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Make tourism accessible for all

In a conversation with **TRAVTALK**, **Taleb Rifai**, Secretary-General, United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), talks about tourism's resilience. He explains why the industry should promote universal accessibility and encourage 'Tourism for All' — the theme for World Tourism Day, celebrated annually on September 27.



AHANA GURUNG

QWhat is the idea behind the theme for World Tourism Day 2016?

This World Tourism Day (WTD), we urge all countries and destinations, as well as the industry, to promote accessibility for all in the physical environment, in transport systems, in public facilities and services and in information and communications channels. About 15 per cent of the world's population is estimated to live with some form of disability. That's one billion people who may be unable to enjoy the privilege of knowing other cultures, experience nature at its fullest and experience the thrill of embarking on a journey to explore new sights. Accessibility for all should be at the centre of tourism policies and business strategies not only as a human right, but also as a great market opportunity.

QAre there any special celebrations in store?

While WTD is celebrated worldwide, the official celebrations will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from September 26-

29. Over the three days, there will be seminars on key topics like 'Creating an adequate policy framework' and 'Investing in universal accessibility,' to name a few, that will be addressed by eminent speak-

ers from tourism associations, government bodies, and many others from all over the globe. unprecedented development. From the 25 million international tourist arrivals registered in the 1950s till the present nearly 1200 million counted in 2015, a lot has happened in this sector. The recognition by

sector in the coming years. Although Europe will continue to be the most-visited destination, the region of Asia and the Pacific will register the highest increase in international tourist arrivals.

technology and the application of sustainable practices to the tourism sector.

The latter is actually the theme of the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development that will unite all actors involved in the tourism community through 2017. Governments, private sector, the academia and civil society will be widely addressed in the exchange of experiences and in awareness raising actions to enhance the sustainability of the tourism sector worldwide.

QHow can the industry overcome the damages terrorism has done this year?

Terrorism is a global phenomenon and it should be tackled through higher cooperation among nations. All sectors of our economies are impacted by these hideous attacks but what we have witnessed in the case of the tourism sector is that the impact is of short-term nature and that the strong resilience of the sector allows destinations to recover quite fast. This is visible not only with

terrorist attacks but also in other critical events such as natural disasters, economic crises and epidemics.

QDo you think that the increasing use of technology and automation in tourism could result in less employment opportunities?

At present, the creation of 1 out of 11 jobs worldwide is linked directly or indirectly with the tourism sector. I do not envision that in the future the sector will see a reduction in its job creation potential. On the contrary, the diversification of the sector and the involvement of other fields will lead to the creation of new business opportunities, hence new professional profiles linked to tourism.

We actually face the challenge of having a deficit of staff and talent and this is why UNWTO works to advance education in tourism through training but also through certification of tourism education programmes through our UNWTO-Tedqual Certification. ↴



“About 15 per cent of the world's population is estimated to live with some form of disability; that's one billion people who may be unable to enjoy the privilege of knowing other cultures. Accessibility for all should be at the centre of tourism policies and business strategies not only as a human right, but also as a great market opportunity.”

Taleb Rifai

Secretary-General, UNWTO

QWhat is your opinion on the growth of the tourism industry particularly in APAC? Where do you see it going in the next decade?

The tourism sector is and will be experiencing an

the international community that tourism plays a key role in the development of nations, tacitly expressed in the Sustainable Development Goals linked to the Agenda 2030 is the clearest evidence of the progress of the sector lately. By 2030, we will witness 1800 million tourist arrivals worldwide, a figure that shows the tremendous importance of the

QWhat are some of the key challenges that need to be focused on to make a country more tourism friendly?

For UNWTO, there are three areas of concern that remain our major priorities: safety and security, facilitation of travel through seamless processes such as the e-visa, maximising the use of

ADTOI calls out for more members

The new team of Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) is going all out to increase its membership and work closely with the Ministry of Tourism and other trade associations to restore its former glory, reveals its President **P.P. Khanna** in a tête-à-tête with **TRAVTALK**.



NISHA VERMA

The recently appointed ADTOI president along with the new team is on a membership drive to regain members who had previously moved away from the association and also bring in new ones. “We are on a membership drive. In the last few years we had lost many memberships and now we'd like to revive all of them. Also we want to focus on the chapters, visit them regularly, discuss their day to day problems and jointly make efforts to resolve their issues,” Khanna says.

Social presence

The association is working on developing a dynamic website to strengthen its online presence, connect its members with each other and the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and state governments. “We have thought of creating a dynamic website

through which our members would connect with each other. Since a lot of queries come from the MOT and state tourism departments, our website will also be linked to their respective websites. This would prove highly beneficial for our members. We also want to revive e-news through which members will be informed about day to day offers on hotels, and packages,” says Khanna.

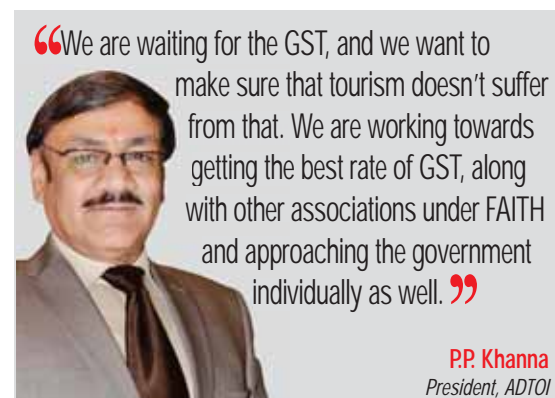
ADTOI is seeking involvement of state tourism bodies to educate its members through roadshows and educational programmes.

Women empowerment

The ADTOI Executive Council (EC) currently has one woman member, but Khanna is optimistic that they can persuade more women to join the association. “Our EC member Reena Chopra will soon be forming a women's commit-

tee, through which she would encourage more women to participate in meetings and organise training programmes for them,” he says.

and Development Committee, which will come up with packages involving attractive domestic destinations for tourists. Khanna informs that



“We are waiting for the GST, and we want to make sure that tourism doesn't suffer from that. We are working towards getting the best rate of GST, along with other associations under FAITH and approaching the government individually as well.”

P.P. Khanna

President, ADTOI

Tapping untapped destinations

Renewing the purpose of the association to make domestic tourism more appealing, EC member Anil Rajput will be forming a Research

they are already looking at Kargil and Chhattisgarh for the same. Khanna added, “The new Civil Aviation Policy is a game changer as it would not only connect smaller destinations by air, but also be eco-

nomical and allow us to sell whole packages to our clients.”

Address common issues

The Goods and Services Tax issue has become a bone of contention between the government and tourism associations. Khanna says that ADTOI along with other associations under FAITH is working toward getting the best GST rate for the tourism industry. “We are waiting for the GST, and we want to make sure that tourism doesn't suffer from that. We are working towards getting the best rate of GST, along with other associations under FAITH and approaching the government individually as well.” The association is also in talks with IATO to address issues which are crucial to both the associations and take them up with the ministry.

He insisted that one of the major issues impacting the small and medium tour operators is the OTAs. “We need to sit with the hotels, transporters and service providers and see how to resolve the issues and how to protect our members. Domestic tourism has crossed the one billion mark already, but not much has been done by the authorities for promoting it. There is a need to promote other tourist sites connected to popular pilgrimages or religious sites,” Khanna adds.

Overhaul

- ↴ ADTOI is working to develop a website linked to MOT and state tourism departments
- ↴ A R&D Committee will focus on new domestic destinations

IITIS expects over 200 investors

The three-day event will welcome investors from around the country and the globe in a bid to boost tourism by upgrading infrastructure. While state governments will present and give details on investible projects, several plenary sessions with notable speakers will be held.

TT BUREAU

The upcoming Incredible India Tourism Investors' Summit (IITIS) scheduled for September 21-23 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, will witness participation from more than 27 Indian states, informed **Vinod Zutshi**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India. He said, "Till date, 140 investors from around 70 companies have confirmed their participation but we are hoping to see a turnout of about 250 investors. Around 600 investible projects will be showcased to the investors through presentations, B2B and B2G meetings."

The maiden edition is expected to accumulate `50,000 crore and will see participation from major stakeholders like banks and financial institutions, domes-



tic investors, cruise liners, entertainment companies, global investors, international associations, tour and travel operators and urban developers, to name a few.

Zutshi added that the summit will bring the investors and state governments

together under one roof for easy facilitation of investment into tourism. "We have also added an Investment Desk in the Ministry to ease the process for investors and have already begun signing MoUs which will continue during the two-day summit," he informed.

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism and Culture, explained, "Its main objective is to position the Indian tourism sector for attracting large investments and presenting to the investors tangible investment-ready projects in the different

states/union territories of India. The summit will provide a global platform for interaction with investors, policymakers and Indian industry leaders, and other stakeholders."

A total of 21 seminars will be held across three days, with various plenary

sessions on topics like Why Invest in Incredible India?, Digital India & Start Up India: Investing in Tourism Technology, Success Stories of Investment in India and on MICE & Medical Tourism, to name a few. A session on Core Infrastructure for Tourism will address the main elements that support the sector such as road transport, railway links, airports and waterways/cruises, where influential speakers from the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways & Shipping, Ministry of Railways, and Ministry of Civil Aviation are expected to be present.

Prior to the event, officials from the Ministry of Tourism embarked on roadshows in the USA, UAE, Thailand, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Gujarat, Mumbai, Bhopal to draw in investors to India. ↴

Indian presence at JATA Expo surges

Around six state tourism boards along with several other travel and hospitality companies from India will showcase the best of their products in Tokyo from September 22-25, 2016.

TT BUREAU

JATA Tourism Expo 2016 will witness a larger Indian presence with the delegation occupying more than double the exhibition space than 2015. This year, the Indian delegation's booths will be spread over 216 square metres, compared to 99 square metres the previous year.

State tourism boards such as Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh,

Manipur, and Kerala will be taking part this year – the last edition saw the presence of only one state tourism board.

The upcoming edition consists of four main programmes this year. The Travel Showcase will host exhibitors from over 140 countries and regions, all 47 prefectures in Japan and many tourism-related industries who will get an opportunity to build or grow business and directly inter-



act with the general public to attract more tourists to the destination.

