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SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TR

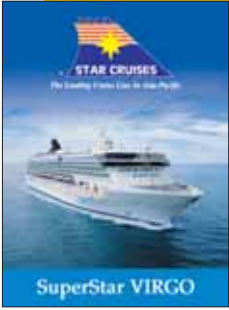
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Rationalise taxes

Experts from the tourism and hospitality industry came under one roof at the HRANI Conclave to discuss the issues and aspirations of the two industries.

TT BUREAU

The HRANI Conclave, held on February 27, saw over 150 delegates in attendance and was also graced by **Kapil Mishra**, Delhi Tourism Minister. **Luv Malhotra**, President, HRANI, said, "There are three primary

where I give due credit to the Delhi Government, which has taken a proactive approach." He also stressed on the importance of a Single Window Clearance (SWC) and simplicity in process. He stated that at present the industry requires 40 odd licences, certifications and clearances to function,



Kapil Mishra
Tourism Minister
Delhi



Luv Malhotra
President
HRANI



K. B. Kachru
Chairman, South Asia, Carlson
& Rezidor Hotel Group

neighbouring states. Malhotra said, "Approximately 24 million tourists come to Delhi, the rest are going to neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Punjab has picked up as well. Delhi is becoming very expensive and a transit state with overnight stays of only 1-2 days."



S. M. Shervani
Hony. Secretary FAITH, Former
President, HRANI & FHRAI



Surendra Kumar Jaiswal
President, Uttar Pradesh Hotel &
Restaurant Association

working on rationalising the taxes and this budget will bring good news for the industry." Mishra further added, "We are working on a major Delhi Festival — a 15 day long cultural event in Delhi to be held in the month of November. We have com-

pletely changed our event organising policy and are also planning 10 smart streets, which will be made into tourist hubs in the city. We are revamping all monuments. This year a massive and aggressive Delhi branding will be launched."

K.B. Kachru, Chairman, South Asia, Carlson & Rezidor Hotel Group, gave the keynote speech, where he highlighted the issues and aspirations of tourism and hospitality sector in Delhi. He also said that the government must carve out policies to make the capital of India a safe, secure, hygienic and pollution free destination.

S.M. Shervani, Hony. Secretary FAITH, Former President, HRANI & FHRAI, said, "Delhi has seen an influx of hotel rooms and guest houses and because of it today the hotels are struggling with their ARR and occupancy."

While Delhi is facing irregularity of taxes, UP has come up with a progressive tourism policy, claimed **Surendra Kumar Jaiswal**, President, Uttar Pradesh Hotel & Restaurant Association (UPHRA) and Managing Committee Member of HRANI. "There are high incentives offered to those who wish to build new hotels in Uttar Pradesh."

We are working on rationalising the taxes and this budget will bring good news for the industry

Kapil Mishra
Tourism Minister, Delhi

issues which we are addressing with the Tourism Minister at an open forum. These are the Luxury Tax, the exorbitant charges on environment tax, and ease of doing business,

whereas only five licences are required in countries like China and Malaysia.

In response to the same, Mishra said, "We are

Hike monument entry fee in phases

The hike in fee at Grade-I monuments listed under ASI is going to be implemented from April 1. The travel industry voices concerns over the sudden fee hike and gives suggestions to minimise damage to tourist numbers.

ANKITA SAXENA

There was no hike for over 10 years in entry fee to monuments. This hike is being implemented as per the decision of the government, ASI is only an executive body. We have requested the government to consider our proposal to have the increase in staggering manner in the

President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO).

According to ASI, in comparison to countries abroad, the entry fee at monuments is very less. **R.S. Fonia**, Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), says, "The money will be collected by the government to provide better public services



Subhash Goyal
President
IATO



R.S. Fonia
Joint Director General
ASI

Jyoti Kapur, President, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI), points out the impact on domestic tourism and says, "The domestic tour operators will not face a big challenge with the entry fee hike as the packages offered by them exclude such expenditures. However, in case of families, the increase will be an extra burden and to avoid that, they might skip visiting monuments or evaluate the affordability of the increased fees."

Bharat scheme. He says, "There is a need for joint collaboration between the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism to enable better landscaping at the monuments, introduction of light and sound shows, cultural events to facilitate better experience and in turn boost tourism. It is an interlinked process and an executive body like ASI has limited means to implement the same."

friendly pavements and wash-rooms, eateries at monuments and more resting places. There is also a need to have more trained audio and video guides at the monuments to facilitate a better experience.

high when many monuments are included in the itinerary and since the amount cannot be claimed from the clients, this may lead to cancellations."

Sarab Jit Singh, Vice Chairman, Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), adds, "The cost of Indian packages will further increase which will be reflected in the total number of arrivals because Indian tourism products are already more expensive by more than 20 per cent, when compared with competing destinations."

Discussing the repercussions of the fee hike on foreign tourist arrivals in India, Goyal says, "The tour operators often sign contracts six months to one year in advance and the fee hike was not updated then. The travel agents do not have the resources to meet the difference as it becomes quite

Singh adds that though the increase for domestic tourists is also similar in percentage sense, it will not affect them so much, because the base prices were very low. In case of foreign tourists, the increase is substantial which will definitely have its impact in foreign tourist arrivals.

Fonia shares the sentiment of the travel industry and points out that there is a need for a PPP model to implement Swachh Smarak, Swachh



Sarab Jit Singh
Vice Chairman
FAITH



Jyoti Kapur
President
ADTOI

course of 2-3 years and not a 300 per cent fee hike at one go," says **Subhash Goyal**,

and improved infrastructure at the monuments." Fonia points out that there is a need to provide Wi-Fi, handicapped

Industry suggests:

- Generate revenue from non-ticket options like kiosks on books, handicrafts; restaurants; special events; group tickets with concessions; e-ticketing for all monuments; sound and light shows
- The fees can be increased by not more than 50% every year and with this in 5 year's time, the targets would be achieved

MOT backs Budget

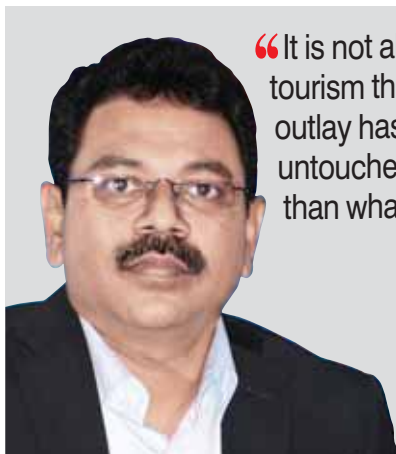
Addressing the concerns of the disheartened tourism industry, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, puts the record straight on the Budget, saying that it is only a financial document. He also said that the industry's requirements will be addressed by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) in the upcoming National Tourism Policy.

NISHA VERMA

While the entire industry is seemingly unhappy with the recent budget, Billa clarifies, "People don't understand the role of the budget. The budget is a financial document of the Government of India. It is not a document where one can expect details of electronic visa or adding or subtracting airports." Sharing his views on the budget, he says, "It is not about how many mentions of tourism there are, it is about how much the outlay has been. And the outlay has been untouched. We've got marginally more than what we got last year.

In terms of monetary allocation, there has been no discrimination."

Unlike the current budget with not a specific mention of tourism, in last year's budget it was announced that e-visa will be extended to 150 countries. Explaining further, Billa says, "Last time when they'd mentioned about e-visa for 150 countries, it was a deviation and it's not a norm. It was because the government took a serious view of doing that and bind down a timeline to e-visa. Every announcement in the budget goes through multiple reviews to see whether it has been done or not, and it ensures a time-bound



"It is not about how many mentions of tourism there are, it is about how much the outlay has been. And the outlay has been untouched. We've got marginally more than what we got last year."

Suman Billa
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

Our job is to get the global investors at one platform and we'd want the states to come and make a pitch because most of the investment will happen at the state level. We will try and hand-hold the states to develop a package that will be attractive to investors."

Looking forward to the Buddhist Conclave, which is planned around September-October in Bodh Gaya, he said, "It is a global event, essentially to establish India's claim as the originating country for Buddhism. It is not only about tourism promotion but also about projecting India to the outside world."

“As long as the money is not cut from the allocation, there is nothing that can stop us from achieving things like making the e-visa triple/multiple entry, introducing conference visas or medical visas, etc”

implementation. We were told that tourism specific things were not taken up this time because the structure of the budget has fundamentally changed. It was centred on the nine pillars of economic growth including agriculture and farmer's welfare; rural sector; social sector; educational skills; etc. However, as long as the money is not cut from the allocation, there is nothing that can stop us from achieving things like making the e-visa triple/multiple entry, opening up of conference visas or medical visas, etc."

While Billa did not give a definite date of releasing the tourism policy, he did reveal that it is awaiting cabinet approval at the moment. When asked if these measures can be expected from the tourism policy, he said, "We are hoping, but e-visa is not just the mandate of the MOT, it is dependent on the Ministry of Home as well. We have taken up this topic and had a meeting with the cabinet secretary there. In fact, a meeting was held between the Ministry of External Affairs as well as other

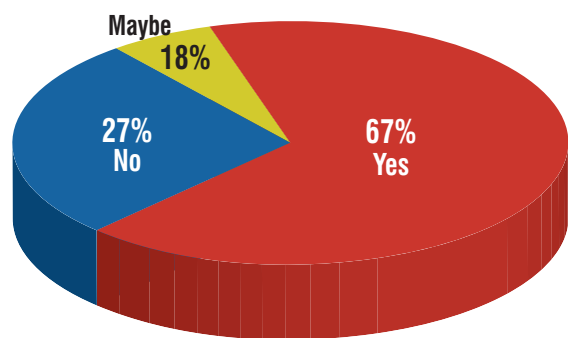
ministries, and the outcome was that it will have a very positive impact."

Talking further of the upcoming investment summit, he said, "We are still trying to structure it. If we have to keep with our promise of growth, we are looking at almost additional 200,000 hotel rooms in the country. And there are huge opportunities for investments like amusement parks, ropeways, as well as the Buddhist Circuit. There are multiple opportunities, which we can showcase and get investors.

What Tourism got?

The Budget 2016-17, presented by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in Parliament, earmarked ₹ 1,590 crore for the Tourism Ministry, out of which ₹ 1,500 crore under plan and ₹ 90 crore under non-plan heads

Dispelling doubts on safety



In the wake of rising coverage in media on crime against women, **TRAVTALK** asked industry players if they would consider India safe for international tourists, specially women. What we received was a resounding yes as 67 per cent gave a thumbs up to the security situation in India. However, 27 per cent voted no to our question casting some doubts on the safety of foreign travellers in the country. Five per cent were unsure. The poll is a reflection on how trade stands tall despite an impression of the country in general and Delhi in particular of being unsafe.



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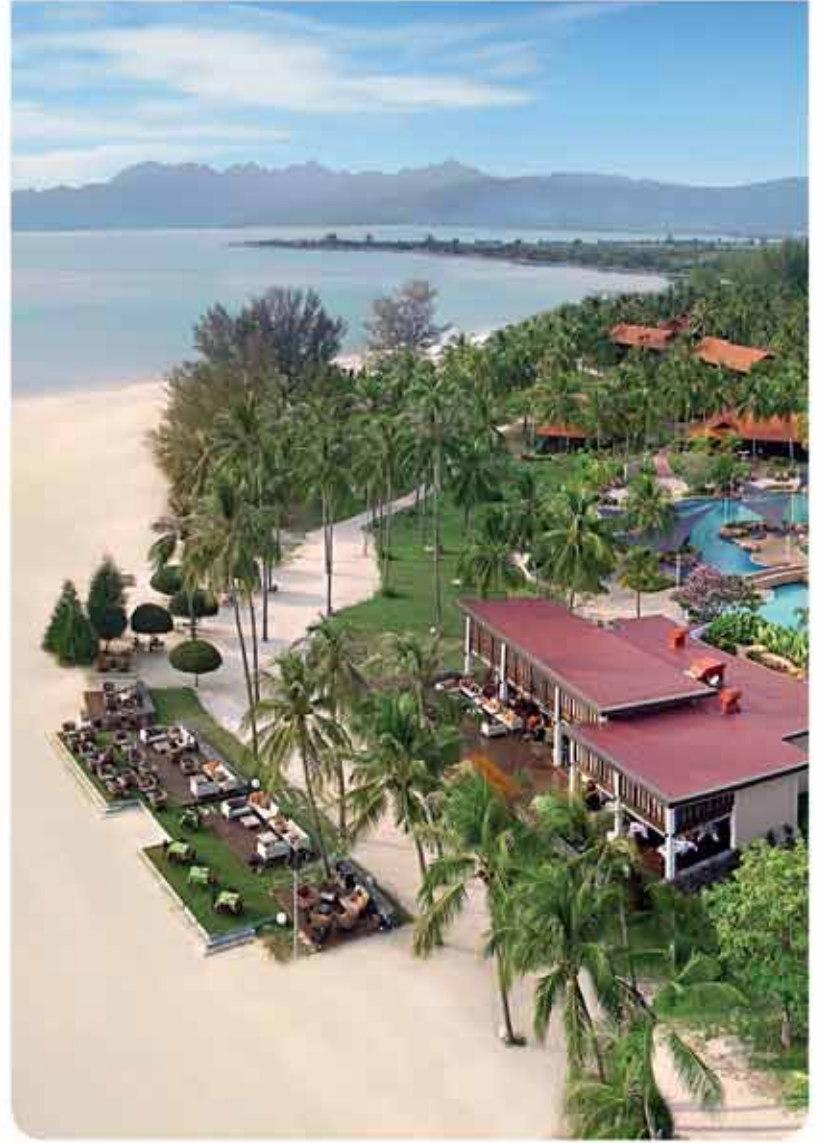
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Responsible Tourism @ KTM 2016

With focus on Responsible Tourism, Muziris and Spice Route themes, the ninth Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) is set to take place from September 28-30.

TT BUREAU

Billed as the largest gathering of tourism stakeholders in partnership with Department of Tourism, the biennial Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) will be held at Samudrika and Sagara Convention Centre, Willingdon Island, from September 28 to 30, 2016. Around 1,500 buyers from across the country and abroad are expected to attend the latest edition, with its focus on 'Responsible Tourism' and 'Muziris and Spice Route'.

"KTM 2016, which will coincide with 'World Tourism Day', will reach out to buyers from new international markets, emphasising on the new arenas of tourism, including responsible tourism, and popularise the concept among the common man," said **Abraham George**, President, Kerala Travel Mart Society.



Abraham George
President
Kerala Travel Mart Society

As many as 265 stalls of different sizes for the exhibitors within Kerala will be featured at the venue as part of the event.

"To facilitate better interaction between buyers and sellers, we have initiated the process for sellers' registration much in advance," George pointed out. The buyers' registration is open till July 29. The mart will be a platform for B2B networking.

KTM promises to bring together business entrepreneurs from Kerala offering various tourism products and services, including tour operators, hotels, resorts, home stays, houseboats, Ayurveda resorts and cultural art centres, on to a single platform and facilitates their meetings and interactions with buyers from around the world.

The mart will also project Kerala as an ideal breakaway destination for weddings and honeymoons along with its Ayurveda and leisure products, all of which are emerging segments for tourism destinations, with the aim of increasing the state's tourism market share by an additional ` 5,000 crore.

"Our aim is to substantially increase the number of tourists from the new market world over in the next two years. However, we have received a great and

prompt response from the domestic and international tour operators in yesteryears," Mr. George said.

During KTM 2014, the UK, Germany, France, Malaysia, and the US topped the countries with the maximum participants, new markets like Singapore, Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Brazil had their buyers too for the meet.

The Year That Was!

