDC is about giving the travel agents the same capabilities in airline retailing as the airline's own websites. It is an XML-based data transmission standard that will enhance communication between airlines and travel agents."

Yanik Hoyles
Director (NDC Program), IATA



GDSs have agreed to participate in the NDC program," he said.

Tyler further clarified, "While some GDSs have already begun to use some XML-based communication protocols, they have each developed these using proprietary standards rather than the open global standard offered by NDC. The standard can be developed for building content-rich applications that

will help the travel agents service customers better. How? By giving them access to richer content—pictures, fuller product descriptions, prices that could even take into consideration a traveler's status in airline loyalty programs."

Many top airlines, including Qatar Airlines, British Airways and Swiss Air, have also announced that they will deploy NDC.

IATA invites agents to volunteer

IATA has invited Indian travel agents to participate in the testing of its NDC standard. **Yeoh Hoy Chin**, Regional Director, Financial & Distribution Services, IATA Asia Pacific, called upon the agents to volunteer in the testing program for NDC.

Aviation policy to ease business

The Aviation Day hosted by IATA, Ministry of Civil Aviation, and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), brought into focus the areas of opportunities, as also the multiple challenges that need to be addressed.



TT BUREAU

India's 5/20 rule was a popular topic of discussion at the Aviation Day conference. **Phee Teik Yeoh**, CEO, Vistara, called for the abolition of the rule mandating five years of domestic operations and fleet of 20 aircraft for airlines to fly international, and route dispersal guidelines. **Tony Tyler**, Director General and CEO, IATA, said, "The problem with such regulations is that by creating distortions to the free market, they influence long-term decisions made by airlines. And so, once they are imposed they become very difficult to change as circumstances evolve, because doing so can't help being unfair to some or other key industry player."

However, **Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi Raju**, Minister of Civil Aviation, said that instead of opposing the easing of the 5/20 rule, existing players on the international route must use existing bilateral allotted to them. Raju was addressing a gathering of senior airlines executives, officials



(L-R); Ankur Bhatia, Tony Tyler, Ashok Gajapathi Raju, GV Sanjay Reddy and Soma Banerjee

from the Civil Aviation Ministry and Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), as well as aviation industry experts at the Aviation Day India, organised by IATA, India's Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the Confederation of Indian Industries.

Delivering the keynote address at the conference, Tyler called for the development of a comprehensive policy for aviation aligned with the Indian Government's stated intention to make it easier to do business in India.

On the ministry's highly-awaited aviation policy, Raju

said that the new policy would bolster growth and ease the investment climate. He said that while the aviation sector would continue with the regulations, the rules would be amended for the growth of the sector.

Replying to a question, Raju also said that at the government has put low-cost airport projects on hold due to feasibility issues.

Talking more about the aviation policy, **RN Choubey**, Secretary, Civil Aviation, said that the aviation policy would look to reduce cost of acquisition of aircrafts and airports,

they would also work more closely with states and moderate taxes on ATF at the state level. "We are working to see that all states can bring down the VAT rates to four per cent on ATF. This is crucial as India has to import crude oil and moderate fuel prices are a key component to making the industry competitive," he said.

Choubey mentioned that the aviation policy has touched upon all the concerns of the industry, "The government is looking at various ways to reduce cost of operations for the airline, including ways to order for aircraft in bulk for all Indian carriers together. We are thinking on these lines and a final decision will come after consultations," he said.

Sky's The Limit

The Civil Aviation Minister said the highly awaited aviation policy would bolster growth and ease the investment climate

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Exclusive platform for sturdy ROI

► Contd. from page 5

buyers on the first day and tour operators on the second day, thus enabling suppliers to speak conveniently to each of them, she opined. "Vkonect MICE marries both corporate and trade requirements, all the while keeping them separate for the purpose of commu-

nication formats. This is the first time we have hosted a MICE event. All the exhibitors were extremely engaging and happy with the response," she pointed out.

Talking about the exclusive focus on MICE, **Vineet Gopal**, Director, Vkonect,

informed that the first edition of Vkonect MICE is an exclusive platform that offers interaction, highest business closures, a robust value for money and a sturdy ROI. Highlighting the USP of the event, he added, "Vkonect's journey from a luxury event to an exclusive MICE event has

been fantastic. Both the buyers and sellers are very happy with 1:1 ratio of buyers and sellers. In these two days, about 850 meetings were facilitated."

The industry partners who participated in the event were tourism boards of

France, Germany, Canada, Munich, Philippines, Reunion Island, Singapore and Oman. Other partners were Lavasa, Hello Tourism (Turkey), Shanti Maurice - A Nira Resort, C&C Alpha Group, GRT Hotels, Radisson Blu - Temple Bay Mamallapuram, Holiday Inn, Fanatic Sports,

Zuri Hotels & Resorts, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, Sahara Star, Aamby Valley, Premier Hotels of Asia, Meritus Hotels & Resorts, Marriot International, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Anantara - Minor Hotels, ITC Hotels and Via Rail Canada.



MICE is not just an opportunity for rewards and recognition but also something that gives a boost to employee satisfaction, enables employee retention and establishes a balance between the professional and personal lives, thereby instilling a team-building spirit and problem-solving attitude. National Tourist Organisations (NTOs) based in India are investing hugely in MICE promotion. However, India is struggling on the inbound MICE business front. Thus, the event is well-timed. We need more such events in the country to understand the evolving MICE industry and to get updates about new offerings for MICE.

Runeeep Sangha
Executive Director, PATA India



India is not quite MICE-friendly, and here the infrastructure is not being developed for the segment. Besides, the private sector is playing a better role than the public sector. There needs to be a better understanding of MICE, and an entry-barrier must be in place to limit the operations to quality operators. This event was extremely well-organised. Tapping prominent corporate buyers is the need of the hour and the event got so many of them on the same platform. I also liked the fact that both days were streamlined differently to enable the suppliers understand the needs of the corporate buyer and tour operator separately.

Sanjay Soni
Treasurer, ICPB and Chief Knowledge Director, Incredible Design



Thai Airways takes a number of groups to Thailand as Thailand is one of best MICE destinations for India. We can also offer charter flights for larger groups at an additional cost. Another advantage is that most of our aircrafts from India land at Bangkok at around the same time. So in case the corporates are flying big groups and they come from various cities of India, they will land in Thailand around the same time. Thus, managing the groups become easier.

Vkonect MICE is a good opportunity to interact with airlines and corporates. As an airline, our focus is heavily on MICE business. We are here to show corporates more places in Thailand. We regularly organise FAM trips for corporates either with Tourism Authority of Thailand or TCEB.

Ravinder Talwar
Area Sales Manager-India, Thai Airways

I would like to congratulate the organisers for putting up a great show with such a good concept, with separate days of B2B selected suppliers and corporates; and buyers and sellers, without mixing the two groups. The outbound traveller in India is always looking for new destinations. The event brings to limelight a number of new locations and destinations and will help in pushing the MICE segment in totality.



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President, OTOAI

Today's meetings industry is increasingly being perceived as a natural extension of the leisure activities within cities. Business tourism and its scope will only increase. Thus, we, as stakeholders in this segment, need to work in close collaboration. This will ensure that the participant has beautiful experiences in terms of venues, services and other offerings.

Vkonect is a fantastic platform. It is a great way to meet and understand the need of the buyer as well as the seller. We need platforms such as these to have a face-to-face dialogue and know about the opportunities to collaborate and partner. This kind of partnership mode can get the business and the rest is bound to follow.



Priti Khanna
Chairperson, MCI

Unleash India's MICE potential

To boost the MICE potential of the country, ICPB is gearing up for the eighth edition of Conventions India Conclave (CIC) themed 'Unleashing the Potential'.



With 116 global business events hosted in 2014, India currently holds the 35th global MICE ranking and 9th position in the Asia Pacific region. Thus, India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) needs to play a more focused role in promoting India as a premier MICE destination. This was pointed out by **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and Chairman, ICPB. "The National Tourism Policy, which is on the anvil, and the upcoming investments

through 'Make in India' campaign, would give the much-needed push to the MICE potential of the country. MOT is also looking at supporting the states and MICE venues to bid for foreign events and establishing and updating the MICE-related infrastructure," he said. "Over 1,90,000 hotel rooms are expected to open in the next four years. So we want to restructure and reengineer ICPB to boost the growth of MICE business in India. MOT will also put aside a specified amount and encourage states to do the same," he added.



Suman Billa
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Chairman, ICPB

In a bid to strengthen India's position in the MICE map of the world, ICPB is also



Captain Swadesh Kumar
Vice Chairman ICPB and Convenor, CIC 2015

gearing up for the eighth edition of Conventions India Conclave (CIC). Themed

'Unleashing the Potential', CIC has registered over 64 hosted buyers, including associations, corporate and medical and educational institutions. It is looking at touching 150 buyers. According to **Captain Swadesh Kumar**, Vice Chairman, ICPB and Convenor, CIC 2015, the main focus is on domestic buyers. "However, we will also have about 15 foreign buyers nominated by the India Tourism Overseas Offices, who will be a part of the Conclave. ICPB is also launching a mobile application soon," Kumar informed.

