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MOT to handhold trade on GST

Tourism Secretary **Rashmi Verma** recently met with the travel trade in Delhi and apprised them of the Ministry of Tourism's plan to assist the industry in coping with the new GST regime, the long pending National Tourism Policy and the Incredible India 2.0 campaign. Here are a few excerpts from her interview with **TRAVTALK**:



NISHA VERMA

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) hosted a luncheon meeting at Hotel Ashok, New Delhi, to welcome **Rashmi Verma**, who has now been appointed as the new Secretary, Tourism, Government of India. The Tourism Secretary addressed various concerns of the IATO members and shared the ministry's plans for promoting tourism in the country and helping the industry cope up with the new tax regime.

On the new role

While Verma is not new to tourism, she has set the agenda in mind for her new role. "My focus is on issues which are proving to be challenges in attracting foreign tourists to India. I will be aiming to address such issues so that we make India an attractive destination for foreign as well as domestic tourists. We want the facilities to improve for every kind of tourist and we want to promote this sector. Our target (audience) is 100 per cent



Rashmi Verma
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

of Indian population and 100 per cent of world population," she said.

We have set up a GST Cell in the ministry to look into the issues people are raising, so that we are able to collate their concerns and have a dialogue with Ministry of Finance on them. We will also handhold our industry for transition from the present tax regime to the GST regime

GST Cell

Verma said that ministry is concerned about how the travel industry would cope with the new GST regime. "As GST is being rolled out

from July 1 and would hugely affect the tourism industry, the travel and trade sector is apprehensive and has many concerns. Thus, we have set up a GST Cell in the ministry

to look into the issues people are raising, so that we are able to collate their concerns and have a dialogue with Ministry of Finance on them. In this way, we could recommend some suggestions and address their concerns. We will also handhold our industry for transition from the present tax regime to the GST regime," she informed.

MOT's foreign offices

Addressing IATO members' concern of vacant Contd. on page 9 ►

Wellness makes headway

In a major boost to medical and wellness tourism, the Ministry of Tourism has released guidelines for wellness and yoga tourism while the policy for medical tourism will be released in three to four subsequent weeks, informs **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture, Government of India.



ANKITA SAXENA

Marking International Yoga Day on June 21, the Ministry of Tourism issued a set of guidelines to standardise the quality of services at wellness platforms, which include spas, Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, fitness and skin care centres among others. The aim of these guidelines is to provide a transparent and accredited system of services for both foreign and domestic tourists travelling for this segment of tourism. At the third meeting of National Medical and Wellness Tourism Promotion Board (NMWTPB), stakeholders from across ministries and private players came together to discuss and suggest nuances in the upcoming policy for medical tourism in India, the draft of which is expected

to be released in three to four weeks from now.

"Medical and wellness tourism plays a major role in overall growth of tourism in the country. India offers some very intricate treatments at one-sixth the cost in many countries, having the best professionals and the most acclaimed paramedical staff. To harness the potential of this segment, we have released the guidelines for wellness centres, spas and yoga centers for tourism purposes. We have asked the members of the Board for suggestions to prepare a draft Medical Tourism Policy, which will be then reviewed and later released in about three to four weeks. We are also working on a dynamic, interactive web portal which will be one stop shop for



Dr. Mahesh Sharma
Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture, Government of India

medical value travel needs. The purpose is to standardise the rates of various services, provide a list of medical tourism providers and offer a single window system to medical and wellness tourism in a transparent manner," said **Dr. Mahesh Sharma**, Minister of State (I/C) Tourism and Culture, Government of India.



Suman Billa
Joint Secretary
Ministry of Tourism

Under the wellness tourism guidelines, the accreditation standard issued by the ministry has been formulated by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH). While the accreditation exercise is a voluntary programme, the ministry has incentivised it for the centres. Wellness centres abiding by the guidelines

will be listed on Incredible India website with a link to their webpage, making it a credible destination for tourists; have the right to display NABH 'Mark of Excellence' and MOT-approved logo at the appropriate location; participate in the ministry's roadshows at national and international platforms and also receive financial support under the existing guidelines for Market Development Assistance (MDA) Scheme for Wellness Tourism Service Providers (WTSP).

Suman Billa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism informed that the Board formed three sub-committees to look into visas, accreditation and marketing of this segment. There are guidelines laid out for medical value travel facilitators who provide end-to-end service in the field of tourism

to eliminate touts. "We have also simplified the registration process at the FRRO, where the onus is on the hospital to register its foreign patients. Also in the field of marketing and promotion, we identified important international medical journals in which we will be advertising. Creatives have been made and the same will be released soon. Two films — one on Yoga, made by BBC and another on wellness, made by CNN — will also be released for promotional purposes."

Newly appointed Tourism Secretary **Rashmi Verma** added that generally medical and wellness tourism are seen as separate entities but NMWTPB is a landmark committee where MOT is trying to bridge the gap between the two to become a leader in the world for medical and wellness tourism. ↓

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Kunming to be convention venue

Scheduled to be held from August 18-20, 2017, the 64th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI will be held in Kunming located in the Yunnan province. Registrations will open on July 5 and close on July 20.

TT BUREAU

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has chosen the beautiful and picturesque city of China – Kunming – in the province of Yunnan as the venue for its 64th Annual Convention and the Indian Travel Congress.

Speaking about the reason behind this decision, **Marzban Antia**, Vice President, TAAI, says, “TAAI has chosen Kunming in the Yunnan Province for its annual convention as it will offer Indian travel agents a fantastic opportunity to do business with the travel trade in China, both inbound as well as outbound. The destination has a lot of facilities to offer as we saw during our recce there. One thing that stood out was the co-operation and pro-activeness of the Chinese tourism ministry and the trade

“TAAI has chosen Kunming in the Yunnan Province for its annual convention as it will offer Indian travel agents a fantastic opportunity to do business with the travel trade in China, both inbound as well as outbound. The destination has a lot of facilities to offer as we saw during our recce there.”

Marzban Antia
Vice President, TAAI



officials there. This convention will be unique and will go a step further in developing the Indo-China relationship. While language does pose a problem, the tourism board has ensured that there will be sufficient English translators for our members during the convention.”

Further about the venue, TAAI said that ‘discovery will be an important option’.

Through the convention, TAAI offers its members an important opportunity to reinforce industry networking and create new business avenues. The convention will be hosted by the Yunnan Government, People’s Republic of China; and the event will be coordinated by Mao Fa International Travel Services (MFITS) – a unit of Service Bureau of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China.

The exhibition as well as the inaugural dinner will be held at The Intercontinental Kunming. TAAI will roll out the registration forms soon. The registrations will open on July 5, 2017 and close by July 20, 2017.

Save the date

Aug 18: India Travel & Trade Expo and Convention inauguration

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Good behind wellbeing

Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Culture Mahesh Sharma recently chaired the third meeting of the National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board, which was followed by the release of ‘Compendium on guidelines for AYUSH facilities’, just in time for the International Yoga Day. By releasing these guidelines as per their schedule, the Ministry of Tourism has proved the importance this sector holds for them as well as the industry at large. Looking at the bigger picture, these guidelines make sure that medical and wellness tourists coming to India get a uniform standard of service and do not face any inconvenience. MOT has even put a list of accredited service providers on its website, which will make it easier for wellness tourists to access all relevant information from an authentic source. Being the land of Ayurveda, India is certainly on the right path by putting this sector on top of its agenda, especially when the wellness tourism industry globally is expected to reach \$678 billion by 2017, and India might just be the frontrunner.

Big summer, big gains?

As the summer months give way to monsoon in India, the biggest travel season for Indians is also almost over. While we can’t really call it an end as Indians these days are travelling throughout the year, the summer, nevertheless, remains the major season because schools are closed and it’s the ideal time for a family holiday. Outbound tour operators and websites did brisk business for months with offers and packages to catch the fancy of the Indian travellers planning their yearly vacations in May-June. Even domestic destinations were not far behind, as travellers flocked to hill stations around the country, including many destinations in South as well as in the North East. While much was being said about the impending effect of demonetisation on this season, there was hardly any notable change. In fact, Indians have been spending as much or even more, especially with many choosing to explore new international destinations like pocket-friendly Eastern Europe.

Reserve the balcony seats

Peter Kollar, Head of International Training & Development, Cruise Lines International Association, encourages agents to recommend balcony cabins to their clients and also shares arguments on how agents can convince them.

There are four key reasons why travellers should book a cruise with a balcony. Not only does that help travel agents in their sales and upgrade recommendations to their clients, but that is also traditionally the only way to cruise. Here’s why.

Size counts

Technically, balconies are larger as cruise lines include the outdoor space in their measurements. But the perception of the stateroom feels much larger than the actual square-meterage. The floor-to-ceiling glass doors accentuate the limitless view making it appear that the room spans across the ocean – much better than a window or a porthole.

Sun and air

Balcony staterooms tend to be lighter due to larger glass windows, allowing passengers who love lazing under the sun to bypass crowded pool decks and relax in their own room. For those that are a little apprehensive of cruising be-

cause they are worried about confined space, a balcony allows to open the doors and let the fresh, ocean breeze fill their room.

The breaking daylight filtering in the morning is also a great way to wake up naturally rather than the alarm clock buzzing. In the evenings, your clients can sit back with a glass of wine or champagne, and reflect on their day. Room service on the balcony anyone?