- KTM 2014 witnessed a participation of 1,100 buyers
- 854 domestic buyers and 234 international buyers from 45 countries attended the KTM 2014
- 40,000 buyer-seller appointments took place during the 3-day event

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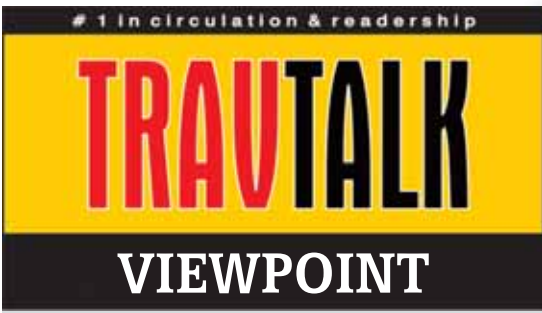
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25 years ago



TRAVTALK brings to you the events that made headlines 25 years ago and are relevant to the travel & tourism industry even now.

The power of one

What if all the small-sized travel agencies in India joined hands and formed a network? They would no longer remain diminutive but find strength in numbers.

A lot of agencies in cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Pune have already done this. They have created groups – whether on mobile applications or on social media platforms – inviting similar-sized agents to be part of it. They contribute to the conversation, share contacts, information and even experiences, and learn from each other's triumphs and errors.

By using simple technology that is available for free, more and more holiday planners are using their adversary to their advantage. This could be a smart move at a time when the online wave is slowly and gradually taking over the market, taking the consumers with it. The power of one, with agents working as a single unit, cannot be undermined; surely it has more value and negotiation power than a standalone small-sized agency.

Domestic tourism paves way for inbound

Hopes to boost inbound numbers are at an all time high, especially with the e-visa now being extended to 150 countries. Everyone, including the travel trade and the MOT, is taking it as a way forward to boost foreign tourist arrivals and in turn increase foreign exchange earnings into India. However, it is important to understand that inbound numbers can only increase if the domestic tourism in the country is flourishing. The MOT has revealed that domestic tourist visits within the country have been recorded at 1.45 billion in 2015, as against 747.7 billion in 2010, which means that we are going the right way forward. While figures speak volumes, domestic tour operators as well as inbound agents claim that with cheaper flights to outbound destinations being offered by both international and Indian carriers, they do lose substantial business to popular Southeast Asian destinations. However, with the PRASAD and Swadesh Darshan schemes in place, we hope that more destinations are developed.

BIG PLANS FOR SIKKIM

Sites for Major Chains Identified

- ❖ The hotel industry recognises Sikkim as the destination of future.
- ❖ Sharp focus on Sikkim and Darjeeling after the tragic happening in Kashmir Valley.
- ❖ Hope for getting the ancient shortest trade route between Sikkim and Lhasa.

From the archives

Yogesh C. Deveshwar was appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director of Air India in 1991 and is heading ITC Ltd today.



CMD, Air India



Chairman, ITC Ltd.

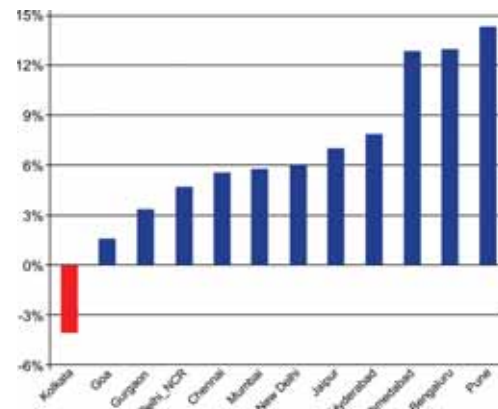


Modest rise in hotel inventory

With 7,853 new rooms, 2015 saw minimal addition to chain-affiliated hotel inventory in the last seven years. Occupancy rose by 3.3 points to 62%, RevPAR increased by 5% (only ` 168), because room rates were down by a half-point.

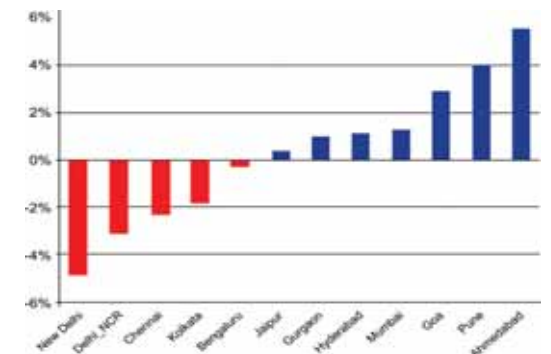
RevPar

RevPAR % Change-2015 vs 2014



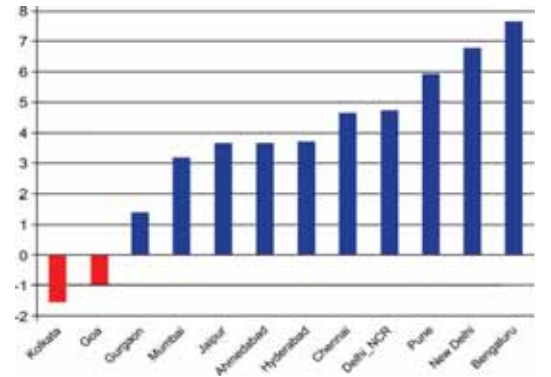
Average Daily Rate

ADR% Change-2015 vs 2014



Occupancy

Occ change-basis profits - 2015 vs 2014



Occupancy improvement is the highlight of 2015, with all but two of the key markets having positive results. -0.9 pts decline for Goa once again puts the focus on demand source concentration on a single market, in this case, the Russian market. Whereas in Kolkata, Occupancy has been in steady decline since it peaked at 70.6% in 2011. 2015 didn't see any new supply. The Average Daily Rate are a third lower in number than for 2014 and with a smaller scale of decline than recent years.



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Looking beyond India

Taj Samudra, Colombo, the flagship brand of the Taj Group in Sri Lanka, gets maximum business from India and is now looking to tap into China as well as the European markets.



NISHA VERMA

Taj Hotels has quite a big portfolio in Sri Lanka with three properties catering to all types of travellers coming into the country. **Parag Kathuria**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Taj Samudra, Colombo, explains, "Taj Samudra in Colombo is a luxury property and gets a mix of corporate, leisure and even MICE business. On the other hand, Vivanta by Taj - Bentota is a leisure property, while the Gateway Hotel Airport Garden Colombo is near the airport and caters to crew and transient clients."

According to Kathuria, they are well prepared to cater to big numbers. "All the Taj properties in Sri Lanka have invested in renovation in the last couple of years to upgrade our product. Taj Samudra has invested \$20 million in the recent past and is now ready to offer international luxury experience. Also, we have opened Golden Dragon

Restaurant last year to tap the Chinese segment," he says.

"In order to bring in better numbers we engage with the travel agents on a day to day basis and participate in trade fairs in association with Sri Lanka Tourism, where both travel agents and hotels come under one roof to promote Sri Lanka as a brand," he adds.

News from the island nation

Sri Lanka Tourism's new MD

Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) appointed **Ruvini Dias Bandaranayake** as the New Managing Director on Feb 15, 2016. She will be expected to lead the team at SLTPB to strengthen the country's tourism industry and further develop Sri Lanka's position in the world tourism ranks via various promotional and marketing activities.



Ruvini Dias Bandaranayake
Managing Director, SLTPB

Sri Lanka Tourism launches 50th Anniversary logo

Sri Lanka Tourism will be celebrating its 50 years on May 2, 2016 and to commemorate the same, Minister for Tourism Development & Christian Affairs Hon. **John Amarathunga**, on February 12 in Colombo, launched a new logo for its Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The national celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of Sri Lanka Tourism will be held on May 27, 2016 at the main hall of Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH).

SriLankan Airlines' thrice-weekly Guangzhou-Colombo flights

SriLankan Airlines has launched thrice weekly non-stop flights from Guangzhou to Colombo, becoming the first airline operating direct flights between Guangzhou and Colombo in the South China market.



Parag Kathuria
Director of Sales & Marketing
Taj Samudra, Colombo

We already have very good footmark in India. China is the largest segment at this point for Sri Lanka and we are tapping them through roadshows, etc

Talking of Taj Samudra specifically, he revealed that most of the business coming to them is not domestic. "90 per cent of our business comes from other countries and 10 percent from Sri Lanka in terms of nationality. The biggest source market for Taj Samudra is India, followed by the UK, the US, Australia and Germany," says Kathuria. However, to boost the numbers further, they are targeting business from China and Europe apart from India. "We already have very good footmark in India. China is the largest segment at this point for Sri Lanka and we are tapping the market by doing roadshows, trade fairs and building relationships with DMCs both in Sri Lanka and China," he adds.

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SAARC focus need of hour

Along with focus on tourism circuits within India, it is imperative for the government to look beyond borders and initiate cooperation between neighbouring countries to boost inbound numbers not only to India but to the SAARC region.



NISHA VERMA

Countries under South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) offer the best opportunity for short-haul travel and there is a possibility of developing these circuits to improve intra-regional tourism. Especially when Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has claimed that these countries

tributed about 46 per cent of this percentage. Promoting together can bring momentum to growth in travel and tourism industry and create harmony among these nations. We have already seen the benefits ASEAN countries are enjoying from regionalisation."

Adds **Jyoti Kapur**, President, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of

IATO, says, "When long-haul travellers from the US, Australia, and the UK visit India, they want to combine it with a visit to our neighbouring countries. If they've come on an e-Tourist Visa, which is only single entry, and go to Nepal, it's difficult for them to further travel to Sri Lanka, since there are no direct flights from Nepal, and they cannot enter India again. So, at least a triple entry



Amit Malhotra
Director
Bestway Tours & Safaris



Jyoti Kapur
President, Association of Domestic
Tour Operators of India (ADTOI)



Cyrus David
Manager-Tours
Parveen Holidays

can actually aim at a common goal for growth, it certainly needs to be assessed if developing these circuits is a viable option. **Amit Malhotra**, Director, Bestway Tours & Safaris, says, "The South Asian continent has potential to attract tourism from other parts of the world. It is highly important to develop tourism routes/circuits for India with its neighbouring countries. There are several reasons to move towards such regionalisation in tourism sector as it can bring wealth maximisation for all countries of this part of the continent and improve the travel and tourism industry's contribution to GDP. The World Travel and Tourism Council data suggests that the total contribution of travel and tourism in the year 2015 for South Asia was 2.15 per cent of the world and India con-

India (ADTOI), "In order to visit most of these countries, Indians do not need a visa as well as foreign exchange. And hence we should promote sub-continent tourism as an extension to domestic tourism."

The industry agrees that as the first step they should only include immediate neighbours in these circuits. **Cyrus David**, Manager-Tours, Parveen Holidays, says, "Some of the neighbouring countries which could be clubbed with the trans-circuit destinations would be Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan, which could increase the flow of tourists."

While this could work for Indian travellers, it can get a little tricky when it comes to international tourists. **Subhash Goyal**, President,

e-Tourist Visa is a must. Only business travellers get a 10 year multiple-entry visa to India, and it is imperative for the government to make the e-visa more flexible."

With opening up of these boundaries and visa norms, inbound numbers into the region would only go up. Malhotra sums up, "These circuits will certainly be beneficial for us in creating travel plans for our clients without impeding their cross country visits. Travel industry brings about the employment and income opportunities for South Asian countries. With political stability that comes about with strengthened regional cooperation, the clamour of insecurity and safety issues for tourists in South Asia will cripple, entailing boost in foreign tourist visits." 🐦

TAAI: NDC workshop with a GDS

■ The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Western Region will partner with a GDS company to conduct workshops on New Distribution Capability (NDC) and IATA's NewGen ISS for its members. Revealing this, **Jay Bhatia**, National Treasurer and Chairman (Tourism Council), TAAI, said, "We are looking to associate with GDS companies who can share their perspective on NDC. This will bring more clarity to our members."

TAAI had invited **Yossi Fatael**, Vice President, United

Federation of Travel Agents Associations (UFTAA), and Chairman, Air Matters, to conduct an in-depth presentation on NDC and NewGen ISS in Mumbai and New Delhi this January. The presentation titled 'Changing Trends in the Travel Industry and its Impact' highlighted the travel agents' perspective on these two important subjects.

Bhatia, who is also part of UFTAA's Global Tourism Committee, added, "We are also trying to get in touch with more and more tourism boards

whether national or international to conduct workshops and training programs for our members. Other than that, we will do various tie-ups in terms of hotel collaborations for our members where we will offer hotel deals at attractive rates exclusively for our members."

Rwanda and TAAI recently signed an MoU in Mumbai to promote bilateral tourism, both inbound and outbound, through education by organising workshops, roadshow and Fam trips.



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Budget '16: Mixed bag for the trade

There was no direct mention of tourism in the Union Budget 2016-17. Industry experts say the government has not heeded to their demands such as infrastructure status, GST, or tax exemption. However, the aviation industry is hopeful with the government promising improvement of 160 airports, boosting regional connectivity, which would indirectly benefit the tourism industry.

TT BUREAU



India: an expensive destination

The budget did not offer any significant provisions for tourism. The increase in excise duty on Air Turbine Fuel (ATF) will increase the air fare resulting in tourists paying a higher amount to travel. On a global scenario India will become a more expensive destination and may affect the numbers into India. However, the development of 160 airports is relatively good news. Any kind of development in infrastructure and transportation enables movement and indirectly facilitates tourism.

Ankush Nijhawan
Managing Director, Nijhawan Group



Service tax hazard

The budget did not offer anything significant to the travel and tourism industry. In fact the increase in excise duty will only increase the prices of ATF resulting in higher air fare for tourists. The increased service tax will add to hotel and transport cost, making India a more expensive destination. However development of new airports and infrastructure and the mission to allot more funds for cleanliness in the country, if implemented efficiently will improve India's brand image.

H.S. Duggal
Managing Director, Minar Travels (India)



Ray of hope for aviation

We welcome the decision of reviving underserved airports, developing 10 out of 25 non-functional airstrips in partnerships with state governments, which I believe will definitely accelerate the development of regional aviation sector and will also give a well deserving boost to the overall aviation sector. Although levying of additional cess in hospitality, could have been avoided as the industry is already burdened with taxes.

Ankur Bhatia
Executive Director, Bird Group and Member, CII National Committee on Civil Aviation



Adverse impact

The development of non-functional airports will improve connectivity within the country especially in Tier-II cities. The move of increasing excise duty on ATF will have some adverse impact on the demand side for the industry.

Rajesh Magow
Co-Founder and India CEO, MakeMyTrip.com



Emphasis on development

The budget has provided a sharp focus on building a stronger eco-system for the travel and tourism industry. Last mile connectivity is a key hurdle for tourism and travel in India, and we believe this measure will aid in overcoming this challenge. The Government's focus on development and empowerment of emerging India- Tier II and III cities - is a positive sign.

J.B. Singh
President and CEO, InterGlobe Hotels



A social budget

Union Budget 2016 is a welcome move and a very mature one by the Finance Minister. I welcome the focus on aviation industry and development of airports, which has been mentioned in the budget. The budget focused on social, agriculture, education, infrastructure and railway, and it scores seven out of ten for me.

