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Medical tourism board up & running

On the occasion of World Tourism Day, Ministry of Tourism launched the Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board to promote India as a medical tourism hub.

SAMAPTI DAS

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) celebrated World Tourism Day on the theme of 'One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities.' Speaking on the occasion in New Delhi, **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge), and Minister of State for Civil Aviation, said that tourism is the engine of economic growth and there is a need to increase India's share in world tourism



from 0.68 to one per cent by 2020 to realise the full potential of this sector.

To promote India as a tourism hub, especially in the field of medical and wellness,

MOT launched the Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board with an initial amount of ₹ 2 crore. Releasing the Tourism Vision Document 2030, Dr Sharma said that low-cost

medical facilities are India's strength and should be taken advantage of for promoting tourism.

"It is for this reason that the government took the important decision of setting up the Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board," he said, adding that AYUSH facilities will be promoted along with regular medical facilities. The Board will be chaired by the Union Tourism Minister and consists of members representing related government departments, tourism and hos-

Foundation stone laid for Paryatan Bhawan

MOT well utilised the occasion of World Tourism Day by laying the foundation stone of its new office building, 'Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Paryatan Bhawan.' Finance Minister **Arun Jaitley** laid the foundation stone at Mandir Marg in New Delhi. The stone was laid in the presence of **Dr Mahesh Sharma**, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Tourism and Culture (Independent Charge), and MoS for Civil Aviation, and **Meenakshi Lekhi**, Member of Parliament.

NDMC will construct the building on a 23,000 sq. metre area at an estimated cost of ₹ 150 crore. It will be a green building with all modern amenities and adequate parking facilities.

pitality sectors and experts in the medical, wellness and yoga, said Sharma, who himself is a medical doctor.

Vinod Zutshi, Secretary, Tourism, Govt of India, said

that tourism is an important instrument of economic growth. We must utilise every opportunity to enhance tourism in India which can help in building the economy and generate employment.

Sunil Kumar, new TAAI President

HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has elected **Sunil Kumar** (CEO, Travel World) as its President for the term 2015-17. The announcement was made during TAAI's 64th Annual General Meeting and Elections held at Sahara Star Hotel Mumbai on September 30. While **Marzban Antia** (Managing Director, Avesta Travel & Tours) will be the new Vice President, **Lokesh Bettaiah** (CEO, Triway

Travels) has been chosen for the post of Secretary General and **Jay Bhatia** (Director, Tulsidas Khimji Holidays) will be the Treasurer. TAAI elections are held every two years. The newly elected Members of the Managing Committee are **Bhagwan Ramnani** (Vensimal World Travel Agents), **Jyoti Mayal** (New Airways Travels), **Anil Kumar** (Acma Travel Tours), **Imtiaz Qureshi** (Viceroy Travels), **Devaki Thiyagarajan** (Avocet Tours & Travel), **R. Venkatachalam** (Naveen Air Travels), and **Shreeram Patel** (Unicorn Travels).



Newly elected TAAI Office Bearers & Managing Committee members

Hear from the Office Bearers on page 35 ▶

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1000+ attend FHRAI convention

Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) held its Golden Jubilee Convention from Sept 25-27, 2015. The event saw participation from MOT and tourism and hospitality industry big wigs.



KANCHAN NATH FROM BHUBANESWAR

The 50th annual convention of FHRAI was held at Mayfair Convention and Lagoon Bhubaneswar, Odisha,

Jual Oram, Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, **Debi Prasad Mishra**, Industries Minister, Odisha,

Union Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge), **Tourism (Independent Charge)** and **Civil Aviation**, **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Tourism Secretary

Karnataka, **R V Deshpande**, and **Dilip Ray**, Chairman, Convention Organising Committee, and Founder-Mayfair Hotels, were also present during the event. The



from September 25-27. Odisha Chief Minister **Naveen Patnaik** inaugurated the event in the presence of **Gokul Chandra Pati**, Chief Secretary, Odisha, **Ashok Chandra Panda**, Minister Tourism & Culture, Odisha;

FHRAI President **T S Walia**, FHRAI Vice Presidents **Bharat Malkani**, **K. Syama Raju**, and **Luv Malhotra**, FHRAI Hony. Secretary, **Vivek Nair**, and FHRAI Hony. Treasurer **Sudesh Kumar Poddar**.

Vinod Zutshi, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (Independent Charge) and Parliamentary Affairs **Rajiv Pratap Rudy**, Minister for Higher Education and Tourism, Government of

three day event saw technical sessions, Heritage Walk and carnival commemorating World Tourism Day on September 27, showcasing the folk dances and culture of various parts of the country.

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TRAVELTALK
 VIEWPOINT

What a September it's been!

What an eventful month September has turned out to be for the travel industry!

The month opened with Ashwani Lohani taking charge as CMD of Air India and the travel fraternity cheered this decision.

We then went on to get a new Secretary as Vinod Zutshi succeeded Lalit Panwar in the Ministry of Tourism. Having already served as the Secretary, Tourism, for Rajasthan and Chairman of the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation, we sure hope that Zutshi will use his experience in the industry to further the cause of tourism in the country.

The IATO Convention in Indore turned the focus on Tier II. In this manner tourism travels to smaller cities also. FHRAI celebrated its Golden Jubilee Convention and conducted elections.

It is also a matter of great pride for India to have hosted the PATA Travel Mart.

The National Tourism Awards felicitated the best, giving a thumbs-up to the hard work done in the industry.

Three different training institutes held their conclaves on HR and skill development on the same Saturday... why would that happen?

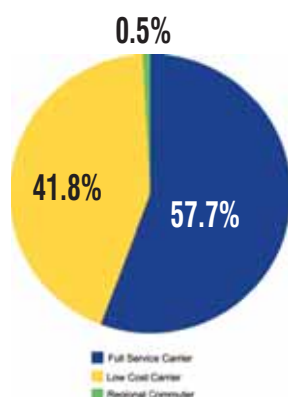
The awaited TAAI elections took place on the last day of the month amidst much expectation and curiosity.

And the eTV facility is making sure that visa issues don't pose a hindrance for foreign tourists. As it extends to more countries, it is evident that tourism occupies pride of place in the country's priority list. The question now is, 'Is eTV enough to woo foreign tourists? What about infrastructure facilities? How well trained is the manpower in the country? Do we have enough connectivity with other foreign destinations? Are we equipped enough to handle the influx of tourists?' So many questions still!

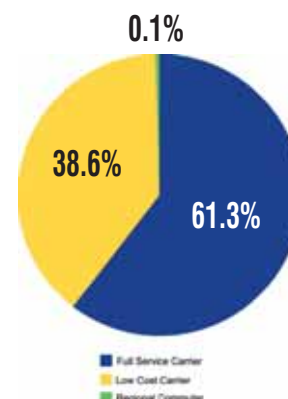
LCC demands at airports rising

The Indian market has shifted predominantly to low-cost and only Jet Airways and Air India continue to operate with a full service cost structure.

Delhi Indira Gandhi Airport International Capacity (Seats) by Carrier Type, June 22-28, 2015

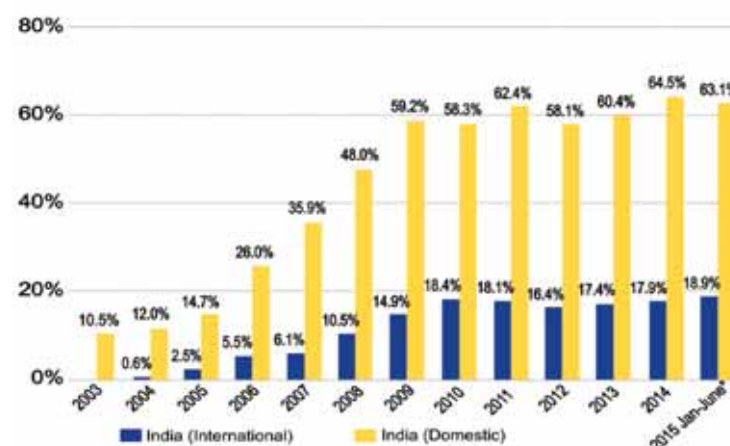


Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport International Capacity (Seats) by Country, June 22-28, 2015



LCC Capacity Share (%) of Total Seats in India: 2003 to 2015 Jan-June*

*Year to Month indicated
 Source: CAPA-Centre for Aviation with Data providing by OAG



LCCs' penetration into India (seat capacity share) recently came close to 65 per cent of all seats in the domestic arena in 2014 – its highest ever level – and touched 19% on international routes in January 2015 to May 2015, again the highest level recorded. In the capital Delhi, a PPP since 2006 and where there are two terminals – T1D and T3 – T1D is effectively the low-cost terminal. In Mumbai, also a PPP since 2006, the situation has historically been that Terminal 1 handles domestic passengers (both LCC and FSC) and Terminal 2 handles international ones (also both LCC and FSC).

West India Travel Awards @ Goa

Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort is all set to host the second edition of the West India Travel Awards on 14 October, 2015.



The India Travel Awards now heads west to Goa to honour the achievers of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry from the region. The much sought-after awards event is scheduled to commence at Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort on October 14, 2015.

SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, says, "The awards are a true specimen of the contribution of various companies and individuals to take tourism to a different level. These awards recognise

extraordinary efforts of people who have made the real difference. A first of its kind, formal Black Tie event, India Travel Awards will make a difference to the industry by recognising regional talent, thereby raising the bar."

Amidst the flurry of preparations, Rohan Sable, General Manager, Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort comments, "The event is a prestigious one for the hospitality industry and the travel sector, and it prepares the groundwork for future generations to excel in this field.



SanJeet
 Mentor
 India Travel Awards



Rohan Sable
 General Manager, Grand Mercure
 Goa Shrem Resort

On hosting the awards for the first time, he comments, "We are certain that Grand Mercure Goa Shrem Resort will create

a niche for itself. We are happy to host the event at our hotel and we are leaving no stone unturned to make it a success."



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'Integrated tourism development'

Vinod Zutshi, the newly appointed Tourism Secretary, Government of India, has called for an integrated and coordinated strategy, involving all the stakeholders, for the development of tourism in India.



RUCHI J SINGH

"Tourism is an integrated development, so my effort would be to involve all the stakeholders and all the players at all the levels," Zutshi said.

He called on the travel trade, hospitality, inter-ministerial and inter-state bodies to come up with a co-ordinated approach.

He said that the constitution of the National Medical & Wellness Tourism Board is in the final stages and it is envisaged as a professional body independent of the government.

India to attend CITM from Nov 13-15

Underlining the importance of tapping the China market, Zutshi revealed

that a delegation led by **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) and MoS for Civil Aviation, will represent India at China International Travel Mart (CITM) to be held at Kunming Dianchi International Convention & Exhibition Centre from Nov. 13-15, 2015.

CITM, jointly organised by the China National Tourism Administration, Civil Aviation Administration of China and Yunnan Provincial People's Government, will have 2,400 standard shell scheme booths.

Zutshi said the ministry is waiting to have maximum number of participants enrolled before they book a stall at the mart.

Message to agents

Zutshi called on travel agents to tap the motivation that causes Indians to travel, be it religious or adventure, or any other.

"Indians are on the move. If you talk of domestic tourists, it is not like people in India are allergic to moving out of their homes. They are moving with motivation.

"When it comes to religious motivation, they move without any advertisement and publicity," said Zutshi.