Sanjay Soni, Honorary Treasurer, ICPB and Head, Exhibitions Committee, stated that 23 booth spaces have been sold out so far and the target is to touch 54. **Girish Kwatra**, Head, Accommodation Committee, shared that Crowne Plaza Greater Noida has confirmed for room space while they are still in talks with Radisson Blu Greater Noida and Jaypee Greens Golf and Spa Resort, Greater Noida. ICPB has also hired a digital media company to spread the word about CIC on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Exploring East Delhi for meetings

Retail prices in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad gives these areas an edge over the corporate hub of Gurgaon. The only thing keeping the Trans-Yamuna area held back is the lack of investments. Puneet Singh, General Manager, Kempinski Ambience Hotel talks about the pros and cons of having a hotel in East Delhi.



ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

Q What makes Kempinski Ambience Hotel a favourite for MICE?

In terms of facilities, we offer a huge space to conduct events and meetings. Spread over 35,000 sq ft, our ballroom is pillar less and is the largest ballroom in North India. Situated on the ground floor with separate entrances, there is an ease of access. In fact, we are the only hotel in the entire NCR region with three separate entrances for a ballroom or meeting spaces. We can hold three events simultaneously at the same time, each accommodating 1,000 people. The ballroom is tall enough to accommodate vehicles inside it.

Q Who will be the close competitors in terms of MICE within Delhi/NCR?

Within Delhi/NCR, I think Hyatt Manesar and then the Aerocity hotels like Marriott will give us competition. Pullman, when it opens, will be second to us.

Q Is the hotel conveniently accessible?

“Spread over 35,000 sq ft, our ballroom is pillar less and is the largest ballroom in North India. Situated on the ground floor with separate entrances, there is an ease of access. In fact, we are the only hotel in the entire NCR region with three separate entrances for a ballroom or meeting spaces.”

Puneet Singh

General Manager, Kempinski Ambience Hotel



Access to here is much better than Gurgaon or for hotels at Manesar. It would now take 25-30 minutes from Central or South Delhi to reach here for a meeting, which otherwise used to take an hour and half. This will take time for people to realise, since there is already a perception about 'Trans Yamuna'. We did not create this perception, we are only here to change it.

Q What about the hospitality business in Delhi/NCR?

For East Delhi, the main hubs are Ghaziabad, Sahibabad and Noida.

Unfortunately, the airport is only in Gurgaon, which will drive more business there.

But, an important factor to note is that the space cost of real estate in UP is very less compared to that on the Gurgaon side. Companies that require large corporate spaces will set up offices in Noida or Greater Noida. This would drive businesses in east Delhi.

But for the next two years, I don't think there will be any major shift, we are going to sustain the way we are as

of now. In terms of overall numbers, MICE will not increase until the government and ministry get on board. We have to bring in the lawmakers to do something for NCR.

Q What hospitality trends do you see related to MICE?

I don't see much difference this year. We will be focusing on the year-end meetings. We see people signing deals and setting up business here. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav will be setting up an automobile factory in Greater Noida. This information is sitting somewhere in the government's office. This is not bringing private investors or hoteliers on board.

The link between government bodies and investors is absent. Sometimes, we get a huge Chinese delegation but we don't know anything about the purpose of their visit. If the Tourism and Trade Ministry tells us about the motive of their visit, a link can be established. But, there is no unified strategy in place and I don't see any shift happening.

PATA India travels to Canada, US

■ PATA India along with India Tourism recently hosted road shows in four cities across the US and Canada. According to Roneep Sangha, Executive Director, PATA India, the road shows in Montreal, Toronto, Chicago and Houston brought together a delegation of 20 suppliers, representing hotels, des-



tinuation management companies to showcase India and its niche product offerings. Talking about the event, he said, "Around 20 suppliers representing hotels and destination management companies from India met with the travel trade. We also witnessed about 219 buyers."

PATA India is now gearing up for its slew of road shows in Europe in October. The five-city road show will go to Frankfurt, Zurich, Vienna, Milan and Rome, Sangha added.

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IRCTC inks deal with Uttarakhand to promote yoga

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has signed an MoU with Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) for promotion of tourism in the hilly state, especially the launch of pilgrim packages for the next year's Ardh Kumbh Mela at Haridwar and projecting Uttarakhand as a Yoga destination.

The MoU, signed on at a high-level meeting at the UTDB headquarters in Dehradun, would facilitate launch of a string of initiatives to jointly promote tourism in Uttarakhand, an IRCTC official said. During the meeting, discussions were held to develop packages for the Ardh Kumbh Mela at Haridwar to be held in 2016 and Chardham Yatra (Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri and Gangotri), besides promoting Uttarakhand as a Yoga destination.

The two sides also discussed measures that would project Uttarakhand as a MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) hub to allure corporates.

It's fun to take a ride VIA Rail

Michelle Goodwin, Manager- International Sales (Asia), VIA Rail Canada, tells TRAVTALK how the transportation company is engaging agents in its operations by giving them timely incentives, hence encouraging rail travel in Canada.



DEEPA SETHI FROM CANADA

Q Why would you recommend VIA Rail to Indian tourists visiting Canada? What are its advantages vis-a-vis air travel?

The best way to see Canada is by train especially the 'Canadian Rockies' – where passengers can enjoy the beautiful and majestic landscape of the mountains, waterfalls, huge lakes and wildlife in the comfort of their seat or sleeper. You know if you are flying, you only see the airport and the city you are arriving and you miss all the beautiful scenery.

Q Since when has VIA Rail been plying in Canada?

VIA Rail was established in 1978 as an independent Crown Corporation. It provides safe, efficient and cost effective passenger transportation in Canada. It has been our endeavour for almost four decades to make our services more inviting and welcoming for our passengers.

Q Which is the longest journey of VIA Rail and how long does it take?

The train between Vancouver and Toronto (known as 'The Canadian') with a distance of 4466 kilometres takes four nights and three days. This trip gives you an understanding of Canada like nothing else can. I know how comfortable Indians are with train travel and the feedback we receive from them about this journey is very encouraging.

Passengers can buy passes if they plan to travel a lot. Even though they can hop on and off, they still need to make reservation since passengers are guaranteed a seat when they travel on VIA Rail.

Q Tell us about some special services offered on board VIA Rail.

In our Sleeper Plus Category on board 'The Canadian', guests can enjoy complimentary access to the public dome cars, featuring

“VIA Rail offers commission to travel agents to sell VIA Rail. Top performers can also be considered for familiarisation and educative visits on VIA Rail from time to time, depending on seasonality.”

Michelle Goodwin

Manager- International Sales (Asia),
VIA Rail Canada



VIA Rail offers commission to travel agents to sell VIA Rail. Top performers can also be considered for familiarisation and educative visits on Via Rail from time to time, depending on seasonality.

Q Does VIA Rail offer special rates for large groups?

It is more fun to travel in larger groups, especially for the long journeys, and we encourage this VIA Rail has special rates for large groups.

Q Does VIA Rail allow web bookings for travel agents also, without losing their commission? If yes, please explain briefly.

We believe travel agents are our partners in business, so we have made sure that they can use our booking portal. If travel agents want to earn commission on VIA Rail, they should open a web account and then they can book online, get confirmation and use the payment gateway to pay the net fare.

upper-level viewing and public lounge areas. A Panorama viewing car is also added to 'The Canadian' during the Peak Season between Vancouver and Edmonton. Complimentary Wi-Fi is offered on both the Economy and Business Class on the Quebec City – Windsor Route. Business class also includes privileged access to the in-station business lounges (where available) along with priority boarding and complimentary newspapers. We also offer special meals like

gluten free meals, kosher and vegetarian meals on board but passengers need to give advance notice.