E. M. Najeeb
Chairman and MD, Air Travel Enterprise Group

Contd. on page 14 ▶



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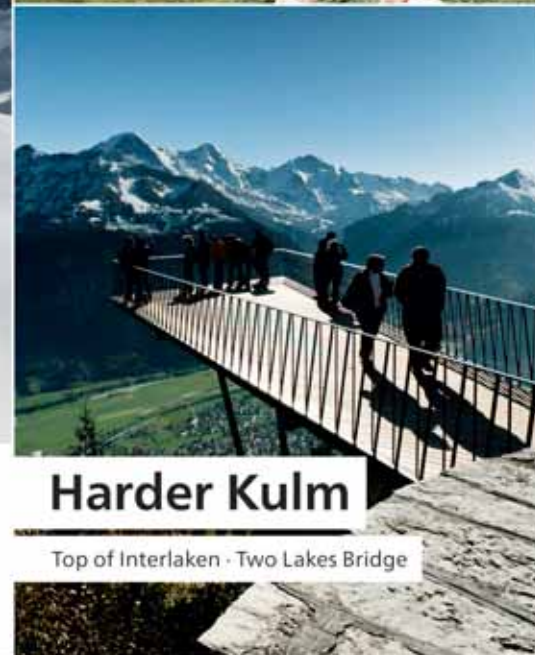
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Rwanda TAFI's next convention venue?

After signing an MoU with Rwanda recently to promote bilateral tourism from and into India, TAFI might also be looking at it as the venue for its upcoming convention.

 HAZEL JAIN

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) is getting ready for its annual convention that will be held in August or September of this year. As part of the protocol, it is in talks with a couple of destinations for this and one of them is Rwanda, hints **Zakkir Ahmed**, President, TAFI. "We will be able to announce the destination only by March end or early April. Our MoU with Rwanda includes not just outbound but inbound as well. It is not very well-known to tourists in India. So we will help them do some promotions through our members and Fam tours. If possible, we will also do our convention there," he says.



Zakkir Ahmed
President
TAFI

Ahmed adds that TAFI is looking to forge similar tie-ups with more countries. "This year's focus will be on training programs as the industry is changing constantly. TAFI is also working on an online platform for our members which we will announce in the next two to three months," he adds.

Enroll in JBG scheme

TAFI will be rolling out the Joint Bank Guarantee scheme for its members from July 1, 2016. "This was an important issue because agents only have two kinds of guarantee, bank and insurance guarantee. A lot of our members were asking for this scheme and fortunately we got its approval," Ahmed adds.

TAFI is also working on Goods & Services Tax (GST) on the side and will be making a presentation to the finance ministry and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) about how GST should be there for the Indian travel industry as a whole. "We have appointed a company that will make a presentation for us on this," Ahmed reveals. 

Luxury upgrade for low categories

With an ideal location and service for all kinds of travellers, Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra, is a perfect getaway in the city.

 TT BUREAU

In the city of the Taj, Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra, offers services that can cater to every type of traveller. "The property attracts leisure travellers, cultural tourists, special interest groups, conferences, weddings and also visitors for F&B outlets," claims **Rupak Gupta**, Joint Managing Director, U.P. Hotels, the parent company of the hotel. According to him, the location of the hotel


makes it a viable option for guests looking for the perfect stay. "The hotel offers a perfect setting due to being located in the prestigious and clean Agra Cantonment area. The property is adjoining the Agra Golf course and has views of Agra Fort as well as the Taj Mahal," he says.

In order to promote the property further, they are taking many initiatives, says Gupta. "We have started advertising,

holding industry meets like the UPTM 2016, Taj Literature Festival 2016 and other high-profile events and destination weddings," he adds. However, the property is committed to the best value package. "In every category we offer the lowest cost/delight ratio. We offer a luxury upgrade to the lower category and economy category rooms, as well as better space option to the upper category," he says. He further adds, "We




Rupak Gupta
Joint Managing Director
U.P. Hotels

have long-term rate contracts with travel agents and keep updating best rates for the day online." 



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Infrastructure focus: indirect benefits

► Contd. from page 10



Swachh Bharat outlay a welcome move

The proposal to levy Infrastructure and Agriculture cess is retrograde as it adds another slice to a high tax burden. We welcome the proposal of a 3-5 year tax holiday for start-ups. We hope this applies to new hotel projects. This will add vigour to the business climate. Amendments to boost ARCs are a good fiscal step. Mention of revival of 160 airports/airstrips is excellent. We hope this translates to reality in FY17. The Proposed outlays in infrastructure, highways, roads and rails are all excellent. Once again, we hope to see real progress on the ground. An outlay of 9000 crores on Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is welcome. India needs to solve the issue of final garbage disposal against the largely prevalent system of sweeping dirt away from one place only to another.

Ajay K. Bakaya
Executive Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts



Regional connectivity to give fillip to tourism

This budget has specifically focused on infrastructure across the country with a huge outlay for roads & highways, railways and reviving the unserved and under-served airports and airstrips in the country. The government realises that as the global economy wavers, domestic demand will be the key to tourism growth, especially to untapped regions like the North-east. We see a specific focus on enhancing regional and last mile connectivity with sops for start-ups and innovation in the passenger transport segment. In fact, increased regional connectivity will also give a fillip to outbound tourism from Tier II and III cities due to higher accessibility. The government is adopting measures from some of the thriving global tourist destinations, where-in public transport is critical not only for daily commuters but also the backbone for tourist traffic. Strengthening the infrastructure across levels will definitely strengthen India as an attractive tourist destination in the global ranks.

Manmeet Ahluwalia
Marketing Head, Expedia India



ATF: Two-pronged concern

The excise duty on air turbine fuel has been hiked and this is a two pronged concern – for the aviation industry – in removing the upside due to the steep fall in crude oil price, and for the consumer – due cascading price escalation as fuel forms almost 50-60 per cent of airline costs. We appreciate the far reaching initiatives and look forward to the government's effective and sustained delivery on ground.

Rajeev Kale
President & Chief Operating Officer-MICE, Domestic & Sports Tourism, Thomas Cook India



Increased level of prudence

The budget affirms the government's commitment to continued reforms while maintaining an increased level of prudence, given the current global environment of economic volatility. While there are no direct provisions for hospitality sector, we are enthused by the government's substantial focus on infrastructure and plans to revive 160 non-functional airports. Increased connectivity and accessibility will also give a fillip to outbound domestic travel from Tier-II and III cities, thus offering greater growth avenues.

Jean Michel Casse
Senior Vice President, Operations – AccorHotels, India



Indirect benefits for tourism

There was no direct mention of tourism or hospitality industry in the budget. However, stress on infrastructure development, improvement of 160 airports, boosting regional connectivity and Swachh Bharat program will indirectly benefit the tourism industry. The outlay for infrastructure development, investment in road sector and intent to upgrade the highways is a measure that will provide strong ecosystem for travel and tourism industry.

Manoj Nair
Director, Meandering Vacations

JEWEL IN THE CITY OF TAJ MAHAL

Agra's iconic hotel, **The Clarks Shiraz**, with the distinction of hosting legends like Jackie Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, Mohammed Ali, is recently renovated and become the latest 5 star delux hotel in the city.

A long table banquet at the world famous **Mughal Room**, High Tea or Sun-downer, Bar-b-que at the terrace **Sunset Lounge**, over looking the Taj Mahal & Agra Fort, an AV for the group at **Arjumand hall**, the new **Checkers Buffet**, the refurbished rooms & bathrooms, Gym by the garden, recreation center and signature massage at **Adiba Spa**, enrich the overall holiday experience.

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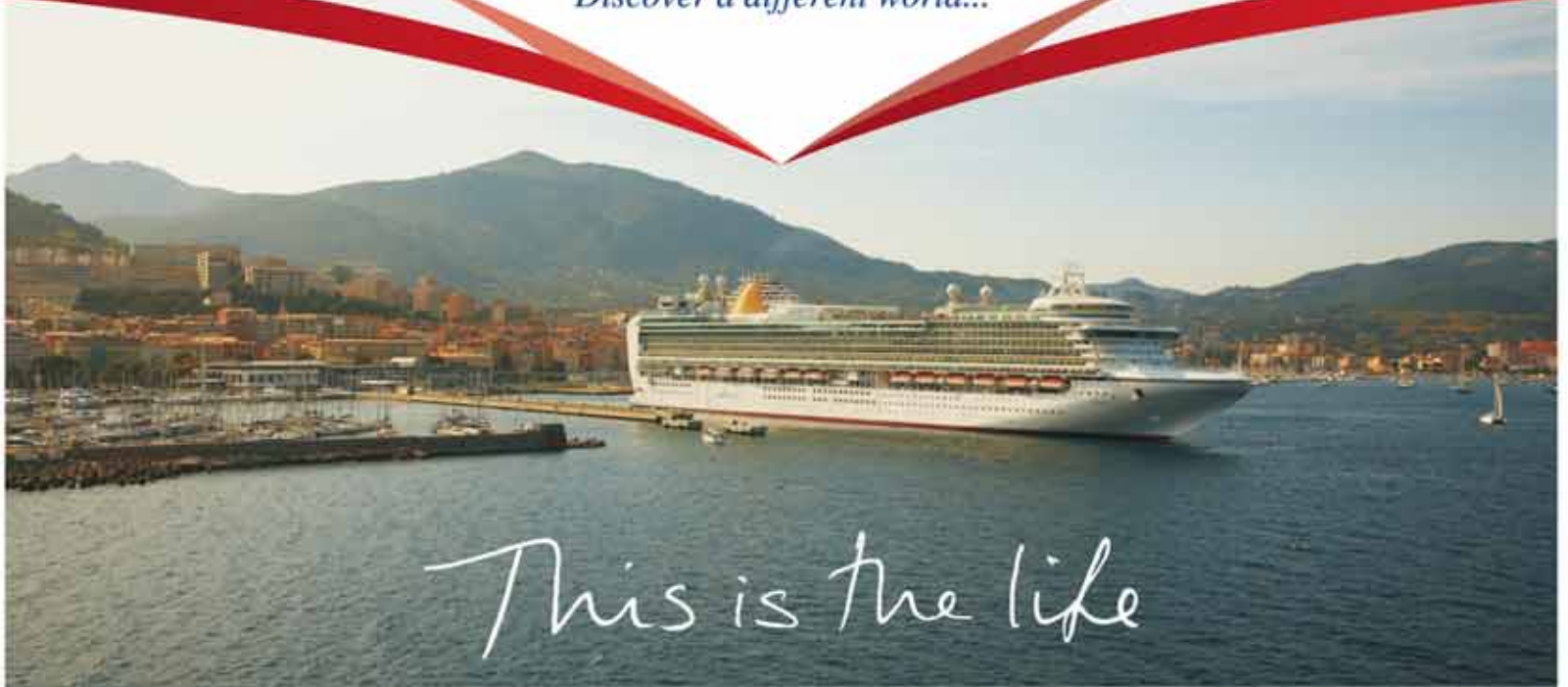
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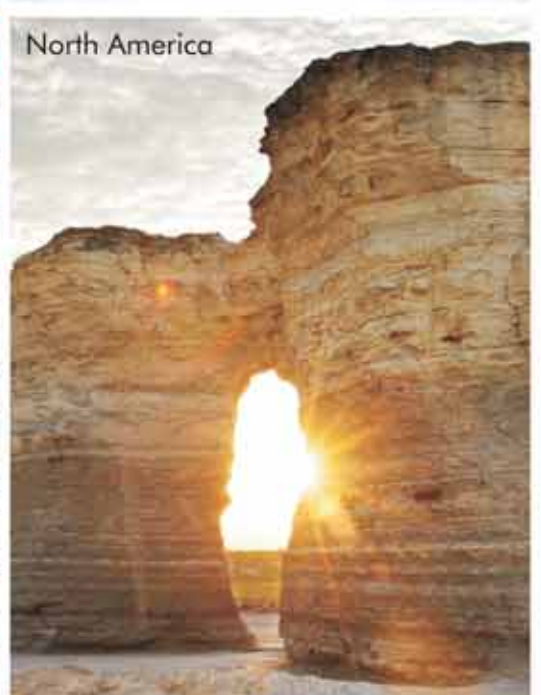
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19th flight on Delhi-Bangkok route

Thai Airways is undertaking a feasibility study on the Ahmedabad route and looking at augmenting capacities on its existing routes.



TT BUREAU

Starting April 1, 2016, Thai Airways will operate an additional flight on Delhi-Bangkok route, which, according to **Sunil Kumar**, Head of Sales – North India, Thai Airways, would only offer more options and



onwards connections to Indian travellers. "Thai will operate additional daylight flight TG324-TG323, increasing frequency to 19 flights a week. It will operate with 777-200 aircraft, offering

capacity of 30 seats in business and 279 seats in Economy. Total capacity per week will be 5941 seats per week from Delhi," he says.

Thai Airways already operates at two time slots from Delhi, and "the additional daylight flight will offer greater options to passengers travelling to Australia and Auckland. Flying at three different time slots, Thai offers convenience and flexibility to passengers," says Kumar.



Sunil Kumar
Head of Sales – North India
Thai Airways

Apart from Delhi, we are also considering increasing flights to Mumbai during the summer

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While flying on new routes is a priority for Thai, the airline is currently focusing on increasing the capacity. Kumar says, "We are conducting feasibility study on Ahmedabad route, and decision to operate to this destination will be taken soon. Further, we are also working on consolidating the existing routes by augmenting capacity. Apart from Delhi, we are also considering increasing flights to Mumbai during the summer season. Thai is currently operating from six cities in India i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru, offering 52 flights a week. We also operate seasonal flights from Gaya and Varanasi between October-March."

The airline has further offered special fares for the daylight flight. "We have also introduced special fares to Thailand on our daylight flights (TG324/TG323) which are valid for travel till September 30, 2016. Through these fares, we will be targeting leisure travellers during the forthcoming holiday season," he says. However, these rates will not include outbound travel from May 16-June 15, which will be observed as the blackout period.



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Attracting FITs and families

Once a haven for couples, Phuket is now diversifying its offerings to attract MICE and even families from India and riding this wave is Novotel Phuket Vintage Park.

TT BUREAU

Slotting India as one of its top five source markets worldwide, Novotel Phuket Vintage Park considers it as top three in Asia, representing almost six per cent of their total business in 2015. Revealing this is **Sopa Sornin**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Novotel Phuket Vintage Park. She says, "Our focus is more on leisure, particularly FITs, families and honeymooners as well as MICE groups. We are expecting to take this growth up to 10 per cent of our business this year. We can already see the growth in FIT and the family markets from India."

The resort is always present at major trade shows in India like SATTE in Delhi and OTM in Mumbai as well as attend Tourism Authority of Thailand roadshows in metros



Sopa Sornin
Director of Sales & Marketing
Novotel Phuket Vintage Park

Our focus is more on leisure, particularly FITs, families and honeymooners as well as MICE

like Chennai, Bengaluru and Kolkata. "We also host Fam trips from India. In December

2015, we had hosted a gala dinner for buyers from India for the Andaman travel trade. We have our international sales office located in New Delhi and Mumbai to assist to any requirement," she says.

The resort has an Indian chef who can tailor-make the food as per the guest's dietary requirements. An Indian menu is also available. "Moreover, the location of our resort also encourages Indians to book us; it is walking distance from the beach, the shopping center and Patong's lively nightlife. Our resort has the largest pool in Patong Beach at 2,000 sq m with a bar, great location with walking distance to attractions nearby, impressive lobby with South East Asia architecture and design, free Wi-Fi throughout the resort. We also won national awards for our spa recently," Sornin adds.

Self-drive itineraries

Travstarz Global Group expects a healthy growth of numbers to Thailand which has already crossed the one million mark in 2015.

TT BUREAU

"An easy visa regime, excellent tourist infrastructure at economical rates, white-sand beaches and amazing night life make Thailand a year-round destination," says **Pankaj Nagpal**, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group.

Nagpal identifies that China has been the largest source market with nearly 3.5 million tourists followed by Malaysia but India is catching up fast and is expected to become the second largest source market in 2016.