About innovations to boost tourism, he said that it is time we started highlighting lesser-known places, which are only thronged by the natives and showcase them on the national level. ↴



Vinod Zutshi
Secretary - Tourism
Government of India

India is a hidden treasure as far as tourism is concerned, and to unfold and unveil this hidden treasure, it requires a complete, integrated strategy to promote all aspects of tourism

"India is a hidden treasure as far as tourism is concerned, and to unfold and unveil this hidden treasure, it requires a complete, integrated strategy to promote all aspects of tourism."

Zutshi was speaking at an interactive luncheon to welcome him as the new Secretary Tourism as well as **Ashwani Lohani**, new Chairman & Managing Director, Air India. The occasion also bid farewell to former Tourism Secretary **Lalit Panwar**, Additional Secretary **Girish Shankar** and **Usha Sharma**, former Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism.

Zutshi said that the ministry is on the job to get more nations under the eTV umbrella and hasten the new Tourism Policy.

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They make India incredible...

The National Tourism Awards given out by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, recognises industry leaders and trend-setters in tourism and hospitality sector. The awards were organised recently in New Delhi. TRAVELTALK brings to you reactions from some of the award winners.

TT BUREAU



Best Inbound Tour Operator/Travel Agent (Category II) 2nd Prize
Minar Travels

Awards are always welcome. We definitely feel elated at this addition year after year. We are thankful to our staff and our associates all over India and abroad, for the support. And above all, our Principals all over the world for reposing their trust in Minar to handle their business.

H S Duggal
Managing Director, Minar Travels



Best Responsible tourism destination: Thekkady Kerala Tourism

The establishment has been consistently striving to position the state as a global destination with a focus on sustaining and preserving the land's nature, culture and tradition. The tourism industry collectively in Kerala is doing well. The tour operators

and the hoteliers are coming together to contribute to the growth of tourism in the state. The agents are helpful as they enthusiastically participate in international as well as domestic roadshows.

G Kamala Vardhana Rao
Tourism Secretary, Govt of Kerala



Best Inbound Tour Operator/Travel Agent (Category IV)
Vasco Travel

This is our sixth National Award since inception, but this one is really special for us as we have won it in our 25th year in the business. This has been possible only because of the commitment from my entire team and I would like to thank them personally. Not to forget all my industry friends, colleagues and overseas partners who supported us at all times.

Vikas Abbott
Managing Director, Vasco Travel

Best Tourist Transport Operator
Ecos Mobility & Hospitality New Delhi



It was an honour for us to receive this award from the honourable President of India. Our unwavering client focus, obsession with quality and at all times wanting to be one step ahead of our competitors, was not easy, either as a goal or as a level to maintain.

Rajesh Loomba
Managing Director, ECO Rent a Car

Best Tourist Transport Operator (Category I)
Parveen Travels, Chennai



We are proud of this moment as this is the ninth time that we have received this award. It is just sheer hard work and team work which has placed us in this position. Today we rank number one in India for the maximum number of arrivals, both domestic and international tourists. With the able support of our Chief Minister & as per her vision, by 2023 Tamil Nadu will bring in 150 lakh tourist arrivals into our state.

A. Arif
Managing Director, Praveen Travels

Best Heritage Hotel (Basic Category)
Samode Hotels



Its an honour to win the National Tourism Award and for Samode Haveli it is a matter of pride for winning the award for the 7th time. At Samode Haveli, Jaipur we have added a new restaurant, which gives a traveller a new option to dine. We are also going to upgrade Samode Haveli rooms and possibly add 10 more Suites next year as we see a demand for more accommodation.

Krishna Pal Singh
Vice President-Sales & Marketing, Samode Hotels



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Czech visas get easier

In a first, Czech Republic has outsourced its visa processing in India and tied up with VFS Global to open two visa facilitation centres – one each in Mumbai and New Delhi.



HAZEL JAIN

The Czech Republic has outsourced its visa application process to VFS Global and has opened two Visa Application Centres (VAC) – one each in Mumbai and New Delhi. This is the first time the Embassy of the Czech Republic in India has outsourced its visa application

an increased capacity of visas,” Hovorka added.

He revealed that going forward Czech Republic will be part of the annual roadshow that takes place in December. The roadshow is conducted by the European Quartet, comprising the countries of the Visegrád Group, namely Czech Republic,

Slovak Republic, Poland and Hungary.

“Czech Republic will focus on a few select segments in India such as incentives and weddings, spa and wellness, and Bollywood. We have more than 80 golf courses and 200 castles and chateaus that are perfect for MICE and weddings, respectively.

“Czech Republic is the fastest growing economy in Europe growing at four per cent for the second consecutive quarter,” the ambassador said.

He also voiced the destination’s long-term plans for India by revealing that it would someday like to build airports in India and provide training.

Direct Delhi-San Francisco on Air India from Dec 2

■ Air India will launch Delhi-San Francisco flight from Dec 2, 2015 onwards which will fly thrice a week, Union Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Culture (Independent Charge), and Civil Aviation, **Dr Mahesh Sharma** announced. San Francisco will be the national carrier’s fourth destination in the United States after New York, Newark and Chicago where it operates daily non-stop flights. The Boeing 777-200 LR (Long Range) flight, to be operated on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, will have a convenient

early morning departure and arrival. Sharma also announced ‘Discover India’ scheme fares of Air India. Under the scheme, a tourist can discover India in one or two weeks at a reasonable travel cost. A tourist can buy five coupons for `32,500 (15 days validity) or 10 coupons for `60,000 (30 days validity) for exciting Indian destinations, serviced by Air India & Alliance Air without worrying about ticket price fluctuation. In another initiative, Air India will introduce Incredible Air India holiday packages from Dec 1, 2015.



Milan Hovorka
Ambassador Designate
Czech Republic to India and Bhutan

In 2014, we received 9,000 applications, which was a 20 per cent increase from 2013

process. Services at both the locations commenced on 9 September, 2015.

Milan Hovorka, Ambassador Designate of the Czech Republic to India and Bhutan, was in Mumbai to inaugurate the first VFS Global visa centre in India. He said, “We have been recording a growing number of applications for short-term visas from India. In 2014, we received 9,000 applications, which was a 20 per cent increase from 2013. In the first six months of 2015 alone, we processed 7,500 visas.”

The centre in New Delhi is located at International Trade Tower in Nehru Place and the one in Mumbai is located in Trade Centre at Bandra Kurla Complex.

“My mission here started from September 1, 2015. I will be more than keen to take the bilateral relations between the two countries to a whole new level. First, we will gain practical experience with this new development and after that we will be more than keen to expand and open new centres in other places in India. However, at the same time we at the embassy need to have the ability to deal with



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Train trips preferred in Europe

Rail Europe recently published the results of a survey it conducted in May 2015 to find out about the travellers' preferable mode of travel while they are in Europe, and 73 per cent chose the train.

TT BUREAU

Rail Europe has published the results of its latest survey called 'Train, the preferred way to travel around Europe'. As the title indicates, the aim

travel around Europe, 73 per cent answered the train. Air travel was the second most popular means of transport in Europe.

The three main reasons travellers gave to indicate

When all factors are taken into account (hotel transfer, airport/station transfer, check-in time etc), trains are the fastest solution to reach all main cities in Europe. When asked what



of the survey was to get feedback from travellers and customers around their choice of travel when they are visiting Europe. Data were collected in April-May 2015 with 4,949 respondents.

When they were asked which was the preferred way to

why they preferred trains were: comfort on board, convenience, and the wide range of destinations available. View of diverse landscapes, price, time saver, eco-friendly, and interaction with locals are among the advantages cited by travellers.

were the main reasons why they visit Europe, 84 per cent of travellers answered it was for holidays followed by 13 per cent who said they went to Europe to visit families. Finally the survey showed that more than 30 per cent of visitors are couples.

PATA Gold for Kerala Project

Kerala Tourism was awarded the PATA Gold in the Heritage and Culture category, honouring the state tourism department's leadership in carrying out the Muziris Heritage Project.

TT BUREAU

Kerala Tourism Secretary, G Kamala Vardhana Rao received the award at the ceremony. The top Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Award for heritage conservation is an honour that highlights the state's trend-setting efforts in reinventing the millennia-old Spice Route heritage. The international award, which recognises excellence and innovation in global tourism practices, was presented to Kerala Tourism at a glittering awards ceremony held during PATA Travel Mart in Bengaluru.

and history for the sake of the modern generation and through it achieve the goal of growth and development for our people," he said. "Muziris Heritage Project is a mammoth

are involved in the day-to-day work carried out on the ground to preserve our rich heritage."

Rao added, "The Muziris Heritage Project is a



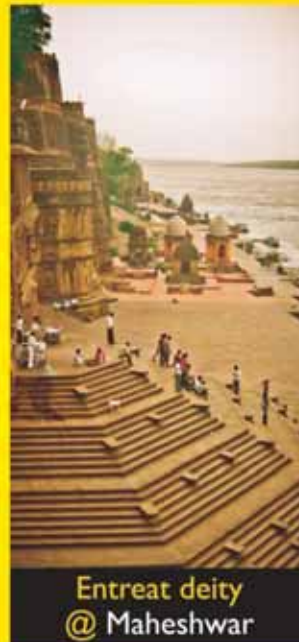
Kerala Tourism Secretary G Kamala Vardhana Rao receiving the PATA Gold award

"We are humbled by this huge honour for our state," said AP Anilkumar, Tourism Minister, Government of Kerala. "The award is an acknowledgement of the initiative to bring back our tradition

conservation undertaking never before attempted in our country in recent times in terms of its size and scale," Anilkumar added. "This is an award for the community and stakeholders in the state who

vital element in the restoration of the historical Spice Route led by Kerala Tourism and supported by the Central government and international organisations like UNESCO."

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TBO's 1st portal for agents

TravelBoutique Online launches Online Dynamic Packages, first B2B online portal in India for travel agents to book trade services from a single platform.

ANKITA SAXENA

TravelBoutique Online launched India's first online B2B portal on September 9, at India Habitat Centre, which brings all travel trade facilities on one digital platform. The Online Dynamic Packages allow travel agents to book hotels, travel services, sightseeing and other package offers online and choose from the



Ankush Nijhawan
Managing Director
TravelBoutique Online

ages from and then combine them for retail, but at TBO, we offer a one-stop shop to avail everything quickly in a matter of minutes. I am proud to announce that we are launching India's first B2B online portal which is a seamless process to book everything online swiftly."

According to Nijhawan, the digital B2B portals will be the game-changers in the industry that will help in increasing inbound tourism. The portal will also reduce the time and effort put in by travel agents to acquire package deals from various sources. He said, "The commission rates are also on the higher end, ranging approximately from 10 to 12 percent in this trade."

Emphasising on the importance of going digital, Nijhawan said, "There is always a chance of losing some customers and clients despite rigorous physical interaction."

Discussing the objective for the launch, **Ankush Nijhawan**, Managing Director, Nijhawan Group, says, "Travel agents have to search suppliers to buy pack-

vast inventory on the website. It allows travel agents to maximise exposure, increase revenue and tap into new markets through this digital platform.

The commission rates are also on the higher end, ranging approximately from 10 to 12 percent in this trade

Focus on Luxury and MICE

Its 'business as usual' for Kuoni India even as it directs its focus on the luxury and corporate travel segments in a bid to improve profits next year.

TT BUREAU

Even as Thomas Cook acquired Kuoni India in August this year, it will continue "business as usual," according to **Rajeev Wagle**, MD, Kuoni India. Speaking at the preview of the Kuoni-SOTC's The India Holiday Report 2015 in Mumbai, he added that the transaction is yet to receive all regulatory approvals.