Watch nature roll by

Balconies are paramount to enjoy Alaska, Norway, Panama Canal and any other itinerary that glides through nature. But having spent two years in a role where I had to stand outside on deck all day while at sea, I have to say it is absolutely amazing to see what passengers pass by in the open ocean – from schools of dolphins, pods of whales, to harems of sea lions. Once I witnessed hundreds of sea snakes squirming past, and even turtles. Add an array of

bird life, pollen clustered on the surface of waves (that is how pollen travels across oceans), even the colour of the ocean in different parts of the world. You also have the crashing of the swell against the hull, the white crest of waves whooshing through the air, and all those ‘city’ problems are left behind.

Affordable

There is a perception that balconies are expensive. Obviously, they are priced higher than the lesser categories, but the trick is you have to show these above benefits to your clients and point out that the per-diem pricing is actually of great value to their experience (per-diems is cost of cruise by number of nights). In many instances, you can upgrade your client to a balcony for as little as \$20-\$30 a night. Also, larger ships now arrive with many more balconies than average, which in turn decreases the price differentiation.

I am a personal fan of balconies situated aft, in fact,

on the stern. They tend to be larger, but most importantly, more private (fewer neighbours), and there is less draft than on the side of the ship. This means that even if it is a little windy outside, passengers are quite protected in their little lap of luxury at the back.

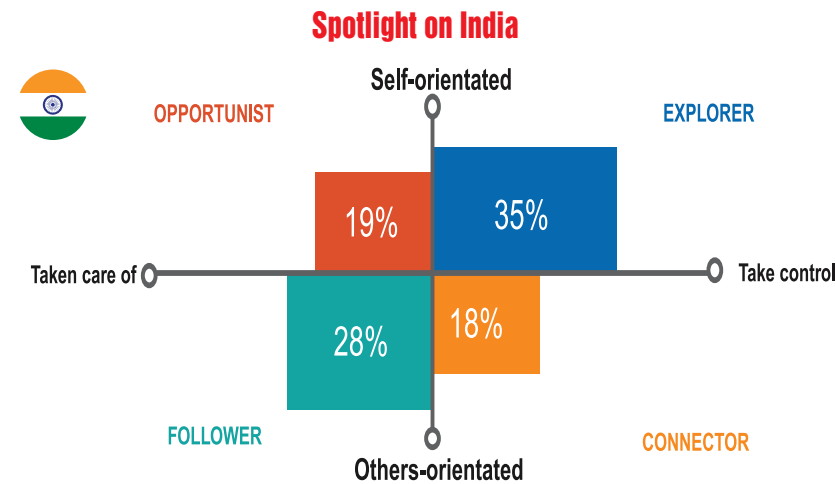
(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Peter Kollar
Head of International Training & Development, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)

Indians like to explore & follow

India has a strong presence of two opposing traveller types. According to a recently-conducted survey, the dominant type in India is the Explorer (35 per cent), followed closely by the Followers type at 28 per cent.



Psychologically, even though many Indian travellers would like to be identified as Explorers, they are still willing to be taken care of. This is mainly due to the level of personal service still common in many aspects of daily life, and finding its way into the tourism and hospitality industry in the country.

- 70% of Indian travellers have engaged the services of a travel agency in the past
- 78% of Indian travellers would prefer to use a travel agency for their next trip
- 57% prefer to build their own itinerary compared to two-thirds amongst Asian travellers in general
- 54% of Indians travel to pamper their loved ones, higher than travellers across Asia Pacific at 43 per cent

Source: Sabre/The Futures Company Research | Base: 3,233 online respondents, Asia Pacific 2016

Odisha 3rd in domestic overnights

Tourist arrival to Odisha has shown an upward trend as a result of the state tourism's aggressive campaign. **Arti Ahuja**, Principal Secretary, Odisha Tourism, talks about the efforts taken to place the state prominently on the domestic and global tourism map.



KANCHAN NATH

The State of Odisha secured 3rd rank in terms of intensity of overnight domestic tourism, with an average of 541 trips per 100 households, as compared to the all India average of 418 trips per 100 households. Therefore, the tourism intensity in Odisha is 29 percent higher than the national-level tourism intensity (National Council of Applied Economic Research, 2015). The state also recorded 12,135,059 tourist visits (domestic and international) in 2015-16 as compared to 11,123,566 tourists in 2014-15.

With the AirAsia X direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Bhubaneswar, the state is expecting a surge in tourist numbers in the off-season. Arti Ahuja says, "We are getting a very good response to this flight. This is not our season, still we are recording increased footfalls. We have tourists coming from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, via Kuala Lumpur. We are sure that with more



"With Air Asia establishing direct connectivity between Odisha and South East Asian countries, Buddhist tourism has come to the forefront, and we really want to cash-in on that now."

Arti Ahuja
Principal Secretary
Odisha Tourism

roadshows that we are planning in the coming months, we are going to have greater number of footfalls in the winter months."

The state is taking several initiatives to revive dormant tourism products. "We are reviving the 'Jagannath sadak' that was used by pilgrims from Nagpur to Puri, reviving it as a cycle route, in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra.

"Further, we have found a Buddhist relic which is go-

ing to be placed shortly in a museum in the Diamond Triangle. Also, in December, we plan to organise a huge event, where we will have live chanting by monks. Hopefully, by that time, the ASI museum will also get operational.

We are also planning to plant the Bodhi tree saplings and have a conclave of different countries who can set up their monasteries there. We aim to primarily promote Buddhist Tourism in December. With Air Asia establishing direct connectivity with South

East Asian countries, Buddhist tourism has come to the forefront, and we really want to cash-in on that now.

"We have recently formed a Task Force to ensure that we carry forth what we decide," Ahuja adds.

Commenting on the upcoming IATO conference in September, she says, "We have been having regular interactions with our tour operators, travel agent associations, hotel associations, not just for IATO, but otherwise as well. We

have also had a number of B2B interactions with numerous foreign tour operators, and invited them for familiarisation tours, especially with the opening of the KL flight. Many tour operators have come from Malaysia and entered into tie-ups with local operators. We have also had leading tour operators from Europe, whom we had met in ITB, coming in. We are also going to have the Odisha Travel Bazar in October, where we are going to have large B2B meetings with tour operators and travel agents. Then IATO is there and we are working closely with them for the publicity of the state."

Suggested Festivals

- ✦ Bird festival at the Chilika Lake
- ✦ Month-long beach festival at Puri promoting sand art, surfing, coastal treks, etc.
- ✦ Open-air theatre in Bargarh district

PHD's 2nd Aero Expo India and 1st Heli Expo from Nov 2-5

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry announced the second edition of the aviation exposition—Aero Expo India 2017 from November 2-5 in New Delhi. The first Aero Exposition was organised last year at Indira Gandhi International Airport with the patronage of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The four-day long Aero Expo is also going to witness India's first 'Heli-Expo' at the Pawan Hans Heliport in Rohini on November 4-5. **K.N. Rao**, Chairman, Civil Aviation Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry said, "Aero Expo has no doubt helped to bring a major boost to regional air connectivity in line with PM's recently announced UDAN scheme in India are noteworthy. India is already the fastest growing aviation market in the world and the move to improve Regional Air Connectivity is expected to further boost the industry by providing a new set of growth opportunities to both domestic and international airlines alike along with a new lease to the allied aviation services and skilling industries."



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ICPB in the city of Nizams

ICPB's 10th Conventions India Conclave (CIC) will be held in Hyderabad from August 29-31 at HICC.



The theme for the 10th annual convention of India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB) is 'Expanding the Boundaries-Mission Possible.' The Conventions India Conclave (CIC) will focus on all segments of the MICE industry, creating an opportunity for its members to look for new avenues of business development. Telangana is the partner state for the Convention.

Pre-scheduled B2B meetings and the exhibition will be an important component of the Conclave, informed **Chander Mansharamani**, Vice Chairman, ICPB. "We are expecting 250-300 delegates during the two day event which includes 50-60 exhibitors and both domestic and international buyers. The Conclave is not only significant for completing 10 years but will also be an opportunity for us to project ICPB



Chander Mansharamani
Vice Chairman
ICPB

We are expecting 250-300 delegates during the two-day event which includes 50-60 exhibitors and both domestic and international buyers

as a parent body for marketing India as a preferred destination for international and domes-

tic conventions," he said. This year, ICPB plans to conduct networking sessions for all associations from scientific and medical fields in India, which are responsible for organising various conventions, large-scale meetings and events in India to interact with the members of ICPB.

He further adds that ICPB is working on restructuring and strengthening the association, and CIC will play an instrumental role in the same. The sessions and panel discussions will focus on various aspects of the MICE industry. Topics like technology innovations in the meetings industry, meeting expectations of the corporate sector and synergy between exhibitions and the conference industry, will be deliberated upon. A distinguished panel of international speakers is also expected to share their experiences during the convention.

TAAI trains members on GST

Sessions have so far been organised in Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Mumbai, and will also be held in other cities.



After conducting in-depth India-wide training sessions on Service Tax for its members over the last couple of years, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has now started conducting similar sessions on GST. It will be doing this through the association's consultant CA Manish Gadia, Partner, GMJ & Co.

Revealing this is **Jay Bhatia**, National Treasurer and Chairman (Tourism Council), TAAI, who says, "We have already embarked on training sessions on GST in 20 cities covering all regions and chapters of TAAI, and they will be completed by June 30. Subsequently, in July or August, we will be doing detailed training sessions that will take into account details that will be announced by the government."



Jay Bhatia
National Treasurer and Chairman
(Tourism Council), TAAI

TAAI has already covered cities of Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Mumbai. Commenting on GST, Bhatia adds, "With the rates that have been announced, no one is happy, and neither is TAAI. The association will be making representations to the government through FAITH or directly with our issues and queries." The session included a talk on air ticketing, inbound and outbound tours.