Through the International Tourism Forum, experts will give insights to the latest travel trends and discuss issues pertaining to the travel industry. What's more, the exclusive Business Meeting will enable domestic overseas suppliers to meet with travel agencies and as part of the four-day event, the Visit Japan Travel and MICE Mart, an inbound business

talk session, is slated to take place from September 21 to 23. The last two days have been dedicated for B2C interactions.

The last edition of JATA Tourism Expo Japan attracted a total of 173,602 visitors and represented over 1,000 businesses and organisations from 141 countries and regions. This year, JATA aims to be bigger and better with increased scale, more substance and improved brand value. ↴

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Convention to mull over GST

The 51st FHRAI Convention, to be held from September 22-24 in Indore, will examine the impact of GST on hospitality and how the industry can tackle the recent practices by OTAs which affect offline agents.

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

The theme for this year's convention is 'Brand India' with focus on how to make India accessible, the impact of FSSAI and OTAs on the hospitality industry, reveals, **Amitabh Devendra**, Secretary General, FHRAI. "In this convention, our focus will be on three things – Accessible India, FSSAI and how it impacts our industry and the emerging trends in F&B operations. Also, we will take up the issue of OTAs and how it impacts our business. One session will be around the trends in design and architecture."

The association is expecting major growth in participation this year. **Luv Malhotra**, Vice President, FHRAI, says, "We are expecting over 1,000 delegates from across the country. Bringing GST to a low



Amitabh Devendra
Secretary General
FHRAI



Luv Malhotra
Vice President
FHRAI

er rate for travel and tourism industry will be our motto. Also, the focus would be to bring in more tourists into the country. We are looking at good participation. Last convention was extremely successful and this year too I am expecting a major growth."

Urging everybody to be a part of this convention **S.M. Shervani**, E.C. Member, FHRAI, says, "I would

rate this as one of the more important conventions and would urge everybody to participate." He calls it a great opportunity for the industry to get together and deliberate, exchange ideas and listen to the experts. "As we are passing through a stage in India where we are at the verge of tourism being recognised as the most important economic activity, we need to leverage that with the government.

Also, we need to be focused upon what we want the government to do and what our industry's contributions can be," Shervani says.

Seconding this, **Param Kannampilly**, Co-opted E.C. Member, FHRAI says, "Normally FHRAI Convention is well-participated. To my knowledge, the agenda is well designed. The conference will be educative as there will be discussions on technological advancements in the industry along with the recent trends."

Agenda

- Over 1000 delegates are expected at the FHRAI Convention
- Technological advancements along with other trends will be discussed at the convention

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For us to reap the benefits of this industry, we need to invest accordingly and India's tourism sector offers a wide variety of investment opportunities. For those wrestling with the question of 'Why Invest in India?' the Incredible India Tourism Investors' Summit is the right platform for the addressal of such queries. Organised by the Ministry of Tourism along with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Tourism Finance Corporation of India, the three-day event will provide an ideal platform to both domestic and international companies who are interested in investing in tourism products. Various states and union territories shall present their respective investor-ready products encompassing hospitality, wellness, roadways, infrastructure, airports, luxury and lifestyle, cruises and civic amenities amongst others. The summit is significant as it coincides with the commencement of the tourist season, from October to March.

India in MICE race

And that fateful month is upon us! This fortnight in particular and the months of September and October in general will witness a plethora of marts and conventions thus highlighting how India is increasingly developing as a MICE destination. The successful hosting of these conventions and B2B marts go a long way in establishing the country as a prominent destination for MICE events. We also hope that this will encourage international companies and associations to consider India as a venue for hosting their events. MICE tourism is gaining a lot of momentum all over the world and India also wants a share of the pie. Various hotels and states around the country are trying to tap into this sector and are making efforts to woo travellers. We hope that the conventions and marts see immense success and prepare the groundwork for establishing India as a coveted destination for such events.

A happy & 'content' digital age

As content marketing paves the way ahead for success in the digital world, the key is to keep it relevant, engaging and deliver value to audiences.

Content isn't just the king, it's the kingdom. Getting the right content in front of the right audience at the right time, is the secret to success in the digital age.

Since Skyscanner was founded in 2003, we have witnessed tectonic shifts in consumer behaviour. Now with instant access to news and video on smartphones, coupled growing numbers of digital natives armed with technology to block advertising, it is very easy for consumers to avoid brands' direct attempts to interact with them. Due to these changes in the marketplace and evolving consumer habits, we had to adapt our approach and be more creative in how we get our brand and product in front of the users.

Using content as a channel allows brands to be part of the customer journey from start to finish. Whether that's using content for SEO purposes and answer customers' questions in the research phase, re-engage them through articles in newsletters or attract them on to site through Paid Social

Ads, content allows brands to be everywhere.

Content marketing strategically focuses on creating and distributing content to acquire, activate and retain audiences. The key is to keep it relevant, engaging and deliver value to audiences. Good content

While advertising will remain to be one of the most obvious and out there forms of brand promotion, content marketing is finding ways to mingle into the lives of the consumer

generates interest among influencer groups which further share and amplify it among the target audience.

A travel brand operates in a challenging environment where it needs to produce strategically placed content which is consistently valuable and rel-

evant. It must help create an experience for the traveller. When someone or something recommends/links to a brand, the traveller will first check out the recommended website. A blog page is a must that will contain all traveller's guides, tips and check-lists that will make the traveller's journey much easier. Though vacations are about creating amazing memories but the planning and prepping is stressful. Therefore, information that eases planning and makes it less cumbersome is part of the process with all the right content.

The idea of crafting a consistent stream of quality content may seem daunting; but it's the need of the hour and paramount in achieving global growth for the brand. Distributing and amplifying videos and articles through well-optimised channels such as a strong social media presence, SEO, PR strategy and solid influencer relationships ensures an efficient ROI.

Therefore, armed with the power of creative content which subtly envelops the key

messages, brands are able to build a relation with their target audience, which is almost mutual in nature. As the consumer sees the merit in the content, it gets shared and promoted, thus becoming an endorser to the brand. Consequently, while advertising will remain to be one of the most obvious and out there forms of brand promotion, content marketing is finding ways to mingle into the lives of the consumer and build a profound connect.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



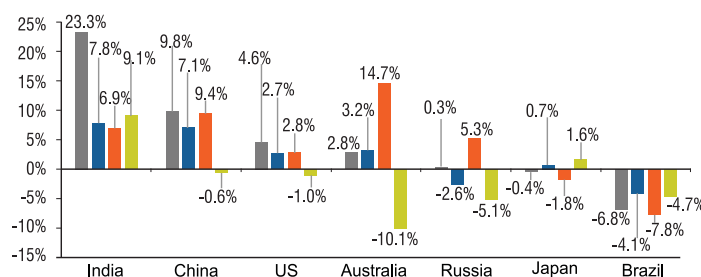
Reshmi Roy
Growth Manager
Skyscanner India

Domestic airline market grows by 26%

According to IATA, India's domestic passenger market ranks number four with an annual growth of 26.2 per cent and PLF level of 84.5 per cent in July.

Drivers of domestic passenger markets

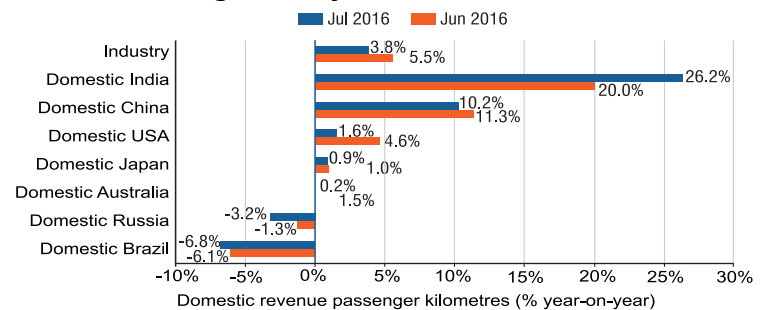
% year-on-year (2016)



Source: IATA Monthly Statistics, SRS Analyser, EIU

Reports suggest that Asian passengers are being put off by terrorism in Europe: traffic on the Europe-Asia route fell by 0.9 per cent year-on-year in June (latest available), and it has been the weakest-performing major route so far in 2016. It appears that Asian travellers may be substituting to destinations closer to home: international traffic growth within Asia accelerated to a four month-high of 8.1 per cent year-on-year in June.

Domestic RPK growth by market



Source: IATA Economics, IATA Monthly Statistics

Source: IATA Air Passenger Market Analysis July 2016



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TRAVELTALK is printed, published and edited by Sanjeet on behalf of DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd., printed at Super Cassettes Industries Ltd., C-85, 86, 94, Sector-4, Noida, Distt.: Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh - 201301 and published at 72, Todaral Road, New Delhi - 110 001 Ph.: +91-11-23344179

Delhi plans to catch them young

The association wants to add more young faces, aged between 18-35 years, to the second-largest Skål chapter by introducing a Young Skålleagues Club.



TT BUREAU

Skål International Delhi held its Annual General Meeting on August 24, 2016, where they discussed the past year's progress and acknowledged achievements along the way.

The club promotes 'business among friends' and has come up with a slew of initiatives for the coming term. Skål International Delhi President

in need through the Florimond Volckaert Fund which is collected through raffle tickets. He said, "We are ready to support any member under financial problem. After all, Skål is not just about meeting and networking, but also about supporting each other." Members who contribute to the fund stand a chance to win prizes. In addition, a digital B2B platform is in the pipeline and will connect Skål members from all over the world. ↴

Skål Congress in Cochin from Sept 23-24

“ The Skål International National Congress' theme lays emphasis on eco-friendly methods as we strive to minimise the use damaging products. We are looking at a participation of around 90-125 delegates. The event draws members from across the clubs for a two-day session of networking, exchange of

ideas and a look into each clubs unique functional processes. It presents an opportunity for each club to take away and implement ideas that has resulted in the reaffirmation of Skål as a core body of travel, tourism and hospitality. The NC is also a fantastic opportunity to implement the core philosophy of Skål – Business

among friends, as it is an excellent venue to network for members across cities and states. Day one would be basically the inaugural session at Marari Beach Resort, followed by cocktails and dinner. Day two would commence at the Vasundhara Sarovar Premiere with formal opening of the business sessions.”