The 'business as usual' status was also indicated by two other launches that Kuoni India has directed – its second edition of 'Perfect Moments – Luxury Travel Collection' and the second edition of its corporate booking tool SONIC 2.2. This implies a keen focus on the luxury and corporate segments.

Speaking about profitability, Wagle admitted, "Last year wasn't profitable for us. But 2015 might just be the best year in history for Kuoni India. We are at the cusp of Q4 and we expect to hit profitability by



(L-R) Vishal Suri, CEO (Tour Operating), Kuoni India, Rajeev Wagle, MD, Kuoni India, and Manoj Chacko, CEO, Kuoni Business Travel

December 2015 on the back of strong growth in leisure and MICE segments."

Vishal Suri, CEO (Tour Operating), Kuoni India, added that the company is focusing on Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru markets to increase in the luxury tour segment. "While leisure tours make up for a bulk of its revenue, the company is growing its other businesses. Even though luxury travel currently contributes only two per cent of our revenue, it is an attractive segment and we expect it will grow rapidly," he said.

The company has also released an upgraded version of its corporate travel booking tool called SONIC 2.2 which integrates airlines and portals. **Manoj Chacko**, CEO, Kuoni Business Travel, said, "We realised that travel is the third-largest spend on the PNL of a company. At present the adoption of online platforms for corporate travel in India is low but the trend is changing and companies, especially small and medium enterprises, are adopting corporate booking tools." The first version of this tool was launched three years ago.

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'500,000 arrivals by 2020'

VisitBritain's GREAT Tourism Week (GTW) toured nine Indian cities during August and September, engaging travel agents with suppliers to discuss bookable products and new packages.

ANKITA SAXENA

The event began in Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Pune in the West; moved to Kolkata, Delhi and Lucknow in the East and North and culminated with Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad in the South. The day-long event at various locations featured a series of meetings between the Indian travel agents and tour operators to engage and forge business ties.

The participating United Kingdom tourism suppliers included Globus & Cosmos, Trafalgar Tours, Golden Tours, Virgin Atlantic, UK Visa and Immigration among many others. The suppliers and Indian agents discussed bookable products and new packages for making Britain the first choice for an Indian traveller.

"We have changed the format of the event this year. Earlier we used to do a Sales Mission in three cities but the

new format allows us the freedom and flexibility to tap into a number of smaller cities which sometimes have greater potential to be bigger markets for Britain," says **Shivali Suri**,



Shivali Suri
Country Manager-India
VisitBritain

Country Manager-India, VisitBritain.

According to the International Passenger Survey figures for 2014, there were a record 390,000 visitors to Britain from India, up by 4 percent in 2013. The figures for

expenditure by Indian travellers in Britain also saw a new record of £444 million in 2014. Discussing the future plan for UK Tourism, Suri said, "We have a strategy in place and a target to deliver 500,000 arrivals in Britain by 2020 and the way we are progressing, we are well on our way to achieving the targets."

Speaking about the importance of Indian travel agents in promoting UK tourism, **James Brevan**, British High Commissioner-India says, "The Indian travel agents are a fundamental part of our team and functioning as it is these people who sell Britain to the Indian customers. Their feedback is crucial to our system as their advice helps us enhance our functioning. For instance we have simplified the visa process to make it easier and quicker to issue UK Visa to the Indian traveller after the feedback from our Indian travel agents."

Philippines at PTM 2015

The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines, attended the annual the PATA Travel Mart held in Bengaluru from September 6-8, 2015. **Gerard O. Panga**, Tourism Attaché, Market Development Group and **James Sy**, OIC for ASEAN and the Pacific Division, led the delegation of the Philippines, comprising 6 sellers from the Philippines who participated in the PATA Travel Mart 2015. This year, the delegates were Shroff International Travel Care, BC Travel and Tours Corporation, New Goldmines Tours and Travel, ARK Travel Express, Select Travels and Celebrate Life TLC. Alongside attending the various PATA events, Panga interacted with the media and updated them on the latest marketing strategies for 2015 and 2016.



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'eTV still has a long way to go'

The Indian tourism industry is in the midst of a transformation with the recent appointment of the new Tourism Secretary and the implementation of eTV. Sarab Jit Singh, Senior Vice President, IATO and Managing Director, Travelite (India), highlights that teamwork and cooperation are the best strategies needed to revolutionise the travel sector.



Sarab Jit Singh
Senior Vice President
IATO and Managing Director, Travelite (India)

AHANA GURUNG

Q*In light of recent changes in the tourism industry, what are some suggestions that IATO is bringing forward to the government?*

The key motive of IATO is to increase the inflow of tourists to India and we strive to attain our goals by resolving as many issues as possible. So far, none of the bottlenecks have been solved completely, which is why the results have not been exemplary. In order to find solutions for these, we are mainly sug-

gesting a meeting between different ministries to work out such issues and cover as many setbacks as possible. Such meetings are extremely crucial in order to make a difference.

Q*As far as eTV is concerned, what is IATO demanding?*

To be honest, eTV has not received as much publicity as it should have. Because of this, several people remain unaware about these developments and hence a less number of people apply for it. Approximately 250,000 eTVs have been issued so far which is a

very small number and shows that it has not achieved the desired effect.

In addition, one cannot apply for eTV more than 30 days before the date of departure which gives tourists less time to plan their tickets and itineraries.

A lot of matters need to be looked into. For these changes to transpire, all of us (tour operators, hotels, suppliers, and state governments) need to work in tandem

Moreover, the visa is only valid for 30 days and offers single entry, which is an indication as to why tourists are deciding against visiting India. To counteract these, we are suggesting the visa application time to be extended to six months, and duration of the visa to be increased to 60 days with multiple entries.

Q*What are your thoughts on the upcoming season for the tourism industry?*

We are not expecting a great turnout this time. A lot of matters need to be looked into – transit within the country should be improved, along with better security, and many others.

For these changes to transpire, all of us (tour operators, hotels, suppliers, and state government departments) need to work in tandem. Each one of us is trying to do the exact thing independently, ultimately using up more resources when we could all work together and achieve superior results.

That being said, thanks to Prime Minister's active support, it feels like the right moment for the tourism industry to improve and upgrade.

Marking Initiatives

- ➔ Work closely with civil aviation department and airlines to improve connectivity
- ➔ Equal focus should be given on every city, and not just the major ones
- ➔ Reduce travel time within the country



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ANA showcases a new side of Japan

Seamlessly connecting India and Japan, All Nippon Airlines (ANA) organised a familiarisation trip for the Indian travel fraternity to showcase Hokkaido, the second largest island of Japan. Hokkaido being the northernmost of Japan's main islands is famous for volcanoes, natural hot springs, national parks and powder snow. With abundant natural beauty, festivity during all four seasons and good Indian food, Hokkaido is sure to impress the Indian traveller.



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French connection

Atout France – France Tourism Development Agency's annual roadshow 'Rendez-vous en France' was recently held in New Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai. A delegation of 24 French tourism professionals visited the three cities to meet with travel trade.



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MOT honours industry leaders

President of India Pranab Mukherjee gave away the National Tourism Awards 2013-14 in New Delhi on September 18. The President congratulated the award winners and said that these exceptional individuals and institutions who have been felicitated have distinguished themselves through their dedication in promoting India as a tourist destination.



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A 4-star experience in Amritsar

UNA Hotels, as a brand, is based on discovery. Vinay Chaturvedi, General Manager, UNA Hotels, tells **TRAVTALK** what agents can use to increase business and sell variety of options to their clients.



TT BUREAU

QWhat is the USP of UNA Hotels?

We are ready to meet the needs of discerning travellers with contemporary space, ultra-modern ambience, varied dining experiences, state-of-the-art technology and comprehensive in-house facilities. We are uniquely positioned to offer a 4-star luxury experience in the heart of Amritsar and the hotel is an ideal venue for business & events. Our ethos is to offer attentive yet unassuming service with sophisticated interior styling. Guest can indulge in the quality cuisine at "Metro" – the contemporary multi-cuisine restaurant offering a variety of Continental, Indian, Oriental and local cuisine, and "One Bar" – the exotic bar. Our conference facilities include 'Happenings', (upto 700 delegates), 'Millennium' (upto 100-150 delegates) with all necessary conference aids. We also offer other facilities



Vinay Chaturvedi
General Manager
UNA Hotels

like swimming pool, spa, Jacuzzi, and gym.

QHow can travel agents work with the group to increase business?

With increasing inflow of inventory in the city and rise of fees of online and offline intermediaries, there is huge pressure on many hotels to build up their top lines and yields from rooms. For our top lines, we focus on the right mix of segments and sources.

We also ensure that our top producing source markets are clearly identified and we protect their best interests and keep them motivated. For the online space, focus is always set on the right prices and right offers on all GDS and

age room rates. Why do you think this is the case?

There has been an under-supply of rooms in Amritsar as compared to the demand in the city. Corporates have started cutting down drastically on hotel expenses

We ensure that our top producing source markets are clearly identified and we protect their best interests and keep them motivated

other web based platforms. For the same, we have a highly cogent and effective channel distribution and management team to closely monitor any variations in the market.

QThe trend has been seen that occupancy percentage is increasing in hotels but the hotels have not cut down on the aver-

which has affected the luxury hotel segment adversely whilst at the same time given impetus to budget hotels. The key strategy for 2015 is 'customisation and improvisation'. Now that Amritsar is to become a smart city, many new hotels have come up in and around the area catering to different segments. The idea is to charge the guests only for the services they use. ↴

WTM 2016 to be a 3-day event

World Travel Market London 2016 will be revamped as a three-day event following exhibitor and visitor feedback and an unprecedented period of growth.



TT BUREAU

WTM London 2016 will take place between November 7 to 9 with the opening hours extended from 10 am to 7 pm for all three days, giving exhibitors and visitors extra time to negotiate and agree business deals, while reducing the ancillary costs of exhibiting.

Over the past five years WTM London visitor numbers have grown by 20 per cent to 32,528, with buyer numbers from the WTM Buyers' Club over the past three events increasing by 16 per cent to 9,124, meaning a three day WTM will give exhibitors the opportunity to see more people over a shorter time span. Total participant numbers for WTM London 2014 hit a record 51,500, with the event generating a massive £2.5 billion in industry business deals.

The new WTM London 2016 will see more content moved on to the exhibition floor further increasing networking opportunities between exhibitors, buyers,

visitors and media. Furthermore, a new amphitheatre seating up to 300 delegates will join the Global Stage on the exhibition floor, meaning the majority of the thought leadership sessions will be adjacent to the exhibition pavilions and stands.



Last year the Events Programme had an attendance of 17,036 including 8,829 unique delegates. The UNWTO & WTM Ministers' Summit will take place on November 9, with the WTM World Responsible Tourism Day – the largest day of responsible tourism action in the world – taking place on November 8. In total more than 1,436 exhibitor personnel meet

with 303 of the industry's most important buyers across the two speed networking sessions at WTM London 2015. The final day of WTM will also host the WTM Bloggers' Speed Networking, which saw 70 bloggers have meetings with 236 exhibitors.

WTM London 2016's move to a three day event follows post 2014 event research which for the first time showed exhibitors and visitors would prefer a three day World Travel Market London. WTM London, Senior Director, **Simon Press** said: "World Travel Market London's move to a three day event will further cement its place as the leading global event for the travel industry

and the event where the travel industry conducts its business.

"For the first time exhibitor and visitor opinion has requested that WTM London is a three day event. Reed Travel Exhibitions has listened to its audience and responded with an event that is exactly what they have asked for, ensuring it remains relevant to the industry's business needs."