Manish Gadia
Partner
GMJ & Co

Manish Gadia, Partner, GMJ & Co, adds, "The major doubt of the members was how they can get maximum benefit from GST. It is one of the biggest economic reforms for India, so the agents have to change the way they are doing business. They will have to take a call on each contract and each tour as to which way they will go. They will have to plan better."

IATO Convention heads



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President, IATO



Lally Matthews
Hon. Secretary, IATO

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has finalised the Chairman and Co-Chairman of their convention scheduled from September 7-10, 2017 at The Mayfair Convention Centre in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. **Rajiv Mehra**, Vice President, IATO, will be the Chairman, while **Lally Matthews**, Hon. Secretary, IATO, has been designated as the Co-Chairman for the IATO Convention. On their planning for the convention, Mehra said, "We are looking forward to an

excellent convention and have been discussing various issues like GST, role of social media, as well as how to get leads through websites and developing websites. Through sessions, we will be working towards the ultimate aim of telling our members how to grow their business. We are choosing topics through which we can do something for our medium- and small-sized operators," Matthews said, "Right now we are trying to get the registrations started."

Communicate with us: MTOA

The Maharashtra Tour Organisers Association (MTOA) members are facing huge problems in various states that is affecting their clients while on the road. Pay heed, MTOA requests the states.



Many tour operators in Maharashtra have been complaining of problems their clients are facing while on road in specific states. Speaking about them is **Sudhir Patil**, President, Maharashtra Tour Organisers Association (MTOA), who says, "We face a lot of challenges while conducting tours, especially within India. Besides Kashmir, there is heavy traffic to Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. But we face huge problems in these two states."

In Himachal, he says, they have been facing difficulties in



Sudhir Patil
President, Maharashtra Tour Organisers
Association (MTOA)

getting permits since the last couple of years. There are also reports of taxi operators overcharging for Rohtang Pass. "We have tried to reach out to the Prime Minister's Office and

have even had a meeting with the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh," Patil says.

Explaining a deep-seated problem with domestic travel, he feels there is lack of communication from the states to tour operators which prevents them from planning holidays for their clients well. "Tourists were recently harassed when their vehicles were stopped in Nainital in Uttarakhand without notice or intimation to anyone. The local authorities suddenly decided to disallow outside vehicles and did not allow our coaches to go up the mountain. This adds extra

burden on the tour operators and makes it difficult for us to give good service to tourists because of non-availability of small vehicles. We sincerely request all state tourism boards and Indian Tourism Ministry to foresee these on-ground problems and communicate the same to us. That way, we can at least make alternate arrangements within the cost," Patil says.

GST Seminar

MTOA conducted a seminar on the impending GST for its members in Mumbai on June 5, 2017

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Tour J&K at half prices

Travelling to J&K has become a lot cheaper. **TRAVTALK** gains some insight in a tête-à-tête with **Farooq Ahmad Shah**, Former Secretary Tourism, Jammu & Kashmir.



NIKHIL ANAND

Tourism has been the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir's economy and the recent strides that the government has taken to boost tourism in the state bear witness to this fact. **Farooq Ahmad Shah**, Former Secretary Tourism, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, reveals, "At the moment, the chief focus of the state is on creating good connectivity throughout the state, encouraging private players to invest in the tourism sector and also focusing on creating and enabling excellent services at the tourist resorts."

The tourism facilitators are presently offering very attractive concessions to rake in good tourist arrivals; in addition to this, the J&K Government has decided to provide a 50 per cent rebate on travel packages and lodgings. This rebate will be made available across all properties owned by the J&K Tourism Development Corporation.

Peeved at the negative publicity the state gets, Shah



Farooq Ahmad Shah
Former Secretary Tourism
Government of Jammu & Kashmir

At the moment, the chief focus of the state is on creating good connectivity throughout the state and enabling excellent services at the tourist resorts

says, "Despite these initiatives, we continue to be hindered by the negative things and images that are being projected about us in the media." As the state continues to battle with its dwindling image as a 'safe' destination, the tourism figures

for Kashmir this year have seen a decline, yet the government officials remain confident of its rise. The Jammu and Ladakh divisions on the other hand have witnessed a good increase, with Ladakh recording a 10 per cent growth for the first half of the year.

Talking about the impetus being given to the MICE sector, Shah added, "Today worldwide, MICE is being given the priority and we are no different. We have lots to offer to this segment at our various modern facilities in Srinagar, Pahalgam, Gulmarg, Jammu and even in Ladakh."

With respect to GST, ensuring the destination stays affordable is something that the tourism secretary hopes will be taken into consideration by those at the helm of affairs. The state tourism ministry has planned to market the state more aggressively in the coming months in hopes of getting prioritised by tour operators for all travel segments including MICE in the near future.

Tourism policy in September?

► Contd. from page 3

foreign tourism offices in source markets, Verma agreed that the shortage of staff in these offices, their publicity, especially of e-visa is suffering. "This is a big challenge as we are not being able to fill the posts, and thus, the role for which these offices were set up in these places has not been fully achieved. We are in the process of resolving this issue, and we are looking at completely restructuring our foreign offices. We are adopting a strategy where we will have overseas offices with engagement of PR agencies, for which we are having dialogue with the PM's Office as well as the Department of Personnel," she added.

Incredible India 2.0

Verma informed that one of the major initiatives they have in hand is the launch of the Incredible India 2.0 campaign. "We will be launching the Incredible India campaign in all the relevant markets. The initial campaign was launched in 2003 and there have been many versions of it running for many years, which is one of the reasons behind the steady growth of foreign tourist arrivals. In fact, the arrival figures for May 2017 reveal a

growth of 19.5 per cent. This year, we are planning to adopt a marketing plan for all our overseas markets as well as our domestic market. We will also be revamping our website and there will be a vibrant and dynamic website for the tourism ministry very soon, which will not only create awareness and give information about the tourism products and destinations in India, but would be able to convert the website visits to actual visits to the country," she explained.

National Tourism Policy

For Verma, releasing the National Tourism Policy remains one of the top agendas. "We are in the process of finalising the revised tourism policy. We have received many suggestions on the draft tourism policy from the Prime Minister's Office as well as other ministries. I am sure we'd be able to take out the policy before World Tourism Day on September 27, 2017. The policy will focus on some of the niche products and some new circuits," she said.

On ASI monuments

As one of the first initiatives, Verma has taken steps towards better maintenance of the ASI monuments. "We are working with the Ministry of Culture and ASI to make

monuments more tourist friendly. All the 116 ticketed monuments will be illuminated and will be open for night viewing till 9 pm every day. We are also in the process of creating better facilities for tourists visiting these monuments on a PPP model and asking the industry to adopt some of the monuments, where they will be made responsible for maintenance of the toilets, provision of drinking water, cleanliness. I am hopeful that with these initiatives, our ASI monuments would become more attractive destinations for the tourists," she asserted.

On the issue of guides, the Secretary is already in talks with Ministry of Culture and ASI. Verma informed, "I've already had a meeting with the Culture Secretary and we had a dialogue with ASI officials to come to an agreement. I am sure that the Assistant Director General (ADG), Tourism and ADG, ASI will be meeting to work out the counters of the guidelines and the issue of guides will be resolved for times to come. I am very hopeful that with this kind of agreement, the key problem this sector was facing about shortage of guides, and of language guides, would be resolved."

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Air China organised a gala evening to commemorate its agency partners for their support in its growth. The guests were welcomed by Garuda Sun, General Manager, Air China, New Delhi; Liang Shi Chun, Sales Manager, Air China (Delhi) and Xia Baouli, General Manager, Air China (Mumbai). Vijay Bhatia – President Bird Group of Companies also gave away top agent award on behalf of Air China, and discussed business growth and explored possibilities of growth further on.

SpiceJet wings to UDAN

Ready to launch new routes under Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme, SpiceJet will be expanding its wings internationally as well.



TT BUREAU

SpiceJet is all set to start flying on routes under Ministry of Civil Aviation's (MoCA) UDAN scheme in July, revealed **Ajay Singh**, Chairman, SpiceJet. "The flights would start in July and we will be flying on Delhi-Kanpur, Delhi-Jalandhar, Mumbai-Porbandar and Mumbai-Kandla routes. We are looking to expand on that network," he said.

The second round of bids for UDAN are yet to be finalised and Singh said that they are unsure about the new routes that would come up. "I believe that the government will look for non-operational airports and offer them to airlines. Also, they are trying to connect existing operational airports. Thus, it is possible that such airports and connections will be offered in the second phase in addition to the criteria that was used last time," Singh informed.

For new routes, new aircraft will be required, and



Ajay Singh
Chairman
SpiceJet, India Travel Award winner

The flights would start in July and we will be flying on Delhi-Kanpur, Delhi-Jalandhar, Mumbai-Porbandar and Mumbai-Kandla routes

SpiceJet has already prepared for the same. Singh shared, "We've placed an order of 155 firm aircraft and we have 50 options. Thus, we might look to convert some of those options and make them firm. We will also look at adding some

of the smaller aircraft to that fleet. We have about 20 small aircraft currently, to which we might add more."

SpiceJet is on an expansion spree on international routes. Singh claimed that they will keep announcing new routes in the time to come. "Recently, we've added a flight to Dhaka, and a Delhi-Bangkok flight as well. We've added a Trivandrum-Male flight and will keep adding more international routes," he informed.

On GST, he only had positive words to say, but opined that there could be teething problems, which would be faced by the aviation sector as well. "I think the tax has been reduced, which is a good thing. From six per cent, it has come down to five per cent, but we are still in discussion on what are the heads under which those taxes will be charged and what is going to be retained by the airlines. Still, we are hoping that it'd be positive for the sector," said Singh.