Jayan Gopinathan
President, Skål International Cochin



Sanjay Datta
President
Skål International Delhi

Sanjay Datta informed that a Young Skålleagues Club will be formed soon as part of the chapter. "The idea has been approved by members here – it will be applicable to individuals between 18-35 years, and is targeted mainly at students, young executives and managers," he added. The main club



Sunil Gadhiok
Vice President
Skål International Delhi

will act as mentor to the Young Skålleagues Club and will attempt to shape and hone the future generation.

Following a consistent agenda to strengthen member base, the club welcomed three additional members to the club and felicitated them. Sunil Gadhiok, Vice President, Skål International Delhi, elaborated, "We are the second largest club in the world in terms of membership and are about 40-45 members short of being the largest Skål club in the world. The idea is to get new, younger members and build ourselves as the largest Skål club around the globe."

Datta also announced financial support for members



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Sustainable environment for tourism

With World Tourism Day just around the corner, TRAVTALK finds out the challenges and initiatives from industry players in India towards creating a sustainable and accessible tourism environment.



TT BUREAU

“Countering global terrorism is most important in present times and tourism is an answer to that. The biggest challenge today is that tourism providers compete with one another rather than working in a cohesive environment where all can benefit from each other. The millennials are increasingly demanding a constant connect with their surroundings and gradually easy access and dissemination of content in general is gaining importance in all aspects of tourism.”



Ankush Nijhawan
Co-founder
TBO Group

“To emphasise the need for creating lifetime experience and night time activities for tourists, the SEL division at ITDC has conceptualised sound and light shows. During conceptualisation it is always considered that the ecology of the destination is not disturbed by using local materials, artisans and designs. Energy efficient equipments are used in the process. As a responsible organisation, all our hotels are disabled-friendly and we are trying to make our installations more energy efficient by gradually switching over to LEDs and solar power.”



Piyush Tiwari
Director (Commercial & Marketing), India Tourism Development Corporation

“This World Tourism Day the industry, globally would be looking into ways of making travel reach out to everybody irrespective of location, financial condition, physical disability, age, etc. We are excited at this prospect of deeper penetration that would blend in diversity and popularity. From a technological perspective, this vision is heartwarming as we would know that our deliverables would now reach out to, not just the competent but also to highly curious minds who previously did not think travelling was easy for them.”



Anil Parashar
President and CEO
ITO



Pankaj Nagpal
Managing Director
Travstarz Global Group

“I strongly believe that the more we travel the more we learn about the misconceptions we have about other countries. Tourism is a learning and knowledge sharing process. In present times tourism's importance is reiterated as terrorism haunts countries worldwide. We have started opening new offices in other countries, introducing newer destinations to our clients, in an endeavour to not just introduce people to newer experiences but also focus on long term affects of tourism as a force to grow a society.”



Subhash Goyal
Chairman
STIC Travel Group

“The theme addresses a very important issue that needs to be taken seriously in India. Although the five-star hotels usually have facilities for the disabled, there are very few monuments that comprise ramps and other services. A few years ago, we provided travel services for the Paralympics and it was very difficult to make provisions at every place. Since then, we have made it a point to make our services disabled-friendly and more convenient for senior citizens.”



Homa Mistry
MD
Trailblazer Holidays

“As a responsible tour operator we follow the Indian tradition of *Atithi Devo Bhava* fully and ensure that the guests get every experience that is promised to them and sometimes even more. On a personal front, we use technology and have moved away from the filing system, to do away with any printing and indirectly not cutting any trees. In terms of accessibility for all, India is improving a lot. It's a growing economy and these things are taken into consideration right from transport to hotels.”

“The idea of propagating accessible tourism is very much needed in the industry. While services like ramps and wheelchairs might be offered around some tourist hotspots, the area surrounding the monuments need to be more accessible and convenient. There have been several instances especially at heritage hotels that had no such facilities at all! In my opinion, we need to take it one step at a time by working on upgrading small numbered groups where private players can be roped in to make the environment more conducive.”



Rajan Sehgal
Director
Arrivals Air Services

“World Tourism Day gives us an opportunity to take stock and recalibrate and this year's theme is a clarion call of our changing times. Tourism today calls for an inclusive, 360-degree approach that encompasses and is sensitive to tourists, but also to the society and the environment. The Indian tourism sector has been severely handicapped due to poor sanitation facilities at tourist destinations. We have identified destinations in India which receive high tourist footfalls but face a deficit of sanitation facilities, and will install pre-fabricated toilet units, commencing with Ooty.”



Abraham Alapatt
President and Group Head - Marketing, Service Quality, Financial Services and Innovation, Thomas Cook (India)

“Tourism doesn't begin and end with five-starred and spa resorts. It has to be available at every levels of affordability, age and different wants and demands. We shall have to come up with our own model as not a single internationally-proven concept will work in totality here. Orbitel as a group believes in four-star styling with three-star pricing.”



Amith Dholakia
Managing Director
Orritel Hotel

Surge pricing on Rajdhani, Duronto & Shatabdi trains

■ The Ministry of Railways has decided to introduce the flexi fare system for Rajdhani/Duronto and Shatabdi trains. The base fares will increase by 10 per cent with every 10 per cent of berths sold subject to a prescribed ceiling limit as indicated in the table below. There will be no change in the existing fare for 1AC and EC class of travel. Other

supplementary charges like reservation charges, superfast charge, catering charges, service tax etc., as applicable shall be levied separately. Vacant berths left at the time of charting would be offered for current booking. Tickets under current booking shall be sold at the last price sold for that class and other supplementary charges like reservation fee,

superfast charges, catering charges, service tax etc., as applicable shall be levied in full. The information should also be displayed to the passenger during the booking in case the fare of lower class becomes higher than the higher class to exercise option to travel by the higher class. The last price for every class of tickets for the particular train should

be printed in the reservation chart for the purpose of charging of difference of fare in the train or charging the passengers of the train without ticket etc. The berths assigned under the Tatkal quota shall be booked at the rate of 1.5 times of the base fare for all classes (2S, SL, 2A, 3A and CC) except 1AC and EC.



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Representation World: Face of Reunion Island

■ The Reunion Island Tourism Board (French Island in Indian Ocean) has appointed Representation World as its representative office in India to implement its ongoing public relations and travel trade programs, educate potential travellers on the destination's unique attributes, thereby attracting a larger number of visitors to Reunion Island from India. Reunion Island aims to



Vineet Gopal
Director
Representation World

receive more Indian tourists, with this partnership with Representation World. Vineet Gopal, Director, Representation World, added: "We are thrilled & honoured to represent the Reunion Tourism Board in India. The 15 days short-stay visa simplification for Indians who wish to travel to the Reunion Island will also boost tourism from India to Reunion Island."

MICE continues to rule the roost

Director Verna C Buensuceso, Officer in Charge (Market Development Group), Department of Tourism, Philippines, expects to see growth of 25 per cent in visitor numbers from India this year contributed mainly by MICE and the wedding segments.



QWhat kind of growth is the Indian market showing for the Philippines?

Globally, India is the 13th largest source market for us. There is huge interest in the Philippines right now and this is reflected in the growth we see from the India market. Our 2015-16 numbers show that close to 75,000 Indians visited us that indicated a growth of 22 per cent over the previous year. By 2017, we look forward to welcoming at least 100,000 Indian tourists.

QWhat segments are you focusing on right now?

We get a lot of MICE and leisure traffic, which remains our mainstay. We are looking for more groups, MICE in particular but also weddings. Towards this, hotels are now able to cater to Indians with Indian food, horse-drawn carriages, flower arrangements, etc.

"We are now talking to the Bureau of Immigration and the Department of Foreign Affairs about the possibility of having group visa on arrival for MICE and leisure."

Verna C Buensuceso
Officer in Charge (Market Development Group)
Department of Tourism, Philippines



because agents now know a lot more about the Philippines. Plus, there are repeaters and they want to go to newer destinations in the country.

QWill there be any budget additions?

Right now, we are transitioning into a new government and our new president has just taken over. So we are in the process of planning our next move. The Department of Tourism has launched the 'Visit the Philippines Again' 2016 campaign. We will also continue with our 'It's More Fun in the Philippines' campaign as has helped us create awareness about the country but we want to evolve. We haven't asked for any increase in budget yet. The budgets that were submitted for next year were already processed through the previous administration. But our budgets are fairly good. Plus, we have an option of outlining the projects that we feel are very important.

QIs the DOT Philippines trying to ease visa norms?

We have already instituted the 14-day free visa for AJACSSUK visas (US, Japan, Australia, Canada, Schengen, Singapore and UK) from all international airports and seaports. But since we are targeting the MICE market, sometimes it is not relevant for them because they are first-time travellers. So we are now talking to the Bureau of Immigration and

the Department of Foreign Affairs about the possibility of having group visa on arrival for MICE and leisure.

QWhat new cities are you looking to tap?

Other than the key metro cities, we are looking at secondary cities like Nagpur, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow. I would like to thank the Indian travel trade, especially in Mumbai. Our numbers show that while Mumbai

alone is not growing, most of the deals, particularly MICE, come from here.

QWhat kind of demand do you see coming from India?

New agents are showing keen interest among others looking for new products. Indian travel is no longer confined to key destinations like Manila, Cebu and Bohol. We see them in other cities as well like Palawan and Davao. This is possibly

Hahn Air celebrates its top performers



Hahn Air recently hosted an awards ceremony to celebrate its top performing travel agents and valued business partners for the year 2015. Over 20 travel agents from Punjab were invited to attend the prestigious awards ceremony at Radisson Hotel Jalandhar. At the event, Hahn Air awarded a certificate of appreciation recognising its top 10 agencies for their continued support and for being among its top business partners.