He says that they have seen a huge rise in the quality of Indian travellers and the destination has been a favourite amongst the MICE, FIT and group travellers. "The self-drive option in Koh Samui and Rayong is a must do for fami-



Pankaj Nagpal
Managing Director
Travstarz Global Group

lies. The length of stays has also increased from an average of 3-4 nights to 6-7 nights now," says Nagpal. Thailand is also becoming a favourite for Indian destination weddings. "Our partner hotel, the Marriott Rayong, has hosted 26 Indian marriages in 2015 and expects to host many more in 2016," he adds.

With their own office in Thailand, the company is con-

tracting with multiple hotel chains in Thailand. Nagpal says, "We also launched our Series Departures for Thailand and are working with our hotel partners to design special packages for the honeymoon segment including unique experiences for couples in hotels. In Bangkok too, we have created five-star luxury packages and plan to work closely with TAT. We also have exclusive deals with some of our hotel partners for the travel trade."

Nagpal expresses that the marketing of extremely low-cost packages is harming the brand positioning of Thailand and it must be checked by the tourism authorities and points out that it is imperative for the tourism board to select partners to position Thailand as an up market and luxury destination and a good destination for Indian weddings.

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New Year with a splash

Travellers making a trip to Thailand in April can look forward to the exciting Songkran Festival, one of the biggest and most celebrated in the kingdom.

TT BUREAU

Thailand ushers in the traditional New Year or Songkran on April 13 for which the celebrations commence a day ahead and continue for almost a week. Songkran is one of the biggest festivals in the kingdom and is all about fresh starts and cleansing. For the same reason, the kingdom rejoices during this auspicious period with friendly water fights that take place everywhere and additionally gives respite from the scorching summer



heat. The fun-filled Water Festival takes place from April 13-15.

To add to the festivities, Songkran celebrations will also take place in Sangkhlaburi from April 12-17 at Wat Wang Wiwekaram. Witness Mon's traditional ceremony from April 13-15 where rituals like bringing sand into temples to build Mon's sand pagoda will take place. On April 16 at 3 pm, watch the sacred ceremony of purifying the revered Buddha's statues through bamboo pipes that can be kilometres in length. As part of the rituals, the men of Sangkhlaburi will voluntarily lie down on the street to make a human bridge for monks to walk upon to the purifying area and



after the ceremony, monks will be carried to their huts. A spectacular parade offering off-season Buddhist robes to monks and pouring ceremonial water in memory of the deceased will be held on April 17 from 9 am onwards.

Healing celebrations

Spa Cenvaree offers an exclusive Songkran package to help you start the New Year feeling calm. The journey begins with a foot ritual, followed by a body treatment and ends with a herbal Muscle Melter Massage

Film, MICE on an uphill drive

Shivadatta Wagle, Director, Meandering Vacations, informs that their Bangkok office has tied up with local vendors to offer the best deals to the Indian B2B sector.

TT BUREAU

With Thailand's popularity increasing year after year, numerous travel operators have strengthened ties with the Thai tourism industry. Meandering Vacations' Bangkok outlet has negotiated deals with local vendors catering to the B2B segment in India. "So far, we have received an encouraging response from the Indian market. Our focus is also on the B2C sector in Middle East and European market," shares Wagle.

He further explains that Thailand's popularity cuts across the age group. "Thailand has all those things to offer that can excite vacationer. Young Indian tourists prefer the most popular circuit of Bangkok and Pattaya for their leisure holidays which is also popular



Shivadatta Wagle
Director
Meandering Vacations

There has been a marked rise in filmmakers, MICE, wedding groups & honeymooners in Thailand

amongst corporate travellers. Families seek vacations in

sunny Phuket, Krabi, Koh Samui and Phi Phi. While tourists are also exploring Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai in the north for the tranquillity it offers," he informs. Wagle adds that Northern Thailand's mountainous landscape makes for the perfect biking terrain with stunning views, ancient temples and the culture of hill tribes.

Additionally, he says that Indian leisure travellers generally go shopping and sightseeing in Bangkok and Pattaya with an increasing number also heading to the less explored places like Chiang Mai, Samui, Chiang Rai, Krabi, Ayutthaya and Koh Chang. He elaborates, "Recent years have also shown a marked rise in the number of Indian filmmakers, MICE delegates, wedding parties and honeymooners."



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Luxury on the rise with FITs

Thailand is seeing a steady increase in demand for luxury products. **Steve Harrop**, CEO, TravelBullz Group, gives an insight into the tourism products in Thailand and the company's promotional plans for 2016.



TT BUREAU

Harrop says that Thailand had a very successful year in 2015 with unofficial figures indicating arrivals of almost 30 million passengers corresponding to growth of nearly 20 per cent over 2014.

"2015 saw 1 million visitors arriving from India into Thailand. These arrivals were broadly spread across all segments from groups and MICE through to FITs. From TravelBullz's perspective we still see a large demand for good quality 4-star product but the luxury segment is definitely on the increase as FIT becomes more popular," he adds.

TravelBullz has had a great start to 2016 and is going to focus on Thailand as a destination, building a strong competitive product and providing the best customer service. "We continue to invest in technology and 2016 will see more features being released that will bring greater visibility to the products on offer and increasing the range of attractions that we sell," says Harrop.

TravelBullz is continuously updating its packages. Harrop says, "It is advised to regularly check our online availability to see the latest deals. We send email flyers frequently, showcasing the latest packages and deals and I highly recommend to our clients to benefit from these deals when their customers are enquiring about the destination. Thailand is a great value for money destination and with our support our travel trade partners can provide the best experiences that Thailand has to offer to the Indian traveller."

The variety of tourism products in Thailand is reinforced by the number of repeat travellers says Harrop. "The Safari World on the outskirts of Bangkok or the FantaSea Cultural Theme Park in Phuket are very popular among the Indian travellers. Thailand is a family friendly destination and attractions for kids include the Madame Tussauds Museum," says Harrop.

Talking about the important source markets for Thailand, Harrop says, "A huge demand is seen from China which is growing exponentially year on year. Aside from the region, Russia although seeing a decline in

recent times is still a large source market as is the United Kingdom. However with the continuing growth being seen from India, it is anticipated they will feature in the top five source markets in the next few years."

"2015 saw 1 million visitors arriving from India into Thailand. These arrivals were broadly spread across all segments from groups and MICE through to FITs. We still see a large demand for good quality 4-star product but the luxury segment is definitely on the increase."



Steve Harrop
Chief Executive Officer, TravelBullz Group



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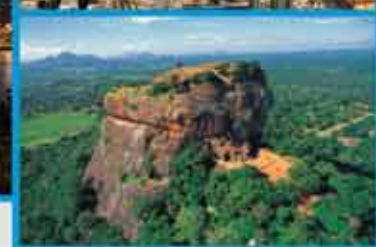


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Skilled tourism manpower

While the emerging economy plays its part in creating jobs in the market, the onus rests on educational institutes to provide skilled manpower. **Rahul B Sharma**, Head of Academy, Eduglobe School of Learning, highlights the immediate need for quality human resource in the industry.



QDo you see a huge demand for skilled manpower in India?

As an emerging market, India is seeing a sizeable growth in inbound tourism and business exports which will lead to a high demand for skilled travel professionals in the sector.

ious high-end internationally mapped travel certification programs and curriculum which is concurrent and globally endorsed by the tourism sector and service industry.

QWhat do you propose to achieve this year?

Our aim is to create jobs for thousands of new job seekers in the sector. Going forward, the company also intends to move in for online global certification with strong international training and placement partnerships.



Rahul B Sharma
Head of Academy
Eduglobe School of Learning

Our objective is to focus on job creation in tourism across India through internationally mapped travel certification programs

Eduglobe is playing a vital role in bridging the gap between education and employment which will contribute to creating a ready pool of skilled manpower for the travel sector.

QHow does Eduglobe stand out from the other institutes in India?

Our curriculum focuses on quality learning with industry mapped certifications and placements majorly for travel and tourism sector with international partnerships such as IATA, City & Guilds UK, Abacus and Manipal Prolearn. Eduglobe stands out from the other educational training organisation as the comprehensive learning model focuses more on practical curriculum and live project work model and assessments.

QWhat are its objectives?

The primary objective is to focus on job creation in tourism sector across India through var-

Korean Air code-shares with Jet

In an effort to expand its presence in India, Korean Air has recently signed a code-share agreement and frequent flyer program with Jet Airways.

The code-share agreement will offer more choice to passengers travelling from India to Incheon, Seoul, through gateway airports in Asian destinations such as Singapore and Bangkok. Passengers will also benefit from the connections onto Jet Airways' daily service to Delhi.

As part of the code-share agreement between the two airlines, Korean Air will place its 'KE' code on Jet Airways' seven to 14 weekly flights from Mumbai and Delhi, to Bangkok and Mumbai-Singapore, and the code-share routes are expected to be expanded even more by the end of this year.

Passengers will benefit from the increased connectivity and fre-

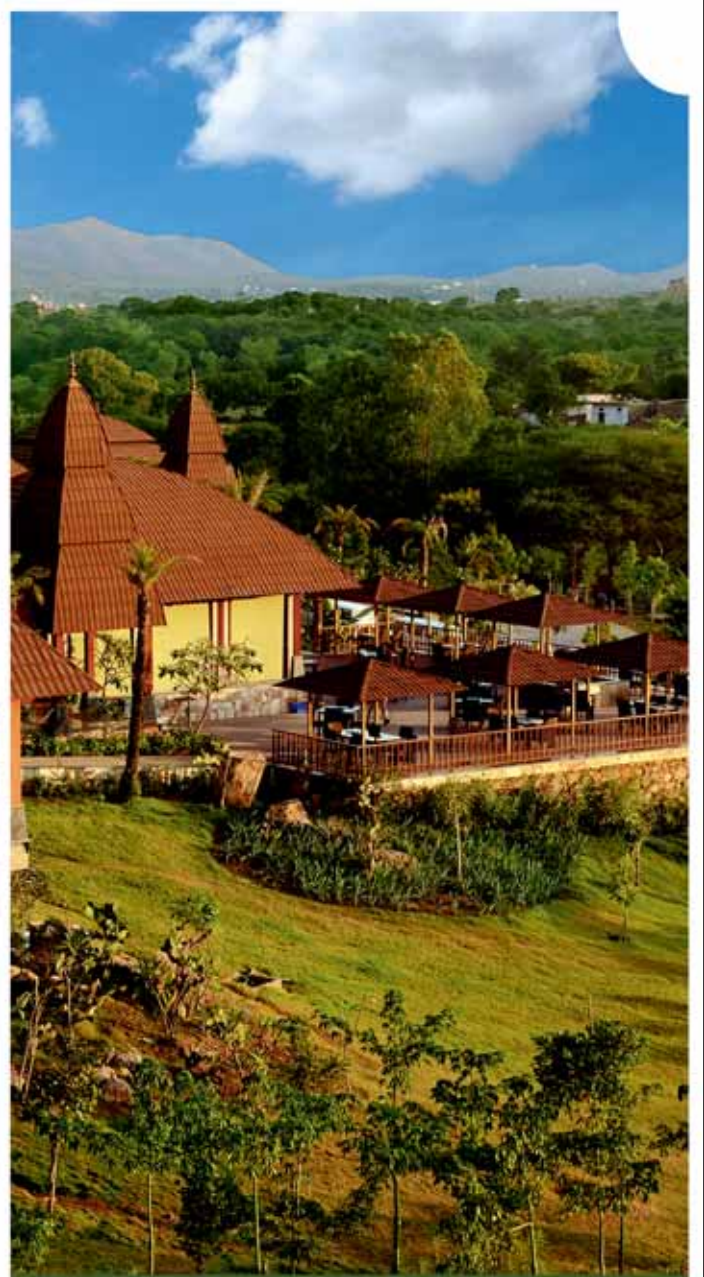
quency between Incheon, Seoul and cities in India.

Along with the code-share agreement, a new frequent flyer partnership program will also take effect. This reciprocal partnership will enable members of both airlines' frequent flyer program, SKYPASS and JetPrivilege, to earn and burn mileage on the entire network of the two airlines.

Korean Air currently operates an A330 aircraft from Incheon to Mumbai three times a week. The flight departs every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Incheon and every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from Mumbai. Jet Airways operates over 20 international routes from the cities of India with a fleet of more than 116 aircraft. Korean Air currently has code-share partnerships with 34 airlines on 397 routes worldwide.



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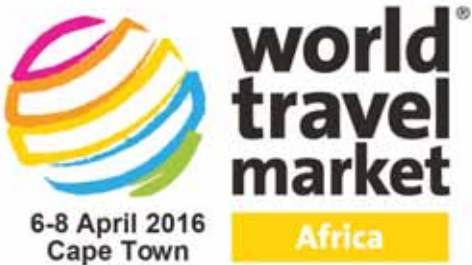
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2,700+ meetings at 1st BTM

The first edition of Bengal Travel Mart (BTM) was held from February 26-28, in Siliguri and saw participation from 93 buyers, of which 15 were international, and 86 exhibitors from Bengal, Telangana, Assam, Nepal and Bhutan. Jointly organised by Eastern Himalaya Travel and Tour Operators Association (EHTTOA), West Bengal Tourism and North Bengal Development Department (NBDD), 2,760 meetings took place over a span of three days at the mart which welcomed around 300 visitors each day.



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More to MICE

Here's a list of 15 experiences in Singapore that will entice, excite and engage corporate travellers of various mindsets.

Marina Bay Sands skyline

Cosmopolitan and multifaceted, Singapore's fascinating diversity makes it a unique and dynamic MICE destination. As a thriving Asian economic hub with a rich multi-cultural heritage, Singapore easily combines business, leisure and lifestyle. It offers a vibrant mix of world-leading business activities, traditional and modern arts, culture and festivals, authentic global cuisines, iconic entertainment, shopping and nightlife.

Having received numerous global accolades - such as 'Asia's Top Convention City' for the 12th consecutive year from the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and 'Top International Meeting City' for the 7th consecutive year from the Union of International Associations (UIA) - Singapore has earned its place as Asia's premier destination for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE).

As a MICE destination, Singapore offers many unparalleled advantages. Excellent air travel connectivity that links some 300 cities across the globe and the support of more than 150 hotels with 50,000 hotel rooms, help draw a diverse base of international visitors. An unrivalled array of Singapore services and attractions enable international event planners to develop remarkable itineraries for discerning groups of travellers. From the heart-stopping equestrian action or a glittering street party to an indulgent afternoon tea with the stars of the world's best rainforest zoo, Singapore has options galore.

- ◆ **Universal Studios Singapore:** Experience cutting-edge rides, shows and attractions based on blockbuster Hollywood films, including Transformers The Ride: The Ultimate 3D Battle, Sesame Street Spaghetti Space Chase, Shrek 4-D Adventure, Jurassic Park Rapids Adventure, and more!
- ◆ **Forest Adventure:** From awesome bridges, scary trapezes to wobbly logs and a fantastic big tarzan swing, there are 34 different challenges and obstacles in four different sites for you to tackle. Overcome these obstacles as a group and emerge stronger as a team!
- ◆ **Adventure Cove Waterpark:** The waterpark boasts of seven thrilling water rides, including Riptide Rocket which is Southeast Asia's first hydro-magnetic coaster. If highspeed water slides are not your thing, laze the day away drifting on a lazy river

or go snorkelling with 20,000 tropical fish over a colourful reef.

- ◆ **Champagne/whisky flight on Singapore Flyer:** Take in the spectacular view of the Singapore skyline while enjoying a delightful selection of local favourites and international cuisine in your private capsule on board the 165-metre-tall Singapore Flyer.
- ◆ **Gala Dinner with marine animals at S.E.A. Aquarium:** Corporate groups can also dine in the exclusive company of marine animals at the Ocean Gallery at the S.E.A. Aquarium.
- ◆ **New York Street-themed gala dinner at Universal Studios Singapore:** Enjoy a gala spread in the background of America's biggest and grandest city as you stroll along the sidewalks.