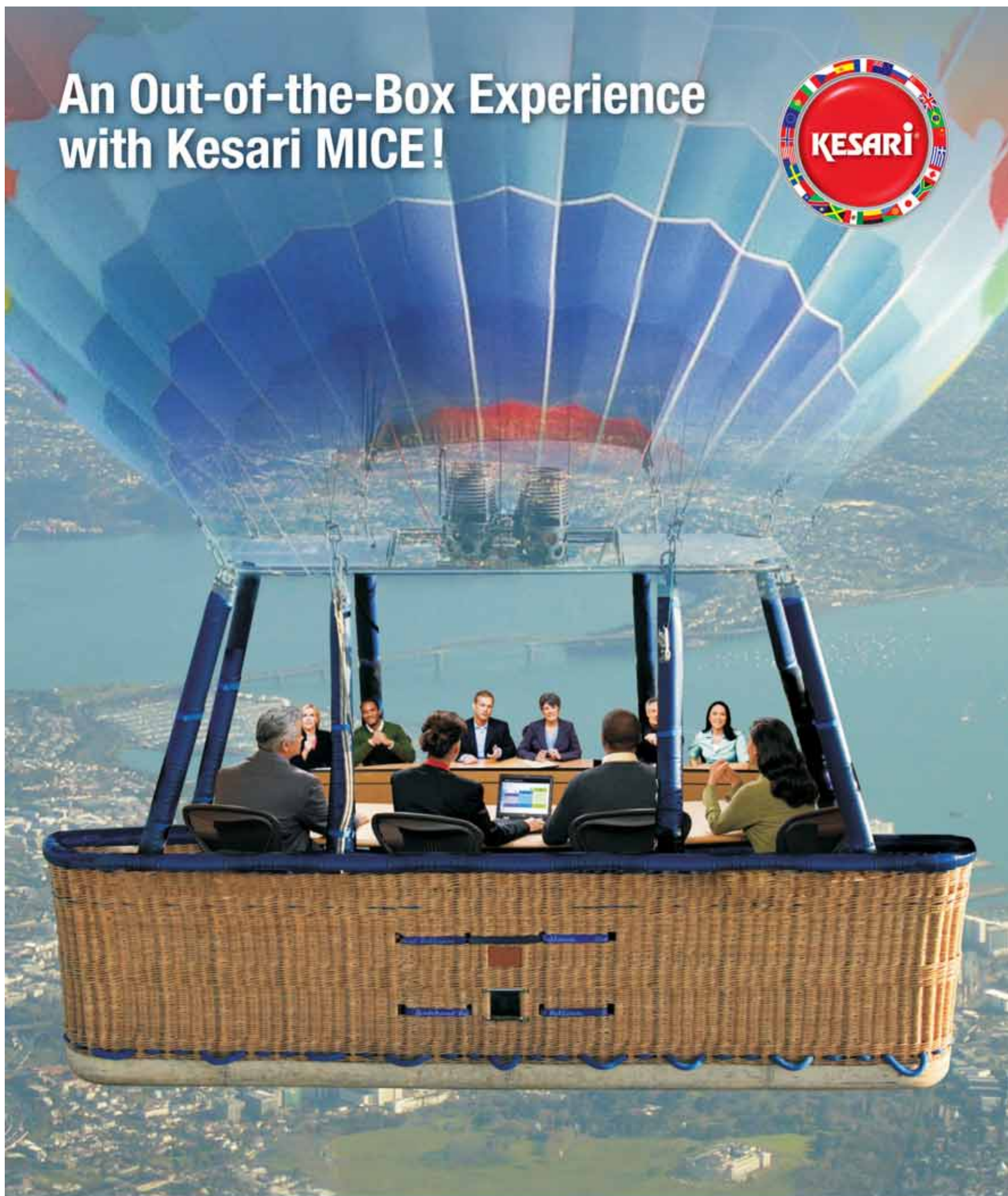
Q Can food be customised on special request for people with dietary restrictions?

It all depends which train they are travelling, for example on 'The Canadian' we have a chef on board preparing the meals.

Q How are travel agents incentivised to sell VIA Rail?



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Make India airline-friendly: IATA chief

Tony Tyler, Director General and CEO, IATA, spoke of the challenges faced by players in the Indian aviation sector and highlighted priority areas to reduce airline operational costs in India.



Delivering the keynote address at the Aviation Day India organised by IATA together with India's Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Tyler, complimented Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet for focusing on the aspect of ease of doing business in the country.

"Indian aviation market is estimated to be valued at \$282 million by 2031 and will exceed a market value of \$360 billion post FY34," he said.

He further elaborated, "Already aviation and aviation-related tourism support 7 million Indian jobs and \$23 billion of India's GDP. But there are immense challenges which must be overcome — as seen in the sector's financial performance. While demand growth is robust and some airlines are generating profit, sector-wide losses for India are still expected to exceed \$1 billion this year. Onerous regulation and processes, debilitating

"India needs smarter regulation. This essentially means taking a business-like approach to regulation using common-sense and proven principles. These include targeting regulation to address real issues, using global standards where they exist, satisfying a rigorous cost benefit analysis and consultation with industry."



Tony Tyler
Director General and CEO, IATA

taxes and expensive infrastructure are holding back the industry's ability to deliver greater economic benefits to India.

In his address, Tyler highlighted three priority areas where work is needed to reduce costs in India:

Reducing the tax burden

The application of Service Tax should be aligned with a principle that it does not apply to services rendered outside of India, including those

for overflight charges, global distribution systems, extra baggage fees and international tickets. He also highlighted that the incoming GST regime should also zero-rate international air transport services in line with OECD guidelines, the need to follow international treaties that protect airlines from double-taxation on income and the need to avoid double-taxation within India in situations where airlines are effectively taxed on taxes collected.

Competitive Fuel Pricing

State taxes on jet fuel can be as high as 30 per cent. Tyler urged the government to grant "declared goods" status for jet fuel which would limit taxation. "The decision to introduce competition in jet fuel supply at key airports needs to be followed up with open access to the pipelines that get fuel to the airport in order for efficiencies of a liberalised market to be realised," said Tyler.

Let AERA be independent

Tyler highlighted the importance of allowing the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) to do its work independently. He called for action in three areas:

Overcome legal challenges which prevent AERA's recommendation for a 78 per cent reduction in Delhi's airport charges from being implemented.

Protect the independence of AERA and the principle of a "single till" for airport charges in light of stock exchange filings which show

that the Ministry of Civil Aviation had instructed AERA to use a hybrid till for its "independent" determination of airport charges at Hyderabad.

Carefully assess the proposed privatisations of Jaipur, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Chennai to ensure that the "single till" principle is maintained and that the privatisation terms are appropriate to the level of development at the airports. Significant public investment in these airports should be considered in a cost/benefit analysis aimed at determining if the public interest would be best-served by a concession contract or a management contract.

Smarter Regulation

"Regulation is also holding back the development of the sector. Well-intentioned regulations, but which are inconsistent with global standards, make doing business in India very difficult for the airlines. India imposes rules and requirements that are not seen anywhere else," said Tyler.

Tyler highlighted several examples where Indian regulation is out of step with global standards and best practices. "India needs smarter regulation. This essentially means taking a business-like approach to regulation using common-sense and proven principles. These include targeting regulation to address real issues, using global standards where they exist, satisfying a rigorous cost benefit analysis and consultation with industry. If we can work together to build regulations that meet the public interest, are consistent with global standards and which can be implemented efficiently then we are all winners," said Tyler.

"There is a great opportunity for the government's ease of business agenda in aviation. By working with MoCA, based on airline input, we could develop and deliver an effective action plan for aviation in India. Aviation should be the model sector demonstrating India's efforts to make it easier to do business here," said Tyler.



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Agent packages now on SAT website

South African Tourism has launched its new digital initiative called 'Chalo South Africa' for the Indian travel agents. Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager, South African Tourism, tells TRAVTALK that this initiative will become live by September, making India the first Asian country to have this feature on the SAT website.



HAZEL JAIN

What can the agents expect from SAT next?

We have such exciting plans for India. We have brand new things to share with our trade partners during our 15-city training roadshow - Learn SA. We also have some of our South African products and ground handlers joining us, so the session should not only be informative, but also very profitable!

We also have an incredibly exciting digital launch that will empower the trade to sell South Africa even better.

Can you tell us about the 'Chalo South Africa' initiative?

We have been busy developing a unique and exciting digital proposition for the Indian travel trade called 'Chalo South Africa'. It will soon give agents and tour operators the option to incorporate their holiday packages into the South African Tourism India website. This product is still in its testing stage but we have launched it during our roadshow and hope to make this live by September

first week. India will then become the first Asian country to have this feature on the South African Tourism website and third globally. The only other international country to have this feature for the travel trade is America. This program was started in South Africa for the domestic market.

How can agents participate in this?

All packages will appear on our 'Deals' page along with contact details and rates. This is open to everyone. Every listing will have to clear certain criteria and those that meet the specifications will be uploaded online. There is no cost to the agent to upload their holiday packages. The Indian consumers will be able to see this on our website and they can contact the trade directly for bookings. Agents will

need to register and create their login. So far the website only offered information; now it will also have a call to action.

What more does SAT has to offer to Indian trade?

Other than this, joint marketing agreements are under discussion (some have been concluded already) with nine industry partners and we are very excited about some of the new itineraries and digital joint marketing events happening.

prior to the news being shared with our consumers.

Will the new visa rules affect numbers?

No, the Indian passports normally reflect the names of both the parents in case of a minor so the unabridged birth certificate is therefore not required. Moreover, we do not have biometrics in India currently so applications are happening as per usual.