CIS Mysore marks India's 70th I-Day



To mark India's 70th Independence Day, a group of 12 girls from Country Inn & Suites By Carlson, Mysore performed a Flash Dance of around 10 minutes on a mix of patriotic and Bollywood songs at World famous Heritage Palace at Mysore. The event attracted thousands of tourists visiting the site on the day.

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Maldives is also for budget travellers

High Commissioner of Maldives to India, **Ahmed Mohamed**, says Maldives caters to all types of pockets, including budget and family groups. He informs that they are in touch with travel agents to determine how feasible it would be to start direct air links from Delhi or Mumbai to Male.

PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

QWith Costa Cruises soon starting a cruise line service to Maldives with Mumbai as a home port from December 2016, how in your opinion will that affect tourism between the two countries?

This will improve tourist arrivals for both Maldives and India. I've so far only heard from the media that Costa Cruises is going to start from Mumbai and take a tour around Sri Lanka and call on Maldives. We too are not at an

QMaldives is essentially viewed as an expensive destination. Do you have a market for mid-scale travellers?

In Maldives, accommodation is categorised in various segments. At the premium resorts we have a one island one resort policy where each island is a self-contained entity, providing all the services — entertainment and otherwise, which gives guests exclusivity and privacy. We also have

hotels and guest houses and river boat safaris where guest indulge in sea safaris like diving and are at sea for the whole duration of their journey. Guest house tourism has picked up very recently after the change in policy that the government brought about that guest houses can be opened on any island so that it gives direct benefit to small and medium enterprises whose investment size is much lower than that of resort owners. These guest houses

have packages that cater to middle income brackets and the packages on offer in Maldives are also categorised. In Maldives we mainly have four segments of travellers — a vast majority is honeymooners, then there are families, luxury and then budget categories.

QHow important are travel agents for tourism?

The tourism minister of Maldives recently paid a visit to India and met

Indian tour operators. It is the engagement of the travel agents and tour operators that make a difference; we understand that and we work proactively with tour operators, we have direct flights to India from southern cities like Chennai, Bengaluru, Trivandrum but there are no direct flights from northern metropolitan cities. We are in touch with travel agents to determine how feasible it would be to start direct air links from Delhi-Male or Mumbai-Male. 



Ahmed Mohamed
High Commissioner
Maldives to India

advanced stage of handling cruise ships, but there are marinas for smaller vessels, and there is a plan to develop cruise terminals. Still, even without a proper cruise terminal there have been visits of very large passenger liners to Maldives. Maldives being a small place and unique in its natural environment, when passengers disembark on our island, it gives them a chance to experience cultural tourism.

QWhat is Maldives doing to attract the ever-growing outbound market from India?

Various PATA reports often indicate that over the past five years the outbound tourists from India have been increasing and also mention that Indian tourists visiting the Asia Pacific region goes into 6.7 million. The Indian outbound figures for South Asia come to 4-5 lakh people out of which last year we were able to tap 52,000 which is about 12 per cent, there is a lot of potential and opportunity to tap into that market. For Maldives, diversification of source market is essential, right now Europe dominates the Maldives market by 52 per cent and Asia Pacific region comes to 40 per cent. The Maldives government is actively seeking to tap the Indian market. The Indian arrivals to Maldives have been on the increase, we saw a 15 per cent hike from 2014-2015. In 2013, India ranked 8th among the source markets in 2014 it was 7th and by the end of 2015 it was 6th.



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Sustainability & profit can go hand in hand

With sustainability as the buzzword, hotels are putting up systems and machines to reduce their carbon footprint, but is sustainability profitable? TRAVTALK finds out if businesses can continue to show profit while being environmentally conscious, some say it is possible while others are sceptical.

 NISHA VERMA

Cost effective

Niranjan Khatri, Founder and Principal Consultant, iSambhav and ex-General Manager, Environment Initiatives at ITC Hotels, believes that the idea that sustainable practices is heavy on the pocket is misleading. "If sustainability is embedded from design phase, it reduces operating costs and helps to avoid regulatory head winds. The main focus for hotels is to briefly reduce use of all resources with key focus on water energy waste and dovetailing the social concerns in alignment with the nine principles of National Voluntary Guidelines (NVG)," he says.

Mukund Sahasrabudhe, Director-Technical Services, Sarovar Hotels, adds, "Adopting sustainability requires highly skilled and experienced designer team and competent project team during execution. On the face



Niranjan Khatri
Founder and Principal Consultant,
iSambhav and ex-General Manager,
Environment Initiatives at ITC Hotels



Mukund Sahasrabudhe
Director-Technical Services
Sarovar Hotels

value, due to high human resource cost and use of non-conventional materials, it may appear that adopting sustainability practices adds on to the development cost. However through appropriate value engineering, the impact on the development cost can be made insignificant."

Price

E.M. Najeeb, Chairman, ATE Group of Companies, however, informs that there is no direct price escalation due to environmental friendly

systems and practices in hotels. "Hotels do not usually enhance room rates, based on the cost of environment friendly practices. They charge higher rates depending on the higher experiences they offer," he adds.

Demand

Najeeb claims that states like Kerala have already adopted sustainable tourism development as a policy. "Many eco-resorts and environmentally rich hospitality properties charge higher rates

as the experience they offer is very exotic. Use of locally grown fruits, vegetables and other supplies are free from chemicals, pesticides and

sustainability practices are followed mainly to minimise the operating costs. Although a few MNCs are keen to know if the hotel is adopting

pect great profits. "The lodges we represent just tell us that they don't want to put money out of their pockets, but want to make them sustainable enough so that the local villagers working for them can also run their houses. All they look for is that their cost v/s bookings are in balance," she asserts.

For Khatri, good practices help reduce operating costs. "Hospitality is embedded with waste by design intent. It is possible to provide the same service by innovatively shaving off wasteful elements," he says.

For making profits, says Sahasrabudhe, the only full proof alternative is to increase the sales. "Adopting sustainability practices is just going to maximise the profit or hedge the costs to some extent against inflation. As such for any hotel, full focus on increasing sales revenue is a must," he asserts. ↴



E.M. Najeeb
Chairman
ATE Group of Companies



Shoba Mohan
Founder Partner
RARE India

manures and so they are in greater demand, and people pay higher prices for them."

Sahasrabudhe, on the other hand, says, "The overall demand of sustainability practices by domestic customers is almost zero. This is mainly due to lack of awareness. So far, in India, the

sustainability practices and its carbon foot print. However, so far customers are not keen on paying extra for sustainability for their stay at a hotel."

Profitability

Shoba Mohan, Founder Partner, RARE India, says that with a dedication towards sustainability, one can't ex-



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United the travel agents stand

United Travel Agents recently conducted a networking event for more than 100 travel agents in Mumbai. There were presentations by Costa Cruises, as well as DMCs from Dubai, Singapore, North East India, Bhutan, Eastern Europe, and hotels from Goa, apart from discussions on ethical tourism.



Address Boulevard in Q4'16

The Address Boulevard Dubai is all set to open its doors in the fourth quarter of 2016 and is upbeat about the growing India market.



A delegation from Address Boulevard Dubai recently visited India to showcase its various offerings at an evening of cocktails and dinner. Speaking at the event, **Abdulkarim Safwan**, Director-Business Development, The Address Boulevard Dubai, said, "Located in the heart of Dubai, it is the second tallest building in the Boulevard district, sixth tallest in Dubai and 36th tallest in the world. Like all other Address properties, it has 196 hotel rooms, starting with 42 sq m of Deluxe rooms up to 340 sq m for the Address Boulevard Suite. The apartments are from the 14th floor all the way to the 70th floor and they vary between studio apartments to seven bedrooms."

Claiming that the property caters to all kinds of guests, Safwan said, "The Address Boulevard has three designated pools for family, adults and for the spa guests respectively. Also, the flagship 24-hour à la carte dining restaurant 'The Restaurant', is designed as



Abdulkarim Safwan
Director-Business Development
The Address Boulevard Dubai



Ankush Nijhawan
Managing Director
Nijhawan Group

an apartment and allows the guests to eat anything at any time. There is a Club Lounge, which is also open 24 hours with live cooking sessions. Another highlight is that the property is connected to the Dubai Mall with an air conditioned bridge, allowing families to walk to the mall for shopping. It is also close to the main business and financial centres of the city."

Talking of the Indian market, he said, "India is among our top three markets and we are really looking forward to welcome more travellers from India to our hotels. While we

are getting good numbers from all the cities in India, we are trying to reach out to the smaller cities in India, along with our representative office in India — the Nijhawan Group."

Ankush Nijhawan, MD, Nijhawan Group, also said that the new property would allow more Indians to experience the hospitality of the Emaar Group. "With the new property coming up, the brand will add more rooms to its portfolio. It is a great property situated in the heart of Downtown. With India being the largest market for Dubai, it is definitely going to benefit the new property." ↴



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Strengthen Fiji connection

With better air connectivity via Singapore, Tourism Fiji is optimistic of getting more tourists from India.



Tourism Fiji held a three city roadshow in India in association with a Fiji-based DMC, Rosie Holidays, to promote the destination and its offerings to the travel trade. "We've planned roadshows in Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai, where we are doing frontline training and cocktails. The idea is to target the upcoming honeymoon season, because Fiji is a honeymoon destination, and

and Singapore Airlines, which has tremendously improved connectivity out of 11 cities ex-India," he claimed. Kari added, "We already have five flights from Hong Kong every week. I think the two weekly flights from Singapore should add to our numbers. We are seeing many travel agents coming to us with the kind of itineraries people are looking for."

While travel trade has been a focus for Tourism Fiji,

Kapadia informed that now they will also target consumers directly. "For the last 4-5 years, we've been spending our budgets in educating the trade, because we strongly believe that if the travel trade is educated, they will sell our destination to the consumer. While such training, roadshows and networking will continue in future as well, we will also focus on the consumer, so that even they would tell the agent that they'd like to go to Fiji."

Get lucky with Virgin's Premium Economy Contest



Virgin Atlantic recently launched a two week-long trade incentive called the Fastest First Premium Economy Contest wherein IATA travel agents were asked to submit their first Premium Economy booking details every day for the duration of the contest. The first entry received each day won a shopping voucher. There was also a bumper prize for one lucky winner.