Singapore Sling



Cooled conservatory at Gardens by the Bay



View from the Singapore Flyer capsule



Wave House Sentosa

- ◆ **Dinner in a Cooled Conservatory at Gardens by the Bay:** For an out-of-the-box experience, dine at two of the largest climate-controlled conservatories in Singapore's awe-inspiring Gardens by the Bay.
- ◆ **Jungle breakfast with orangutans at Singapore Zoo:** Singapore Zoo is the only place in the world where you can have breakfast with orangutans. After taking photographs with them, watch them swing and climb in their adjacent habitat.
- ◆ **Dinner aboard tram at Night Safari:** Experience fine-dining amongst the creatures of the night, all on board a moving safari tram.
- ◆ **Cocktails at world's tallest rooftop bar at 1-Altitude:** Party the night away atop the tallest building in Singapore. At 282 metres above sea level —1-Altitude is the world's highest al fresco bar and viewing gallery.
- ◆ **MegaZip Adventure Park:** From walking across rope bridges while being high in the air, to testing your balancing skills, MegaZip Adventure Park is the place for that adrenaline rush.
- ◆ **Dragon boat race down Marina Bay:** Dragon boat racing is a sport that requires true team co-ordination and grit. This unique and versatile platform is great for creative training and getting a team to experience success that is driven by unity.
- ◆ **Discover local cuisine in a cooking class:** Enrol at any of the reputed cooking classes and learn how to prepare Singapore's signature dishes like chilli crab and chicken rice, among others.
- ◆ **Singapore Sling cocktail mixology class:** Learn from bartending experts how to create the original and legendary Singapore Sling cocktail.
- ◆ **Tipi tent dinner in the wild at Night Safari:** Nestle in the comfort of an air-conditioned tipi tent for a memorable evening of drinks and delectables in an exotic safari setting. ❖



New York-themed street at Universal Studios Singapore



Shipwreck Tunnel at S.E.A. Aquarium

Photo Courtesy: Resorts World Sentosa



Jurong Bird Park



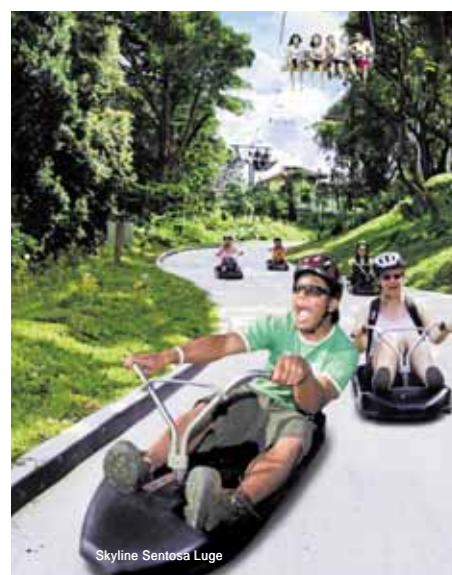
Breakfast with orangutans at Singapore Zoo



Rope walking



Gourmet dinner aboard a tram at Night Safari



Skyline Sentosa Luge



Universal Studios Singapore



Sentosa Merlion

Photo Courtesy: Resorts World Sentosa



STB Incentive Programme

The Singapore Tourism Board and its partners have curated a collection of unique, diverse experiences – **In Singapore Incentives and Rewards (INSPIRE)** programme – with the discerning business traveller in mind. STB is extending its run for INSPIRE India, in response to strong market demand. To qualify, send in your applications by June 30, 2016. Group travel to be completed by September 30, 2016. To enjoy INSPIRE experiences, incentive groups must meet the following qualifying criteria:

- ❖ Each group must spend a minimum of 1,000 visitor nights
- ❖ Group must stay at a premium hotel accommodation in Singapore

From a selection of unconventional itineraries, personalised programmes and exclusive dining offerings to Singapore's rich multi-cultural heritage, world-class offerings and round-the-clock excitement, the traveller will be spoiled for choices. To reward the corporate traveller, STB has partnered with the most-sought after tourist sites in the country and has curated packages to suit various needs. Value (1000-1499 VN) & Premium (1500 VN and above) tiers are available to support different group sizes.

► Changi Airport

Every Singapore incentive trip begins at the world-renowned Changi

Airport which houses five thematic gardens and a rooftop bar. For the INSPIRE scheme, Changi Airport offers Changi Dollar Vouchers worth S\$20-S\$30 per pax.

► Gardens by the Bay

An integral part of Singapore's "City in a Garden" vision, Gardens by the Bay spans a total of 101 hectares at the heart of Singapore's new downtown – Marina Bay. Under the scheme, Gardens by the Bay offers Lunch and breakfast buffet at Flower Field Hall with complimentary access to the Cooled Conservatories; Gardens souvenir bags are also up for grabs.



Public cantilever at Marina Bay Sands SkyPark

► Resorts World Sentosa

Resorts World Sentosa is Asia's ultimate leisure and MICE destination. Under the INSPIRE scheme, groups can relish dinner in New York Street at Universal Studios Singapore, or have breakfast at Adventure Cove Waterpark.

► Singapore Turf Club

Seating 30,000 racegoers and equipped with world-class race-tracks and viewing facilities, Singapore Turf Club also plays host to prestigious races such as the Singapore Airlines International Cup, Emirates Singapore Derby and the Longines Singapore Gold Cup all year round. Under INSPIRE offerings, your client can enjoy live action at Singapore Racecourse, including buffet dinner, guided tour to Parade Ring.

► Wildlife Reserves Singapore

Wildlife Reserves Singapore operates for award-winning wildlife attractions: Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari, River Safari and Singapore Zoo. Each year, Jurong Bird Park welcomes approximately 800,000 visitors, Night Safari 1.1 million, River Safari 900,000, and Singapore Zoo 1.7 million. Qualifying groups can enjoy perks such as exclusive breakfast or dinner meals within the Jurong Bird Park, Night Safari and Singapore Zoo. ❖

► Sentosa

Located just 15 minutes from Singapore's city centre is Sentosa, an idyllic resort island with pristine beaches, exciting attractions, sea sports, golf and retreats. Thrill seekers can take a ride on Skyline Luge Sentosa, nature lovers can explore the walking trails and wonders of Butterfly Park & Insect Kingdom.

As part of INSPIRE, Sentosa offers Indian dinner at Emerald Pavilion or cocktail at Madame Tussauds with a complimentary welcome banner at Wings of Time.

Take survey, win rewards

- ❖ Tell us how you plan to add some excitement and fun to your next business trip to Singapore! Will you try out a gourmet restaurant with your colleagues, bring your family to visit our kid-friendly attractions or shop until you drop?
- ❖ The most creative submissions will be rewarded with the Singapore 241 Passport, worth up to S\$50,000 of exclusive dining, lifestyle and leisure experiences in Singapore!
- ❖ Log on to tinyurl.com/IndiaBTSurvey and participate now!

Gardens by the Bay



Contact the Singapore Tourism Board for more information at mumbai@stb.gov.sg, +91 22 66083200; or delhi@stb.gov.sg, +91 11 45810088. For additional resources to help you plan your next business event in Singapore, please visit: yoursingapore.com/mice

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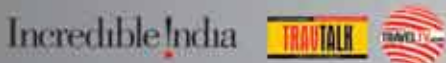
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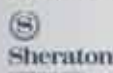
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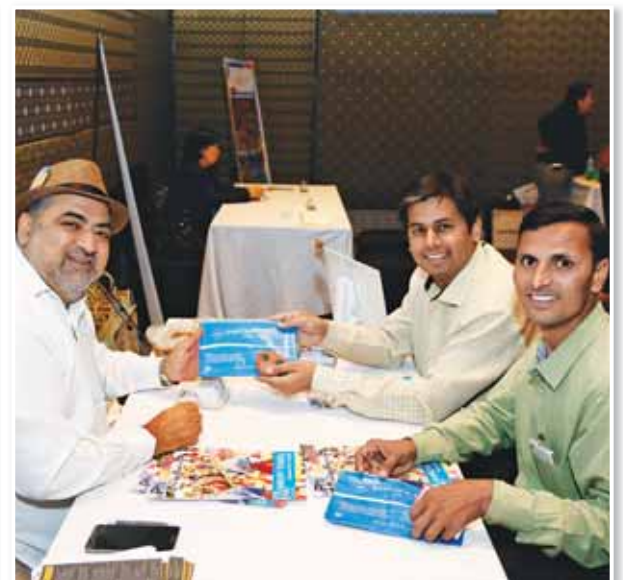


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Philippines roadshow dazzles Pune

The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines, conducted its 'Visit the Philippines Year (VPA) 2016' roadshow in Pune for its travel trade partners in the city. A 25-member delegation, comprising hoteliers, resorts, spas, and representatives of tour attractions, interacted with key travel and tour operators, MICE providers, up-market leisure operators and media personnel.

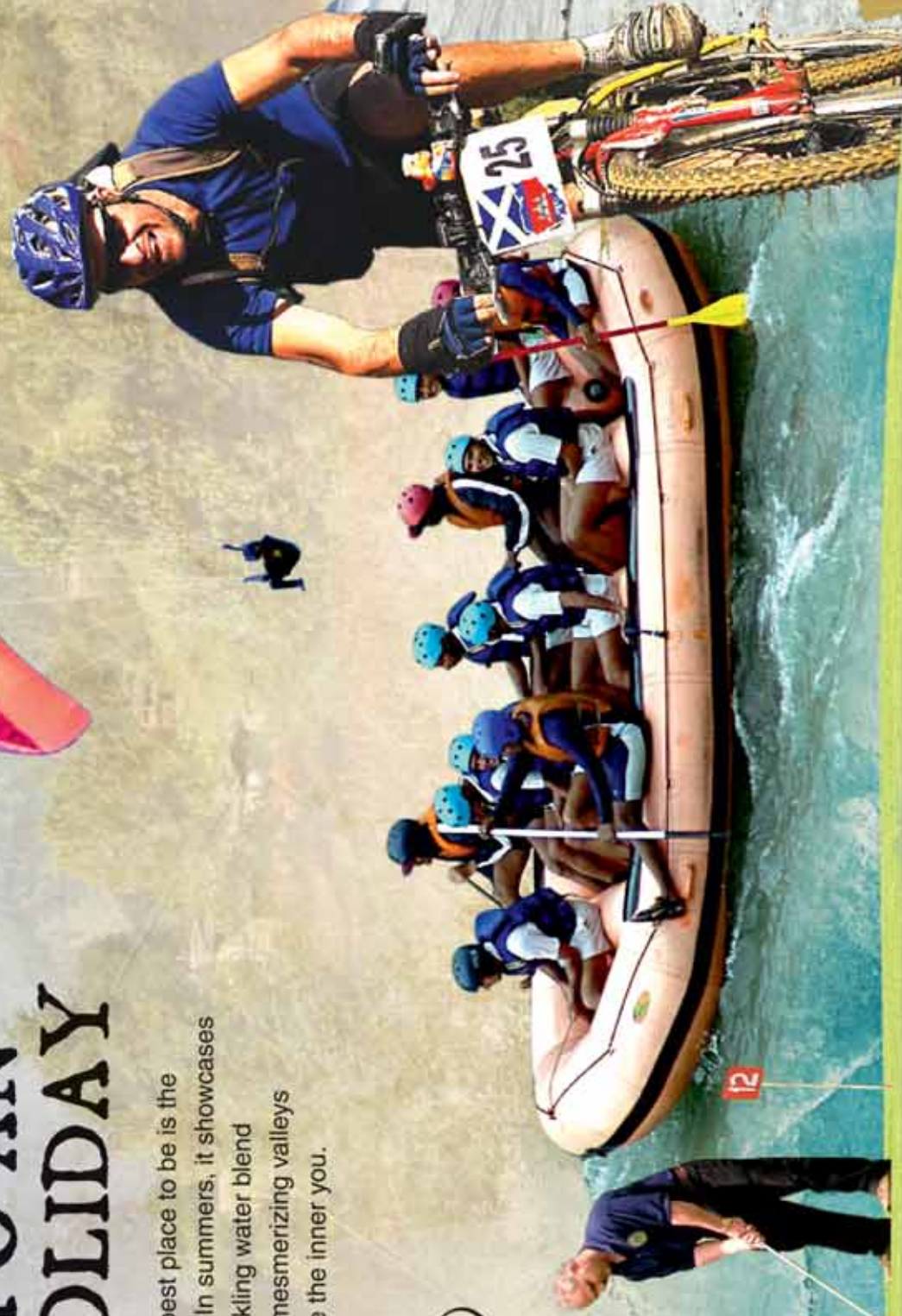


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QUANTUM

Creating Synergy amongst Travel

In its fourth year now, 'Creating Synergy Among the Travel Fraternity,' fondly called CSTF, has been growing in strength and this was evident at its recent networking party in Mumbai where attendees from the travel trade partied till infinity at Café Infinito dressed in red and black.



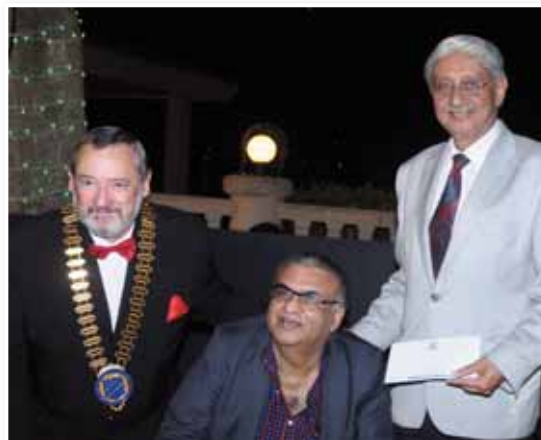
Fraternity network going strong





Presidential dinner in Mumbai

SKÅL International held a grand Presidential Dinner in Mumbai to honour SKÅL World President, Nigel Pilkington and International Council President, **Bernard Whewell** who were in India recently.