“'Chalo South Africa' will soon give agents and tour operators the option to incorporate their holiday packages into the South African Tourism India website. This product is still in its testing stage but we have launched it during our roadshow and hope to make this live by September first week.”



Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager, South African Tourism

Criteria for Chalo South Africa

- Participant must be an SA specialist
- Leisure packages need to have minimum of nine nights with at least two provinces
- MICE packages must have minimum of four nights
- Participants must use a SATSA operator



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IATO southern chapter to 'Stop Blaming, Start Action'



At the IATO Tamil Nadu Andaman Pondicherry - Chapter Meeting held this month, the members discussed a lot of issues including improvement in facilities for travellers, constructing toilet facilities at all the Tourism sites. Improving tourism in new trends, using social media and other medium for promotions as IATA Chennai is going to have a dedicated Facebook page that keeps travellers informed about the latest trends. The meeting also flagged off new moto, " Stop Blaming, Start Action," for the organisation.

Now, book private jets online

JetSetGo - India's first online marketplace for private jets and helicopters is set to give private aviation market a fillip. Kanika Tekriwal, CEO, JetSetGo Aviation Services, shares the future plans of her company with TRAVELTALK and seeks cooperation from travel agents to spread the word.

SAMAPTI DAS

What led to JetSetGo?

Our customers told us that chartering is difficult in this country. It is difficult to find the right aircraft that suits the needs and budgets. JetSetGo caters to transparency, ease of booking and improvement in services. I started when aircraft were very few in the

\$104 trillion. But we have not seen that conversion into private jet travel. I looked into that and how we can change that hence, private jets and JetSetGo.

Tell us about the change in behavioural pattern of consumers and acceptance of JetSetGo and the trend in the industry.



"We want travel agents to create market awareness among their clients. We are regularly engaging with them to try and make the product cheaper where we can build enough margins for them."

Kanika Tekriwal
CEO, JetSetGo Aviation Services

country. Today we have a fleet of 300 plus aircraft. In 2013 and 2014, the combined networth of UHNIs was close to

There was a lack of market awareness about the industry. It was considered as an expensive industry and a non

reachable product. Post JetSetGo the market has opened up to a lot of new customers. They want to charter and fly and are averse to pay for the empty sectors. If we price it appropriately according to what the consumer actually needs then they will come back for more and more flights.

What kind of services do you offer?

JetSetGo gives you a platform to search, compare and book private jets across the country. Once your booking is done, from the time you enter the airport till the time you leave, its JetSetGo's responsibility. We have our in house customer experience department which takes care of catering and other services that may be required.

What are the popular routes?

For inbound tourists coming into India the golden triangle has always been the most popular. Delhi- Mumbai despite

of its commercial connectivity is very popular among the business travellers. Delhi-Bengaluru is also doing well.

How do travel agents cater to your business?

Travel agents contact us but these queries do not materialise very often because when there is an intermediary they mark up very high margins. One of our core focuses is to create market awareness and we want travel agents to do so among their clients. We are regularly engaging with them to try and make the product cheaper where we can build enough margins for them to sell these products.

Taking Off

JetSetGo has a fleet of 300 plus aircraft. In 2013 and 2014, the combined networth of UHNIs was close to \$104 trillion

Focus on spend, length of stay

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has overhauled its strategy to target 'quality' tourists. The focus will now be on offering indigenous experiences and longer stays.

TT BUREAU

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has finalised its marketing plan for 2016. The tourism board will now focus on promoting the kingdom as a quality leisure destination through Thainess. The plan marks the start of a new era for Thai tourism. The wording of the new strategy indicates an end to decades of absolute focus on quantity, as measured by visitor arrivals, and a total shift to quality, measured by visitor expenditure, average length of stay, and the overall quality of the visitor experience. This plan marks the opening of a new chapter for Thai tourism.

The Minister of Tourism and Sports, Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul has called on the entire industry, including both the private and public sectors, to work on the principles of the 3Rs: Restructure, Rebalance and Reposition. This includes identifying new target markets both in terms of geography and customer segments.



Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul
Minister of Tourism and Sports, Kingdom of Thailand

The targets for 2016, as measured entirely in revenue earnings, are up by eight per cent over the projected earnings for 2015, or around 2.3 trillion Baht. Also international and domestic tourism will be both up by eight per cent over the same period, which is above the growth projections for the overall Thai national economy for 2016.

The theme, along with the targets and marketing strategies were finalised at the TAT's annual marketing plan meeting held in the beach resort of Bang Saen, a rapidly emerging destination about 65 kilometres east of Bangkok. The meeting was attended by more than 400 TAT executives and officers from head office and worldwide.

It is based on the fact that there is more than adequate accessibility to Thailand via excellent air, road and sea connections, as well as smooth facilitation that allows visa-free or visa-on-arrival access for citizens from 68 countries and territories.

The 2016 marketing strategy will retain the Amazing Thailand branding logo as well as the 'Thainess' identity; concentrate on niche markets; such as, golfers, weddings and honeymoons, health and wellness visitors, 'halal tourism' for Muslim visitors and focus on women travellers.

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SECTOR	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
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SECTOR	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
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IATA chief meets Mumbai agents

A special meeting on the new New Distribution Capability (NDC) standard was conducted recently by TAAI and TAFI with International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Mumbai and was attended by over 250 agents from across India.



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It's all about MICE connection

Over 30 Indian travel and hospitality companies participated in the recently-concluded Vkonect MICE, India's premium B2B meetings platform for MICE. The two-day event, held at the Holiday Inn, Aerocity, New Delhi, included a networking session between corporate buyers and exhibitors on day one. On day two, travel trade met the exhibitors for exclusive business session in a tabletop and round ribbon format.



Live the royal life @Ananta

Anshul Bhargava, General Manager, Ananta Resort and Spa, tells **TRAVTALK** how the property in Udaipur is prepared to host myriad events from conferences to royal weddings.



TT BUREAU

Q Tell us about the new property in Udaipur?

Ananta Udaipur is spread out in 75 acres surrounded by Aravali Hills. It has 160 luxurious rooms (operational) and 630 to 4,500 sq ft of Presidential suite. We have a spa and banqueting facilities and a swimming pool with sunken bar and mouth watering multi cuisine restaurants and bar.

Q What are the USPs of the hotel?

Our base category of room is of 630 sq ft with a balcony and an open sky shower in every room. We are happy to promote spa in both our properties in Pushkar and Udaipur which are 22,000 sq ft and in house games and recreational activities. For sure we can't forget MICE facilities. Ananta is well equipped with 14, 000 sq ft of banquet - pillar less and 42, 000 sq ft of banquet lawns for big conferences and royal weddings.



Q The Pushkar Mela just round the corner. What is the occupancy of the hotel for these kinds of occasions?

During these seven days a guest experiences the traditional colours of Rajasthan. We always get heavy traffic of inbound during these seven days of Pushkar Mela. But it's going down with occupancy due to the economic conditions of other foreign countries.

Q Who are your main clients?

We are happy to see the support and attraction towards The Ananta, Udaipur and

Pushkar from both international and domestic market segments. But we surely appreciate the increasing footfall of domestic travellers from all over the country.

Q How do you think the face of Indian hospitality has changed or improved?

Trends have now changed a lot compared to the past. Guests now prefer more luxury and recreational activities available with cuisines from various places. Therefore, Ananta comes as the best luxurious resort with expert spa treatments, multi-cuisine restaurants and various fun activities.

jüSTa eyes leisure market

jüSTa Hotels & Resorts is eyeing leisure locations to drive business this year, says Rohit Katyal, Head of Sales & Marketing – NCR, jüSTa Hotels & Resorts.



TT BUREAU

Q What is the USP of the group?

We at jüSTa do not believe in brick and mortar hotels. We are keen to develop



Rohit Katyal
Head of Sales & Marketing – NCR
jüSTa Hotels & Resorts

more differentiated, personalised hotels as a concept home away from home in a hotel. We are focused to do 50-60 rooms small luxury hotels. We have mix or corporate, international leisure, domestic leisure and residential — non-residential conferences for 40-50 people.



Q How have you positioned your properties?

We operate 14 small luxury hotels and resorts in eight cities and are a perfect choice for business or leisure travellers, who are looking for comforts of large hotels at an affordable price. We peg most of our hotels in an ARR of ₹ 4200-4600.

Q New initiatives and properties that you plan to launch this year?

Food and art are going to be two key focus areas for us this year. Recently we launched The Jehan in New

Delhi, Hyderabad, Udaipur, Chittorgarh and Goa. The Jehan as a concept is not restricted to any particular location and is about good lavish food made available at your desired location. The Jehan is about weddings, events, conferences, etc. As part of our expansion plan, we have opened another resort around north Goa by the name of Cabana Bay 15-A jüSTa Resort. The company is aggressively looking at expanding in Rajasthan as well. We wish to expand our portfolio by managing hotels on management contracts or revenue share models.