Pranav Kapadia
Founder
Global Destinations

we have done very well in this particular market. We have a total of six resorts showcasing their products, along with our partners Rosie Holidays," said **Pranav Kapadia**, Founder, Global Destinations, which represents Fiji in India.

Vaijyanthi Kari, Country Head, Tourism Fiji, added, "All the three markets are good in



Vaijyanthi Kari
Country Head
Tourism Fiji

terms of outbound travel, because they want to go beyond just a beach destination and are looking for experiential, action-packed holidays. What works in Fiji's favour is that it has a lot to offer."

Kapadia said that they are still a small market for India with close to 4,000 arrivals. However, "we've grown over the last 3-4 years by 20-25 per cent on average year on year. The biggest challenge that we've been facing in the past is connectivity, but since April this year, Fiji Airways has started flying twice weekly from Singapore. This has helped boost the connectivity with a better airfare as well. They also have thoroughfares with Jet Airways



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Celebrate Navratri the Gujarati way

No state can claim to live and breathe the nine nights as this western state when every street transforms into a bustling carnival venue.

The festival of Navratri is well-known and celebrated all over India. But there's a reason why the mention of 'Navratri' invariably draws one's mind towards the state of Gujarat. Nowhere else does one get to witness the transformation

Every year, thousands of tourists flock to Gujarat during the event to soak in the festive spirit. The Department of Tourism, Government of Gujarat makes special arrangements to further enhance the experience that they take back. The

dance form 'garba' which flows in every Gujarati's blood. People come out in large numbers with their 'dandia sticks' at night to participate in this delightful activity dressed in the most radiant and colourful traditional outfits. The authentic Gujarati food is also relished by all at the various food stalls that spring up all over the state.

The Department of Tourism, Government of Gujarat, has partnered with a number of trusted travel agencies to offer tourists extremely attractive travel packages and to provide a



of every street in a state into a bustling carnival and a vivid aesthetic masterpiece encompassing various art forms from music to dance to vibrant textile designs putting even the most happening discotheques of the country to shame.

The energy and the vibe that the state radiates during these nine days or rather nine night-long fiesta is absolutely utopic.

major centers for this are Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and other large cities of the state apart from the village level celebrations. This year the state of Gujarat, under the supervision of the Department of Tourism will be hosting the much awaited Navratri Festival from October 1-9.

The highlight of the Navratri celebrations in Gujarat is the traditional



wider range of offerings to the visitors in addition to

the schemes offered by the department itself.

The department along with the agencies offers a

variety of tour plans to suit the need of every type of traveller. From a two day trip to a 10 day holiday, from 2 star to 5 star hotel stays they have it all.

Other than giving visitors a taste of the Navratri celebrations, these tours also encompass visits to major tourist sites and local sightseeing.

The department, in order to facilitate easy access to these packages has provided all the relevant details on its website www.gujarattourism.com.

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MOT goes social networking

■ The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has launched its account on Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Periscope, and Vimeo. Tourism Secretary **Vinod Zutshi**, along with Joint Secretary-Tourism **Suman Billa** and other MOT officials made the five accounts live. Zutshi observed that the clientele involved in tourism is much more tech-savvy than any other industry. MOT wants to take a 360-degree approach to interact with consumers for which it has decided to actively leverage social media platforms, he added. He also said that it is for the first time that MOT has appointed an agency

for marketing and promotion, and is developing a content sharing network with Incredible India offices and state governments. "The ministry has also kept aside a sizeable amount of budget for promotion through e-media platforms," Zutshi said. MOT's Twitter presence has increased by 94,000 between May-August, 2016, Billa said. He also called upon state governments, Incredible India offices and tourism associations to actively participate in social media campaigns and share their images, videos and other information to be shared on social media.

Indians spending more in Oz

Tourism Australia's annual India Travel Mission 2016 held in Chennai witnessed the largest-ever delegation of Australian sellers, which is a clear indication of the growing importance of Indian arrivals.



HAZEL JAIN FROM CHENNAI

About 70 Australian travel companies descended on Chennai this August to meet 100 Indian travel agents over two and a half days. This was the largest delegation of Australian sellers that has ever participated in the India Travel Mission 2016 with 82 delegates showcasing 70 different products of which almost 20 were new par-

ticipants such as Scoot, Visit Canberra, Tourism Barossa, Australian Wine Tour Company, Featherdale Wildlife Park, Sand Dune Adventures, Fire Truck Tours, and Wildlife Coast Cruises.

This is a clear indication of the growing importance of Indian tourist for Australia. They are travelling to Australia more, staying there more and most importantly

spending more. **Michael Newcombe**, General Manager for South, South East Asia and Gulf countries, Tourism Australia, confirms, "Indians are not just travelling more to Australia but also spending more. Their rank in terms of arrivals is nine which has dropped a rank but in the near term, we would like India to return to number eight. In terms of overnights, they are ranked number four.



Michael Newcombe
General Manager-South, SE Asia and Gulf
Tourism Australia

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We want Air India to increase frequencies to India and increase direct capacity to Australia. For Jet Airways, we want them to commence services to Australia in the next couple of years

Indians are long-staying primarily because of the VFR segment," he says.

The focus now for Tourism Australia is to push its 'Aquatic and Coastal Campaign'. Newcombe adds, "It makes sense for Australia since it's the largest island in the world. However, other campaigns like 'Restaurant Australia' will continue. Food and wine expenditure by Indians in Australia went up by almost 51 per cent in 2015. In fact, Indians are now spending close to AUD 127 million just on food and wine." It currently has 2,800 Aussie specialists and wants to bring this up to 3,500 by end of the next FY.

The core focus now is improving aviation access and the NTO has been having ongoing conversations with Air India and Jet Airways. "We want Air India to increase frequencies to India and increase direct capacity to Australia. For Jet Airways, we want them to commence services to Australia in the next couple of years. But we will take what we can get," he adds.

Tourism Australia's core focus segment remains leisure, more specifically high-value travellers. It has also increased its budget for the India market by 15 per cent increase this FY since India has been identified as priority market for Australia. Newcombe also revealed that the NTO is looking to reach the masses through a Hindi TV serial that will be shot in Australia soon. ↴

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Fillip to medical & wellness tourism

The 3rd edition of International India Medical Tourism Congress (IIMTC) organised in Hyderabad at Leonia Holistic Destination saw participation of various stakeholders from the healthcare and tourism sectors from various countries like the Middle East, the US, Europe and Africa. The event was attended by 850 participants.



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AME 2017- new hope for Turkey

The congress, meeting and event industry exhibition, ACE of MICE (AME), will be held from February 22-24, 2017, in Istanbul. **Selin Kamil**, International Relations Executive, AME, says the event will address issues such as crisis communication and management.

SHEHARA RIZLY

QWhat is the focus of the exhibition for 2017?

ACE of MICE Exhibition is the meeting point of top level decision-makers of the meetings and event industry in Turkey and the world. We offer an excellent opportunity to the attendees with hosted

buyer programme, B2B meetings, network activities, enriched seminars and panels. The sessions will be held on topics such as 'Crisis Communication & Management on Events', 'Sports Events' and '3rd University Students Meet the MICE Industry'.

We are planning to open registration for hosted buy-

ers, press and visitors towards the end of September on www.ameistanbul.com. The companies that would like to exhibit can contact us at sales@ameistanbul.com.

QWhat are your expectations from the event?

We have partnered with industry associations and in-

ternational media to promote AME. We are also working with hosted buyer group coordinators to invite qualified buyers. Besides we are in touch with Convention Bureaus and MICE companies. According to our intensive communication campaign we aim to reach the maximum number in the meaning of both exhibitors

and hosted buyers and visitors at AME 2017.

QHow is the MICE market faring in Turkey?

Turkey has had a tough time this year, but in spite of the difficulties we have overcome the situation. During this period, Turkish MICE companies continued to



Selin Kamil
International Relations Executive
ACE of MICE

We are working with hosted buyer group coordinators to invite qualified buyers. Besides we are also in touch with Convention Bureaus and MICE companies

work hard and thanks to their professionalism, we escaped with minimum damages. We will continue to host international congresses and groups in Turkey to encourage tourism. According to 2015 ICCA statistics Turkey is ranked 18th worldwide and ranked 11th in Europe.

QWhat are the latest trends in MICE?

Today the MICE industry is strongly connected through technology than ever before. Apps, mobile sites and social media channels are assisting planners before, during and after events. Virtual reality is becoming one of the most popular trends. Moreover, green meetings and sustainable event trends are still in the foreground like last year.

QHow important are the Middle East and India markets for Turkey?

We absolutely believe that the Middle East and India markets are really attractive for Turkey. Turkey hosts many groups both from Middle East and India.

We have worked with European market until today and now there is a need to enter new different markets. So, we are aware that the Middle East and India are potential markets. Also direct air connectivity gives advantages between these destinations.



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Harvesting tourism on farms 850 participants @IIMTC

Pandurang Taware, Director, Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC), spoke to TRAVTALK to shed light on the growing agritourism sector in Maharashtra.

The 3rd International India Medical Tourism Congress held in Hyderabad, from Sept 3-4, saw participants from the healthcare, tourism and government sector.

TT BUREAU

For many, agritourism was unimaginable earlier, but Taware has not only incepted the concept, but has been promoting it aggressively for the last 11 years. A total of 1,600 farmers have been trained under ATDC's Agri Tourism Training Program and 322 farmers from Maharashtra have started agritourism on their farms to supplement their income from agriculture and employment. "Agritourism is a niche product and slowly it is growing. We only started in Maharashtra and now it is expanding across India. Today, we have almost 1,000 agritourism centres around the country, out of which Maharashtra has majorly 300 agritourism centres. It's definitely growing."



Pandurang Taware
Director, Agri Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC)

We have contributed to the National Tourism Policy 2016 and agritourism has now been included into the draft policy

According to him, agritourism helps the farmers get sustainable income, as they don't have a fixed daily income. "A farmer's income depends upon three major

things — rain, produce and price — which is not certain. This is the reason why

next generation farmers are not staying on the farm, as it lacks sustainable income and employment. Thus, agritourism doesn't just bring tourism to the farm, but also allows the tourists to get a first-hand experience of the farm. Maharashtra has received more than 10 per cent of international tourists from 27 different countries, which shows the potential of the state and the scope to which agritourism can grow."