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Full house at Travel Wedding Show

The Pink City will play host to the second edition of Travel Wedding Show, the B2B meetings platform for buyers and suppliers in the wedding segment and tourism stakeholders, which will be held from July 8-9, 2017, at the Jaipur Marriott Hotel.



TT BUREAU

The second edition of the Travel Wedding Show, set to be held in Jaipur next month, is already creating a buzz in the travel and weddings industry. The Chief Guest for the event will be Rajeev Jain, Director, Rashi Entertainment, while the Guest of Honour will be Hema Harirani, Director-National Sales India, Marriott International. The show is expected to have 30 high-profile exhibitors including Le Méridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre, Taj Hotels & Resorts, The Oberoi Hotels & Resorts,



Sarika Bhambani Rawal
General Manager
Travel Wedding Show

The show will bring a selected group of people together and facilitate business for the growth of both the industries

AccorHotels, Abu Dhabi Tourism Board, Austria Tourism Board, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism, Destination Canada, among others.

The two-day event, organised by PLG and DDP Exhibitions, will address the need for a consolidated face-to-face opportunity between the travel fraternity and weddings sector. The first day will witness the presence of 35 wedding trade specialists from across the country, showcasing the variety of weddings they specialise in. A gala dinner will be organised at the venue on the same day, where industry experts will address participants. For the second day, 35 wedding planners and agents from across the country have been invited for the event.

The show attracts buyers from across the country showcasing a range of products, which are relevant to the exhibitors' specialties. The main agenda behind the

show is to bring new business opportunities to its exhibitors.

Sarika Bhambani Rawal, General Manager, Travel Wedding Show, says, "The idea is to amalgamate the two vibrant sectors—weddings and travel—a scenario that is seldom witnessed. The show will bring a selected group of people together and facilitate business for the growth of

both the industries. Moreover, the two industries will come together for face-to-face interactions that are more effective. The two-day event is organised in a manner that it will enable the suppliers in understanding the unique requirements of the wedding planners and trade specialists separately."

The first edition of the Travel Wedding Show was

held on July 9-10, 2016 in Gurgaon. The show hosted 30 exhibitors and 30 buyers on both days and saw participants engage in 1200 meetings in a round-robin format. The Indian wedding industry is reportedly flourishing at a growth rate of 25 per cent per annum and is pegged at an estimated ₹250,000 crore (\$40 billion).

Unique opportunity

- ↳ The show will have 30 high-profile exhibitors
- ↳ The two-day event is organised in a manner that it will enable the suppliers in understanding the unique requirements of the wedding planners and trade specialists separately

19.5% growth in foreign tourist arrivals in May

■ The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in May 2017 were 6.30 lakh as compared to FTAs of 5.27 lakh during the same period last year and 5.09 lakh in May 2015. The growth rate in FTAs in May 2017 over May 2016 is 19.5 per cent compared to 3.5 per cent in May 2016 over May 2015. FTAs during the period January-May 2017 were 42.15 lakh with a growth of 16.4 per cent, as compared to the FTAs of 36.22 lakh with a growth of 8.7 per cent in January-May 2016 over January-May 2015.



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South Korea to woo Indian MICE

South Korea has set its eyes on India to reach hitherto unexplored markets for the abundance of MICE facilities that it can boast of. This in turn will give India Inc. a new destination to explore and discover. This year, the two-day 18th Korea MICE Expo welcomed over 3,000 attendees from all over the world.



HAZEL JAIN FROM INCHEON

Korea has worked hard to be synonymous with MICE for the rest of the world. From building world-class infrastructure and churning out trained manpower to ensuring smooth service to corporate groups, South Korea has arguably managed to do it all. But there is surely space for improvement, especially when it comes to the Indian market and its unique requirements.

Korea now ranks number one worldwide for global congresses hosted in 2016, according to the latest International Meetings Statistics Report released by the Union of International Associations (UIA). The findings show Korea as a country rising from 891 meetings in 2015 to 997 in 2016, reflecting almost a 12 per cent increase. Making up the national equation, Seoul, maintained its third place in city ranking and hosted 526 meetings in 2016, up from 494

in 2015. Now ranking 14th, the port city of Busan hosted 152 meetings in 2016 (increase of 1.33 per cent) and Jeju, which increased its ranking from 19th to 17th place, held 116 meetings in 2016 – four more than 2015.

Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) recently hosted the nation's leading business events trade show along with its 11 Regional Convention Bureaus titled 'Korea MICE Expo 2017' – or KME 2017.



This year's 18th Korea MICE Expo is considered the largest ever expo, with over 3,000 attendees from all over the world.

The two-day expo, held at Incheon's Songdo Convention from June 15-16, 2017, brought together 298 domestic sellers across 399 booths

and more than 255 buyers from at least 29 countries, including five from India. This included one corporate buyer and four travel agents.

Kapsoo Kim, Executive Director, Korea MICE Bureau, says, "These latest findings are a strong reflection of Korea's broad growth not only across

the country's meetings section, but across the country itself. Established event destinations like Seoul are continuing to show their prowess, while an increasing number of regional capitals are giving global meeting planners an increasing variety of options and so boosting Korea's appeal for congresses."

"These latest findings are a strong reflection of Korea's broad growth not only across the country's meetings section, but across the country itself. Established event destinations like Seoul are continuing to show their prowess, while an increasing number of regional capitals are giving global meeting planners an increasing variety of options and so boosting Korea's appeal for congresses."

Kapsoo Kim

Executive Director, Korea MICE Bureau

BUYERS

"KME is a good platform for buyers from India since South Korea is a new destination for us. At KME, we got an idea of what corporates can do here for MICE and incentive groups. We wanted to meet sellers that we can partner with and this platform helped us do that. However, awareness about Indians and our culture is limited and food is still a challenge. However, I see a lot of scope for this destination. Some clients want a new destination and are open to exploring newer cultures. We may do something with South Korea soon."



Harsh Mehta
Marketing Services
(Meetings, Conferences,
Planning & sourcing)
Cipla Ltd

"The destination is still unexplored as far as the Indian market is concerned. Indians don't really know South Korea and what it has to offer. Language definitely is a barrier. If that can be bridged, a lot of things can be worked out for the Indian market. I met someone from Kim's Travel DMC here and honestly, he was the only person we could really connect with and who could understand our requirements. But there is surely a lot of scope if the language barrier is bridged as it is a beautiful destination."



Daren Batatawala
Sales – Assistant
Manager, Thomas Cook
(India)

"It's a new destination for us so we are getting good product knowledge here at KME and learning about the different destinations that could serve as a good MICE venue for our clients. The Indian market is too fussy about things like food, and it is also a very last-minute market. So, we always look for destinations that can adjust to our quirks and deliver. They are also interested in the India market, but communication has not been that smooth. Also, the right person who can make decisions is not sitting at the booths. It might take a while for South Korea to get used to us but I also see a huge potential."



Shruti Wahi
Manager –
Contracting, JTB

"We met interesting products and destinations like Jeju, Busan and Daejeon. South Korea has really good infrastructure and offers a lot of options for a variety of events – both big and small. The only concern I can see is the food for Indian groups. We can get caterers from India but that adds to the cost. Corporates have certain budgets and we need to stick to that. Also, South Korea is not cheap, especially when you compare rates to that of China, both for airfare and on land."



Deepak Singh Aswal
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Hogwarts' charm to spellbind Indians

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the first Harry Potter novel, Scotland has introduced new itineraries mapping the locations mentioned in the legendary collection of novels. Potter-related tourist magnets include Scotland's Glenfinnan Viaduct, where the Hogwarts Express travelled.



Indian visitors and locals alike can experience all things connected to Harry Potter with the new itinerary of locations created by VisitScotland. These include the Jacobite Steam Train in the Scottish Highlands, Harry Potter Walking Tours in Edinburgh, Bo'ness Motor Museum, home to the official car of Ron Weasley in Falkirk, Dalhousie Owl Experience in Dalhousie and the JK Rowling Suite at The Balmoral, Edinburgh.

According to International Passenger Survey conducted by VisitBritain, Scotland recorded a 16 per cent increase in Indian visitors in 2017 over the previous year. In 2017, the destination is expecting a similar, double-digit growth from India. The Indian market is a strategic priority for Scotland with large growth opportunity expected, particularly within the luxury and value seeking family

markets. Scotland lends itself to the interests of the Indian travellers with a focus on history and heritage as well as whisky, filming locations and of course natural landscape, informs **Kirsten Spence**, Market Manager-India, Middle East and Australasia, VisitScotland.

She elaborates that Scotland is able to accommodate the Indian MICE market with a variety of venues across the major cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. Glasgow in particular has a reputation for Indian cuisine and catering for the Indian market. In terms of incentives, the destination has some of the best activities for adventure and relaxation from golf and whisky tasting to taking part in Highland Games. Spence says, "Scotland is also becoming a more popular choice for smaller Indian weddings given the plethora of exclusive-use castles and estates. The Indian market has evolved over



Kirsten Spence
Market Manager-India, Middle East and Australasia, VisitScotland

Scotland is also becoming a more popular choice for smaller Indian weddings given the plethora of exclusive-use castles and estates

the years with increasing requests coming for more off the beaten track itineraries. The Highlands and Islands feature highly, along with the Moray Speyside Malt Whisky Trail, the Aberdeenshire Castle trails and the Bollywood



Trail, which was compiled to showcase the 23 (and counting) Bollywood films that have been produced in Scotland."