"This decision has been made during a period of record growth for the WTM London, with overall participant numbers at a record high of 51,500, visitor numbers peaking at more than 32,000 and buyer numbers from the WTM Buyers Club at more than 9,100. These record numbers sees the event facilitate more than £2.5 billion in industry deals. WTM London will continue to offer unrivalled networking and business opportunities. From 2016 exhibitors will be able to meet an even greater number of industry executives conducting even more business over a short space of time, while reducing the ancillary cost of exhibiting." ↴

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Locations: Film filip to tourism industry

Locations exhibitions once again brought global locale vendors and allied service representatives under one roof to interact with the Indian film industry.



The two-day Locations 2015 exhibition conference that was held in Mumbai recently saw the presence of over 25 sellers that included destinations and hotels. They interact-

ed with more than a 1000-strong cross-section from the Indian film industry. Speaking at the event, **Sudhanshu Hukku**, Director, Locations, said, "Locations can help revolutionise tourism by helping destinations feature in

Indian films, the world's largest film industry."

Locations is a B2B platform based on the concept of films as a catalyst to tourism. It was conceptualised in 2003 and was launched through

Variety at Cannes Film Festival. In 2010, BBC declared it as the 'World's First Film Tourism Event'.

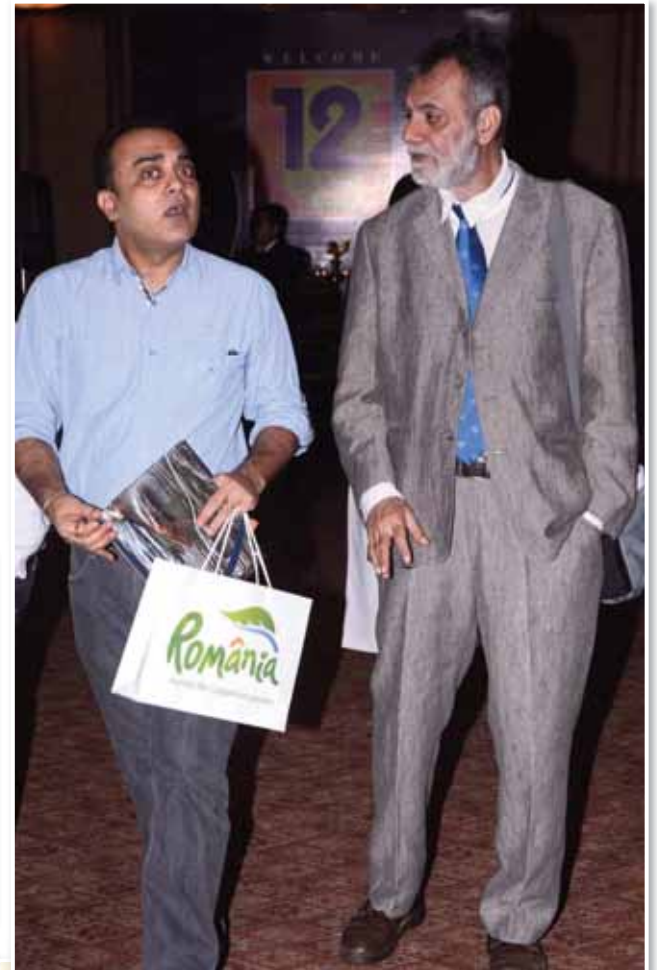
Locations brings the Indian film fraternity under one roof for a face to face

Participants at Locations 2015

- ❖ Bulgaria Film Locations
- ❖ French Line Production
- ❖ Georgia Embassy and Consulate
- ❖ Hungary Consulate and line production company
- ❖ Iceland Embassy and Consulate
- ❖ Jordan - Line production company
- ❖ Romania - Line production company
- ❖ Oman - Line production company
- ❖ Khyber Indus - Line production company
- ❖ Thailand - Line production company
- ❖ Rajasthan Tourism

with various aspects of international locations and production possibilities including subsidies, tax rebates and other global vendor concessions to shoot a film on their shores. This is achieved through interaction with global destination vendors: tourism boards, film commissions, line production companies, airlines, railways, resorts and travel and

tourism service providers. Locations has seen the presence of the destination promoters from more than 50 countries along with some Indian states. It has helped transact a business of over \$100 million. Some of the countries that have benefited from participating in Locations include Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Hungary, Malaysia, Poland Romania and Thailand. ↴



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The image shows the interior of a train carriage, likely a first-class or VIP carriage. A person wearing a white top, tan trousers, and red boots is standing near the open door, holding onto a metal handrail. The carriage has yellow walls, a blue carpet, and a luggage rack. A large window on the left side of the carriage offers a view of a snowy mountain landscape. The text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

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Miss Earth 2010: Nicole Faria - Photographed by Atul Kasbekar

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An online partner for agents

In the wake of rising number of young Indian travellers, it is important to associate with the right travel partner. MakeMyTrip, India's largest online travel company, offers agents to become partners with them to boost business.



MakeMyTrip offers agents to become partners with them to grow and ease business. Their focus on technology and customer service ensures a seamless and convenient travel-purchase experience. Being a partner with MakeMyTrip comes

with various benefits for the travel agents.

"From being among the first OTA in the world to offer low-cost inventory online, launching the first iPhone travel App in India, to opening up new avenues for Indian travellers and travel-partners alike, we ushered many first-in-

industry offerings. Today, we have a dominant position in the OTA market as a whole, and especially in flights, mobile and hotel-transactions. We look forward to delighting Indian travellers for many more decades with our technology and product innovations," says **Deep Kalra**, Chairman & Group CEO, MakeMyTrip.

Ranjeet Oak, Chief Business Officer-Holidays, MakeMyTrip explains how technology can be used by agents who partner with the company. Travel agents no longer need to depend on local suppliers for quotation or availability of services. The entire range of MakeMyTrip pre-packaged

holidays for India and across the world is available at just a click. The website reflects live inventory, current prices and all details on the inclusions. The agents have complete flexibility to create the perfect itinerary for their guests from the vast range of holidays available on MakeMyTrip.com



Ranjeet Oak
Chief Business Officer-Holidays
MakeMyTrip

Travel agents no longer need to depend on local suppliers for quotation or availability of services. Our entire range of pre-packaged holidays is available at just a click

Another technological benefit for partners is that agents do not need to worry about escalating prices on air or hotels. Once a booking is done, MakeMyTrip freezes the price for the guest or partners. All the prices are in INR in order to prevent any currency-related fluctuations at the end of the payment schedules.

To make work easier for agents, MakeMytrip offers 24x7 support and availability. Travel agents can now book online as they speak to the client — anytime of the day or night. There is no dependency on people from sales teams to revert on quotes, availability, prices and thus the bookings can be made at the convenience of the agents.

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 - ➔ Free casino chips for MMT guests in Sri Lanka and Nepal
 - ➔ Special initiatives for senior citizens: Rooms at ground floor in Bhutan, Ladakh and other destinations
 - ➔ Tie-up with local Indian restaurants in Bhutan for Jain meals; chefs at destinations like Kashmir and Ladakh to take care of special dietary needs

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IATO welcomes Zutshi and Lohani

The Indian Association of Tour Operators and its 145 members got together in New Delhi to welcome the new Tourism Secretary Vinod Zutshi and Air India's new CMD Ashwani Lohani.



RUCHI J SINGH

Indian Association of Tour Operators organised a special interactive luncheon in New Delhi to welcome new Tourism Secretary **Vinod Zutshi** and **Ashwani Lohani**, new CMD, Air India, and bid farewell to former Tourism Secretary **Lalit Panwar**, Additional Secretary **Girish Shankar** and **Usha Sharma**, former Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism. More than 145 member agents were present at the

event held at The Park, New Delhi.

Subhash Goyal, Chairman, IATO, started the proceedings by thanking the agents and members for a successful convention recently concluded in Indore. "We received 1,260 delegates and had to turn away 300 delegates due to a lack of accommodation," Goyal said about the houseful convention.

He also assured Lohani of selling Air India vigorously in the wake of the national car-

rier's announcement of 25 kg baggage allowance on domestic routes. Reminiscing the IATO Convention of 2006, he thanked Zutshi, the-then director of Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation for a successful convention.

Pronab Sarkar, Secretary, IATO, put forth IATO recommendations regarding eTV, viz., multiple-entry eTV, visa applications to be submitted 180 days prior, visa duration to be extended to 40 days and on-arrival biometrics for all tourists.



Zutshi, the newly appointed Tourism Secretary, called for an integrated and coordinated strategy, involving all the stakeholders, for the development of Tourism in India. "Tourism is an integrated development, so my efforts would be to involve all the stakeholders and all the players at all the levels," Zutshi said.

"[It's] not a cakewalk like Madhya Pradesh - from the serene environment of Bhopal I have landed into a frying pan," Lohani told a lauding audience.

Lohani appeared determined to rescue the carrier. "[There are a] lot of things which are bad, but can be set right. The airline still has its inherent qualities. It was a brand, which lost its sheen, but the sheen will come back, it has to come back," he stressed.

He concluded on an optimistic note: "I can see the gleam in Air Indians' eyes when I tell them we have to soar. They all want to soar. The challenge is great, but the determination is greater. I look forward to support from Tourism Secretary Vinod Zutshi and the Ministry of Tourism in my mission to do whatever is possible for this fledgling airline."

Sarab Jit Singh, Senior Vice President, IATO, and **Amresh Tiwari**, Treasurer, IATO, were also in attendance. 

Realising the enormity of the task ahead of him, Lohani called his new job "indeed a tough nut to crack."





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India a B2B market for cruise

With India still a maturing market for cruising, cruise companies like MSC are wholly dependant on the travel trade to push their products to the discerning traveller.

HAZEL JAIN

QHow do you perceive the cruise market from India?

The cruise market from India has been on a high this year and has enough potential to grow much more. Currently, we have close to over 1,20,000 passengers from India who take a cruise holiday. Indian passengers are now open to new expe-

riences and new products, resulting in the growth of the cruise industry by approximately 10 to 12 per cent year-on-year.

QHow has the trade helped you achieve this?

India is primarily a B2B market for cruises and we are overwhelmed by the support received from the trade fraternity whether it is tour operators, retail

agents or consolidators. Recently, we did a training session for IAAI members on MSC Cruises at our office which was attended by around 50 agents. We have been receiving great feedback for the same and plan to continue doing such sessions with members of other travel trade associations as well.

QAre you working with tourism boards

of countries where you have sailings?

MSC Cruises has sailings from both Dubai and Abu Dhabi and have been well supported by tourism authorities of both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, to promote cruising in these regions. We are also looking forward to working closely with more tourism boards, which will be beneficial to promote

cruise holidays as a whole for India market.

QWhat new products can the trade look forward to sell in India?

MSC Cruises will make its first sailing to Asia with the newly renovated MSC Lirica calling in Shanghai on May 1, 2016. The 65,000 GRT ship will make our company's maiden call in China's biggest mega-



Kunal Sampat
GM (India)
MSC Cruises

We are overwhelmed by the support from the trade fraternity. We did a training session for IAAI members on MSC Cruises which was attended by around 50 agents

Iopolis after a 60-day round the world trip via Europe, which departs on March 3, 2016, from Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. MSC Cruises has also announced the sales for the inaugural summer 2017 cruises of MSC Meraviglia, its first generation of ships.