Taware is happy that the government has included agritourism in the draft Tourism Policy. "We have contributed to the National Tourism Policy and agritourism has now been included into the draft policy. Before this, Maharashtra Tourism had unveiled their policy of 2016, where agritourism and Responsible Tourism have been included as growth areas, which is helping the farmers. Our main aim is to encourage regional tourism."

ANKITA SAXENA FROM HYDERABAD

The event held under the aegis of Society of Critical Care and Emergency Medicine (SCCEM) and International India Wellness and Medical Tourism Association (IIWMTA), welcomed participants from various countries including the Middle East, Africa, USA, and Europe from the healthcare and tourism sector. **B. Venkatesham**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of Telangana, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. He showcased Telangana as an upcoming medical tourism destination and various offerings of hospitals, ayurveda centres and nursing. **Dr. Christina Z. Chongthu**, Managing Director, Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC) also presented the various initiatives of the state towards making Hyderabad a hub for medical and wellness tourism. She said, "The ease of travel is the biggest advantage of India. Coupled with the eTV facility, world class technical facilities, ease of transac-



tion and a positive comparative price index gives India a competitive edge. The government is offering marketing and promotional assistance at international and national platforms to industry stakeholders." **M. Venkateshwarlu**, President, Telangana Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), was also present at the event.

Hospitals, travel agencies offering medical travel assistance, international airlines like Turkish Airlines, medical tourism portal, IVF centers, dental care centres, AYUSH Ministry, Telangana CCI and wellness centers exhibited their products at the show.

"India is a leader as far as global wellness can be mapped and the variety of wellness and medical services that India can offer to the world is unmatched. South India has so far led the Indian sector, with Chennai and Kerala catering to the largest share of markets. There has been a considerable increase in standards of services with the growth of wellness industry. We believe this event has laid down foundations for the greater international participation in Indian healthcare sector and expect a considerable growth in medical tourism sector through the networking of the attendees," said **H.N. Garg**, President, SCCEM.

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Lords debuts in Kerala

■ Lords Hotels & Resorts, the fastest growing mid-market chain of true value hotels has launched one of its premium resorts in God's Own Country – Kerala, recently.

Located at Cheruthuruthy, the Lords Resorts – Thris-

luxury resort is set on the banks of Bharathapuzha River.

“Lords Resorts – Thris-sur is in many ways an epitome of Kerala’s rich and varied landscape which within its premises houses a natural waterfall, a pond, butterfly



sur was inaugurated by Chief Guest **A.C. Moithen**, Honourable Minister for Co-operation and Tourism, in the presence of several other dignitaries of the state. With the launch of this luxury resort, Lords Hotels & Resorts now has 26 properties in India and its first in Kerala.

Spread over 20 acres of varied landscapes and located at a distance of 30 km from Thrissur town, the 57-room

luxury resort is set on the banks of Bharathapuzha River. “Lords Resorts – Thris-sur is in many ways an epitome of Kerala’s rich and varied landscape which within its premises houses a natural waterfall, a pond, butterfly farms and nature trails, all set against a backdrop of large expanse of rubber plantations. The lodgings are interspersed across the terrains and have been seamlessly merged with their environment. We are positive that a stay at our resort will make for one of the most memorable experiences for our guests,” says **P.R. Bansal**, Chairman & Managing Director, Lords Hotels & Resorts.

Revise liquor policy to boost tourism

The existing excise policy has been a dampener for Kerala’s tourism sector, resulting in a slow year particularly for MICE. However, the new government has shown interest in reviewing the policy and easing regulations.



AHANA GURUNG

Tourism in Kerala has suffered a blow as a result of the state’s excise policy which seeks to prohibit the sale and service of alcohol in all public places, except bars and restaurants in five-star hotels. This is apparent from the decline in tourists arrivals in the state, recording an increase of mere 54,000 foreign tourists between 2014-15 (9,77,479 FTAs in 2015 in comparison to 9,23,366 FTA in 2014).

Playing spoilt-sport

As per a survey conducted by the Department of Tourism, Kerala, titled ‘Kerala Tourism Trends, Trade Survey 2016’, one of the reasons for the decline has been attributed to the liquor ban while high rates and stiff competition from neighbouring countries have also played a role in the decrease. Close to 20 per cent growth in foreign tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka suggests that Kerala is losing the competitive battle.

Sarath Aravind from Kochi-based Say Tours agrees to the fact that business has indeed been on a downward spiral the past year and adds, “Inbound has been slow for us mainly because of the liquor ban. The MICE segment in Kerala used to be strong but it has considerably slowed down – there have been instances where many events have been cancelled.” Although 70 per cent of hotels in the state have conference facilities, the growth rate in the MICE sector dropped from 9.1 per cent in 2013 to a low of -0.6 per cent in 2015.

However, Aravind mentions that wellness tourism, which has always been Kerala’s strong point, has been the bright spot for the state. “We’ve been getting a good number of tourists from the Middle Eastern countries that fly down for Ayurveda treatments,” he informs.

Saving grace?

The new state government seems to have understood the depth of the situation



Sarath Aravind
Owner
Say Tours



Vikas Abbott
Managing Director
Vasco Travels

for signs of easing the policy were revealed last month by Kerala Tourism Minister A.C. Moideen at a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram. He suggested a relook on closure of liquor bars at tourist hotspots in the state and said, “With hotels not serving liquor, conferences have come down and the state is losing out,” he said, adding, liquor should be made available in bars at tourist hotspots. According to various reports, Excise Minister T.P. Ramakrishnan has said the state would review the existing policy as it did not have the de-

sired effect of reducing alcohol consumption in the state.

While the revision is definitely a positive sign for the state, **Vikas Abbott**, Managing Director, Vasco Travels opines that other bottlenecks have had an equal hand in tourism’s slowdown in Kerala. “Yes, the policy did have an impact in tourist arrivals but factors like the global economic slowdown and poor infrastructure also have a hand. These roadblocks need to be resolved for the sector to really flourish and to achieve unprecedented growth.”

When the Aussies came calling...

Tourism and Events Queensland and Tourism Victoria recently held a workshop and lunch session for its trade partners at Sofitel Hotel, BKC in Mumbai. As many as 28 senior suppliers from Victoria and Queensland, met with Indian travel trade partners during the event.



Delhi-Seoul direct from Dec SL eyes 4 lakh Indians

The GSA of Korean Air, Acumen Overseas, made the announcement of five weekly direct flights between the two cities at an event organised recently in New Delhi.

The year 2015 saw a 32% rise in Indian arrivals to Sri Lanka and the country is aiming higher through its association with Bollywood and Indian trade bodies.

TT BUREAU

South Korea's largest airline and flag carrier, Korean Air is all set to launch its five weekly direct flight service between New Delhi and Seoul from December 1, 2016. The news of the direct flight was announced at an evening of cocktails and dinner organised by the GSA of Korean Air — Acumen Overseas, at Hotel Pullman, Aerocity Delhi, and was attended by the who's who of travel industry. Present at the event were **Choong Hee Le**, Regional Manager - North India, Korean Air; **Park Jin Ki**, Passenger Sales Manager, Korean Air; **Prithviraj Singh Chug**, Director, Group Concorde; **Jasraj Singh Chug**, Group CEO, Group Concorde; and **Payal Mehta**, Business Head, Group Concorde.



Pukhraj Singh Chug
Managing Director
Acumen Overseas

teractive session. Korean Air boasts excellent and smooth connectivity to the prime cities of Japan — Osaka, Fukuoka, Nagoya and Narita ex Delhi. The launch of non-stop flights between Delhi and Incheon by Korean Air will go a long way in promoting travel (both leisure and business) between the two countries. Other than being a leading business destination, South Korea is also full of opportunities and attractions for tourists. Korean Air endeavours to promote MICE incentive movements from Delhi to Incheon and return.

Currently Korean Air operates three direct flights between Mumbai-Seoul. Korean Air is the one and only non-stop connection from Mumbai to Seoul.

Pukhraj Singh Chug, Managing Director, Acumen Overseas, says, "Korean Air strongly believes that India as a destination has potential for both business and leisure travel to Korea. The airline is working hard to give the Indian traveller visibility of the modern and high-end Korean infrastructure and the beautiful and extensive natural resources that Korea possesses. The launch of the direct Korean Air flight to Seoul from Delhi will give the Indian traveller complete solution to explore Korea for varied business and leisure interests in the future."

Up and above

✈ Korean Air connects the prime cities of Japan— Osaka, Fukuoka, Nagoya and Narita ex-Delhi.

SAMAPTI DAS

Chinthaka Weerasinghe, Manager Northern India, SriLankan Airlines, said, "India is a very important market for us. Last year we had the highest number of tourist arrivals from India with the growth rate of 32 per cent. About 3.2 lakhs tourists came to Sri Lanka from India last year and we are expecting around 4 lakh Indian tourists this year. We are focusing on generating more and more business out of India." Talking about the association with the travel trade, Weerasinghe said that most of their business channels through travel agents. He added, "We assist them in various initiatives like recently we had the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) Northern Chapter having their conference in Sri Lanka and we assisted them in it."

He added, "We also work closely with various tourism boards and hotel chains. Now we are targeting other travel segments like destination wed-



Chinthaka Weerasinghe
Manager Northern India
SriLankan Airlines

dings. We have tied up with hotels to give special discounts to travellers from India who come to Sri Lanka for weddings." Weerasinghe informed that they are looking at major expansion plans in India after the new aviation policy has come, but the major source markets now happen to be Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Rajasthan, UP and NCR though the airline is based in South India.

SriLankan Airlines recently signed Bollywood actor, Jacqueline Fernandez as its brand ambassador.