Identifying some trends, Spence explains that they have seen Indian travellers visit Scotland in off season outside of July-September, looking to experience something beyond the main cities. The average length of stay is 13 nights, a reflection of the VFR travellers while for

FIT or groups, it is common to include the destination in a UK -wide itinerary with 3-4 days in Scotland. The average spend across the market is approximately £415 per visit, which is expected to increase given the growth of the luxury market and the addition and refurbishment of key luxury accommodations.

"Edinburgh now has connectivity from Middle Eastern hubs, Istanbul with Turkish

Airlines; Glasgow has a long standing route with Emirates, with two flights a day from Dubai. In October 2017, travel to Scotland will become even easier by flying with KLM to Mumbai via Amsterdam with 2-3 daily connections either to Glasgow or Edinburgh," adds Spence. In terms of marketing and promotional strategies, Scotland is currently investigating opportunities to invest in specific Indian market social media activity.

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Is Indian tourism overpriced?

Is India out-pricing itself in the global scenario? Is the country losing out on inbound and domestic business because tourism products, especially hotels, are overpriced? While agents are affirmative, hoteliers beg to differ.



INDER RAJ AHLUWALIA

“I feel Indian hotels are over-priced, especially in the up-market segment, owing to taxation rates that are higher than in other countries. Indian tourism being seasonal, winter sees a heavy influx of tourist arrivals in the plains, and summer sees a similar rush to the hills. Shortage of accommodation leads to high tariffs. The current tax structure doesn't help, and the government needs to rationalise it. It appears this is in the offing. Hopefully, the future will see an improved situation.”



P.P. Khanna
President, Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India

“India as a destination is over-priced, and this is making us lose out in business to our neighbouring countries. Taxes are very high and this makes hotels overpriced. Inter-state taxes are also high which makes transportation costly. The same applies to dining out. One goes out to a restaurant for a meal and ends up paying 30 to 40 per cent as taxes alone. During 'season' time, airfares to destinations like Leh, Ladakh and Goa are high. We need to rationalise our tax structure. To aggravate the situation, the government has recently increased the service tax from 4.5 to 9 per cent.”



Lally Mathews
Secretary
IATO

“India is losing out on business from inbound and domestic markets not because of over-pricing of hotels but because of the poor infrastructure and lack of amenities like connectivity to tourist destinations and sanitation and hygiene standards of public and tourist places. Another grey area is security and safety. The introduction of the new GST bill will make all the states have uniform taxes, which may boost business from domestic and inbound markets in the future.”



Sunil Sikka
General Manager—Marketing & Business Development, WelcomHeritage
India Travel Award winner



M.P. Bezbaruah
Permanent Representative
(Hon.), UNWTO

“I am surprised that this question is still being asked. Shortage of hotel rooms and high prices were a concern 20 years back and we should have progressed since then. Presumably, overpricing is relevant to the high-end and luxury segments. Logically price is a function of demand and supply. If the industry has been able to realise this price, it follows that there is enough demand to sustain it. The question is will the demand and arrivals increase if the price is lower? I think it would.

The focus therefore should be more on increasing supply, particularly in the budget segment.”



Tarun Thakral
Chief Operating Officer
Le Meridien, New Delhi

“I don't feel that India is out-priced, rather it meets global price points of discerning tourist destinations. Hotel pricing in the major cities has gone through a phase of correction in the last 3-4 years, owing to an increase in supply in all metro cities. Also, with the entry of international hotel companies, hotels focused on dynamic pricing to increase RevPar, resulting in pricing driven by market demand and product value. Additionally, the emergence of budget hotels has created a situation where products are offered at all price points, catering to various traveller categories.”



Lajpat Rai
President
Lotus Trans Travel

“In my opinion, India is definitely out-pricing itself in comparison to its neighboring countries. This is happening mainly because so many Central and State Government taxes are being put on the tourism and hospitality industry. Hotels apart, there is also heavy taxation on the movement of tourist vehicles. It is time to rationalise the tax structure to bring costs to a realistic level, and also create a more transparent situation for the industry players and clients.”

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DreamFolks charts new waters

After joining hands with DragonPass, DreamFolks is all set to cater to the B2C segment by offering their services on the website.



TT BUREAU

Dreamfolks, a leading lounge management company in India, joined hands with DragonPass earlier this year to enhance the experience of their existing clients and offer a taste of Indian hospitality to DragonPass' clients around the world.

As a mark of this partnership, they launched a dual branded card for customers, which, according to **Liberatha Kallat**, Managing Director, DreamFolks, is serving both Indian and international markets. "Overall, the card has been well accepted and is in fact being introduced by banks to



Liberatha Kallat
Managing Director
DreamFolks

its clients for both India and international travel. Few months down the line, this card will be available on the DreamFolks portal for individual customers," she added. As a next step in their growth strategy, they will now be entering the B2C space.

Kallat informed, "At this juncture, we are very delighted to have partnered with DragonPass and are currently serving many clients in the B2B space. In the near future, we plan to open a subscription channel for our dual-branded card on the DreamFolks portal. Hence, with this move, DreamFolks anticipates that the B2C domain (along with B2B business) will also be a strong driver of business growth."

Last year, DreamFolks served 1.5 million customers and they anticipate serving 2.5 million customers, including Indian and international this year. Kallat insisted that their main focus remains to

enhance the customer loyalty programmes. "As of now, Dreamfolks is designing and running several programs to assist its clients add tremendous value to customer loyalty programmes run by financial institutions, airlines and other special interest groups," she added.

Driver for growth

← The plan is to open a subscription channel for dual-branded card on the DreamFolks portal. With this, the company anticipates that the B2C domain (along with B2B business) will be a strong driver for growth

Economy piggyrides on tourism

Here are a few glimpses from the 2nd Odisha Tourism Conclave which took place at Hotel Swosti Premium, Bhubaneswar on June 17, 2017. Organised by the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO), the conclave discussed the importance of tourism in driving future economy.



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Riding on the inbound, MICE wave

Shuvendu Banerjee, GM, Crowne Plaza Kochi, believes that owing to the strategic location of the property, the hotel can cater to both leisure and business events, clubbed with offering great MICE facilities and experiences for tourists.



TT BUREAU

Crowne Plaza Kochi has been in existence for five years now, and according to Shuvendu Banerjee, they have been doing well, especially in terms of business travellers. "There are a lot of business and corporate travellers that come from around the country and abroad. We have inbound travellers as well and we do a lot of MICE events in the hotel as our focus has really been the corporate clientele," he said.

He asserted that their location plays a strong part in attracting the business they get. "We are very close to Willingdon Island as well as to the national highway. Thus, we are only 15 minutes from the IT park and the Cochin Shipyard at Willingdon Island, where the navy and other industries are also located, which is a big advantage to the hotel," added Banerjee.



Shuvendu Banerjee
 General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi,
 India Travel Award winner

We keep engaging with local associations as well as associations of Arab agents, as the Arab market is very strong in Kerala

In terms of leisure, they get a lot of inbound clientele because they are just next to the backwaters, he informed. "We have one of the best

spas in the city and five restaurants within the property. We are one of the closest hotels when one wants to go towards Alleppey. Thus, people come and stay here overnight, either going to or coming from Alleppey or Munnar," he said.

For such travellers, they have quite a few experiences within the hotel, including a boat jetty within the premises, complimentary early morning and evening yoga sessions. "We also have a gymnasium, which is open 24 hours, as well as speciality restaurants. We keep doing F&B promotions, which works very well for our local clientele," he added.

In terms of occupancy, Banerjee is only seeing year-on-year growth. "Inbound to Kerala has shown significant growth and we have done many MICE and business events. Last year, occupancy grew by around 7 per cent, and

this year, we are expecting to touch 4-4.5 per cent growth as compared to last year, he revealed. As MICE remains their primary focus, the hotel has multiple venues for hosting different kind of events and even weddings."

Banerjee insisted that they work very closely with the trade partners and keep meeting them regularly. "IHG also did a roadshow recently, where all the travel trade partners were invited, and discussed opportunities with us. We keep meeting them in trade fairs and events. Apart from that, a lot of FTOs and tour operators come and experience the property, which makes a lot of difference. We keep engaging with local associations as well as associations of Arab agents, as the Arab market is very strong in Kerala. We organise their events and we have Arab staff in the hotel, which makes us unique," he said.

Eros Hotel cheers for trade partners



Eros Hotel, Nehru Place, hosted a gala cocktail party for its trade partners on June 2, 2017, to thank them for their valuable contribution. Over 100 guests were felicitated with a 'Certificate of Appreciation' at the glittery event, where they relished cocktails and canapes over networking. **Amanpreet Singh Sandhu**, Director of Sales & Marketing, welcomed and extended his gratitude to all eminent guests who graced the occasion.



'Chalo, South Africa!'

Africa's Travel INDABA 2017 was held at Durban's Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre. TRAVTALK spoke to the Indian contingent about the diverse array of travel and tourism offerings at the event.



KARISHMA KHANNA FROM DURBAN

“Travel INDABA 2017 is a great forum where you can really understand South Africa as a destination and its variety of tourism products and services. The people here are very friendly and they go out of the way to give you whatever information you want. The province of KwaZulu-Natal, famous for its outdoor activities, beaches, natural environment, sporting events and variety of adventure activities, is an idea which needs to be promoted back in India. There have been many more suppliers this year and business has been transacted over the three days.”



Chitra Bhatia
Managing Director
Aashman Air Travels

“For Thomas Cook India Group, S. Africa has always been a key destination. Traditional source destinations like the US and Europe have their own political and geo-political challenges. We have even faced challenges in Hong Kong with the introduction of PAR. With such strong destination markets going through an upheaval, S. Africa offers us lots of opportunities. We have bought a South African DMS (private safaris), so clearly S. Africa is going to be a strategic opportunity for us going forward. Therefore, INDABA offers a company like Thomas Cook potential to look at new emerging experiences, locations, partners in the African continent all under one roof.”