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New spin to Vkonect

Back in a new format, Vkonect MICE's principle was that a sanitised, closed door business meeting environment will lead to focused engagement with the quickest conversion potential.



India to sponsor WTM Buyers' Club

World Travel Market London 2015 has announced India Tourism as the sponsor of its prestigious WTM Buyers' Club as it looks to promote India to the global travel industry as a safe and year-round luxury destination.



TT BUREAU

World Travel Market, the leading global event for the travel industry, has opened registration for WTM 2015 to be held from November 2–5 and is poised to be the biggest and best yet. WTM is the must-attend four-day B2B exhibition for the worldwide travel and tourism industry. WTM 2014 saw a record 51,500 participants, including 9,100 buyers conducting business worth more than £2.5 billion with almost 5,000 exhibitors from 186 countries and regions.

India Tourism has been chosen by WTM London 2015 as the sponsor of its prestigious WTM Buyers' Club. In the first six months of 2015 the country welcomed 3.85 million tourists, up 3.4% on the same six months in 2014.

India is looking to increase its tourism numbers further by enticing tour operators from global source markets to promote the country as a year round luxury destination. The key to India's strategy is to focus on a variety of niche products – including; rural, wellness, medical, adventure, golf, MICE and cruise tourism – to overcome the aspect of 'seasonality' spread tourists around the country by promoting India as a 365 days destination, and expanding out from its most popular period of October to March.

Furthermore, India has an array of new products to promote to the world's leading buyers at WTM London 2015; including the development of its cruise industry, which will see Royal Caribbean include Indian ports in its itineraries from October.

The UK is India's second largest source market for tourists with 810,000 people visiting in 2014. India will look to sign deals at WTM 2015 with UK tour operators that will see the number of visitors from the country increase to one million in 2016.



“WTM London will host more than 9,000 of the most important buyers. India is in a prime position to promote its range of products to these buyers through its sponsorship of the WTM Buyers' Club.”

Simon Press
Senior Director, WTM

Dr. Lalit Panwar, Secretary (Tourism), Government of India, says, “India is very happy to be sponsoring the WTM Buyers' Club for WTM London 2015. The objective of the MOT is to promote India as a year round luxury destination through its vibrant destinations and tourism products and to increase tourist traffic to the country. There is an ever-increasing amount of new

and exciting products to educate the world's leading buyers about. WTM London is an event when the Indian tourism stakeholders get to meet the world's buyers and sign business agreements. The Ministry of Tourism and the Indian exhibitors look forward to a very successful WTM London 2015.”

Simon Press, Senior Director, WTM London, said,

“WTM London will host more than 9,000 of the world's most important buyers through the WTM Buyers' Club. These buyers will sign deals worth more than £2.5 million with exhibitors. India is in prime position to promote its exciting range of tourism products to these buyers through its sponsorship of the WTM Buyers' Club.”



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Going Global

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➔ Mexico is the Premier Partner for WTM 2015

➔ WTM 2015 will host more than 100 conference sessions with 17,000 delegates

A year of successful partnership

The Air India Star Alliance partnership successfully completed one year on July 11, 2015. Air India celebrated the day with fervour and enthusiasm across its offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The celebration functions included its employees and partners like travel agencies, corporates and other Star Alliance airlines.



Thailand woos enterprising agents

Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) North India Chapter recently held its Quarterly Member's Meet at The Park Hotel, New Delhi in association with Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB). The event saw participation from more than 80 members from Northern India Region.



Thai perks for ETAA

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CHIEF GUEST

Dr. Mahesh Sharma

Hon'ble Minister of State for Tourism And Culture (Independent Charge) & Civil Aviation, Government of India

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

- Captains of Medical and Wellness Tourism Industry.
- International & National Medical and Wellness Tourism Experts.
- Corporate Groups with investments in Medical infrastructure (Medical and Wellness Projects).
- Indian and Foreign Tour Operators.
- Medical and Wellness vacation Planners.
- Institutes imparting Medical and Wellness Tourism related Education.
- State Tourism Boards.
- Airlines.
- Medical and Wellness care professionals.
- Doctors.
- Medical Equipment Companies.
- Pharmaceuticals.
- Biotechnology Companies.
- Hotels.
- Spa Wellness.
- Travel Companies.
- Insurance Companies.
- Medical Students.
- Non-Profit Organisations etc.

THE PROBABLE ISSUES OF DISCUSSION

- Branding India as a better destination for Medical and Wellness Tourism.
- Innovative strategies to promote Medical and Wellness Tourism.
- Proper marketing for Medical and Wellness Tourism.
- Inadequate Grievances Redressal policy.
- Legal remedies for medical malpractice.
- Highly unorganized Medical and Wellness Tourism sector.
- Inequities embedded in the Medical and Wellness care system.
- Combining Medical and Wellness Tourism with Spiritual Tourism.

TAKE AWAYS

- Latest thinking from senior industry and policies from government leaders.
- B2B and professional networking.
- New investment opportunities in Medical Tourism market.



For further enquires please contact :

Manisha Singh – (O)011-49545454 Extn. 227; (M) 99531-91010 (E) manisha.singh@phdcci.in
Varun Gogia – (O) 011-49545454 Extn. 242 (M) 98710-98716 ; (E) varun.gogia@phdcci.in
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DID YOU Know?

Tamil Nadu: Most preferred by foreign tourists

As per country-wide data by the Union Tourism Ministry, foreign tourists chose Tamil Nadu over Maharashtra in 2014. Tamil Nadu drew 4.66 million foreign tourists while Maharashtra saw 4.39 million visitors. Tamil Nadu registered an approximate increase of 17% in its foreign tourist visits in 2014 as against 2013.

Skål builds its social network

At its luncheon meeting, Skål International Delhi recently felicitated Ajeet Bajaj, Managing Director, Snow Leopard Adventures, who was awarded the Skål Asia Environment Award at the Skål Asia held in Manila. The meet at The Claridges, New Delhi, also witnessed the launch of Skål's Facebook page.





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Keenly watching the Indian skies

The Aviation Day held recently in Delhi focussed on areas of opportunities that aviation provides for the Indian economy, as also the multiple challenges that need to be addressed by the stakeholders in the Indian aviation value chain. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India, was the chief guest at the event while Tony Tyler, Director General and CEO, IATA, delivered the keynote address.



Mainpat



Chitrakote Waterfall



Kailash Gufa



Mainpat

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Recognising hospitality stalwarts

India is home to some of the finest hotels in the world, with major international brands fighting out for its own piece of the pie in the hospitality sector in India. The spirit of Indian hospitality is well defined as “Atithi Devo Bhava” and transcends the ethos of the myriad hotel brands both Indian and international. It is this very spirit of hospitality that the first India Hospitality Awards 2015 recognised and acknowledged.



G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, Secretary Tourism, Government of Kerala

I am really happy that these kinds of awards are being held in God's own country. Tourism has been identified as one of the five Ts of nation building which include: Trade, Technology, Tradition, Training and Tourism which have been identified by the Govt. of India. Tourism is on the policy agenda, tourism has been identified as important for nation building. All the states are taking this very seriously, enhancing their budgets. The states are realising the importance of tourism. All the states have enhanced their budgets for the same. Gujarat has gone up to ` 600 crore, Maharashtra has raised its budgets to ` 400 crore. We also increased to ` 300 crore, a small state like Telangana has increased their budget to ` 300 crore. In the Spice market, we have constituted Tourism Promotion Investment board under the chairmanship of honorable chief minister of Kerala. We want to keep single window organisation for giving you all kinds of clearance for all projects. Whether it is CRZ clearances, or pollution control board clearances, or the land related clearances, you can come and request for it.

The Gallery of Legends award

Ashok Anantram
*Consultant-Sales and Marketing
GRT Group of Hotels & Resorts*

I have spent three decades in a fantastic company that ITDC is. Its work culture, environment, outstanding leadership, learning environment encouraged people to be risk takers. I guess that is why we were so much ahead in our time in hospitality sale and marketing. Good environment gets good people. Care concern, outgoing, customer relationship. In healthcare you really have to be very genuine and hats off to the doctors.



DDP Game Changer

Jose Dominic
MD & CEO, CGH Earth

Kerala is an incredible safe state, flowering Green, though now it is a little drier than it used to be. These awards being held in Kochi are for an industry which is more than for the tourists, more than for hotels it is now what is driving and creating jobs and livelihoods in the state. One in four new jobs created comes from tourism. Over 9.8 per cent of gross value added comes from this industry overtaking all other activities in Kerala.