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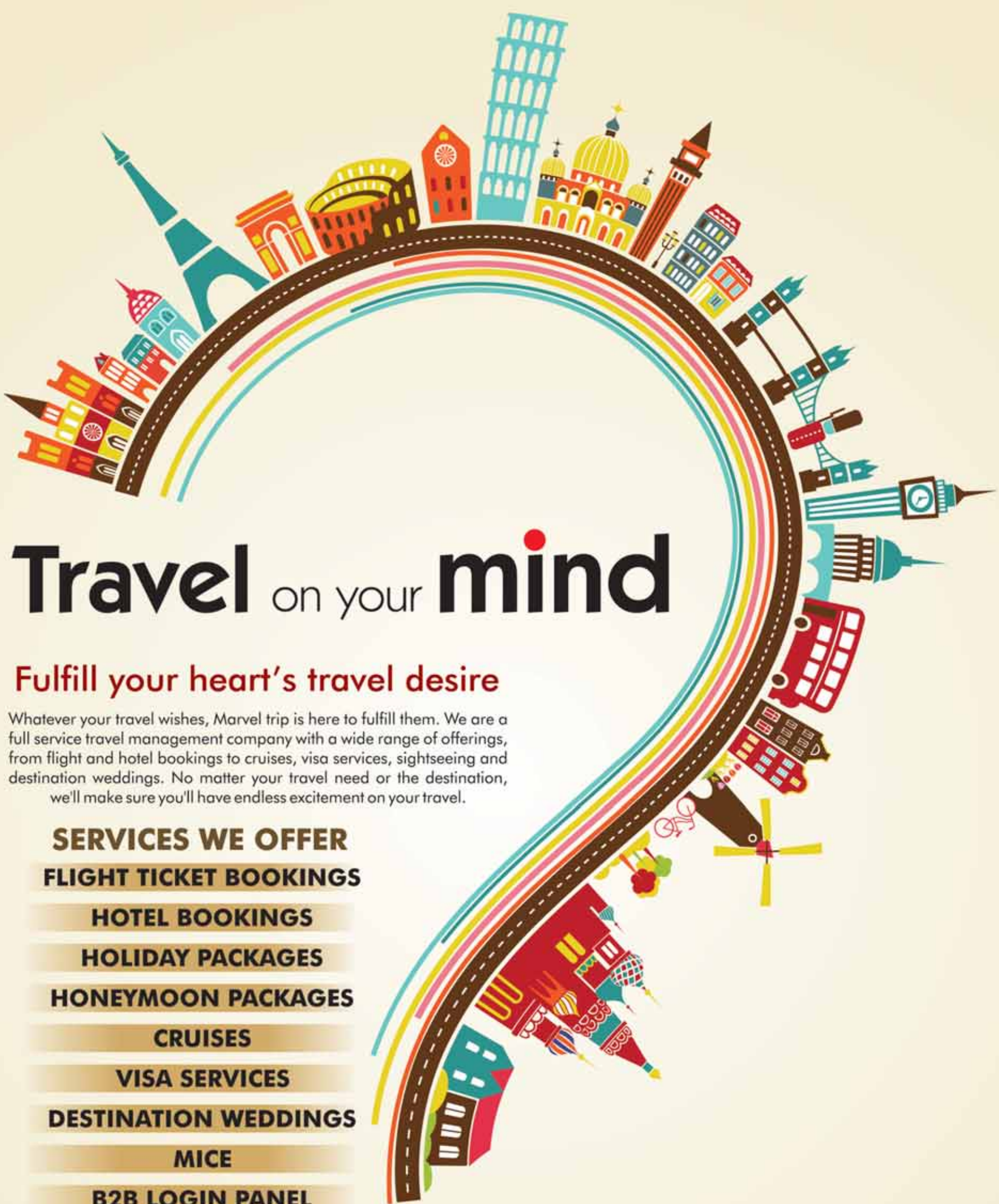
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Emirates encourages sportsmanship

Continuing with its agenda to inspire the spirit of sportsmanship among travel trade, Emirates will organise the second edition of its 'Emirates Cricket Trade Tournament 2016' from March 12 at Mumbai's Islam Gymkhana. The format has been made more competitive with 416 players in 32 teams playing 45 games over four days. Former South African cricketer **Jonty Rhodes** made a special appearance at the pre-event networking party, enthraling everyone.





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Celebrating the #Scotspirit

VisitScotland recently held events in Mumbai and New Delhi to launch its campaign 'The spirit of Scotland #Scotspirit' which is to be shared by everyone across the social media platform. The events also marked Scotland's relationship with the Indian travel agents and tour operators so that the latter are aware of the destination and can sell it easily.

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2016 EVENTS



MITT Moscow, 23rd-26th Mar



UITT Ukarine, 30th Mar-1st Apr



Connections LUXURY Italy, 3rd-6th Apr



AITF Azarbaijan, 7th-9th Apr



COTTM China, 12th-14th Apr



SITT Russia, 14th-16th Apr



KITF Kazakhstan, 20th-22nd Apr



CXSRITE China, 22nd-24th Apr



Connections MEETINGS Spain, 29th May-1st Jun



Connections LUXURY Thailand, 19th-22nd Jun



BITE China, 24th-26th Jun



DDP Travel Wedding Show, India, 9th-10th Jul



LA CITA USA, 30th Aug-1st Sep



DDP Travel Technology Show, India, 20th-21st Aug



ASTANA LEISURE, Kazakhstan, 21st-23rd Sept



JATA Japan, 22nd -25th Sept



DDP Travel Experiential Show, India, 15th-16th Oct



Connections LUXURY Brazil, 16th -19th Oct



CITE China, 1st-3rd Dec



DDP Travel Business Show, India, 9th-10th Dec



FITUR Spain, 18th -22nd Jan 2017



BIT Italy, Feb 2017



TTE UK, Feb 2017



BTS UK, Feb 2017



To participate in any of the above event, please contact:

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Europe on a bus

Berend Lund Christian, Director Corporate Planning, Europamundo Vacations, explains how Indians can avail its hop-on, hop-off coaches.

TT BUREAU
Europamundo has introduced English guided tours with a particular focus on India. Talking about their venture in Indian travel market, Christian says, "It would have been relatively easy to put the same tour with a Hindi speaking guide on the bus for the Indian traveller. But our one and a half year research on the market devised new routes in the itinerary, adapting to different food requirements in India, tied up with good quality Indian restaurants, instead of including dinner in tour packages, we



Berend Lund Christian
Director Corporate Planning
Europamundo Vacations

The tour leaders have been acquainted with Indian culture and trained for the Indian customer

have introduced evening transfers to the city centre, in-city hotels with easy access to public transportation, a detour to the cultural city side, river cruises and more. The tour leaders have been acquainted with Indian culture and trained for the Indian customer. The tour content is surely going to satisfy the Indian customer."

Europamundo is represented by four tour operators in India — DPauls, Guideline Travels, Travel Tours, and Akbar Holidays. "There's a huge potential in India market. We have about 84 tours out of which 78 are for Europe starting from April to March and for the coming season we have more than 3000 guaranteed departures. We bring in 1,25,000 travellers from Latin America to Europe but in a decade we hope to have the same number of Indians coming to Europe. We are offering sightseeing bus not for city but for all over Europe, open to all age groups," says Christian.

Discussing about the decision to enter the

2 additions to Outbound Konnections

Outbound Konnections (OK) has been regularly adding clients to its kitty, the latest ones being SriLankan Holiday and Casela World of Adventures.

TT BUREAU
Bringing the total number of global clients to seven, Outbound Konnections has been appointed as the preferred sales partner for SriLankan Holiday for North and East India. Moreover, their contract for west and south India has also been extended. They will provide complete management, sales, marketing and operational

functionalities for SriLankan Holiday Offer (SLHO).

OK will also provide comprehensive sales, PR, direct marketing and product positioning services for Mauritius-based Casela World of Adventures in India. Commenting on these partnerships, **Komal Seth**, Director for PR & Marketing, Outbound Konnections, said, "We are very happy to sign the

two partnerships with SriLankan Holiday and Casela. We at OK believe that the process of planning a holiday or a business trip begins by educating the seller and the buyer about the market and the particular destination. This is why OK focuses in the field of dynamic sales and marketing for travel and hospitality clients with respect to their field of interest. We analyse and strongly feel that hotels and



Komal Seth
Director for PR & Marketing
Outbound Konnections

resort chains, tourism boards, special attractions, tour operators and DMCs based all over the world should look at India as an important source market."

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EVENT TALK

MARCH 2016

Ace of MICE Exhibition	Istanbul	Mar 16-18
OTOAI Convention	Bali	Mar 17-21
ICPB roadshow	Kolkata	Mar 18
FICCI Travel & Hospitality Tech Conclave	Delhi	Mar 18-19
ITM	Ahmedabad	Mar 18-20
MITT	Moscow	Mar 23
Best of Australia roadshow	Bengaluru	Mar 29
WTM Latin America	Sao Paulo	Mar 29-31
UITT	Kiev	Mar 30-Apr 1
Best of Australia roadshow	Hyderabad	Mar 31

APRIL 2016

Connections Luxury	Italy	Apr 3-6
Africa International Luxury Travel Mart	Cape Town	Apr 4-6
PATA Seminar: Global Opportunities and Challenges	Delhi	Apr 5
Best of Australia roadshow	Kochi	Apr 6
WTTC Summit 2016	Dallas	Apr 6-7
IT & CM China	Shanghai	Apr 6-8
WTM Africa	Cape Town	Apr 6-8
AITF	Azerbaijan	Apr 7-9
Dhaka Travel Mart	Dhaka	Apr 7-9
Best of Australia roadshow	Coimbatore	Apr 8
ADTOI Convention	Kolkata	Apr 8-11
CNS Partnership Conference	Nashville	Apr 10-12
South India Travel Awards	Hyderabad	Apr 12
Digital Travel APAC	Singapore	Apr 12-14
China Outbound Travel & Tourism Mart	Beijing	Apr 12-14
SITT Russia	Novosibirsk	Apr 14-16
Great Indian Travel Bazaar	Jaipur	Apr 17-19
KITF Kazakhstan	Almaty	Apr 20-22
Visit Scotland Expo	Edinburgh	Apr 20-21
PATA Asia Pacific Travel Technology Conference	Delhi	Apr 21-22
Routes Europe	Krakow	Apr 24-26
Arabian Travel Mart	Dubai	Apr 25-28
Ecotourism & Sustainable Tourism Conference	Botswana	Apr 25-28
Arabian Hotel Investment Conference	Dubai	Apr 26-28
ICPB roadshow	Bengaluru	Apr 29

MAY 2016

INDABA	Durban	May 7-9
World Travel Fair	Shanghai	May 13-15
Peru Travel Mart	Lima	May 13-16
WTM Connect Asia	Penang	Mat 18-20
PATA Annual Summit	Guam	May 18-21
Bangladesh International Tourism Fair	Dhaka	May 19-21
WTM Connect China	Hainan Island	May 23-25
PATA & MOT roadshow	San Francisco	May 24
PATA & MOT roadshow	Los Angeles	May 25
PATA & MOT roadshow	Seattle	May 26
ILTM Asia	Shanghai	May 30-2
PATA & MOT roadshow	Vancouver	May 31

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

Single window clearance

West Bengal's Tourism Incentive Scheme and Tea Tourism Policy gives industry professionals in the state a necessary backing to further tourism.



AHANA GURUNG

According to statistics from the Ministry of Tourism, Kolkata Airport alone registered a 3.91 per cent share out of a total of 71.03 lakh FTAs and ranked sixth among the top 15 ports in India during January and November, 2015.

This year, the state's tourism department has come up with a slew of initiatives in a bid to boost tourism in the state. Apart from focusing on improving tourism infrastructure and changing their marketing campaign from 'Beautiful Bengal' to 'Experience Bengal - the Sweetest Part of India,' **Sanjay Agarwal**, Joint Director, West Bengal Tourism, expressed the state's potential and increasing interest to tap the niche market



“To encourage more players, we launched a tea tourism policy around a year and a half ago with a single window clearance system.”

Sanjay Agarwal
Joint Director
West Bengal
Tourism

and said, "Tea tourism plays a pivotal role for West Bengal, with the world famous Darjeeling tea estates situated in the northern region. To encourage more players, we launched a tea tourism policy around a year and a half ago

with a single window clearance system. The management from any tea garden interested in contributing to tea tourism has to send an application which will be sent for approval and sanctioning. A few projects are already in the pipeline -

one project under this scheme was recently sanctioned and hope to we approve eight to ten projects by the end of this year. Moreover, we have also included tea tourism in our packages," he explains.

West Bengal's Tourism Incentive scheme offers several incentives for tour operators to encourage tourism business in the state. Apart from a state capital investment subsidy on mega tourism projects, WB Tourism also offers an additional incentive on generation on employment to adventure tour operators, a cent per cent exemption from Luxury Tax for three years (also applicable for homestays) and a tourism promotion assistance for five years in lieu of interest subsidy. ↴

Packages at net cost

Sans Incredible Vacations, a destination management company (DMC), conducted a workshop in Delhi inviting its partner sub agencies to showcase the products on offer for the US and Canada.



TT BUREAU

Nalin Kapadia, Vice Chairman, Sans Incredible Vacations, says, "We provide product and destination knowledge to our travel partners to enable them to suggest tours to their clients in order to have a more holistic and experiential travel." Destination Canada was also invited to present the various products on offer to the tourists and facilitate the agents with product knowledge.

According to Kapadia, the number of Indians travel-



Nalin Kapadia
Vice Chairman
Sans Incredible Vacations

ling to the US and Canada has increased manifold. He says, "We see tourists from all segments from leisure, educational tours, to FITs and MICE.

Out of the total number of Indians, nearly 35-40 per cent is comprised of FITs and group travellers."

Talking about the support being offered to the travel trade, Kapadia says, "We have created some special packages keeping in mind the Indian perspective which the agents can sell easily. We offer these packages at net cost and the agents can earn out of selling activity to the clients."

Kapadia identifies New York, Orlando, Niagara Falls,

Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Washington and San Francisco as popular destinations in the US for Indian travellers. In Canada, the popular destinations are Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta.

Elaborating on the plans for 2016, Kapadia says, "Our strategy for 2016 is to introduce more newer products as add-on to the existing itineraries and suggest tours to the agents that may have been missed out based on our product and destination knowledge." ↴

Form - IV
Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper TravTalk to be published in the first issue every year after the last day of February

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- Periodicity of its publication : Fortnightly
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New LATAM brand wins IF Design Award

Interbrand, the agency which developed the new brand LATAM, to be adopted gradually by LAN, TAM and their affiliates, has won the IF Design Award 2016 in the "New Brand Identity" category. The IF Design Award is one of the most prestigious international design awards. Each year, it recognises companies from all over the world in various categories, such as interior and service design, communication, products, architecture, etc.

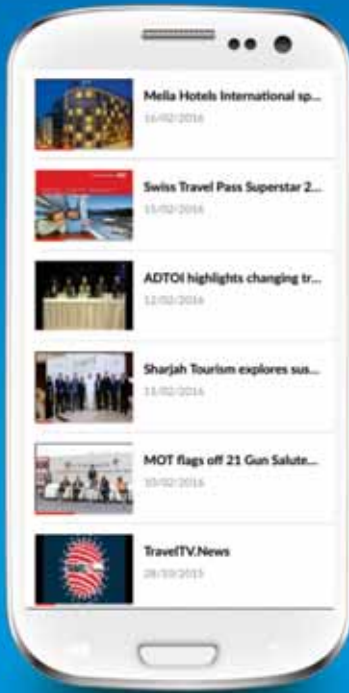


"We're very pleased to have won the IF Design Award for our new brand identity, which reaffirms our commitment and joint efforts with Interbrand to give life to LATAM. This is a long process that is not over yet. We're building the identity of a company that was born and raised throughout various Latin American countries and aims to offer not only the best network of destinations, but also the best travel experience for our passengers," commented **Jerome Cadier**, LATAM Marketing VP.

The LATAM logo's main colors are indigo and coral, which were inspired by the blue and red of LAN and TAM.



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Vistara

Gurgaon

Sanjiv Kapoor joins as Vistara's Chief Strategy & Commercial Officer. He will be responsible for managing a wide portfolio of Vistara's commercial and planning functions. Kapoor will also be responsible for in-flight services and ground operations. He succeeds Giam Ming Toh who is returning to Singapore Airlines on completion of his deputation with Vistara. Kapoor joins Vistara with over 19 years of experience in the airline industry, in various leadership and consulting roles. Kapoor, a native of Kolkata, received his MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.



Europamundo Vacations

Kolkata

Aparna Basumallik is now Business Head India, Europamundo Vacations. Prior to this she was the CEO of Club7 holidays for 28 years. Europamundo Vacations, owned by JTB (Japan Travel Bureau), one of the largest travel and tourism company in the world, has introduced English guided tours to focus on Indian travellers and their requirements. Their first tour starts in April and India representation will be by 4 distributor Guideline, Travel Tours, Akbar Holidays and DPauls.



Marriott

Pune

Indraneel Benadikar has been appointed as the Market Director of Sales and Marketing for the Marriott properties in Pune. He joined Marriott as a part of the opening team at the JW Marriott Juhu in 2001 and since then has held several positions in sales, marketing and revenue management disciplines; both in India and across South East Asia. His most recent assignment was in Bangkok where he was a part of the opening team at the Bangkok Marriott Hotel Sukhumvit and the Marriott Executive Apartments, Thonglor.