Suzanne Pereira
Senior Vice President Trade
Relationships & Communications,
Thomas Cook India

“Travel INDABA is a great platform to meet and interact with sellers from the African continent. It is an elaborate showcase of the new developments and new destinations and helps buyers like us to plan for the coming seasons. The insight to the trade show was very informative and will for sure help us create new product inclusions and promote unknown offbeat destinations. We would like to thank Tourism South Africa for inviting us at INDABA and showcasing the continent and its exciting new tourism products so beautifully.”



Sunita Amarnani
Head of Products,
Contracting & Operations,
Strawberi Holidays, a
Division of Kesari Tours



Siddharth Jain
Director, Click2travel &
Sapphire Ventures

“Travel INDABA is a great show. Unlike other shows, it comes with a variety of products on board, specifically for South Africa. Every time I come here, I get to meet new people, network with them and witness different products. It's a great show! It has brought to our attention that South Africa has a lot to offer, including national parks, private game reserves and rich wildlife experiences. In addition to South

Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana and Kenya are also coming up really well.”



Ritesh Mundhra
Director
Choice Holidays

“Travel INDABA is a very informative and important platform for us. Here, at INDABA, we get to meet local and international sellers and exhibitors who share in-depth information about the destination and its various tourism products with us. This helps us further in encouraging our clients to choose offbeat destinations for their vacations. South Africa has varied offerings including beach destinations such as Cape Town and Durban and almost 100 km of wildlife. I would go back and encourage my Indian clients to visit South Africa at least once.”



Jitender Sharma
Director
All Right Holidays

“Travel INDABA 2017 is a great platform to interact with suppliers from the entire African travel industry as it gives immense opportunities to understand as well experience the destination. The show allowed sharing of more information through direct interaction with the suppliers, including hoteliers and game drive reserve owners to understand their products better. South Africa has a variety of travel offerings for Indians, being big in adventure and wildlife tourism.”

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Tourism in Odisha poised for a big push

The 2nd Odisha Tourism Conclave held at Hotel Swosti Premium, Bhubaneswar on June 17 by Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) witnessed 45 speakers and around 250 participants.



TT BUREAU

While generating direct income employment, the tourism industry has tremendous potential to create indirect employment and income due to higher multiplier effect, observed **J. K. Mohanty**, Chairman, HRAO. "Through this conclave, 'Tourism to be the Driving Force of Future Economy,' we state again that tourism can be the largest

employment generator and booster for Odisha's as well as India's GDP," he said.

Stressing on industry status for hospitality, Mohanty said, "What we propose is that the government should declare hotels under infrastructure/ industrial status to increase the room capacity in the hotel industry which in turn has a direct impact on the growth of the tourism sector."



Naveen Patnaik
Chief Minister, Odisha



Ashok Chandra Panda
Tourism and Culture Minister, Odisha

Addressing the gathering, Odisha Chief Minister **Naveen Patnaik** said, "Tourism in any state can only thrive with the joint efforts of the government and the private sector. The cooperation between Odisha tourism and the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) in organising this conclave is commendable."

On policy decisions and tourism, Patnaik added, "The

tourism in Odisha is poised for a big push and many initiatives have been taken by the government for the same. One of the notable milestones was the tourism policy and guidelines which laid down concessions for investment in the tourism sector. Mechanism is in place for expeditious clearance of proposals."

After the declaration of Bhubaneswar airport as an international airport, there has been significant jumps in the international tourist arrivals, Patnaik observed. Recently the tourism department signed a memorandum with Air Asia for direct flights between Bhubaneswar and Kuala Lumpur. "This will open South-East Asia and result in higher tourist footfalls. Our state has made sig-



J. K. Mohanty
Chairman, HRAO

nificant progress on social indicators, on the law and order front as well as with respect to creation of general infrastructure. We boast of a long coastline, scenic eco-tourism sites and rich legacy in handloom as well as heritage and pilgrimage sites for Buddhism and Hinduism. Odisha is truly the soul of Incredible India, and I welcome you all to partner with us in making Odisha the next most sought-after tourism destination of the country and the world," he added.

Odisha Tourism and Culture Minister **Ashok Chandra Panda** noted, "We are slowly catching up with other states in ethnic tourism, eco-tourism, as well as religious and spiritual tourism. Particularly, we have signed a memorandum with the State Forest Department to give a boost to eco cottages in the state. We recently held the Buddhist Conclave and the Diamond Triangle, consisting of the three Buddhist sites of Ratnagiri, Udaygiri and Lalitgiri in the Jashpur district has a lot of potential. We have a light and sound show at Dhauli and very soon we will organise it at Konark as well. All these initiatives will boost tourist overnights stay. Both the domestic and international footfall in the state have gone up" 📈

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3 cities on SriLankan's radar

SriLankan Airlines will start flying to Hyderabad, Vizag and Coimbatore from this July, reveals Siva Ramachandran, CCO, SriLankan Airlines.

TT BUREAU

Witnessing a phenomenal growth from the India market in the past decade, Siva Ramachandran said, "For Sri Lanka, India has grown as the number one nation for tourism arrivals. From India, we have seen a 15 per cent growth year-on-year, which does not count the trader community that travels more regularly. If you add them, it'd be more than 20 per cent."

For SriLankan Airlines, the travel trade has been an important focus, especially for the Indian market, says Ramachandran. "India has been a key market for SriLankan Airlines. We have come a long way and our business has grown, of which the travel community is a key component. They have been contributing to our growth," he asserted.

Chinthaka Weerasinghe, Manager-Northern and Eastern India, SriLankan Airlines, added, "We have very good frequencies from India, making us one of the largest international operators from India. The support from travel agents has been very good. In fact, 80 per cent of our business comes from travel agents, as we get strong support from all distribution channels, right from OTAs, tour operators to consolidators."



Siva Ramachandran
Chief Commercial Officer
SriLankan Airlines



Chinthaka Weerasinghe
Manager - Northern and Eastern
India, SriLankan Airlines

In a bid to boost the business further, SriLankan is all set to launch more connections in to India. "Currently, we are operating 107 frequencies a week. By the middle of this year, we are hoping to go up to 130 frequencies. In India, we are adding Hyderabad, Vishakhapatnam and Coimbatore. Also, we are increasing flights to Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Delhi," Ramachandran revealed.

He informed that initially these new connections will start with four flights daily, but they would make it a daily operation as they acquire more airplanes. "We will be flying five times a day to Chennai from the current twice daily. In Mumbai and Delhi, we will have 11 flights from the current 7 flights. In most of the destinations, we get over 80 per cent PLF. However, some stations like Kolkata, we have

received over 70 per cent, as it's a new route," he said. While promotions would continue in terms of Fam trips to key destinations of Sri Lanka, Maldives and Seychelles, the airline would also organise a number of workshops and roadshow with Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau.

In order to get feeds from Tier-II and Tier-III cities, SriLankan Airlines is also looking at codeshares. "We are currently engaged in talks with Air India to look at serving destinations within India where we do not fly. We have also started initial discussion with Jet Airways. As they are the largest full service carriers in India, we hope to cover the entire country with them. They'd also like to fly to some of our destinations, where they don't fly, like Seychelles and Maldives. Thus, we see a year of cooperation with Indian carriers this year."

Bringing people closer to nature



Country Inn and Suites by Carlson, Mysore celebrated World Environment Week amidst much fanfare at Kukkarahalli Lake. Termed as 'Plate to Planet', the celebration involved the team actively providing food to the underprivileged along with other carrying out activities like bicycle rally, planting 250 saplings at Kukkarahalli Lake to raise awareness amongst local communities.



Representation Company Expression of Interest

Seeking a tourism representation company to support Tourism Fiji's activities in the India Market.

Support is sought to provide facilities for Tourism Fiji staff within an office in Mumbai. While the Tourism Fiji staff members will take full responsibility for managing Tourism Fiji's strategy as well as the day-to-day engagement with trade partners, a degree of strategic oversight by the Representation Company is also required to assist with the delivery of strategy (contacts, strategic advice).

Support is also required from the Representation Company for marketing, PR, event management and administration.

Response needs to address the following:

- About the Respondent:**
 - Trading name
 - Physical address
 - Operational locations
 - Postal address
 - Registered Office
 - Business website
- Response to the Requirements:**
 - Proposed office logistics (rental space arrangement) for Tourism Fiji staff member(s)
 - Support services that can be supplied
 - Marketing capabilities
 - PR capabilities
 - Event support
 - Administrative support (payroll & banking)
 - Suggested levels of strategic oversight
 - Industry contacts
 - Strategic management
 - Any previous experience with similar client arrangements
- Capability to deliver:**
 - Describe their company size & structure
 - Track record & relevant experience with destination management
 - Qualifications & experience of team handling PR, events & marketing
 - List related assignments or accounts
 - Note any conflicts of interest or how they would be handled
 - Demonstrate connectedness with the key travel partners & media relevant to the South Pacific
- Quotation:**
 - Provide sufficient details against the tasks or outlined projects
 - Separate out costs by item
 - Office space
 - Administrative support
 - Marketing, PR, event support costs
 - Strategic oversight
 - Proposed contract terms
- References:**
 - Provide 2 references and a brief summary of the work undertaken by you on their behalf, including the results where possible.