DDP Trailblazer

KG Abraham
Chairman & MD, KGA Group of companies

It was dream since 1985 to have my own hotel. I left from Kuwait in 1976, 39 years ago, I was 22 years old, I went further to achieve this hotel and my dream by the grace of God. If Dubai can bring half a billion people as tourists I'm sure we can as well. Indian is full of history, greenery, geographical diversity; we all must work as a group to augment tourism.



Face of the Future

Abhishek Verma
General Manager, Holiday Inn Express Chennai
I would want to thank IHG for giving me this opportunity and India travel awards for recognising me. The award motivates me to do better in future.

And the winners for India Hospitality Awards 2015 for South & West are...					
S. NO	CATEGORY	NAME	S. NO	CATEGORY	NAME
A	Gallery of Legends	Ashok Anantram <i>Consultant, Sales and Marketing, GRT Group of Hotels & Resorts</i>	15	Spirit of Hospitality	Grand Hyatt Goa
B	DDP Game Changer	Jose Dominic <i>MD & CEO, CGH Earth</i>	16	Best Luxury Destination Wedding Resort	Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Alibaug
C	DDP Trailblazer	KG Abraham <i>Chairman & MD KGA Group of companies</i>	17	Best Designed Hotel	Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park
D	Face of the Future	Abhishek Verma <i>GM, Holiday Inn Express Chennai</i>	18	Best Holiday Accommodation	Poetree Sarovar Portico Thekkady
1	Best MICE Destination	Lavasa Tourism	19	Best Emerging Hotel	ibis Bengaluru City Centre
2	Best Restaurant and Bar	Mediterra,Sayaji Indore	20	Best F&B Manager of the Year	Ganesh Chalangodan-Holiday Inn Cochin
3	The Enterprising General Manager of the Year	Kunal Shanker - Holiday Inn Cochin	21	Best Technology Provider	InterGlobe Technology Quotient for Rooms and More
4	Best Budget Hotel	Nandhana Hotels (India)	22	Best All day Dining Restaurant	Festa - Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort
5	Excellence in Customer Service	Golden Tulip Grand View Resort, Goa	23	Best Luxury Hotel	Le Meridien Kochi
6	Best Luxury Wedding and MICE Hotel	Crowne Plaza Kochi	24	Best Luxury Resort	Leela Raviz Kovalam
7	Best Hotel Chain	Choice Hotels India	25	Best General Manager Mid Market	Ranganath Budumooru - Holiday Inn Express & Suites Hyderabad Gachibowli
8	Best Mid Market Hotel	Mercure Lavasa Hotel	26	Best Ancillary Services	Maini Materials Movement
9	Best City Hotel	The Capital - Trivandrum	27	Best Debut Heritage Hotel	The Poovath Heritage
10	Best Debut Hotel	Holiday Inn Express & Suites Hyderabad Gachibowli	28	Best Day Spa	Ora Regenesis Spa
11	Best Debut Business Hotel	Sayaji Kolhapur	29	Best Leisure Resort	Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere
12	Best Business Hotel	Radisson Blu Indore	30	Best Heritage Boutique Hotel	The Malabar House
13	Best Serviced Residence	Somerset Greenways Chennai	31	Best Boutique Hotel	Dream Cochin
14	Best Corporate Hotel	Holiday Inn Cochin	32	Hospitality Partner	Crowne Plaza Kochi
			33	Beverage Partner	Bacardi India
			34	Sponsor	Maini Materials Movement
			35	Sponsor	Karcher India

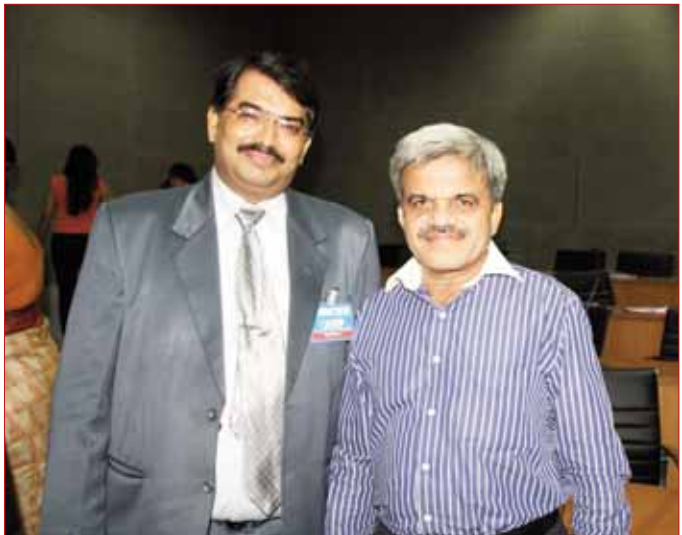
Maya glows with the stars

The first edition of India Hospitality Awards 2015, recognising outstanding contributions to the hospitality industry in West and South regions, was held on July 21 at Hotel Crowne Plaza Kochi. After the success of first region- wise Travel Awards in 2014-15, this new initiative has already garnered popularity and recognition within the hospitality industry.



300+ meetings at first TIM

Over 300 B2B meetings were witnessed at the first-ever Tourism Investors Meet in Delhi hosted by Ministry of Tourism in partnership with FICCI and Tourism Finance Corporation of India. The two-day event focused on interactive conclave, one to one meetings where by exhibiting destinations showcased 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.





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3	Bengaluru	Dubai Cruise Tourism Roadshow
4	Nagpur	Learn South Africa
4	Kolkata	Tourism Authority of Thailand B2B Roadshow
4	Chennai	Dubai Cruise Tourism Roadshow
5	Lucknow	DOT Philippines B2B Roadshow
6	Mumbai	Dubai Cruise Tourism Roadshow
6	Mumbai	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
6	Lucknow	Tourism Authority of Thailand B2B Roadshow
7	Delhi	DOT Philippines B2B Roadshow
7	Delhi	Dubai Cruise Tourism Roadshow
7-9	Vadodara	Holiday Expo
14 -16	Aurangabad	ITE
17	Ahmedabad	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow
18 -19	Mumbai	SATTE West
18 -20	Surat	Travel and Tourism Fair
18-20	Delhi	Incentive Travel & Conventions Meetings India
19	Mumbai	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow
21	Pune	Visit Britain B2B Roadshow
24	Mumbai	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
26	Bengaluru	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
27	Delhi	Medical & Wellness Tourism Summit
27	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority Trade Dinner
28	Delhi	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority B2B Roadshow
28-30	Mumbai	India International Travel Mart
31-Sep 1	Mumbai	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
31	Chennai	Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria Roadshow

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24-26	Kazakhstan	Astana Leisure

NATIONAL

1	Delhi	Tourism Queensland & Tourism Victoria Roadshow
2	Chennai	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
3-4	Ahmedabad	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
1-3	Jaipur	IBTM India
3-5	Gurgaon	India International Travel Mart
6-8	Bengaluru	PATA Travel Mart
7	Kolkata	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
7	Delhi	Atout France Networking
8	Delhi	Switzerland Tourism Workshop
8	Delhi	Atout France B2B Workshop
9	Bengaluru	Atout France B2B Workshop
9	Delhi	Visit Florida VIP Luncheon
9	Delhi	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
10	Mumbai	Atout France B2B Workshop
11-13	Ahmedabad	Travel & Tourism Fair
11	Lucknow	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
14	Chennai	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
16	Bengaluru	VisitBritain's 'Great Tourism Week' Roadshow
14-16	Mumbai	International Food Service India
16	Hyderabad	Hyderabad Fair

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

Greece: Blessing in disguise

Reeling under a financial crisis, Greece has become a much cheaper destination for travellers. The Mediterranean destination attracts travellers from the subcontinent during April-June and in the winter season. Travel to Greece has become cheaper for Indians, with the rupee having strengthened 8.2 per cent against the euro since December 2014. **TRAVTALK** speaks with industry leaders.



MEGHA PAUL

Greece will do its best to revive those products which are of a major part of their tourism. Tourism will definitely play a major role for them in resolving some part of the crisis. Last year, our association signed a MoU with Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourist Agencies (HATTA) from Greece. About 70 members went to experience the destination first-hand to sell and market Greece in India in a better way. We will honour the MoU with Greece. We are promoting travel to the country but will also see that our travellers are safe and secure.



Guldeep Singh Sahni
President, OTOAI



Greece has been a niche destination for Indian travellers and continues to attract them even through this crisis. We haven't seen a drop in numbers so far. In fact, we have seen higher interest from Indians planning to visit Europe, wherein Greece is one of the top choices as Indian currency has strengthened over Euro in the last few months. Even the last time the Greek crisis was looming large, the country became an attractive destination for Indians.

Manmeet Ahluwalia
Head- Marketing, Expedia India

Greece is a big opportunity right now. The Greek government might announce extra sops in service tax for tourists and this will only help boost tourism. Assuming the current debt crisis in Greece, the hotels might reduce their tariffs and this will go a long way. What we need is support from the Greek government so that visas can be issued faster in just two-three days.