Udeni Perera
Manager Western India
SriLankan Airlines

While talking to TRAVTALK about this, **Udeni Perera**, Manager Western India, SriLankan Airlines said, "Our operation into India is the biggest one, operating at 11 cities and 100 destinations and Sri Lanka receives the most number of tourists from India. Jacqueline Fernandez is one the most famous actors in India and she is from Sri Lanka. So, she takes it as a pride to be associated with the national carrier of Sri Lanka. This initiative will eventually bring us a lot of publicity, business and recognition." ✈

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Cocktails & canapés at Caper celebration

Caper Travel Company hosted an evening for its partners and friends from the trade at Kitty Su, The Lalit in Delhi. The evening saw the who's who of the travel fraternity networking over cocktails and canapés.



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Philippines takes fun to South & West

The Department of Tourism (DOT), Philippines, received overwhelming response during its four-city roadshow that commenced from Kolkata and travelled to Chennai, Bengaluru and finally to Mumbai. DOT Director **Verna C Buensuceso** led a delegation of 16 members from the Philippines that included officials from DOT Philippines, DMCs, airlines, and hotels.



Bengaluru



Mumbai

EVENT TALK

SEPTEMBER 2016

IATO Convention	Chennai	18-21
Incredible India Tourism Investors Summit	New Delhi	21-23
Astana Leisure	Kazakhstan	21-23
Manila International Travel Expo (MITE)	Philippines	22-24
JATA Tourism Expo	Tokyo	22-25
IITM	Mumbai	23-25
TTF	Pune	23-25
Skal International India National Congress	Kochi	23-25
ILTM Americas	Mexico	26-29
Kerala Travel Mart	Kochi	27-30
Tourism Ireland roadshow	Mumbai	28
Tourism Ireland roadshow	New Delhi	29
European Quartet roadshow	Mumbai	30
India International Travel Mart	Gurugram	Sept 30 - Oct 02

OCTOBER 2016

European Quartet roadshow	New Delhi	1
Buddhist Conclave	Sarnath	2-4
Australia workshop	Coimbatore	4
Scandinavia roadshow	New Delhi	4
Scandinavia Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	5
Australia workshop	Kochi	6
Scandinavia Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	6
World Travel Expo	Manila	7-9
Arabian Travel Awards	Gurugram	12
Tourism office of Spain workshop	Mumbai	13
ICPB Convention	New Delhi	13-15
Tourism office of Spain workshop	Bengaluru	14
Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart	Bhopal	14-16
Connections Luxury	Brazil	16-19
Tourism office of Spain workshop	Kolkata	17
World Tourism Conference	Penang, Malaysia	17-19
Amazing Thailand Luxury roadshow	New Delhi	19
ITB Asia	Singapore	19-21
India Hospitality Awards – North & East	New Delhi	20
India Travel Awards – North	New Delhi	21
Amazing Thailand Luxury roadshow	Kolkata	21
Business & Luxury Travel Mart	Gurugram	24-25
APEX Expo 2016	Singapore	24-27
Skal International World Congress	Monaco	Oct-29- Nov 2

NOVEMBER 2016

Luxury Travel Fair	London	3-5
Taipei International Travel Fair	Taipei City	4-6
CITM	Shanghai	11-13
Phocuswright Conference	Los Angeles	14-17
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Mumbai	16
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Bengaluru	18
Best of Australia workshop	Ludhiana	18
Best of Australia workshop	Lucknow	20
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Hyderabad	21
Switzerland Tourism trade show	Kolkata	22
Switzerland Tourism trade show	New Delhi	23
PATA New Tourism Frontiers Forum 2016	Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh	23-25
Germany Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	28
Germany Tourism roadshow	Chennai	29
Germany Tourism roadshow	Kolkata	30

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

ASSOCIATION TALK

600+ members expected @TAAI congress

Member DMCs and operators from the UAE and the Middle East are also likely to participate in the association's annual convention in Abu Dhabi.



HAZEL JAIN

The 63rd convention of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) that will take place in Abu Dhabi from October 14-16, 2016, is likely to get about 600-700 delegates from across India. **Jay Bhatia**, National Treasurer and Chairman-Tourism Council, TAAI, revealed this, adding, "We are also expecting our overseas members to participate that includes DMCs and operators from the UAE and the Middle East region. We are currently awaiting fares from airlines for the package that we are giving to members."

TAAI has so far met Jet-Etihad, Emirates, and Oman Air.

Abu Dhabi, he adds, was chosen because of its proximity to India and good connections from most major cities of India. "That way our members don't waste time flying and members from all our regions and chapters can directly connect to Abu Dhabi or Dubai. The Abu Dhabi Tourism & Cultural Authority also came forward to offer us full support for the Indian Travel Congress," Bhatia adds.

The convention will be held at the Emirates Palace

that will host the inauguration, the business sessions as well as the Indian Travel Trade Expo (ITTE). The primary hotel has been finalised as the Marriott Hotel Downtown Abu Dhabi. The other hotel will be Le Royal Méridien Abu Dhabi.

'Wow' factor

Bhatia says, "We want this convention to stand out in the minds of our members. So this year, we have two amazing elements to offer our members. One is the venue – the Emirates Palace Hotel. It is grandiose, royal and classy. The second 'wow' factor for our members is



Jay Bhatia
National Treasurer and Tourism Council
Chairman, TAAI

access to Ferrari World Abu Dhabi where members can indulge in self drives on the famous Yas Marina Circuit which is an F1 track." ↴

Orchha: Next big MICE destination

IATO organised a Fam trip for its active members to Orchha Palace and Convention Centre in Tikamgarh, MP, to promote the property for MICE.



NISHA VERMA

Orchha Palace and Convention Centre welcomed 140 IATO members before its formal opening on October 1, 2016, and showcased its various offerings to the tour operators.

Lally Matthews, Honorary Secretary, IATO, said, "Orchha Palace and Convention Centre is one of the best hotels in the region, with very good conference facilities and quality accommodation. I am hopeful that it will get good MICE business. They have an upmarket product, and having a five-star hotel in a location like this will only add numbers."

Ashok Jain, Managing Director, Orchha Palace and Convention Centre, also owns Orchha Resort in the same region and is positive that the new property would only make it the next big MICE destination. "The destination is getting popular because of the historical and mythological sites in Orchha. Orchha is pollution free, clean and has good weather. The number of both domestic and international tourists to this destination is increasing every day. Today, there is a difference in demand and supply, and Orchha requires more rooms as well as conference halls. Thus, we are filling that gap." The property has 100 rooms, which include two suites of 1,800 sq ft area



Lally Matthews
Honorary Secretary
IATO



Ashok Jain
Managing Director
Orchha Palace and Convention Centre

and two rooms each. There are two banquet halls, with seating capacity of 1,000-1,200 people in theatre style and 600 people in round table style.

Orchha is connected to all the metro cities and Jain hopes

to get good business from corporates, at almost 60 per cent less the price. "I am hopeful that IATO will promote and sell the property, so that we can boost our business as well as market it in a better way," he says. ↴

Slash GST rates on travel: FAITH

Federation of Associations in Travel and Hospitality is geared towards ensuring that the travel industry gets GST benefit, reveals **Sarab Jit Singh**, Vice Chairman, FAITH.



TT BUREAU

On FAITH's main agenda right now is how will GST pan out, says Singh. "We are trying our best that the GST rate applicable on tourism organisations and services is at least half of the normal rate. We are also trying to get zero rating on GST for export services, and the transactions in foreign exchange. We have already reached out to the tourism minister, finance minister, state finance ministers, MP, state chief ministers; cabinet secretaries and all

the concerned departments," he says.

He adds that all the member associations are also echoing the same thought. "We all are on the same page. If the travel industry speaks in one voice, then the government will not have variant views, and it will be easier for them to decide on issues," he asserts. In terms of getting new members under FAITH, he says, "All the core associations across India are part of FAITH and we do not want to add any other regional association to be part of

it at this point. However, these associations can become cause partners."

Another concern for FAITH is its impending conclave. Singh says, "It is still at the stage of planning and for certain reasons we've not been able to take it forward so far. We want to invite the Prime Minister to grace the occasion."

On FAITH's participation in the upcoming Tourism Investors' Summit, he says, "It's a good initiative by the MOT, and it was needed to be done by




Sarab Jit Singh
Vice Chairman
FAITH


the central government, offering a single platform for investors and consider the projects. We are one of the knowledge partners and we will do selection of the buyers." ↴

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Shangri-La International Management

Mumbai

Vivek Braganza has been appointed as the Director of Business Development, India, by Shangri-La International Management. He has over 13 years of hospitality experience in Sales & Marketing, and Revenue Management. Prior to joining Shangri-La, Braganza has worked in property-based and regional roles with Starwood, Marriott and Taj. His last assignment was as Director of Sales & Marketing, The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. Braganza holds an MBA in Sales & Marketing from the Indira Institute of Management, Pune.



Crystal Sarovar Premiere

Agra

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **Vivek Mahajan** as the General Manager of Crystal Sarovar Premiere, Agra. He brings along an extensive experience of 14 years in the hospitality industry. Prior to joining Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, Mahajan had worked with reputed brands like Oberoi Group, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces and Wyndham Hotel. His last assignment was with Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide as Resident Manager. He is an alumnus of BHM Bangalore.



Hyatt Place Gurgaon

Udyog Vihar

Maulina Gupta has been appointed as General Manager for the Hyatt Place Gurgaon/Udyog Vihar. Spanning over 18 years, Gupta began her career with the Taj Group of Hotels and after over six years with various hotels across the country, she joined Hyatt Regency Delhi in 2006. Her last assignment was as Director of Sales & Marketing for her second pre-opening at the Hyatt Regency Gurgaon in 2012. She holds a professional degree in Hotel Management with a Bachelor's Degree in Science and Diploma in Software Engineering.



Lords Resorts, Silvassa

Mumbai

Lords Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Mahesh Chand Rajwar** as the General Manager of its property in Silvassa. Prior to taking up the position with Lords Hotels & Resorts, Rajwar was GM for Country Inn and Suites. He brings over 12 years of experience in hospitality. Certified in Hotel Management & Catering Technology from American Hotel & Lodging Association and Oriental School of Hotel Management, Rajwar has created a niche for himself in cost management, revenue generation, employee management and curbing attrition.