Submissions are to be made to eoitourismfiji.com.fj before close of business on July 14th, 2017. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

For questions please contact Kathy Koyamaibole on kkoyamaibole@tourismfiji.com.fj or phone +679 6722433

Goa: Best learning destination as well

Donna D'Souza, Principal, Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition, Goa, believes that the beach destination is not just a favourite among international and domestic tourists, but also the best place to learn about the tourism and hospitality industry.



TT BUREAU

Q What makes IHM Goa different from other institutes?

The Institute of Hotel Management, Catering, Technology and Applied Nutrition, Goa is affiliated to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Goa is one of the oldest attractions for

tourists worldwide, and students enrolling at IHM-Goa have plenty of opportunities to experience both tourism- and hospitality-related activities while simultaneously completing their studies in the same field. The aim of the institute is to provide world-class training to students and mould them into professionals who can be readily

absorbed into India's growing hospitality sector. As the certification from IHM Goa is accepted worldwide, many students are also recruited for placements abroad.

Q What courses are taught at the institute?

Skills- and management- based courses are the most popular at the institute.



Students with an aptitude for operations may opt for the craft courses in food production and Food & Beverage service or they can take up the degree course which focuses on supervisory and management level.



Donna D'Souza
Principal, Institute of Hotel Management Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition, Goa

Q Please elaborate on the hands-on training provided to the students

At the end of the day, the success of a hotel in particular and hospitality sector at large primarily depends on guest satisfaction. The objective is that the guest is satisfied with the level of service and professionalism of the staff with whom they interact during their stay. All the courses that we offer involve hands-on experiential training. We encourage students to train at classified hotels during their internship and during their studies, at stand-alone restaurants and catering establishments to practice and develop their skills learned at the institute.

Q What is the way forward for Indian tourism and hospitality industry?

The travel and hospitality industry in India must constantly synchronise and re-invent their way of functioning in order to keep up with competing destinations. The demands of the discerning guests are ever-increasing as technology improves and more guests become increasingly internet-savvy. Learning is a journey and not a destination, so our challenges are to constantly improve and stay abreast with developments in the hospitality and tourism industry.

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South Korea ups its MICE ante

Korea MICE Expo 2017, the nation's leading business events trade show, brought together 250 businesses and more than 300 buyers from around the world, including India. Korea Tourism Organisation along with its 11 Regional Convention Bureaus showcased their MICE products in a two-day expo at Incheon's Songdo Convensia between June 15-16, 2017.





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Anchor sets sail for Spain & Portugal

Anchor Destinations and Travel Management has been appointed as India marketing representative for Spain and Portugal-based DMCs to promote the destinations in the Indian market.



Anchor Destinations and Travel Management has been recently appointed as India representative for a Spain-based destination management company—Portugal Tours and Space Travel, and Top Atlantico—a destination management



Deepika Khanna
Founder and CEO, Anchor Destinations and Travel Management

Our partner DMCs are well aware of the Indian clients' specific needs and are also flexible and adaptable to the ever growing demands of these travellers

company for Portugal. Anchor Destinations will be responsible for all branding campaigns and sales and marketing activities of both these DMCs in India.

According to Deepika Khanna, Founder and CEO, Anchor Destinations and Travel Management, this appointment is a milestone for the company and going forward, the company is looking at some newer and strategic collaborations.

"Both Spain and Portugal are much in demand among the Indian travellers, be it for holidays, MICE travel or the luxury segment of travel. Our partner DMCs are well aware of the Indian clients' specific needs and are also flexible and adaptable to the ever growing demands of these travellers. We assure our travel agents from the fraternity of competitive

rates combined with excellent level of service and on-time reverts by our partners in Spain and Portugal," says Khanna.

C&K Holiday Clubs debut in Delhi

Cox & Kings launched four Holiday Club stores to complement its sales offices in Delhi and offer immersive holiday experiences to FIT travellers.



C&K has expanded its presence in Delhi by opening 4 Holiday Club stores in Saket's MGF Metropolitan Mall, South Extension; Rajouri Garden and Connaught Place. Based on the concept of travel lounges, these stores will be serviced by expert travel advisors and offer a slew of experiential holidays. Travellers looking for special interest packages or domestic and international packages can



Karan Anand
Head-Relations, Cox & Kings
India Travel Award winner

choose from various divisions of C&K like Getaway Goddess,

Enable Travel and Trip 360. Karan Anand, Head-Relations, C&K, said, "The idea and concept behind the Holiday Club is that we would have nice lounges in key parts of the city which would help to be an interface with clients directly, focusing on our experiential holiday offerings. Travel shopping has become a lifestyle choice for people and they shop for holidays just the way they purchase other branded products and our presence

in these high-end shopping hubs will broaden our point of sales for people to enjoy the Cox and Kings experience." With these stores, the company is targeting the individual travellers, young families and the millennial. Further, these Holiday Club stores will complement the existing points of sales that C&K has in New Delhi. "We will promote these lounges through all our existing marketing and promotional platforms," adds Anand.

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GST to level playing field for states

Even though the revised GST slab of 28 per cent on hotels charging ₹ 7,500 tariff and above has brought about some relief to the hospitality sector, the industry is still wary of how they will muddle along this new tax regime. Winners of South India Travel Awards 2017 share their thoughts.



ANKITA SAXENA

► Best Debut MICE Hotel – Holiday Inn Cochin

28% GST for hotels with ₹ 10,000 tariff and above

The GST tax slab for hotels is in the highest bracket in the world. The government has classified any room charge above ₹ 7500 as top-end category business with 28 per cent GST; however it is the nominal rate at which rooms are sold in metros and other cities, explains **Kunal Shanker**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Cochin. "The 28 per cent rate ceiling should have been for any room rate above ₹ 10,000 per night. This will reduce foreign tourists coming to the country for short term and tourists will opt for other tourist-friendly countries in the region, like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Maldives where the impact of taxation is much lower," he says. However, according to Shanker, this move will increase opportunities for entrepreneurs and hotel owners on Input Credit and will reduce operational expenses in that margin.



► Best Tour Operator-Inbound – Cholan Tours

GST to have no negative impact on the industry

According to **Pandian K**, Director, Cholan Tours, GST is good for the industry and a positive move. He feels that in the past, more tax had to be paid due to various components like luxury tax, VAT and Service Tax. Now there is no concept of rack rate and special rate as we will pay tax only for the selling rate charged by the hotel," he says. He further elaborates that the 28 per cent tax slab will not affect the industry negatively as it applies only on hotels charging more than ₹ 7500. "The percentage of people choosing 5-star hotels is less, which shouldn't be a burden for them" Pandian K adds.



► Best Destination Wedding Resort – Anantya Resorts

GST to bring in a level playing field for South India

Value-based billing and uniform taxation with simplified slabs is definitely the way forward, feels **Lakshmy Ashok**, Director, Anantya Resorts. She explains that the revised GST rate of 18 per cent for rooms below ₹ 7499 brings down the burden and is a welcome move. Also, the shift to a value-based rate system will encourage dynamic pricing and mid-level properties will



benefit especially if they pass on the savings to the guest. Talking about GST's impact on the industry in South India, Ashok says, "Earlier, Tamil Nadu had high taxation with 12.5 per cent luxury tax on rack rate and 9 per cent Service Tax on sell rate resulting in a nearly 23 per cent taxation while the rates in neighbouring states of Karnataka and Kerala were a little lower. Other states which had a high tourism focus had substantially lower rate opportunities. Now a uniform rate is encouraging, creating a level playing ground. This will help the South be more competitive."

► Best Wildlife Lodge/Resort – Waterwoods Lodge and Resorts

Small scale businesses ignored under GST

The current GST regime will have a negative impact on the hospitality industry, according to **Arjun Kapoor**, Director, Waterwoods Lodge and Resorts. He feels that small-scale businesses have been left out under this regime. "Most of the wildlife lodges/resorts are small properties of 15-25 rooms located in remote areas. Wildlife tourism is an expensive form of ecotourism and Karnataka is one of the most expensive states for the same. Our overheads are much higher and we have seasonal business. We source our provisions locally to support the livelihoods of the surrounding communities for sustainable tourism. But the anti-profiting system in GST puts us under scanner if the small scale suppliers do not have GST registrations, which is unfair," says Kapoor. He further elaborates that it will be difficult to balance costs for smaller properties, and to add to the confusion, GST implementation has left the players in the dark about what to be prepared for.



► Best Budget Hotel – Ramada, Bangalore

Holidays to South India to become cheaper with GST

Though the revised GST slab of 28 per cent is great news for the hotel industry and guests alike, **Sachin K S**, Director-Sales, Ramada, Bangalore, feels that anything above ₹ 10,000 should be considered as luxury. "We are the highest taxed hospitality industry in the world. We need to attract more inbound tourists to India and if taxes are tweaked a little more, travellers are likely to be interested in investing in our country. However, uniformity of taxes and its transparency will bring down the cost of 4-star hotels from 21 per cent to 18 per cent and lessen the burden of multiple taxes on guests," says Sachin. He further explains that most of the travel agents take net rates from the hotel and the back seat on the rates taken by hotels will reduce. "In South India, there are so many holiday destinations and heritage hotels. These holidays would become a bit cheaper on the hotel front at least with GST," he adds.



► Best Hospitality Professional – Pankaj Gupta

Revision in GST rates will boost tourism in South India

The GST Council revised the tax slab for hotels and according to the General Manager of Aloft Bengaluru Whitefield, **Pankaj Gupta**, this revised GST rate for hotels charging tariff of ₹ 7500 and above will definitely help enhance the business and at the same time allow the hotels to provide add-on facilities to end users. "With 28 per cent for tariff above ₹ 7500 from the earlier ₹ 5000 I feel we can expect more footfalls in South India and improvement in business as the industry will be able to deliver standardised accommodation to millions of travellers," says Gupta.