Hyatt Regency

Chandigarh

Puneet Bajjal, a dedicated Hyatt professional, has been appointed general manager at the new Hyatt Regency Chandigarh. With a hospitality career spanning more than 17 years, Bajjal is respected for his expansive knowledge of the hotel industry, and brings with him to Chandigarh a broad experience of working with a number of Hyatt brands. Before joining Hyatt, he worked in India with both Taj & Leela, two of the country's most prestigious hotel chains. Born and raised in Gwalior, Bajjal graduated in hotel management at IHM Hyderabad.



Park Plaza Faridabad

Delhi-NCR

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of **Sabyasachi Chatterjee** as General Manager of Park Plaza, Faridabad, Delhi-NCR. A highly motivated individual and a passionate hotelier, Chatterjee brings with him over 18 years of operational excellence and key deliverables across cross cultural teams. Prior to this, he was the General Manager at Optus Hometel, Bhiwadi. Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, Chatterjee had worked with The Pride Hotels, UP Hotels Ltd. and Clark Hotels. He belongs to Kolkata and is a Calcutta University Science graduate.



Optus Hometel Bhiwadi

Bhiwadi

Nitin Kapoor has recently joined Optus Hometel Bhiwadi as the General Manager. Kapoor has more than 15 years of experience in the hospitality sector. Prior to this, he worked with Optus Sarovar Premiere Gurgaon as Executive Assistant Manager. Some of his previous assignments include stints with Crowne Plaza Today Gurgaon, The Imperial Hotel New Delhi and with the Taj Land's End in Mumbai. Kapoor's areas of expertise include food & beverage service and sales, banquet operations and sales and customer service among others.



Meena Rewari has been appointed as Director of Sales & Marketing by Hyatt Regency Chandigarh. Rewari, a Post Graduate in English literature, hails from Panipat. Her career in Hospitality Sales spans almost two decades across association with brands like The Park Hotels, The Oberoi Group and Hyatt Hotel Corporation. Her knowledge, experience, knack for customer engagement and determination to achieve growth make her the best suited choice for this position.



Le Meridien Gurgaon

Gurgaon

Le Meridien Gurgaon has appointed **Bhupinder Rawat** as the new Director of Rooms for its 285-room property at MG Road, Delhi-Gurgaon border. Rawat's career spans over 16 years and he has worked with brands such as Nikko, Claridges, Shangri-La and Pullman. For the past two years Rawat has been the Executive Housekeeper of Le Meridien Gurgaon. In his new role as the Director of Rooms, Rawat continues to head the housekeeping function of the hotel. Before joining Le Meridien Gurgaon, Rawat was the Executive Housekeeper at Shangri-La Hotel, New Delhi.



Grand Hyatt Goa

Goa

Grand Hyatt Goa has taken aboard **Alejandro J Leo Cupul** as the Director of Spa and Recreation to spearhead the Shamana Spa at the resort. Alejandro comes to Grand Hyatt Goa with over 16 years of diverse experience in the spa industry. After starting his career in 2000, Alejandro has worked with leading international brands like Le Meridien, Rosewood and Orient Express Hotels. Prior to joining Grand Hyatt Goa, Alejandro held the responsibility as Corporate Spa Director at Hard Rock Hotels and Casinos in Mexico and Dominican Republic. He has also been an expert council for various spa conventions and trade shows in Morocco, the US, Spain and Mexico.



TALKING People

Jogging helps **Teh Yik Chuan**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Tigerair, clear his mind. Reading a good book also helps him de-stress. "But I love travelling. Sampling local cuisines, interacting with people and learning about the history and culture of a place is something that I am extremely passionate about. My most memorable holiday moment was enjoying a hot spring at Blue Lagoon in Iceland while it was snowing outside. What's more, the unique landscape in Iceland makes for a perfect backdrop for a relaxing holiday and otherworldly feel to it," he says. His favourite holiday destination in India is Varanasi. "The boat ride on the Ganges is most memorable," Chuan adds. Outside India, he prefers the United Kingdom.



Piyusha Dudeja, Area Manager - Northern & Eastern India, Switzerland Tourism, is a huge fan of yoga and indulges in a lot of sports and fitness activities. Her favorite destination in India is Goa. However, her favourite holiday memory is her recent trip to Montreaux in Lake Geneva region of Switzerland with her son. "It has spectacular chocolate and cheese experiences that you can make memories with," she says. Dudeja takes inspiration from any and all women who step out of their comfort zone. "I am in awe of women who go the extra mile," she concludes.



Kunal Kothari, Executive Director, Rail Europe India, is a big movie buff. He is a Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt fan and enjoys to watch Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan's movies when he is free. "I love Gujarati food but in terms of international cuisine, Italian is my favourite," he says. A phone charger, Microsoft Surface, his wallet and shaving kit fall into his essentials when travelling. Apart from Switzerland, he loves to spend time in Cairns and Melbourne in Australia.





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A 'Tourism Cabinet'

Madhya Pradesh has created a Tourism Cabinet to speed up the decision-making process with regards to tourism projects in the state. **TRAVTALK** catches up with **Om Vijay Choudhary**, Executive Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism.



NISHA VERMA

Q Tell us about the newly formed Tourism Cabinet in MP.

In all the states there are cabinet of ministers, but in MP, Chief Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** has created a group of members who will solve, resolve and promote tourism infrastructure facilities in the state. On February 2, 2016, the Chief Minister and his cabinet visited Hanumantiya where we are celebrating the Jal Mahotsav. They had a two hour meeting on the scope, possibilities, problems, and the futuristic plans for promoting the destination. It was announced there that a core committee of the cabinet will be formed, which will be dedicated to tourism. It was decided that in order to resolve issues, instead of the whole cabinet, the core committee of four or five ministers including the finance minister, forest minister and irrigation minister will take care of the tourism issues in the state.

Q Despite having an investment friendly tourism policy, why hasn't MP attracted many private investment projects?

MP Tourism acts as a catalyst in order to attract investments, and we celebrated the Jal Mahotsav in Hanumantiya since the destination has a lot of land and islands that can be developed by private entrepreneurs. I believe that the private investors don't put money in the tourism or the hotel industry because they are operating on a different pattern. There



“It was decided that in order to resolve issues, instead of the whole cabinet, the core committee of four or five ministers including the finance minister, forest minister and irrigation minister will take care of the tourism issues in the state.”

Om Vijay Choudhary
Executive Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism

Forts & palaces seek private players

Q What are the new tourism products introduced by MP Tourism?

MP Tourism, in its stride to make travelling experience of tourists better every time they visit Madhya Pradesh, has introduced an innovative feature of Caravans- 'Holiday on Wheels'. It is a luxury experience. Caravans with carrying capacity of 8 adults, can be hired by tourists to travel anywhere. The Caravans are fully equipped with Wi-Fi, studio-style A/C bedroom with eight convertible sofa cum beds, a spacious wash room, two LCD TVs, home theater, microwave, fridge and locker facility. Details of a number of adventurous packages are available at www.mptourism.com. We also introduced water tourism at Tawa-Madhya, Bargi-Mandla, Hanumantiya, with cruises being the star attraction. Orchha scenic float takes tourists on a rafting safari through the Betwa river. Indira Sagar will become a mini-aqua tourism arena incorpo-



rating most modern water sports and thereby giving a meaningful feeling to tourism. Light and sound shows are being organised at Gwalior, Orchha, Khajuraho and Indore. The state government is aggressively focusing on development of infrastructure.

Q What are the marketing and promotional activities of the state in 2016?

We believe in promotional activities through all channels. The user friendly website provides in-depth information about the tourist destinations of the state and an online booking facility. MP Tourism is also present on Facebook, a platform for direct interaction. We also participate in most of the major roadshows and trade events which take place across India and abroad. We also regularly take part in WTM and ITB to promote the state in the international market

Q How is the government working with the private sector to boost tourism?

The state cabinet has decided to hand over forts, heritage buildings and palaces to private stakeholders for their development. Tourism Policy 2010, as amended in 2014, provides ample scope for the development of tourism infrastructure through private investment. The Land Bank policy will also be strengthened further.

Hari Ranjan Rao

Commissioner Tourism and Managing Director
Madhya Pradesh Tourism

are three parties involved in a project — builder, promoter and the management. There is a bit of shift of the system and affirmations of all are required, which makes it difficult.

Q The ADTOI convention will be the 3rd tourism related convention within a year in MP. What is your plan behind hosting such events in the state?

Our main agenda is to promote the destination and we are using these events as platforms to endorse tourism in MP, which is an effective tool to create job opportunities in the state. ↴



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NEWS IN BRIEF



ITB CHINA TO DEBUT IN SHANGHAI IN 2017

ITB China will take place from May 10-12, 2017, as a new offshoot of the international exhibition in Shanghai. The world's leading travel trade show will provide China's fast-growing travel market with its own platform, which is the combined product of strong partners. The corresponding agreements were signed on March 9, day one of ITB Berlin. The show will reportedly be organised by a new subsidiary of Messe Berlin, MB Exhibitions (Shanghai), and will focus exclusively on Chinese buyers meeting global destinations and service providers.



Registration for KTM 2016 open till July 29

The ninth edition of Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) will be held at Samudrika and Sagara Convention Centre, Willingdon Island from September 28-30, 2016 and will focus on themes 'Responsible tourism' and 'Muziris and Spice Route'. It is expected to attract around 1,500 buyers from around the country and abroad. Around 265 stalls of different sizes for the exhibitors within Kerala will be featured at the venue as part of the event. **Abraham George**, President, Kerala Travel Mart Society, says, "KTM 2016, which will coincide with 'World Tourism Day', will facilitate better interaction between buyers and sellers as we have initiated the process for sellers' registration much in advance. The buyers' registration is open till July 29."



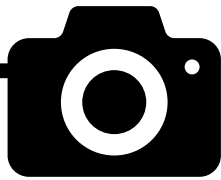
SATTE 2017 slated for Feb 15-17

South Asian Travel and Tourism Exhibition (SATTE) 2017 will be held from February 15-17. The dates for the next year's event were announced at SATTE this year, held at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, from January 29-31. The event is one of the biggest travel and tourism platforms showcasing India's tourism potential to the world by bringing the global tourism market to India.



ATF 2017 to focus on collaborative efforts among ASEAN

ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2017 will be held in Singapore from January 16-20. "Singapore is honoured to host the next theme - Shaping our Tourism Journey Together," says **Lionel Yeo**, CEO, Singapore Tourism Board. To commemorate its 50th anniversary, ASEAN will also launch a year-long travel campaign to promote the region's diverse offerings.



ITB BERLIN THEN & NOW

Celebrating 50 years of ITB Berlin



ITB BERLIN 1966



ITB BERLIN 1969



ITB BERLIN 2016



BIT Milan hosts 84 Indian Buyers

International travel fair BIT (Borsa Internazionale del Turismo) brought together trade operators from all over the world to do business with Italy. Sponsored by Fiera Milano, BIT took place in Milan and attracted a large Indian contingent. With more than 1,500 hosted buyers, 2,000+ participating companies, BIT has been an international meeting point for decision makers, professionals and buyers in the luxury, MICE and leisure tourism arena.



OTM innovates itself

OTM 2016 opened in Mumbai this year with high attendance over three days from February 18 to 20, 2016. This edition of the three-day B2B trade show saw more than 1000 sellers from 50 participating destinations meet more than 6,000 buyers on the exhibition floor. On the sidelines of the trade exhibition were a host of innovative events to discuss emerging trends in the travel business, such as TechForum, StartupKnockDown and 'Shoot at Site'. Major Indian destinations perfectly complemented their international counterparts with Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Gujarat, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and many other states present with large number of sellers from each state.

FITUR 2016 records over 200,000 visitors

The 36th edition of FITUR held from January 20-24, 2016, received 231,872 professional and general public visitors over its five-day staging. The mega event saw the participation of 9,605 businesses, registering an increase of 3.4 per cent over the previous year. While international business participation grew by 4 per cent, national participation recorded a 3.1 per cent growth. This edition saw the presence of 711 main stand holders representing a 3 per cent growth, with 178 new businesses out of which more than half were international. Additionally, 165 countries were present at the trade show with 16 reinstatements of official participation.





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A FIRM Backing

As the global business travel sector witnesses exponential growth, the Government of India continues to extend support and assistance to the travel trade fraternity to further the MICE segment to greater heights.

AHANA GURUNG

The ITB Berlin World Travel Trends Report 2014-2015 prepared by IPK International suggests that the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) segment occupies a 54 per cent market share among global travel and has overtaken the leisure segment. Similarly, through 2007-2014, the MICE segment grew by 37 per cent while traditional business trips have declined by 14 per cent.

Currently boasting a fast growing economy even in the midst of economic slowdown across the world, India's GDP grew to 7.2 per cent and is predicted to grow by 7.6 per cent during 2015-2016, according to the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

"We are a growing market and the economy's growth rate has already garnered a great deal of interest from around the world," says **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism. "Along with India being a well-known leisure destination with numerous tourism products to offer, it also makes for a favoured destination for MICE. What's great about India is that when exhibitions are held here, you are catering to a large market that is readily accessible. If we can pitch exhibitions during the summer season, we can flatten seasonality and maintain a balance between high and low season" he explains.

According to International Congress and Convention Association's (ICCA) annual report





DRIVING BUSINESS TRAVEL

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Tourism, the travel industry set up the India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) to effectively promote India as a convention destination. ICPB takes the initiative to diffuse knowledge to conference industry personnel through educational programmes, seminars, etc. with Indian associations and relevant world organisations. Active members of ICPB are extended benefits under the Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme towards bidding for international conferences/ conventions.



2014 on the number of rotating international association meetings hosted by countries and cities, India ranked among the top 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region with 116 global business events during the same year.

Working towards developing the business travel segment in India, Billa states that a significant amount of work has been done in this sector but there's always room for improvement. "The Ministry is well aware of the potential and the chunk of development in tourism that can be expected. As of now, we provide marketing development assistance for promotion of this segment and an aggressive publicity campaign is also in the pipeline to endorse MICE destinations in India. We are also looking at setting up some convention and exhibition promotion bureaus in different states; Hyderabad already has one at present. ICPB will be the mother-body of these regional units. We are also planning on setting up a

small corpus for bidding costs," he says.

While he agrees that India's potential in the MICE segment is large, Billa believes that marketing and promotion of current exhibition facilities is crucial. He says, "India does have world-class convention centres, but pure-play exhibition centres are few. Plans to add more exhibition centres are on the anvil but before we focus on the new ones, we must make good use of the existing ones and sell them well."

The Department of Industry Policy and Promotion has also been working on a new convention and exhibition centre near the Indira Gandhi Airport (IGI) in Dwarka. The ongoing project will also have 3,500 hotel rooms and an entertainment arena that can host a large music concert. A part of the construction is funded by the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, while the rest is on PPP basis.



SUMAN BILLA

WORLD CLASS CONVENTION FACILITIES

Pragati Maidan, New Delhi

Total area
123 acres

Exhibition space
65,000 sq mtrs

Outdoor display area
25,000 sq mtrs

HITEX Exhibition Center, Hyderabad

Indoor exhibition hall
3 (3500 sq mtrs)

Outdoor display area
5

Open grounds
2 (Fair Park spans 30000 sq mtrs)

WHY Exhibitions?

AHANA GURUNG

Exhibitions have been one of the oldest modes of reaching out to prospective customers since time immemorial. The only thing that has changed throughout these years is probably the exhibition space which has transformed from make-shift tents to state-of-the-art exhibition centers with the latest amenities. The difference in the environment however, has not defeated the event's true purpose - marketing and networking with potential clients.