Vineet Raina
Head-Outbound Tours, Jetair Tours



There could be a possibility of government raising the taxes for the locals. But they need money and thus, hopefully the country will balance it with the attractive pricing for tourists. However, the lack of direct flights could act as a deterrent for many travel buffs.

Augustus Barretto
Business Associate, Mercury Travels

At Thomas Cook India, we have taken comprehensive precautionary measures, and being fully hedged, we see zero impact to our businesses, both foreign exchange and leisure. Greece is an attractive destination, and although our stand-alone numbers are not as significant as other European destinations, a depreciation in the Euro will result in an upside with pricing benefits being passed on to our consumers, giving further impetus to our European uptake- already showing strong growth of over 33 per cent.



Madhavan Menon
Managing Director, Thomas Cook India



Ranjeet Oak
Chief Business Officer-Holidays, MakeMyTrip

Somebody's bad news might just be good news for our outbound travel industry. Greece has become cheaper as a destination. India outbound market is anyways expected to grow at least four times in the next four years and I see more travel to Greece. The only roadblock is the soaring airfares. Five years earlier, the airfares were about 40 per cent of the entire travel package. But now about 60 per cent of the travel package is spent on just airfares. So airlines need to give more incentives and offers to promote destinations.



Jayesh Ashar
Managing Director, Pearl Travels



The possibility of Greece as a destination becoming cheaper is high. This will assist us in promoting Greece as a destination for our outbound customers. We see this as an opportunity for leisure tourists who will benefit from a pricing perspective on account of the recent developments in Greece.

Prashant Binnany
Director, Discovery Holidays

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VISA TALK



Phasing out all Non-Machine Readable Passports (MRPs)

The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India has announced that all Indian citizens living in India and abroad must apply for urgent re-issuance their passports in the following cases.

- If holding handwritten passports.
- Passports valid for less than 6 months.
- If pages in the passport have exhausted.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has set a deadline of 24th November, 2015 for globally phasing out all Non-Machine Readable Passports (MRPs). From the above mentioned date, foreign governments may deny visa or entry to any person with a Non-MRP passport.



Change in Passport Collection Procedure: Spain

Consulate General of Spain in Mumbai has announced that representatives cannot collect the documents on behalf of an applicant from Spain Visa Application Centres in South & West except in following conditions:

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

However, applicants who do not wish to collect their documents in person and whose documents cannot be collected by one of the above will get their passports back by courier at an additional cost of Rs. 350/- to the dispatch address mentioned in the courier form and covering letter which has to be submitted along with the visa application. In case no specific address is mentioned on the covering letter and courier form, the passport will be sent to the address mentioned on the Visa Application Form.



Brazil: Type V Short Term Visa

Embassy of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Delhi has announced that applicants need to submit the copy of CNPJ certificate (Brazil Company Registration Certificate) along with the invitation letter when applying for Brazil Type V Short Term visa.

Visa Snippets:

- Embassy of Republic of Indonesia, New Delhi has announced that, Indonesia visa application form has to be filled online and the print out of the same has to be submitted along with the required documents.
- Indian Nationals can now avail Senegal visa on arrival for the stay up to 90 days.
- Embassy Royal Norwegian Embassy, Delhi has announced that, Norway visa applications will be submitted through VFS centres at following locations Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Chandigarh. For more details kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com

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FAITH update for May & June

► Draft National Tourism Policy:

Ministry of Tourism had kickstarted the formulation of the draft of the national tourism policy 2015-2020. We engaged with them at multiple levels in one on one meetings & in public platforms to give inputs to grow various sub-segments of Indian tourism, while also recording our concern with some of the proposed initiatives.

Our suggestions for growth of various aspects of Indian tourism touched upon: vintage car policy, adventure tourism initiatives, domestic tourism growth, cenat taxation reforms, GST tourism competitiveness, seamless tourism transportation, airline hills & hinterland connectivity, cruise tourism, & target setting for tourism market share & size enhancement etc. Most of these recommendations find their mention in the draft of the national tourism policy for action. We also recorded our concerns with the proposed initiatives of the policy for forming multiple bodies within the ministry of tourism itself which we felt may have the potential to enhance bureaucracy with overlapping roles, without enhancing speed of implementation or accountability.

► Foreign Trade Policy Inputs:

To enhance foreign exchange earnings, Foreign Trade policy 2015-2020 was launched in April, by ministry of commerce. It was the first time that a detailed interaction was undertaken with the tourism industry through the FAITH platform on tourism. Through structured initiatives, most of our board members had engaged with ministry of commerce over past 18 months for inputs on this policy. Two of our very key suggestions were implemented that is- 1. setoff of service tax liabilities against credit scrips of

foreign exchange earnings and 2. tradability of unused credit scrips. However, as per a joint decision of the ministry of commerce & finance, the entitlement of this duty credit was brought down drastically across the board for all goods & services in the new FTP. We kicked off our discussions on this issue and on other aspects of the FTP with the ministry of commerce.

► GET Review:

After the completion of GET - Global Exhibition on Tourism, FAITH Board, through two meetings, undertook an intensive review of the same for feedback and for further enhancement of GET process to make it even more efficient & effective. Additionally, a sub-committee has been formed by a set of members of the Board to put together the draft of a Blue Book, which will be lay out the execution template & standard operating procedure for the next GET.

► GET 2016:

Ministry of Commerce, engaged with FAITH to kick start the ideation for the next GET, including at a very broad level, its concept & timing. FAITH has shared its thoughts of creating an exclusive, globally benchmarked travel exhibition from India which touches the segment of inbound & domestic both while spanning various sub segments of Indian tourism (adventure, heritage, mices, culture, Eco etc) and various Indian States.

► Inter-Ministerial meeting:

The proposed Inter-Ministerial meeting of various ministries & officials of the central government to discuss and converge on a shared vision for tourism has been getting deferred for some time now, due to the

non-availability of senior officials. To ensure that this important intervention is undertaken, FAITH maintained its follow up with the minister of tourism & officials of ministry of commerce, which has started undertaking this exercise for various services sectors of India.

► J&K meeting:

On lines of the result oriented, format of our state brain-storming on tourism, discussions were held with the chief minister and various tourism officials of J&K to conduct a similar one there. The dates are under planning for J&K & for other states.

► Delhi Luxury Tax:

Delhi assembly unilaterally enhanced the luxury tax in their budget on June 27, which makes delhi hotels even more uncompetitive as it is levied on rack rates. FAITH sent a detailed letter showing the economic impact of this move and follow up meetings are now planned for the same.

► Tourism constitutional classification:

Economic affairs of Ministry of Finance engaged with FAITH, to map the constitutional classification of tourism in India and our thoughts on the same for going forward to improve the tourism industry.

► Bureau of Industrial Standards:

BIS, a body of ministry of consumer affairs, which generates the ISI mark, engaged with FAITH to ideate for creation of a workshop on quality standards setting for the tourism & hospitality industry. An exhaustive workshop has been planned in one of the coming months to engage with the presidents & leaders of various member associations of FAITH.




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Claridges Hotels & Resorts

New Delhi

Anuj Bidani has been appointed as the Director of Sales and Marketing for The Claridges, New Delhi and The Nabha Residence, Mussoorie. With over 13 years of vast experience in hospitality industry Bidani possesses great leadership skills, a passion for excellence and a talent for developing high-performing teams that drive excellent business results. Prior to joining The Claridges, New Delhi, he was responsible for creating new markets for premier 5-star properties; the most recent being Swissotel Kolkata, a part of Fairmont Raffles Hotels International.



Shangri-La Hotel

Bengaluru

Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru has appointed **Ramasamy Natarajan** as Director of Sales. In his new role, Natarajan will head the Sales Department encompassing corporate sales, MICE and travel trade business. With more than 11 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Natarajan has worked with various 5-star hotels; in his last assignment, he was part of the pre-opening team and led the sales team at Fairmont Jaipur. His idea of rejuvenation is spending time with his two Labradors. Outside work, he enjoys cooking and travelling.



Somerset Greenways

Chennai

Supriya Malhotra has been appointed as General Manager at Somerset Greenways Ascott. She comes with 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to her current role, Malhotra was General Manager of Radisson Blu Resort and Spa, Alibaug. She has also served as General Manager at Oakwood Premier Mumbai and held leadership positions at international brands like Renaissance and Marriott Executive Apartments. Malhotra holds a Diploma in Hotel Management from IHM, New Delhi.



ANYA Hotel

Gurgaon

Vijay Krishnan V Menon has taken over as General Manager at ANYA Hotel Gurgaon - Member of Design Hotels. With over 19 years of experience with leading hospitality brands, Menon brings an array of skills and core competencies to the table. His last operational role was being the General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton, Starwood Asia Pacific Hotels & Resorts. He has also worked with brands like Hyatt Regency Kolkata, The Park Bangalore, Chennai & Kochi American Express – Global Corporate Services, Le Meridien Hotel Bangalore & Resorts & The Oberoi Hotel Mumbai.