Smooth Sail

MSC Cruises will make its first sailing to Asia with the newly renovated MSC Lirica calling in Shanghai on May 1, 2016

Cruise industry is growing by nearly 10 to 12 per cent year-on-year

Vistara forays into Varanasi

Vistara has announced bookings for its 12th destination—Varanasi. Starting Oct 21, 2015, Vistara will offer daily flight on the Delhi-Varanasi-Delhi route.

Phee Teik Yeoh, CEO, Vistara, said, "Varanasi is awe inspiring and a symbol of spiritualism that has attracted Indians as well as international tourists for years. The addition of Varanasi to our network perfectly complements Vistara's versatile ecosystem that now offers leisure, corporate, and pilgrimage options. With the positive feedback of our customers Vistara has established itself as a preferred brand in a short period of time. We are confident that the travellers on this route will also appreciate Vistara's seamless and personalised service."

Vistara has recently achieved the benchmark of flying 500,000 customers across its network.





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5. A game of Golf followed by a Gala Cocktails and Dinner hosted by ITC Grand Bharat on Day 2.
6. **Post Summit FAM trip** to Golf Courses organized by IGTA for the foreign buyers.






For further details, please contact:

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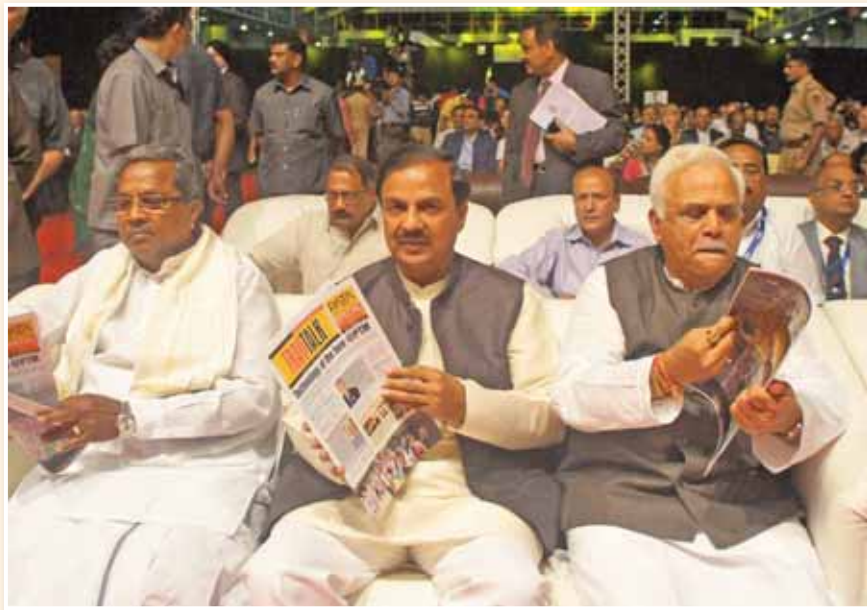
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PATA in India's Silicon Valley



The 38th PATA Travel Mart was held in Bengaluru from September 6-8, 2015. There were three major events - The Technology Forum, The Investment Forum and the PATA Travel Mart in itself. Over 1200 delegates international Media representing 61 countries and almost all Indian states participated.



TAAI seeks rapport with government

Team Positive clinched all top posts of TAAI Office Bearers. The new President **Sunil Kumar** has been around for 15 years and is fully aware of the challenges agents face, like IATA rules, APJC matters, and Joint Bank Guarantee Scheme.



HAZEL JAIN

The TAAI Team Positive has 50-plus years of cumulative experience and represents all four regions. Newly elected President **Sunil Kumar** says, "I'm elated that all four of us have been elected. I'm so grateful to the members of TAAI for having the confidence in the TAAI Positive Team. We shall go all out to do all that we can to live up to their expectations."



Marzban Antia
Vice President
TAAI

"It's a great feeling especially because I always wanted to be a winning captain of a winning team. Not a winning captain of a losing team nor a losing captain of a winning team," he says.

The association holds elections every two years. "The turnout has been fantastic. I have been in TAAI for so many years, gone through elections for more than 16 years but I have never seen this kind of an audience. Very disciplined in the manner in which the voting took place, the members have been very co-operative, very supportive. I have not seen this quality of membership with absolutely zero defection as far as the election is concerned before," Kumar adds.


Kumar says their immediate agenda is to form committees, assign responsibilities to various members of the Managing Committee. "The agenda has been decided with the collective experience of the Managing Committee. A stronger rapport with the government is the need of the hour. Any association, like any product, must keep changing to keep up with the changing times. We would like to evolve this association to be relevant in today's environment. Our practices and approach must change with the times," he adds.

The team led by Kumar had listed re-introduction of Joint Bank Guarantee in its election campaign agenda. Some other issues pointed out

by the team during election campaign were improving election pattern to reduce costs and time taken for members to vote; focus on small and medium travel agencies, seek government's liaison to create a regulatory round-table, which will also be good in a way to resolve issues like commission, service tax, fuel surcharge; bring in principals to work closely with TAAI

through Preferred Partner Program; and work with IATA on new form of payment for smoother implementation.

Marzban Antia, who has been elected as the Vice President, says a lot of legal work pertaining to the association needs to be addressed. "To be honest, I am quite elated that our team has won. It is all the hard work that we have

put in over these two years and the hard work prior to this election and organising it. We will do great work this year. We got two years now to do good work for our members and the fraternity at large. The immediate plan of action is to do a lot of legal work that needs priority. The Constitution needs to be changed; a lot of effort needs to be put in with regards to the airlines." 

"The agenda has been decided with the collective experience of the Managing Committee. A stronger rapport with the government is the need of the hour."

Sunil Kumar
President, TAAI



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► Contd. from page 34



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- 4** You can meet **5,000 EXHIBITORS** from across the world at WTM
- 5** There are more than **9,100 WTM Buyers' Club** members in attendance
- 6** More than **38 TRAVEL INDUSTRY SECTORS** travel industry sectors are represented at WTM
- 7** **MORE THAN 17,000** attendance at WTM's conference programme
- 8** Including more than **8,000 UNIQUE VISITORS**
- 9** The Travel Tech Show at WTM is the UK's **LARGEST TECHNOLOGY EVENT**
- 10** WTM's visitor audience has grown by **MORE THAN 20%** over the last five years.

WTM LONDON HOSTS MORE THAN 1.1M ON-STAND MEETINGS

World Travel Market London, the leading global event for the travel industry, facilitates more than 1.1 million on-stand business meetings which sees the event generate more than £2.5 billion in industry deals.

In total, 1,124,403 on-stand business meetings took place at WTM London 2014 making it the event where the industry conducts its business negotiations. On average WTM London exhibitors host a total of 229 on-stand meetings.

This number excludes business meetings at pre-scheduled appointment events such as ILTM at WTM. It also excludes the WTM Speed Networking sessions, which take place on the first and final day of the event for WTM Buyers' Club members and on Thursday for bloggers.

The most on-stand meetings are held in the European region (including UK & Ireland) with a total of 412,060 meetings taking place.

Asia follows next with more than 187,000 (187,207), Africa, Americas and Global Village both host around 130,000 meeting (131,791, 130,752, 129,095 respectively).

Furthermore, the Middle East sees almost 87,000 (86,987) on-stand meeting take place, with more than 46,000 (46,513) facilitated at the Travel Technology Show at WTM London.

World Travel Market London, Senior Director, Simon Press, said: "The massive number of on-stand business meetings World Travel Market London facilitates clearly demonstrates WTM London is the event where the industry conducts its business deals.

"To host more than 1.1 million on-stand meetings at World Travel Market London is testament to the value of exhibiting at the event and illustrates why WTM London facilitates more than £2.5 million of industry business deals."



MEXICO PARTNERS WITH WTM

World Travel Market London is delighted to announce Mexico as its Premier Partner for WTM London 2015.

Mexico has become WTM London 2015's Premier Partner as part of the country's promotion in the UK. 2015 has been designated as The Year of Mexico in the UK and the UK in Mexico and is seeing an exchange of art, culture, science, academia, business and tourism of which the WTM London Premier Partnership is a key initiative.

Mexico will use the WTM London Premier

Partnership to promote the diversity of its tourism products; which includes 11,000 kilometers of coastline, including its own exclusive sea The Gulf of California and the second largest reef in the world, home to 44,000 archaeological sites.

Mexico is also one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world hosting up to 12% of the world's species, while its gastronomy is Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity according to UNESCO.

Furthermore, the country is also hosting its first Formula 1 Grand Prix race in 2015.





REGISTER FOR WTM LONDON 2015

WTM London 2015, which takes place between Monday 2 – Thursday 5 November, is poised to be the biggest and best yet.

New for this year is the WTM Wellness Lounge, which will take place on Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 November. The first day of WTM (Monday 2 November) remains exhibitor invitation-only for visitors, and will host the hugely popular WTM Speed Networking. Tuesday 3 November sees the event open to everybody from the industry and will host the UNWTO & WTM Ministers' Summit.

The third day of WTM London (Wednesday 4 November) sees the largest day of responsible tourism action in the world – World Responsible Tourism Day, while following a success debut last year the WTM Festivals will

return on the Wednesday evening. While the final day of WTM (Thursday 5 November) will host two speed networking sessions – one for buyers and one for bloggers.

World Travel Market, Senior Director, Simon Press said: "Register now for World Travel Market London 2015 for what will be the biggest and best WTM yet."

"More than £2.5 billion worth of travel industry deals will be facilitated by World Travel Market London 2015, between 5,000 exhibitors and more than 9,000 buyers."

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a social networking session

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Network Talk was an exclusive event organised by **TRAUTALK** and Park Hotels at Agni, The Park New Delhi. It was an interactive congregation and a fun-filled evening that provided an opportunity for colleagues and contemporaries of the travel industry to catch up over cocktails and trade talk.



and business together

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New Delhi



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Hear it from the 'Maya' winners

The India Travel Awards are testimony to the hard work and dedication its winners put into the industry. TRAVTALK asks these industry leaders how e-Tourist Visas help boost inbound numbers to India and what's next on their wish list.



Best Emerging Travel Portal

The e-Tourist Visa (eTV) is a game changer and it is going to help India to get its fair share of tourists. The more we facilitate this, the whole metal block of tough visa process goes and it becomes easy for

a traveller to plan a trip without bothering too much about visa. We have already seen a surge in numbers and enabling eTV for more nationalities and at more airports is a booster for the growth of inbound tourism. It is a winner all the way.

Deepak Narula

Managing Director, GRNconnect.com
North India Travel Awards 2014



Face of the Future

I think it is great news that the government is now issuing e-Tourist Visa (eTV) to 36 countries and from seven more airports. Now life will be easier for a tourist who wants to come to India. This is something which is definitely going to get better.

There might be some problems initially but over the years they will overcome it. eTV is a great boon for us and the tourism industry. This will definitely boost inbound tourism in the country. Especially tourism in all the regions will see growth with eTV being issued from airports in all corners of the country.

Ankush Nijhawan

Managing Director, Nijhawan Group of Companies
North India Travel Awards 2014



Face of the Future

The act in extending eTV to 36 more countries showcases the positive intent of the government in promoting travel and tourism in India. With the inclusion of Ahmedabad providing this visa type and knowing the penchant of the western region

to attract strong business investment, I envisage greater inbound travel for both business and leisure, maybe as high as 15 per cent rise to the region. I am sure that along with the developing infrastructure, the Indian tourism industry will get a significant fillip.