FCM Incoming

New Delhi

Prashant Narayan joins FCTG India as Country Head, FCM Incoming. In this capacity, Narayan will be responsible for brand expansion with a specific focus on building inbound holiday solutions for individual and group requirements of leisure travellers. Narayan joins FCM Incoming with an experience of over 22 years within the service industry. Prior to this, he was associated with Thomas Cook, as COO-Inbound Business and was also a Member, Executive Committee, Thomas Cook (I) Ltd.



Shangri-La Hotel

Bengaluru

Shangri-La Hotel, Bengaluru, has appointed **Rajan Malhotra** as Director of Sales and Marketing. In his new role, Malhotra will oversee all aspects of hotel sales and marketing strategies, including revenue forecasting and developing business plans, in addition to the recruitment, training and managing of the hotel's sales team. Malhotra brings with him 14 years of experience in the hospitality industry. His last assignment was with Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide at Le Meridien, Jaipur. He has previously been associated with brands such as Taj, Hyatt and Zuri.



ATPI India

Mumbai

Global travel management and events business, the ATPI Group, has announced organisational changes expanding the role of senior leaders within its India operation. With the legal merger of ATPI and Griffin Travel now complete in India, the specialist brand – trading as ATPI Griffinstone – will be led by **Nitin Hardi**, who takes on the role of Managing Director of the Marine and Energy Specialist division. The new management structure follows the group's recent acquisitions across key markets, including Griffin Marine Travel, Business World Travel in New Zealand and Plan B Travel in Australia.



The Imperial

Delhi

Jacqueline Tara Herron, a seasoned wellness professional with over two decades of experience, re-joins The Imperial as Director-The Imperial Spa, Salon, Health & Racquet Club. Herron's career in wellness and spa began years ago in the UK & USA as a yoga/meditation teacher, aromatherapist and stress consultant. In 1990 she founded 'Yogic Solutions' seeing clients and operating an accredited body/mind training school. She has since collaborated on global spa developments such as One and Only, Taj Exotica, The Royal Crescent, Tor Spa Retreat, Octave Living and The Imperial New Delhi.



Courtyard by Marriott

Gurgaon

Courtyard by Marriott Gurgaon has appointed **Anuj Soin** as the Food and Beverage Manager for the hotel. He has been an essential part of the Courtyard by Marriott Gurgaon team from the past 2.5 years where he joined as Events Manager-F&B. He previously worked with The Leela Ambience, Gurgaon as the Restaurant Manager of Spectra. He holds an MBA in finance and is a hotel Management graduate from BBDNITM, Lucknow. Sooin has also worked at The Taj Rambagh Palace, Jaipur and Eros Hotel Delhi.

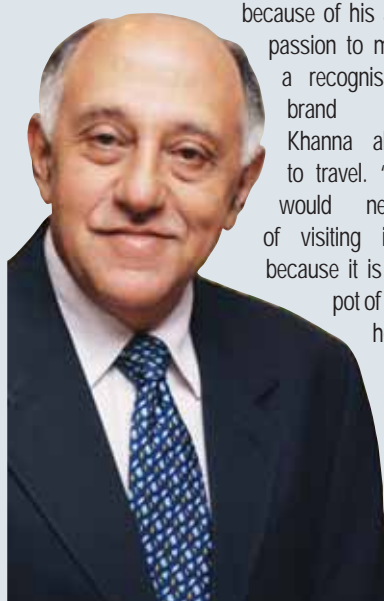


TALKing People

When **Narendra Prabhu**, General Manager, Brigade Orchards' Signature Club Resort in Bengaluru, gets stressed, he plays a game or two of badminton to relax. Another thing he is passionate about is learning. "It is a never-ending process and influences a person's life in a positive way," he says. A philanthropist, Prabhu has been sponsoring two Somalian students since the last 16 years, supporting for their education through UNICEF. He calls Ooty his second home where his father served as a police officer for almost 13 years. He also got an opportunity to explore Sydney where he did his post-graduation, he says.



Dinesh Khanna, Chairman, The Club Mumbai, feels that the travel and hospitality industry in India should get more recognition as it contributes and has greater potential to contribute further to the Indian economy and foreign exchange. He is inspired by Ratan Tata because of his ability and passion to make TATA a recognised Indian brand overseas. Khanna also loves to travel. "A place I would never tire of visiting is Turkey because it is a melting pot of cultures," he adds.



Kunal Gujral, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Resort Rio, Goa, has one rule that he lives by: Get busy living or get busy dying. His inspiration in life is and always been his father. He says, "Every son looks up to one when he becomes one – my father!" His favourite book is *The Shawshank Redemption* by Stephen King. Gujral also enjoys travelling and his favourite destinations remains Kerala. "It is definitely His country!" he exclaims.



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Shot in the arm for medical tours

Telangana tourism department is turning Hyderabad into a hub not just for world-class treatments but also leveraging the tourism industry through its Medical Tourism Society. **B. Venkatesham**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of Telangana, elaborates on their initiatives.



ANKITA SAXENA FROM HYDERABAD

Q Please elaborate on the tourism assets of Telangana.

Telangana is the youngest state in India which is known for its landscapes and heritage. Hyderabad in particular has a lot of tourism assets. For heritage tourism there is Charminar, Salajung Museum, Golconda Fort, Chowmahalla Palace, Paigah Tombs, Qutub Shahi Tombs amongst others. Tourists can enjoy cascading waterfalls, colourful festivals, art and culture of the state. Beautiful temples like Birla Mandir, Mecca Masjid are on offer for religious tourism. Hyderabad is also world famous for pearls in the city and the tourists can enjoy shopping at Laad Bazaar or indulge in a variety of food that has a history of centuries in the city.

Q What new initiatives are being taken by the tourism department?

We are focusing on promoting medical tourism in Hyderabad. The city is well connected with greenfield airport and has an array of world-class facilities for medical treatments. The industry is estimated to be a \$50 billion industry globally and estimated to grow at 30 per cent annually. The estimated number of medical tourists in India is estimated to be 2,30,000 in 2015 which is to double in the next four years. To leverage this segment, as part of the tourism policy of the state, a Medical Tourism Society will be formed in a joint venture between the health department and the tourism department of the state. Globally patients are travelling to Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Gulf countries, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia apart from India. We receive patients from the US, Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa and we plan to improve the numbers for India.

Q Please share some details on the Medical Tourism Society in Telangana.

The Medical Tourism Society will act as a catalyst to provide support and guidance to international patients. The main objective of the society is to promote Hyderabad as a world-class destination for advanced patient care. The society will act as a single point contact between the international patients and various stakeholders such as healthcare providers and various travel agents who provide travel

related and accommodation services. The tentative roles and responsibilities of the society will be to promote Hyderabad as a medical tourism hub; empanelment of hospitals according to pre qualification standards; maintain a web presence with all details like list of doctors and specialties, healthcare providers with international patient services, assistance for admission and interpretation services along with medical traveller's guide with essential useful numbers.

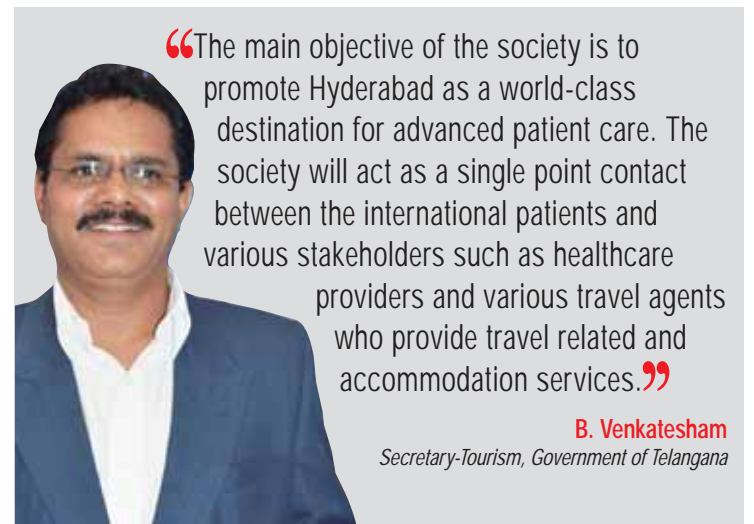
Q How are you working with travel agents to promote tourism?

As we are focusing on medical tourism, we will also focus on the medi-

Asia soon. As of now we do not have any particular tie-ups with airlines for medical tourism but we are planning to partner with them so that we can train the crew and provide on board medical assistance and also advise patients to book these particular flights when travelling to the state. We are also planning to tie up with O2 Spa and other Ayurvedic centres to promote this sector.

Q What are you doing for MICE Tourism?

We are promoting this segment with vigour as Hyderabad offers a one-stop shop for meetings and is also well connected through air routes



“The main objective of the society is to promote Hyderabad as a world-class destination for advanced patient care. The society will act as a single point contact between the international patients and various stakeholders such as healthcare providers and various travel agents who provide travel related and accommodation services.”

B. Venkatesham

Secretary-Tourism, Government of Telangana

cal tourism facilitators who are responsible for providing all travel, foreign exchange, hotels, transfers and visa services to the patients coming to India along with the attendants with the patients. They are also an important arm and will be incorporated in the society where their issues and needs will be addressed. Workshops will be conducted to interact on a one-on-one basis with the medical tourism facilitators who send the patients to India and those who cater to them here. The government will act as a facilitator to improve this segment of tourism.

Q What are the marketing and promotional plans for 2016?

We participate in all major travel trade shows like ATM, WTM, etc. and to promote medical tourism in particular we are planning to participate in an event in the Middle East and Central

allowing easy access. Hyderabad is known as a MICE destination which has many award winning convention and meeting venues for MICE travellers. The convention centres in the city offer state-of-the-art facilities for both national and international conferences. We have hosted one of the largest conferences like the one on biodiversity where 11,000 delegates from 193 countries gathered in Hyderabad.

Society Living

The Medical Tourism Society will act as a single point of contact between the international patients and various stakeholders such as healthcare providers and various travel agents who provide travel related and accommodation services



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