Four Points by Sheraton

Vishakhapatnam

Four Points by Sheraton Vishakhapatnam has appointed **Aditya Shamsher Malla** as General Manager. Malla brings with him over 21 years of experience in hospitality industry and has previously held Excom assignments with Starwood as Director of Sales & Marketing of The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, as EAM – Sales & Marketing of The Westin Mumbai Garden City and as General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Jaipur.



Ranbanka Palace

Jodhpur

Prakash Topa has been appointed as the new General Manager-Sales & Marketing at Ranbanka Palace. Topa comes with an experience of over 20 years in the travel and hospitality industry. He was earlier serving as the General Manager at NIDRA Hotel by C & C Alpha Group in Vadodara. He started his career with The Connaught, New Delhi, after which he worked with Hotel Jeddah Trident, Bristol Hotel in Gurgaon, Quality Inn DV Manor, Hotel Howard Park Plaza and Holiday Inn.



Crowne Plaza

Bengaluru

Padma Prasad has been appointed as Talent Development Manager by Crowne Plaza, Bengaluru. A seasoned hotelier, Prasad has over two decades of experience in the industry and has worked for international hospitality groups such as Taj Hotels, Radisson Blu, A&W Fast foods (Doha) & Professor (HOD) in SL College of HM & CS. He has successfully supported and contributed to Crowne Plaza Kochi in Quality & Training needs since August 2012 and will continue providing the quality and training needs for the Bengaluru property.



Kempinski Ambience Hotel

New Delhi

Rahul Gautam joins Kempinski Ambience Hotel, Delhi, as its Assistant Director Food and Beverage. Gautam has more than 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry in India and the UK. In his current role, he will be responsible for developing procedures, service standards and operational policies, planning and implementing effective control to reduce running costs. Prior to joining Kempinski Ambience Hotel Delhi, Gautam was with Amanbagh in Alwar, Rajasthan, as a Food and Beverage Manager. His previous stints include Novotel-United Kingdom, Taj Mahal Hotel, and The Oberoi. He is a graduate from Delhi University.



Buzz Travel Marketing India

New Delhi

Ashish Saran has been appointed by Buzz Travel Marketing India as Account Head for VIA Rail Canada India operations. With an experience of over 20 years in the hospitality and travel industry, Saran has a unique distinction of marketing both Europe & Canada. Having in-depth knowledge of the B2B market pan-India, he now takes on the role of promoting VIA Rail Canada in India.

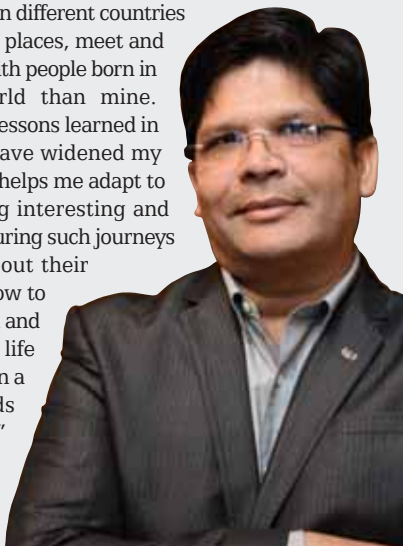


TALKing People

Rohit Vig, Managing Director, StayWell Hospitality Group, is a travel buff, yet he likes to spend quality time with his daughter. "I like spending my leisure time with my daughter. Also I love travelling. Whenever I want to take a break, I visit the hills, which India has aplenty. So majorly, it's family time when I am not working. I try to have at least one day in a week when I don't look at my phone or check e-mails."



Ajit Koushik, Area General Manager- India, Ascott, says nothing makes him happier than travelling. "Travelling is my passion and nothing has been more fulfilling to me than the sights of a new city, traditions of different cultures, the flavors of new food and the sound of an unfamiliar language," Koushik says. "I have been fortunate to live in different countries and explore new places, meet and build relations with people born in a different world than mine. Travels and the lessons learned in every journey have widened my perspective and helps me adapt to change. Meeting interesting and diverse people during such journeys and learning about their philosophy on how to live has enriched and transformed my life and knowledge in a way that words cannot express," he adds.



Sahib Gulati, Director-Marketing, EllBee Hospitality Worldwide, is an alumni of University of Southern California and the London School of Economics. Gulati's favourite destination in India is Rishikesh, and abroad he likes to visit London. He feels that the young generation would help the industry add a new dimension in their approach. "I see a lot of young entrepreneurs joining the hospitality industry be it as travel agents, destination planners, restaurant owners or hoteliers who are bringing in the exposure of new knowledge that may not have been tapped by the industry before," Gulati adds. In his free time, Gulati loves to play cricket, football and tennis. His interest in the art world is reflected at Ganga View, where he has encouraged established and young artists to liven up the hotel areas and also help maintain and revive the old traditional arts for the guests and locals.



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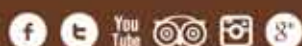
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NIKKI COLLEGE DESIGN

Namma Bengaluru, says PATA

Buoyant about hosting the PATA Travel Mart in Bengaluru this year, RV Deshpande, Higher Education and Tourism Minister, Karnataka Government, says they are the first state in the country to appoint a consultant to rate their hotels and homestays.



PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

How has the tourism scenario changed lately on a central level as well as the state level?

Tourism is the top agenda of the Government of India as well as the state government. We are trying to build infrastructure and we are trying to address concerns like security and cleanliness. After UNWTO and WTTC, PATA is one of the three biggest travel associations of the world and Karnataka is glad to have won the bid to host PATA Travel Mart. From September 6-8 this meet will happen in Bengaluru and we have requested the PM to inaugurate the event. Delegates have started registering, and more than Karnataka this will help the country to grow. In many countries tourism contributes to more than 15-18 per cent of the GDP, some such countries are Cambodia,

“We are now concentrating more on infrastructure and cleanliness, the Tourist Mitra concept (Tourism Police) is also going to be implemented in the state and the idea of this is give security to the tourists. We are the first state in the country to appoint a consultant to rate our hotels and homestays.”

RV Deshpande
Higher Education and Tourism Minister
Government of Karnataka



snow, you'll find everything, be it beach, wellness, heritage, adventure, eco-tourism, or religious tourism, we have everything, but we also need to do a lot and we are working on that.

immense opportunity to promote the state at a global level.

How are you involving private entrepreneurs for tourism development?

Tourism is our thrust area and we understand that we need to address various concerns. We have initiated many programmes in Karnataka to promote tourism, we have started a programme for corporates to adopt tourist destinations, to keep them neat and clean and provide toilet and water facilities and many corporate have come forward to participate in this. If tourism has to grow we need to approach professionals to build tourism.

How do you plan to encourage corporates to invest in the tourism sector?

Investment in tourism sector is absolutely necessary; we have highly skilled manpower, which is key to the travel and tourism industry. We have brought out an investment-friendly tourism policy where incentives and concessions are being made available across 17 tourism products. The state will promote and encourage hotels and resorts to come up with wayside amenities, museums and galleries and will also promote agro and adventure tourism.



Malaysia and Singapore; in India tourism contribution has not been more than 6.3 per cent to the GDP and that is because tourism has not been tapped at the national or state levels. We want to do it very aggressively. I met the Prime Minister and the Tourism Minister Dr Mahesh Sharma is also very interested.

What is the state government doing specifically to promote tourism in Karnataka?

Tourism is of top-most priority of the Karnataka Government. We are now concentrating more on infrastructure and cleanliness, the Tourist Mitra concept (Tourism Police) is also going to be implemented in the state and the idea of this is give security to the tourists. We are the first state in the country to appoint a consultant to rate our hotels and homestays. Our new tourism policy is almost ready, it has been cleared by the Cabinet; we'll release it soon. We have also come up with an infrastructure corporation. Karnataka is one state in which, except

Which tourists have a greater share in the tourist arrivals of Karnataka — domestic or international?

The figures are difficult to understand, we are working on a system where we want to know exactly how many tourists visited the state — domestic or international. Domestic travel has also grown a lot. Our Chief Minister is also keen that we aggressively market tourism. The PATA Travel Mart will add to the growth of tourism in the country, more so in Karnataka.

How will PATA Travel Mart help to further the cause of tourism in Karnataka?

Our Chief Minister is committed to the growth of tourism in the state. This is the third PTM in India, and we have a big responsibility. However, even though the event's happening in Karnataka, this event is for the entire country. PATA will also be hosting an Investors' Meet for the first time during PTM, this will give us an

State of the affairs

- ➔ Karnataka's new tourism policy will be unveiled soon
- ➔ The state will promote wayside amenities, museums and galleries

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