OPENING NEW AVENUES

Exhibitions not only bring together existing customers, new prospects, suppliers, advisors and investors under one roof, but are a good way to keep an eye on the competition, Seth shares. "SMEs can use this platform to find out more about their customers and gauge the feedback about their product and services," he says. "It can give them valuable inputs for understanding the demand and thus exhibitions can act as a market research platform too. It also provides a snapshot of what's new and you may get access to the movers and shakers. Participation for these companies can be a considerable cost in absolute term but not in relative terms. The combined cost of acquiring clients and inputs is much less than doing so individually."

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Many forms of marketing, including telesales, adverts and direct mail, involve some intrusion for customers which can be resented. Not with exhibitions. Seth explains, "Customers go to events prepared to give their time and attention and are often ready to buy. Trade shows attract qualified visitors and the majority often has buying responsibility and attracts those people who can be elusive at other times. Many arrive armed with credit cards and will have done their homework beforehand. Likewise,



Of course exhibitions are an excellent platform to showcase products and meet with potential clients. But there's more than what meets the eye. **NAVEEN SETH**, Director - Exhibitions, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, gives an insight into the additional benefits of participating in such trade events.



PERKS GALORE

- Generate sales
- Create/strengthen brand image
- Networking and building contacts
- Explore new trends
- Increase visibility through media
- Contribute to growth of economy

consumer shows can be a great launch pad for a new business or product and also offers the chance to do live demonstrations in front of a large audience.” Moreover, Seth feels that with press attention and the power of word-of-mouth, one can create a real buzz about one’s product or service.

GROWING BUSINESS, GROWING ECONOMY

Countries like Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, to name a few, are well-known for being home to some of the biggest exhibitions in the travel trade fraternity. The entire city’s active participation in the planning of the exhibition acts as a support function to make the event success and has certainly added to its growth and experience. “These cities otherwise would not have gained as much prominence as they do now,” says Seth. “But today, the long list of hosting events has attracted global visitors to these countries and gives a big boost to tourism and the economy. The infrastructure is being developed to suit the stakeholders from across the world and connects the local economy with the country and further with the world.”

Exhibitions can largely be looked at as a big investment, particularly for small businesses, but through short-term investments, the benefits can be reaped in the long term, turning the leads collected at an exhibition into loyal customers.

DOS & DON'TS

Attending an exhibition for the first time? Or perhaps you are a regular visitor but rarely get much out of attending one? Here are a few dos and don'ts that will help you make the most of the opportunity.



The DOs



Pre-show promotion

As technology has made everything so much more accessible, one way to make sure important clients visit your booth is to send reminders (like emails) inviting your targets and make RSVP calls to schedule appointments. Potential customers will remember you when they attend the show and chances are they might be your next major client.



1



2



Set a clear objective

Sanjiv Agarwal, Chairman & CEO, Farifest Media, says that defining a set of objectives will speed up the rate of success even further. "Have a clear idea of what should be done, targeting a certain number of meetings etc., act on that and measure the achievement after the show. It helps you to realise where you could have done better and leaves room for improvement."



Be a social butterfly

Look around and network with other exhibitors who may be your prospects, says Agarwal. Networking is an essential part of exhibitions where the presence of top honchos from numerous organisations is welcomed. Take the golden opportunity and make connections!

3



4



Take notes

When you exchange cards, make it a habit to jot down notes about the conversation behind the card. You will end up meeting hundreds of people and remembering each one of them will be a tedious job.



5



Make it interactive

Including activities like a short quiz can make the experience memorable for anyone. Have a photo booth or distribute giveaways when you have a visitor. The whole point is to make sure potential clients enjoy learning about what you have to offer.

The DON'TS



Make a mess

Agarwal opines that distributing messy food like popcorn can often put off a lot of people. It also litters the place and attracts the wrong kind of people. If you do give out small food items, make sure you arrange for a dustbin.



Pitch from aisles

He also shares that pitching from the aisle can be bothersome. Stay in your booth when you are making pitches so that people associate you with your brand. Additionally, if you are missing from your stall, you might just lose out on the opportunity of booking clients.



Play loud audio

With hordes of people, exhibitions are anyway a noisy affair, says Agarwal. Don't play loud music; it will disturb business discussions among your neighbours including in your own booth. If music is absolutely necessary, opt for soft, calm, ambient music instead.



Too many brochures

Giving away pages of brochures is not only inconvenient, there's a bigger possibility that visitors will just throw them away. Instead, distribute a concise pamphlet with the most important information that will be most useful for them.



Stay on the phone

There can be nothing more exasperating than waiting to get information out of someone who is constantly on the phone. You are there to promote your business and most people will expect you to be readily available. Avoid accepting frequent calls - try and prioritise them.





GLIMPSES OF **Litt** 2016



The third edition of India International Travel & Tourism (IITT) fair, held in Mumbai from January 15-17, 2016, saw the presence of 500 buyers and almost 1500 brands at the trade event. The response grew by 50 per cent while growth in terms of revenue was accounted at 30-35 per cent. As new initiatives like 'IITT Connect' were introduced at the exhibition, the huge participation clearly made IITT's evolution evident.



The

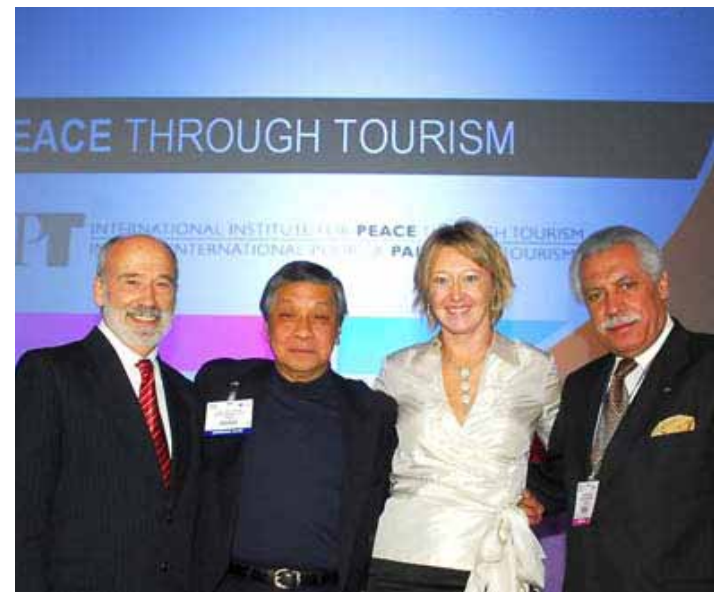
F2F FACTOR

Travel Show brings forth four specialised tourism exhibitions addressing the need for personalised face-to-face meetings in India.

The Indian tourism industry's steady growth has opened up avenues manifold for travel professionals from the world over. With numerous players in the sector, bringing them together under one roof becomes imperative to further the growth of the industry. Recognising this necessity, the Pacific Leisure Group (PLG) has introduced Travel Show, a bouquet of carefully planned travel exhibitions with the aim of showcasing a wide variety of products and services to the biggest tourism product providers and consumers.

Alwin Zecha, Executive Chairman & Founder, PLG, and a connoisseur in the tourism industry with over 40 years of experience, says that the mushrooming of shows has confused several clients. "With too many shows, clients find it difficult to decide which one to attend," he shares. "For this reason, Travel Show has dedicated different editions that focus on the newest and most sought-after tourism genres in India.

"We have Travel Experiential Show, Travel Technology Show, Travel Wedding Show and Travel Business Show taking place this year. Travellers have become more intelligent and know what they want - the experiential edition attempts to fill this gap by offering bespoke products catered directly to their interests. It is also quite obvious that travel technology has become a huge component of the industry with its ever-increasing expansion, while India will continue to be a forerunner in the subject of weddings. Likewise, as long as the travel industry



exists, trade will continue and with India's potential, exponential growth in tourism is evident," he shares.

Zecha opines that technology's prominent presence in today's world has deprived individuals of face-to-face interaction and expresses his desire to bring that back. "We want to highlight the importance of one-on-one meetings and contribute to the industry's growth through personal interactions. The travel industry is a service industry and therefore, good service is crucial which can only be rendered when you have a good understanding of your clients' needs. Travel Show aims to accomplish exactly that," he signs off.

BLOCK YOUR DATES

Travel
WEDDING SHOW
Jul 9-10
India

Travel
TECHNOLOGY SHOW
Aug 20-21
India

Travel
EXPERIENTIAL SHOW
Oct 15-16
India

Travel
BUSINESS SHOW
December 16-17
India



“

We want to highlight the importance of one-on-one meetings and contribute to the industry's growth through personal interactions

”

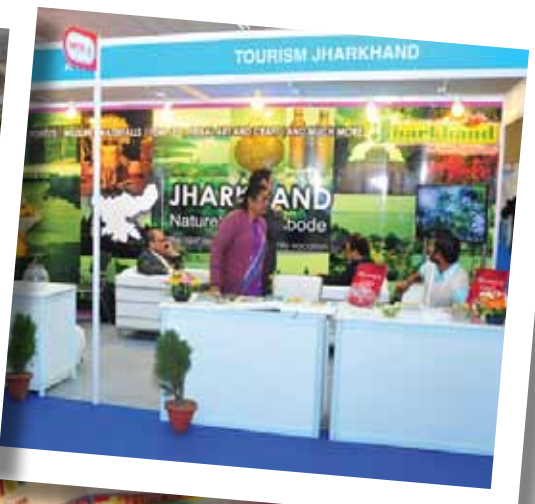
ALWIN ZECHA



This year's edition of SATTE witnessed 750 participants from over 35 countries and 28 Indian states. The mega-event saw an unprecedented visitor growth of 28 per cent as compared to its previous editions. The three-day affair from January 29-31, 2016 welcomed travel trade and hospitality professionals from all over the world and included participation from 28 Indian states and over 35 countries saw participants deliberating industry potential, existing concerns and the future by exploring new frontiers amongst various industry stakeholders.



ALL ABOUT **SATTE**



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ANA LARRAÑAGA

Taking a leaf out of

FITUR

Based on her ongoing experience in the industry, **ANA LARRAÑAGA**, Director, FITUR, shares her thoughts on planning a successful exhibition.

SUPPORT AND KNOWLEDGE GO HAND-IN-HAND

Firstly, I consider that the industry's support is needed, both public and private. Good knowhow of trade fair management is a crucial requirement. It is also necessary to be a benchmark for the source and incoming tourism market. And last but not less important, a trade show of international relevance in this field has to provide a highly representative offer of the sector, concentrating on the same stage both supply and demand, the best professionals, as well as content of interest through workshops and activities that reflect the current state of the industry, providing professionals with a valuable tool for analysis.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

It is crucial to define a set of objectives beforehand and to establish appropriate strategies to achieve them. This task should be followed by subsequent development and follow-up to consolidate the achievement of these objectives. A strategic plan should be created and stringently followed to maximise productivity and convenience.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING

The absence of prior planning is, in my opinion, the principal error that is often made, together with not listening and a lack of empathy with the sector. We have to listen to its agents, discover their concerns and needs, since a trade show that seeks to represent a segment of the economy cannot allow itself the luxury of moving away from its interests. We owe ourselves to this industry and have to offer it answers and solutions.



They provide crucial platforms for businesses which are highly beneficial



A strategic plan should be created and stringently followed to maximise productivity and convenience

TIPS & TRICKS

- Maintaining good relations can go a long way
- Sending reminders to clients ensures their participation
- Follow-up mails post-event are necessary to be remembered
- Offering pre-scheduled meetings are a bonus
- Do not move away from the interests of the agents in the sector

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Trade shows play an important role in the expansion of the industry and participation in such events is highly recommended. They provide crucial platforms for encounters and business, and are highly beneficial for companies and professionals. Moreover, trade exhibitions like FITUR which are spread over several days focus on a great deal of activity and those who participate in the event undertake numerous actions that later bear fruit.

What meets the Eye

DR. SANJAY SONI, Chief Knowledge Director of Incredible Design, decodes the essentials of effective decor and talks about its importance at exhibitions.



“

The perfect decor accomplishes a translation of the client's ethos into the architecture which is impactful, aesthetic, true to its requirement and occupies a vital role in determining the overall success of an exhibition

”

Participating in exhibitions is a tool to showcase your brand - it could be products, services and/or strengths. Potential clients swarm in from different parts of the world and with several other competitors vying for attention, the most effective way to stand out in a crowd is to ensure the stall is a showstopper.

Soni addresses the importance of decor and says it is the most essential part of selling products. “As we dress ourselves to present to the world, we need to dress up our brand and our products as well. Decor at an exhibition is the same as packaging a product or a service for the market and careful planning needs to be implemented to achieve the goal,” he shares.

But what does the ideal decor achieve? “The perfect decor accomplishes a translation of the client's ethos into the architecture which is impactful, aesthetic, true to its requirement and occupies a vital role in determining the overall success of an exhibition,” he says. Soni explains that understanding some crucial points will go a long way in effective decoration.

“The first and foremost step is to thoroughly understand the client's brief. If you are able to really grasp the essence of what he wants to be portrayed, more than half your work is already done. Don't think twice about asking too many questions – getting this right will be worth all the trouble,” he elaborates.

Imbibing the company's USP is another critical aspect of decorating. “What good is the decor if it cannot instantly tell the audience what it is about?” he states. “In a crowded exhibition hall, you must be able to rely on the decorations to stand out and visitors should immediately be able to tell what you deal in. It makes it convenient for both the exhibitor and buyer and if the customer is happy, then so are you.”

Hands-on communication with the client is also crucial to determining success. Soni says, “Be open and listen to their needs. Likewise, if you think their suggestions won't work, explain it to them why it won't. Avoid aggressively supporting your own ideas and keep an open mind and ear. You are partnering with the client to achieve the same objectives so stay in frequent touch and communicate progress and new suggestions.” Changing times and advancing technology have also had an impact on the design elements, he informs. “The brief of the client hasn't changed much over the years though now his vocabulary is different. The vocabulary is now graphics, new materials, new technologies and new modes of exhibiting. The language of display has changed due to introduction of these new elements, thus what we see now has changed in terms of the designs,” he remarks.

Additionally, owing to the fact that most clients are well-seasoned travellers, clients are better aware of design element due to exposure. Soni adds, “The market has also become fiercely competitive thus he is more demanding and asks for newer solutions.”



APRIL 2016



3 **Connections Luxury**
Italy

4 **Africa International Luxury Travel Mart**
Cape Town

6 **WTM Africa**
Cape Town



7 **AITF**
Azerbaijan

12 **Digital Travel APAC**
Singapore

12 **China Outbound Travel & Tourism Mart**
Beijing

14 **SITT Russia**
Novosibirsk



17 **Great Indian Travel Bazaar**
Jaipur



20 **KITF Kazakhstan**
Almaty

24 **Routes Europe**
Krakow, Poland



25 **Arabian Travel Market**
Dubai

MAY 2016

7 **INDABA**
Durban



13 **World Travel Fair**
Shanghai

13 **Peru Travel Mart**
Lima

18 **WTM Connect Asia**
Penang

23 **WTM Connect China**
Hainan Island

27 **CMT China**
Nanjing



29 **Connections Meetings Spain**
Malaga

30 **ILTM Asia**
Shanghai



JUNE 2016



9 **KOFTA**
Seoul

16 **ITE & MICE**
Hong Kong



19 **Connections Luxury**
Thailand

24 **BITE China**
Beijing



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- 43 countries
- Approximately 4,300 visitors

Kitf

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WEDDING SHOW
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Travel Experiential Show,
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Travel
TECHNOLOGY SHOW
Travel Technology Show,
India, Aug 20-21

Travel
BUSINESS SHOW
Travel Business Show,
India, Dec 16-17

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