Dev Karvat

Managing Director, TravellTag Cover-More India.
West India Travel Awards 2014

Wall of Legends

The extension of e-Tourist Visa (eTV) to 36 more countries and addition of seven more airports is big news for the tourism industry. It will definitely give a big boost to inbound tourism. By inclusion of Gaya Airport, good footfall of foreign tourists is anticipated in the eastern region, especially in the Buddhist circuits of the states of Odisha and Bihar. These states have flourished with Buddhist tourism and Buddhist Tours are getting famous among the tourists these days. Travellers are also taking much interest in the Golden Triangle of Odisha. As the state has a huge Buddhist Tourism potential, a flight connection to Bhubaneswar with Varanasi and Bodhgaya would be a highly profitable one.



J K Mohanty

Chairman & Managing Director
Swosti Group of Hotels
India Travel Awards East 2014

Gallery of Legends

This is an encouraging step by our Government. Simplification in obtaining Indian visa will certainly benefit inbound travel and help increase numbers, especially in the Western Region due to inclusion of Ahmedabad airport in the list. The Western Region is well equipped with handling inbound tourism and has some of the most prominent tourist destinations in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa. With the inclusion of Ahmedabad airport, the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Goa and Madhya Pradesh will get a boost to increase inbound tourists. However, it also provides a challenge for Western Region to gear up with 'A' grade infrastructure and facilities, including the competence of travel professionals, car fleets, hotels, guides and international cuisine.



Om Prakash Sehgal

Director, Inorbit Tours
West India Travel Awards 2014

Best Travel Management Company

This is a great initiative by the government. Our tourism potential is big enough to wipe out the entire current account deficit that the country faces year after year. However, there are many infrastructure and security issues that need attention to be able to project India as a tourism friendly destination. The need of the hour is for the Central and State Governments to formulate common policies and strategies to push this agenda and also grant industry status to the tourism and hospitality sector. At the same time, certain basic minimum standards need to be created for the entire industry to cover services like travel agencies, car rentals, hotels, restaurant, tour guide services, etc.



Pankaj Nagpal

Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group
North India Travel Awards 2014



Best Visa Facilitation Company

The introduction of eTV is most welcome as it is vital towards infusing much needed demand into the under leveraged inbound sector. The new eTV system will prevent line-ups in front of the visa desks at airports, reduce the workload of staff working at airports, provide easier visa facilitation for foreigners and increase the number of visitors, as well as tourism and foreign trade revenues. Much needed reforms to its visa rules will provide the foundation for very strong growth in the sector during 2015-16.

Rajan Dua

Managing Director, Udaan India
India Travel Awards West 2014



Entrepreneur of the Year

Tourists visiting Rajasthan now need not visit Delhi or come through other arrival points. Where Ahmedabad is concerned, it is the closest international airport chosen due to its proximity to Somnath and Gir, some of the biggest tourist destinations in Gujarat which is more frequented by tourists. Tourists now will have the option of flying into these cities without having to waste time in transits and can spend extra time in the western region. With the facilitation of eTV for these airports, the airlines will also add more seats/flights.

Jay Bhatia

Chairman – Tourism Council, Tulsidas Khimji Holidays
India Travel Awards West 2014



Best Global Distribution System

The WTTTC predicted that visa reforms would fuel 7.5 per cent growth for the Indian travel industry. Volumes from the regional Abacus and global Sabre channels give us reason to be even more bullish about the impact over time. We will communicate the eTV extensions and expect travel agents serving both the corporate and leisure sectors to respond. Every initiative that makes access to the India market easier ultimately boosts demand.

Jeet Sawhney

Managing Director, Abacus
East India Travel Awards 2014

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Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation

Industry leaders have their say

► Contd. from page 42



Best MICE Operator

As global travel increases world-wide, key initiatives like e-Tourist Visa by the Indian Government is creating a definite momentum in footfalls across the country. Since the implementation of e-Tourist Visa across 108 countries, we

have already recorded a surge of 1000 per cent in tourist arrivals with maximum coming from the US. This has created a demand into the under-leverage inbound segment. The Eastern region will be exploding in near future with tourist arrivals. Already Kolkata and nearby cities are basking in the generation of demand which has spiked the local infrastructure and human resources in this state.

Sunaina Chatterjee

Chief Executive, Incentives and Conference Planners
East India Travel Awards 2014



DDP Trailblazer

Attracting international tourists to India requires work on various aspects like perception of safety, cleanliness, ease of arrival into the country, costs of accessing tourism infrastructure like hotels etc. In this respect, the extension of e-Tourist Visa will go a long way to make it easier for foreign tourists coming to India. This, coupled with other government initiatives like 'Incredible India' campaign, 'Swachh Bharat' and other campaigns will give a big boost to tourism in all parts of India and we expect that this will start to show results in the next couple of years.

Apurva Salarpuria

Executive Director, The Salarpuria Group
East India Travel Awards 2014



Best Inbound Tour Operator

Introduction of e-Tourist Visas to tourists to over a 180 countries will provide a much-needed boost to the inbound tourism industry. However, besides the addition of East to the e-Tourist Visas, there is

a requirement to increase air connectivity to the region. We have no direct connection from Europe to any airport in East India which is a huge deterrent for European tourists travelling to this region. We need to work on improving air connectivity to this region to realise the full potential of the e-Tourist Visas in the East.

Sumit Periwai

CEO, Clubside Tours & Travels
East India Travel Awards 2014

Fastest Growing Hotel Brand

The positive move from the Government to extend the e-Tourist Visa scheme has given a major push to inbound tourism in India and since inbound tourists will not have to go through the hassle of filing a visa, they will definitely increase in India leading to increase in the eastern region as well. An added benefit of the seven new airports added to the list will increase the number of foreign tourists by giving more optional entry points to the neighboring countries.



Sumit Mitraka

Managing Director, Summit Hotels & Resorts
East India Travel Awards 2014

Best Outbound Tour Operator

Easing regulations and norms required to procure visa will help in increasing the inflow of travellers into India. Procuring a visa to India in most countries was a tedious task for a traveller including business travellers. Business travellers are potential leisure travellers and are brand ambassadors for 'Brand India'. Markets across countries have specific interests to travel into destinations within India such as Gaya and East India and the e-Tourist Visa facility being extended from such tourist specific airports besides our primary 'gateway airports' will further facilitate tourist inflow across India.



Sriram Rajmohan

CEO, Club7 Holidays
East India Travel Awards 2014

Face of the Future

I think e-Tourist Visa is going to make a huge push in momentum for tourism business in South India. As a leader of the business, I agree to this and the industry welcomes the move. It opens different avenues for us and eases the way we do business. Chennai has a huge influx of Japanese and Chinese travellers and travellers from the South East Asian market, apart from the American and European base. The inclusion of Trichy airport is going to help the influx of the South East Asia because they have direct flights from Trichy to Singapore and Indonesia. Trichy's inclusion on the list will add to the momentum. We will make more business if more and more airports manage to be on the list.



Abhishek Verma

GM, Holiday Inn, Chennai
India Hospitality Awards West and South 2015



The Enterprising General Manager of the Year

With new air connectivity coming in, like the Cochin International Airport also expanding by the end of the year, we will see more airlines coming in. There will be decongestion of airlines which are operating in Bengaluru because of cheap parking charges and the airport charges get optimised. This causes new connections which are key to new markets opening up in South India. Kerala has three international airports and if I am not wrong then they are looking at the fourth airport coming up. There is a lot of inbound demand from Kerala because of the natural beauty of the state and the demand will be supplemented by the air connectivity.

Kunal Shanker

General Manager, Holiday Inn Cochin
India Hospitality Awards West and South 2015



Best City Hotel

Ahmedabad's potential as a tourist destination has largely remained under-utilised. From being the home to archaeological wonders reflecting the era of Mughals, to being the epicentre of freedom struggle in the pre-independence time,

Ahmedabad has a lot to offer to its tourists. The city boasts of fast paced development on one side and has a rich traditional and cultural heritage. With the availability of e-Tourist Visa at the Ahmedabad airport, the city will now greatly benefit in terms of an increase in the influx of inbound tourists. It is definitely a step in the right direction.

Sandeep Johri

General Manager, Novotel Ahmedabad
West India Travel Awards 2014



Best Corporate Hotel

Issuing eTV to additional 36 countries and seven more airports does not just make travelling easy to India, but also shows the Government's willingness to work towards increasing the contribution of tourism sector to our GDP. The

decision to open additional airports, in Tier II & Tier III cities like Jaipur and Ahmedabad to name a few, not only helps these cities in commerce and growth of GDP, but also it impacts a positive growth in the states, vis-à-vis the region as well. It is extremely important for us to utilise these benefits in true spirit to make them successful.

Vishal Jamuar

General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel Indore
West India Travel Awards 2014



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EVENT TALK

OCTOBER 2015

NATIONAL

2-4	Pune	Travel and Tourism Fair
5	Mumbai	Thailand Luxury Roadshow 2015
5	Mumbai	Turkey Roadshow
7	Chandigarh	Tourism Authority of Thailand Luxury Roadshow
7	Delhi	Turkey Roadshow
9	Delhi	Tourism Authority of Thailand Luxury Roadshow
9-11	Indore	India International Travel Exhibition
9-11	Nagpur	Holiday Expo
9-11	Goa	Travel & Tourism Fair
10-11	Gurgaon	Vkonect Luxury B2B event
14	Goa	West India Travel Awards
15	Goa	India Cargo Awards West & South
16-18	Lucknow	India Travel Mart
16-18	Bhopal	Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart
26	Delhi	Scandinavian Tourism Board Media Brief
26	Mumbai	Spain Tourism Office Leisure Workshop
27	Delhi	Scandinavian Tourism Board Travel Trade Seminar
27	Mumbai	Spain Tourism Office MICE Workshop
28	Delhi	Spain Tourism Office Leisure Workshop
29	Delhi	Spain Tourism Office MICE Workshop
30- Nov 1	Noida	India Travel Mart

NOVEMBER 2015

INTERNATIONAL

2-5	London	World Travel Mart
8-9	Brussels, Belgium	UFTAA AGA + Forum
17-19	Spain, Barcelona	IBTM, World

NATIONAL

6-8	Visakhapatnam	Holiday Expo
20-22	Guwahati	Travel & Tourism Fair
23	Delhi	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
24	Bengaluru	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
25	Ahmedabad	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
25	Mumbai	Monaco Government Tourist & Convention Bureau B2B Roadshow
26	Mumbai	German National Tourist Office Networking Event
27	Mumbai	German National Tourist Office B2B Roadshow
27	Delhi	Monaco Government Tourist & Convention Bureau B2B Roadshow
27-29	Pune	India International Travel Mart
27-29	Ahmedabad	India Travel Mart
27-29	Kolkata	Travel East

DECEMBER 2015

NATIONAL

1-3	Bhuj	Rann Utsav
3	Delhi	European Quartet B2B Workshop
4	Begaluru	European Quartet B2B Workshop
4-6	Hyderabad	India International Travel Mart
5	Mumbai	European Quartet B2B Workshop
5-7	Jaipur	India Travel Mart
11-13	Madurai	India International Travel Exhibition
18-20	Siliguri	Tourism Fair

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

Providing customised solutions

Imbued with a firm belief in customer satisfaction, Directors of Meandering Vacations, Amita Nair and Deepali Wagle give a lowdown on the future of the company and young India's fascination for travel.



TT BUREAU

With over three decades of experience in the industry, avid travellers **Amita Nair** and **Deepali Wagle** turned their passion into profession in the form of Meandering Vacations. Starting off with two offices in Mumbai, they gradually expanded their portfolio of offices and opened branches in Nagpur, Kochi, Calicut, Pune and New Delhi, with the next city in their pipeline being Kochi.

The company holds a strong belief in keeping their customers content and happy and their USP lies in creating exceptionally memorable experiences for them. "We are aware of the expectations and requirements of the travellers," says Amita. "Today's customers are knowledgeable and we provide customised solutions as required by them,



Amita Nair
Director
Meandering Vacations



Deepali Wagle
Director
Meandering Vacations

however there is always a scope of guidance and consulting which ensures enhanced customer satisfaction and it creates more value than expected," she adds.

In terms of the future of the company and the Indian tourism industry, Deepali mentions that the company has strategically moved in alignment with India's socio economic developments and

demographics. "Travel/tourism, which was a luxury or unknown need for the population in Tier II and III regions, have suddenly found a need to travel and see places and get out of their existing domains," comments Deepali. "India is a young country of 1.28 billion, where 65 per cent population is below 35 years with a high literacy rate of 80 per cent. This age group creates the incremental demand for travel. We

also need to keep in mind that 50 per cent of the total population is between 0-25 years which means Indian tourism is firmly placed to move at fastest pace," she says.

With a consistently growing GDP of 8 per cent, outbound tourism has grown from 3.7 million in 1997 to 9.8 million in 2007 to 14.3 million in 2013. "Factors such as liberalised economy going global, higher disposable income, people have started travelling more than once a year, creating the surge in outbound travel," adds Amita. "Depreciation of rupee against dollar led to expectations that outbound tourism may suffer, but on the contrary the movement was not hampered and remained stable. Going by the numbers, India may indeed account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020, as predicted by the UNWTO," she concludes.

Fulfilling a responsibility

Clarks Inn Group of Hotels, as part of its CSR Programme, visited Anand Niketan Vridh Sewa Ashram, an old age home devoted to needy senior citizens.



TT BUREAU

What is life is hard to define. But a life lived with dignity and accomplishment, bonding and care of friends and family, is a life lived well. However, and unfortunately so, the dawn of the dusk of life does not augur well for everyone as family grows and children travel far and away in their pursuit of better life.

Clarks Inn Group of Hotels, as part of its expanding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programme, recently visited Noida-based Anand Niketan Vridh Sewa Ashram, an old age home devoted to the service of needy citizen aged over 60 and managed by Jan Kalyan Trust, in order to bring cheers in the life of its elderly residents who gave their best years to the development of the larger society that we are part of today.

In a first such initiative, Clarks Inn organised a colourful programme at Anand Niketan Vridh Sewa Ashram organising



a quiz show based on the format of Kaun Banega Crorepati, the famous Indian television game show aired on Sony. The elderly in the audience were divided into four teams and vied against each other to be the first to answer every question thrown upon them with childlike enthusiasm with some amongst them displaying outstanding general knowledge skill.

The game show was followed by singing competition. To everybody's utter surprise some of the voices heard

during the competition were exceptionally melodious and enthralling, spellbinding everyone present in the audience. The elderly residents were also served a variety of snacks and beverages throughout the duration of event.

Clarks Inn Co-founder and President, **S N Srivastava**, who took keen interest in making the event happen and was himself present throughout the duration of event was jubilant to see

the overwhelming response that the event attracted from the elderly residents of Anand Niketan.

"For those in the dusk of their life, days and wait could be painstakingly endless. Today was a very emotional experience. We are glad to be able to bring cheers and joy to the residents of the Ashram. Everyone present immensely enjoyed this afternoon. We would like to come back soon and organise more such events at other places as well," he said.

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VISA TALK



Indian E-Tourist Visa

The e-Tourist Visa facility has been extended to 113 countries from August 2015. Below are list of countries whose nationals are eligible for India E-Tourist visa.

Andorra, Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Aruba, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Cayman Island, Chile, China, China- SAR Hong Kong, China- SAR Macau, Colombia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Laos, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Montserrat, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niue Island, Norway, Oman, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Macedonia, Russia, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Turks & Caicos Island, Tuvalu, UAE, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Vatican City-Holy See, Venezuela, Vietnam.



Additional Requirement for Botswana Visa

High Commission of the Republic of Botswana, Delhi has announced that with immediate effect, applicant has to submit an attested copy of all the supporting documents of invitee/host (Work permit, Residence permit, Exemption Certificate, Naturalization Certificate, Certificate of Incorporation, Share Certificate of Host etc) when applying for Botswana Business Visa. The attestation has to be done either by Botswana Immigration or by Botswana Police Department.



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.



Taiwan: Attestation of Documents

Taipei Economic and Cultural Center, Delhi has announced that, they will attest the documents post it has been attested by the concerned issuing state authority and Ministry of External Affairs.

Visa Snippets:

- Embassy of the Czech Republic, Delhi has announced that Czech Republic visa applications will be submitted through VFS centres at Delhi & Mumbai. For more details kindly logon to www.udaanindia.com
- High Commission of the Republic of Mozambique, Delhi has been relocated to A-16/2, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi.

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Turkey's MICE offerings

Growing MICE endorsements by companies in Turkey makes it an ideal destination to host the ACE of MICE Exhibition in 2016. Exhibition Director Beyza Aksit tells **TRAVTALK** about the preparations underway to bring together MICE professionals of the world on a single platform from March 16-18.



SHIVANI KAUL

Q How many Hosted Buyers, Exhibitors, and Visitors are you expecting at the 2016 exhibition?

We had 269 Exhibitors, 656 Hosted Buyers and 11,687 Visitors at AME 2015. For the next year we are still in contact with convention bureaus and MICE companies all over the world in order to increase this number. We expect 330 Exhibitors, 300 International Buyers and more than 300 local Hosted Buyers

from associations and corporate companies.

Q What is the focus of the exhibition?

Our aim is to bring together MICE industry from Turkey and the world. We would like to show and introduce the MICE potential in Turkey to international market as ACE of MICE Exhibition is a unique MICE event in our country.

Q Tell us about the MICE market in Turkey?

There are 1,300 hotels with meeting facilities and event venues, 1,130 event management companies, 1,890 service providers in Turkey for now. According to Turkish MICE Industry Survey, which was released at AME 2015 in February by Tourism Media Group, 29.3 per cent of the attendees from Meeting and Event Management companies said their annual MICE endorsement is between one to five million euros and 20 per cent of the companies have five million



Beyza Aksit
Exhibition Director
ACE of MICE Exhibition

euro endorsement. About 3.8 per cent of the companies have less than €50,000 endorsement. On the other hand, 22 per cent of the attendees from hotels and venues have MICE endorsement of €100,000 – €500,000 and 21 per cent have endorsement of €10,00,000 – €30,00,000. About 7.2 per cent of the companies have €10 million of endorsement. All these numbers show that the growing potential of MICE industry in Turkey is still in progress.

Q What are the latest trends in MICE mar-

ket and which is the emerging MICE destination in the world?

Mobile social event networking, multi-event App platforms, technological options for live events and hybrid meetings are so popular nowadays. In terms of sustainability trends, the green meetings are so preferable. Regarding destinations I can mention about Istanbul which became an excellent choice for events in recent years. Istanbul offers an unique opportunity to the attendees with direct flights, congress centers, event venues, hotel capacities which make it more attractive.

Q What kind of steps is the Turkish Govt taking to encourage MICE tourism into the country?

Turkish government supports convention bureaus in Turkey such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Antalya to make Turkey a well-known destination through marketing activities.

Istanbul Calling

330 Exhibitors, 300 International Buyers and more than 300 Hosted Buyers are expected at ACE of MICE 2016

29.3% of the attendees from MICE companies' annual endorsement is between one to five million euros

RezNext partners with RAVHAR

RezNext has announced partnership with RAVHAR, a leading hospitality company providing central reservations and point of sale solutions to hotels and resorts under the brand name HOSTS. HOSTS-Win caters to the unique requirements of leisure stay properties, especially the resort segment. The product is currently being used in over 500 properties across North India. HOSTS-Win

from the real-time online distribution model," said Mike Kistner, CEO, RezNext Global Solutions. "RAVHAR is a preferred PMS technology vendor for several 3-5 star hotels and resorts in North India. This partnership with us will now allow them to offer a complete distribution solution suite to their existing and new customer base."

According to Amarjit



Mike Kistner
CEO, RezNext Global Solutions



Amarjit Singh
CEO, RAVHAR

and RezNext's intelligent distribution platform will now be tightly integrated. RAVHAR is joining the RezNext league of leading PMS partners globally. RezNext's most recent PMS partnership was with Hotelogix.

"We are happy to welcome RAVHAR as our strategic PMS partner. We are growing our customer base aggressively and have a PMS agnostic strategy to ensure hoteliers in our markets are able to fully benefit

Singh, CEO, RAVHAR, "We see great synergies with RezNext in improving our penetration in the resort segment. RezNext's intelligent distribution technology supports a dynamic business model across, packages, pricing and reporting functionality. This functionality along with the specialised revenue management services offered by RezNext will help us meet the growing needs of our clientele and allow them to maximise the revenue opportunity."

OBITUARY

Vinod Kothari passes away Founder of Aero Agencies



The travel fraternity offers sincere condolences on the passing away of veteran tourism professional, Vinod Kothari. He was 92.

Born on Dec 3, 1922, Kothari was the Founder Director of the 66-year-old IATA agency 'Aero Agencies Limited' which he formed in 1949. He served as President of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) from 1987-1988 and retired as the senior most IATA travel agent.

Kothari was Past Director of Odisha Tourism, Hotel Corporation and was the only TAAI president who occupied each and every elected office in TAAI. He is survived by his daughter and grand children.

Kothari has been a luminary of the travel trade industry and contributed tremendously to its progress in several ways. He continued to guide the Aero Team with his vast and immense knowledge and experience and vision.

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- ✓ Fostering of existing partnerships – up and cross selling activities
- ✓ Dealing with customer enquiries, overseeing smooth, efficient business operations
- ✓ Driving sales of outbound travel itineraries to regions in Europe (CEE) – F.I.T. and groups
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- ✓ Monitoring competitors activities and data collection / Mystery shopping

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Ethiopian Airlines

Mumbai

Tadesse Tilahun has joined Ethiopian Airlines as its Area Manager – India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Tilahun joined Ethiopian Airlines in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 2000 as a Flight Control Agent in Flight Operations. He later moved to the Marketing Division as Senior Marketing Officer. He was appointed as Traffic and Sales Manager, Northern India, until his recent appointment as Area Manager Indian Subcontinent. Tilahun holds M.Sc. degree in Applied Mathematics from Addis Ababa University.



Bird Travels

New Delhi

Praful Khosla been appointed as the Executive Vice President of Bird Travels. Khosla has held senior leadership and management positions in various organisations in travel & aviation industries and has worked with multiple international airlines. He brings with him a rich experience of 16 years in Strategic Planning & Business Development. As Executive Vice President, he would be overall responsible for sales, marketing & business development of our existing business and will spearhead the growth in new business opportunities.



Berggruen Hotels

Goa

Berggruen Hotels, which operates in India under the brand name of Keys Hotels, has appointed **Rajeev Thapa** as the General Manager of Keys Resort Ronil, Goa. Thapa joins Keys Resort Ronil, Goa with over 18 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He was previously associated with brands such as Taj, Leela, Le Meridien and Park Hotels. Thapa holds a Diploma in Hotel Management and Catering Technology from the Institute of Advanced Management, Kolkata and a diploma in Hospitality Management from American Hotel & Motel Association, Michigan.



Double Tree by Hilton

Pune

Sahdab Mehta has been appointed as the General Manager of Double Tree by Hilton hotel, Pune. Mehta has over 15 years of experience in hospitality. Prior to joining Double Tree by Hilton, Mehta was leading the F&B team at the Marriott Pune as the Executive Chef. At Double Tree, Mehta recently guided the transition from a raw project stage to a fully operational and vibrant hotel. In his new role, Mehta will be responsible for budgeting and financial management, planning, organising and directing all hotel services, including front-of-house, food and beverage operations, and housekeeping.



Courtyard by Marriott

Ahmedabad

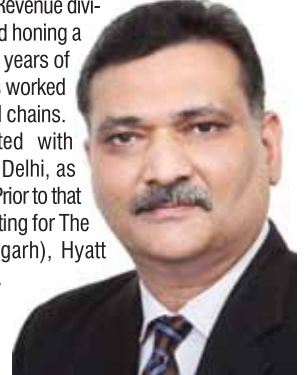
Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad has appointed **Gaurav Apte** as the General Manager. Apte has 14 years invested in the hospitality industry wearing multiple hats of responsibility, and more to come. He conducts activities to drive financial results, guest and associate satisfaction and garner a larger market share. Before his move to Ahmedabad, Apte was the Resident Manager at Bengaluru Marriott Whitefield Hotel, from June 2014. In his earlier stint, Gaurav served as the Front Office Manager (July 2009 to September 2010) and later Director of Rooms (October 2010 to July 2012) in Courtyard by Marriott Hinjewadi, Pune.



Radisson Blu Plaza

Delhi

Aditya Singh has joined Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi as its Director for Sales and Marketing. He will be spearheading the Room Sales, Catering Sales, Marketing and Revenue divisions in addition to building and honing a dynamic sales team. In his 19 years of industry experience, Singh has worked with several international hotel chains. Recently, he was associated with Kempenski Ambience Hotel, Delhi, as Director of Sales & Marketing. Prior to that he also headed sales & marketing for The Grand, JW Marriott (Chandigarh), Hyatt Regency Delhi, among others.



Novotel Hyderabad Airport

Hyderabad

Roshan Rajpal has joined Novotel Hyderabad Airport as EAM. Her last assignment with AccorHotels was with Novotel Bangalore Techpark where she was heading Sales & Marketing for all five multi-brand Accor hotels in Bengaluru. Rajpal has 24 years of experience in Sales & Marketing across Accor, Carlson, IHG & in South India. She is also certified in Revenue Management; a graduate of Academie Accor's International Hospitality Management Program and has most recently undergone Hotel Operations Training at the Sofitel BKC in Mumbai.



Radisson Hotel

Indore

Anubhav Bhan has been appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing by Radisson Hotel Indore. Bhan comes with over 12 years of industry experience. He has previously worked with brands like Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, The Orchid Mumbai, Four Points by Sheraton Pune, and Radisson Pune. He holds a Bachelors degree in Hotel Management and catering technology from Banarasidas Chandiwala Institute of Hotel management.



Piccadilly Hotels

New Delhi

Sudhir Chawla has been appointed as the Director of Sales - Leisure & MICE by Piccadilly Hotels, New Delhi. Chawla has 10 years of industry experience. Before coming to Piccadilly, he was associated with Four Points by Sheraton Jaipur, Accor, Royal Orchid Hotels, and Avalon Hospitality. Chawla holds a Bachelors from IHM Chandigarh and Masters in Hospitality Administration from IHM Pusa, New Delhi.



TALKING People

Nick J Parker, Head India and Middle East, Virgin Atlantic Airways, says, "India is just amazing, there is so much to do here. Everywhere you go, there is so much history and so much diversity." Parker, who has been in India for a year now, has seen states of Jaipur, Punjab, and Kolkata. He mostly travels for work and wishes to take a trip soon with his wife and two kids. "The food is amazing. My family is loving it here too." Parker is an ardent fan of Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra and says he likes to watch Bollywood movies once in a while.



Nalin Mandiratta, General Manager, Crowe Plaza Today, Gurgaon, says, "In my spare time which I rarely get, I like to spend quality time with my family. Also if I can, I love to play cricket. There are many destinations that I enjoy visiting. When visiting international destinations, Mauritius is one of my favourites, for its beautiful beaches. We visit Singapore, Thailand, mostly for shopping! In India too there are many places I like going to like Goa, etc. Also I am a big movie buff! Watching all bollywood and hollywood movies is my best bet in spare time!"



Puneet Chhatwal, CEO, Steigenberger Group, says, "In my free time, which I could never imagine I would have, I go to the forest behind my house and take a 6-10 km walk every weekend if I am there. I have been fortunate that the nature of my job has taken me all over the world so I don't really have a preference for a particular city or country in terms of favourite locations. However, I like India as much as South Africa, Scandinavia or even the big cities like Paris, Milan, London and Rome. Every country, city or culture has something different to offer and for me it's always about taking the best from every place and having a good time."



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Gujarat is renowned for the vitality of its vibrant traditions and culture. These often epitomize in festivals of various hues and colours spread over the year. Among the myriad festivals of Gujarat, none is so universally acclaimed and widely awaited every year than the Navratri festival which falls in the month of Ashvin. Navratri is often described as the world's longest dance festival. Every available public space transforms into a dance venue with young and old, men and women, couples and large groups, all dance with joy during the nine days. The garba, garbi and dandiya ras dances are all performed around a lighted garbo, symbolizing the Eternal Light of Shakti. Dandiya ras dancers perform with sticks in their hands while the garba and garbi dancers clap hands, tap feet and snap fingers. The vigorous dance movements, the pirouettes and leaps, with dancers wearing flamboyantly colourful dresses and ornaments, set the pulsating rhythm of the Navratri Festivities.

People come out in huge numbers and take the occasion to dress up in colourful traditional attires. Men wear the dhoti-kurta comprising a long shirt and long flowing garment. Women wear chania-choli, the long flowing skirt with the short blouse. The chania-cholis are embellished with tiny mirrors, silk thread work, embroidery, sequins, crystals, seashells and kundan stones. Paired with elegant traditional silver jewellery adorning the ears, neck, arms, fingers and waist, the chania-choli clad Gujarati woman transforms herself to an exotic beauty goddess.

Everyone is invited to join in these great Navratri festivities which will turn out to be the longest & most enjoyable party you have ever attended.



There is perhaps no better time to visit and catch the pulse of Gujarat's throbbing cultural treasures than during Navratri. The whole of Gujarat awakes to riot of colours rhythm and celebrations during Navratri. On the devotional front, the nine nights are broken into sections of three. The first triple days are for Durga, the supreme power of good that vanquishes the evil king Mahishasura. The triumph of good is also seen as a cleansing of impurities in human lives. Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, is assigned the second triple set of days. The final three days are offered to Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and arts. Devotees from every walk of life have a reason to pray during the nine days.

However, the celebrations cut across religion and region and people from different communities and cultures take part in the festivities, particularly the dancing. Mouthwatering traditional delicacies are devoured during this period. Sweets like Jalebi and fried Tikki are all time favourites.



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NIKKI DUGGAL DESIGN

Virgin Atlantic: 15 years and counting

Nick J Parker, Head of India and Middle East, Virgin Atlantic Airways, and Sameer Duggal, Head of Sales-India, Virgin Atlantic Airways, spoke to **TRAVTALK** about their latest code-share with Jet Airways and the Indian flying experience.



DEEPA SETHI & SHIVANI KAUL

Q How has Virgin Atlantic Airways' 15-year journey in India been?

Parker: It's been fantastic 15 years. We've come a long way since we started with flying couple of times per week on a 747. We now fly daily on our latest aircraft, the 787, and over that time we have developed a huge following in India.

Duggal: Indian market has really grown in the past 15 years on the London and US route and we see more and more people being aware of what they really want when they are booking a ticket or flying internationally. When it comes to Virgin Atlantic, we see that people really are looking forward to booking with us more so because of our constant innovation. So we see there is a huge potential there, specially to the London and the US route.

Q Tell us about your recent code-share with Jet Airways.

Parker: We have expanded our code-share with Jet Airways, so we have added a second daily code-share flight from Mumbai across to London, connecting Mumbai effectively with our trans-Atlantic network. More recently we've got four new points within India with Jet Airways that connect both over Delhi and Mumbai. So it really does help us expand our reach within India, giving our customers more choice to pick up our services and experience.

Duggal: We are very focused on our latest code-share expansion with Jet Airways from Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore and Kolkata. The reason we have Jet as a partner is that they also are equally focused on customer service like us. We want all the customers to come experience Virgin Atlantic, travel with us to London or the US, or even if they have to go over Mumbai, there is endless opportunity. We connect over 100 destinations in the US with Delta, our joint venture partner.

Q What special products are you including to attract more Indian flyers?

Duggal: We see today passengers are flying with gadgets like smartphones and iPads that never used to happen in the past. So we give them options to use these gadgets that they are flying within the flight they can plug in to the screens and watch what they want. Besides that we are very focused on Indian food. We have dedicated Indian crew, we make sure we have the latest Bollywood or Hollywood movies so we are not leaving anything unnoticed for our Indian passengers and we continually evolve products for them.



Sameer Duggal and Nick J Parker

Q Any promotional packages that you have come out for the agents and trade?

Duggal: Trade is very important for us. We deal very closely with them in India. Currently to focus more on the trade community we are strengthening our call centre and sale support as we see more and more calls coming in from the new code-share cities that we have started. Besides, we have also started a VS Flying hub which is our trade-dedicated website, where they can log in and find out updates about VS. We keep coming out with packages for them where they can win cool gadgets, lifestyle vouchers, movie tickets etc.

Q Are there any plans to expand the Premium Economy section on your 787-9 Dreamliner?

Parker: I think with the Premium Economy cabin it is always about making sure you've got the right number of seats not just for any particular route. So when we look at the 787, that number of seats (35) is brilliant for optimizing the cabin space onboard and so it's a great configuration on the India route. The time is to make the Indian public more and more aware of the Premium Economy cabin, then clearly there is opportunity in the

future to look at putting more aircraft on the route with a larger configuration.

Q So are Indians flying more directly to the UK or is it coming more transit?

Parker: We are doing pretty well on the India to London sector but clearly now we have got our joint ventures as well with Delta across the Atlantic, that opens up a huge amount of options for people. We have just started our new operations into Detroit, flying to Atlanta, key hubs in the US which you can connect to Tier II and III cities within the US as well.

Q How has e-Tourist Visa changed travelling to India?

Parker: Anything that strengthens ties between UK and India is great for the routes. We are so excited that the e-Tourist Visa is now being extended to the UK market, that's fantastic news not just for the airlines but for India tourism. There are so

many people who would like to come in to India who would have been put off before. There is a huge opportunity for India now encouraging so many people to travel.

Q When all other airlines are cutting down on baggage, VS is offering 3 extra baggages to students. Does that attract more people?

Duggal: It is an attraction. We see more students and IT professionals booking with us, who are travelling one way to the UK or the US. They love that allowance, they can carry lot of stuff with them, especially on the premium economy. It's hugely popular in India. We see people travelling with us from areas where we are not even online and connect with us just to get that extra baggage allowance.

Q Tell us about the celebrations that you carry out during festivals.

Duggal: We encourage our airport team and crew to celebrate with the passengers during festival time either on check-in or on board. We design special food menus for them, we've done special giveaways at the counters, we also do *tilak* ceremonies. Last time when India went to vote we offered anyone who voted that day an upgrade to get a lounge. 🐦



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