Thailand promises unique experiences

In its 16th year, Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2017 aims to promote community-based tourism and local products to increase the number of foreign tourist arrivals to the region.



TRIPTI MEHTA FROM CHIANG MAI

Thailand Travel Mart Plus 2017, organised by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), in collaboration with the Thai tourism industry, was held in Chiang Mai between June 14 and 16, 2017. The Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre (CMECC), the venue for the event, provided the perfect setting for the display of the local products

Commenting on what TTM+ 2017 sought to achieve, **Walailak Noypayak**, Executive Director - ASEAN South Asia and South Pacific Region, TAT, said, "India is the sixth largest market for Thailand. We want this to be a platform to promote our neighbouring countries as well, those that form part of the Greater Mekong Subregion,

namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam."

This year, TAT is looking to promote Chiang Mai, the principal city of northern Thailand, as a preferred market for international tourism. "We want more airlines to fly directly to Chiang Mai from various Indian cities. We want to promote this destination as a cultural hub as it is famous for temples and festivals besides being

home to good handicrafts and immensely hospitable people," added Noypayak.

The Authority has devised extensive plans to promote tourism in a number of segments, including the Indian wedding segment, FITs, and those who are looking to spend on high-end products that the country has to offer. Commenting further, Noypayak said that their intention was to provide

value for money and experience to guests with a focus on quality leisure tourism. Revenue earned from such tourism will help promote community-based tourism products, with more involvement of the local people. The Authority has initiated strategies that will help the locals develop their products to suit the needs of international travellers. For single women travellers as well as families, the Authority has launched mo-

bile applications that will help guests decide on where they want to shop and how they can avail promotional discounts.

"Cultural values are one of our biggest assets. However, it is not just the product but how efficiently and effectively it is utilised to suit the needs of tourists. More than numbers, we want to focus on how tourists can contribute to our economy," concluded Noypayak.



Yuthasak Supasorn
Governor
TAT

of the Lanna kingdom and a chance for the buyers and sellers to interact with each other.

The event was attended by **H.E. General Tanasak Patimapragorn**, Deputy Prime Minister, Kingdom of Thailand, and **Yuthasak Supasorn**, Governor, TAT. The Tourism Trend Talk Forum on the first day of the event had keynote addresses by **H.E. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul**, Minister of Tourism and



Walailak Noypayak
Executive Director - ASEAN South Asia and South Pacific Region, TAT

Sports, Kingdom of Thailand; **Mason Florence**, Chairman of the World's 50 Best Restaurant Academy; **Prof. David Beirman**, Senior Lecturer, University of NSW, Australia; and **Sarah Mathews**, Head of Destination Marketing Asia Pacific (APAC), TripAdvisor.

Speaking at the occasion, Supasorn said, "We are looking at quality tourism in order to serve the needs of the Indian market. So far, we have had young Indians coming to Thailand for the beaches and to play golf. We will continue promoting those segments but are also looking to attract more Indian families to travel to Thailand."



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11:00 am – 11:30 am	: Event registration
11:30 am – 01:00 pm	: Interactive & Business session, with one on one meeting with Global Destination Heads
01:00 pm – 02:00 pm	: Buffet lunch
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Trafalgar encourages early bookings

The company has been giving early bird offers to travellers while incentivising travel agents in an effort to change the last-minute market that is India. They claim to have grown 21 per cent in 2016.

TT BUREAU

To cope with the characteristic trait of last minute travel bookings that the Indian market has become notorious for, Trafalgar has resorted to offering early bird discounts that its trade partners can extend to their clients. Speaking about this was **Nicholas Lim**, President – Asia, Trafalgar, who was in Mumbai for the open-



ing of the company's new office. "We started quite successfully to get Indians to book early two years ago. But the team has had a hard time this year. We have been urging our travel partners to get their clients to book early as they miss out on the opportunities. Trips get full and we are unable to squeeze them in. Sometimes, Indian travellers decide to book one week before the departure. We hope to change that over time. Other markets like the Americans, Kiwis, Australians book six to nine months in advance."



Nicholas Lim
President – Asia
Trafalgar

To counter this, Trafalgar offers incentives to the trade on a case-to-case basis. It also offers consumers early payment discounts on its autumn, winter and spring (AWS) series to encourage them to book early and avail 7.5 per cent off on most of its 34 handcrafted itineraries across Europe from November 2017 through April 2018.

"Agents are incentivised to push their clients to book earlier and to educate them on the benefits their clients can avail if they do. In fact, in an unprecedented move, we made a decision in March 2017 to guarantee every single departure in our brochure all the way to October 2017. The agent doesn't have to worry about any departure getting cancelled. We give them a huge amount of confidence," Lim adds.

Trafalgar claims to have grown 21 per cent in 2016, and this year till June 2017, it is sitting at a 13 per cent growth. "Hopefully, we will be able to emulate the same numbers as we did last year. We want to grow the market further in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Delhi and Pune and slowly look at tier II cities of Ahmedabad, Kochi and Chennai through our travel partners," Lim says.

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Thursday-06-Jul-2017	Mumbai	10:00 - 16:30
Friday-07-Jul-2017	Rajkot	09:30 - 13:30
Saturday-08-Jul-2017	Baroda	10:00 - 16:30
Monday-10-Jul-2017	Ahmedabad	10:00 - 16:30
Tuesday-11-Jul-2017	Jaipur	10:00 - 16:30
Wednesday-12-Jul-2017	Delhi	10:00 - 16:30
Thursday-13-Jul-2017	Chandigarh	10:00 - 16:30
Friday-14-Jul-2017	Delhi	10:00 - 16:30
Monday-17-Jul-2017	Lucknow	09:30 - 13:30
Tuesday-18-Jul-2017	Kolkata	10:00 - 16:30
Wednesday-19-Jul-2017	Hyderabad	09:30 - 13:30
Thursday-20-Jul-2017	Chennai	10:00 - 16:30
Friday-21-Jul-2017	Bangalore	10:00 - 16:30
Saturday-22-Jul-2017	Colimbatore	10:00 - 16:30
Monday-24-Jul-2017	Mumbai	10:00 - 16:30
Tuesday-25-Jul-2017	Indore	09:30 - 13:30
Wednesday-26-Jul-2017	Nagpur	10:00 - 16:30
Thursday-27-Jul-2017	Pune	10:00 - 16:30
Saturday-29-Jul-2017	Goa	09:30 - 13:30

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‘Learn SA’ to hit 17 cities this July

South African Tourism will be interacting with travel agents from 17 cities for ‘Learn SA’ programme starting with Mumbai on July 6.

TT BUREAU

The annual Learn South Africa training programme equips travel agents with the best tools and tips to sell South Africa in the Indian market. In its seventh edition this year, SA Tourism promises that the

ing for us as a brand. We get such youngsters to come to South Africa who are willing to do a number of activities in a day. They are focused and know what they want to spend on, so we have been helping the trade to repack holiday packages for this segment as well.”

TT BUREAU

Gurgaon welcomed the opening of a new TUI store in North India, taking the total count of its outlets to 20 in the country. The new store is located in Sushant Lok, Phase 1.

Speaking on the occasion of TUI India’s expansion, Nikhil Dhodapkar, CEO, TUI India, said, “We are delighted to open our store in Gurgaon

as we see a growing demand from this city for travel and we are excited about the potential that is available to be tapped.”

TUI stores have trained travel experts who not only assist customers to decide on the holiday destination but also guide them through the trip. Customers can walk in and get a sense of the products being offered through images. Additionally, a lot of videos are shown to the cus-



Nikhil Dhodapkar
Chief Executive Officer, TUI India

tomers, giving a perfect look and feel of the holiday.

The travel company specialises in crafting holiday packages for domestic destinations like Goa, Kerala, Andaman, Lakshadweep, etc. as well as international destinations such as Thailand, Dubai, Europe, Maldives and the USA. Designed to cater to different needs of various customer segments, these packages include a comprehensive suite of services, ranging from ticket and hotel bookings to sightseeing, meals to guided tours.



Hanneli Slabber
Country Manager-India, South African Tourism, India Travel Award winner

Promising travel agents attending ‘Learn SA’ may be invited to participate in the marketing activities supported by SA tourism

2017 version of ‘Learn SA’ will have new, exciting and useful sessions that will ensure a profitable business for SA and repeat customers for travel agents who attend the training.

Also on offer for the first time ever: promising travel agents attending ‘Learn SA’ may be invited to participate in the marketing activities supported by SA tourism. Registration is free and travel agents are encouraged to sign up multiple participants.

‘Learn SA’ will cover 17 cities to ensure that travel agents all over the country are given the opportunity to learn and thereby sell the destination. The cities include metros like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru, as well as Tier-II cities like Rajkot, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Coimbatore, Indore, Nagpur, Pune and Goa. Speaking about a particular market segment that has seen good growth and where the tourism board will especially focus on, Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager-India, South African Tourism, says, “We have seen good growth in the under-35 age category and it is interest-

TUI India adds 20th store

The travel organisation has increased its footprints in India with the inauguration of a new outlet in the National Capital Region.



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Swiss Tourism moves into new office



Switzerland has moved into a new setup in Nariman Point in Mumbai that will house Swiss Business Hub India and Switzerland Tourism under the single roof of the Consulate General. Celebrations continued in the evening at the Trident Hotel with a musical programme.

Malaysia aims 1mn mark

Malaysia is optimistic about the possibilities of growth in Indian arrivals to the country this year, buoyed by the launch of their e-visa waiver programme, as they set out on roadshows in India.



TT BUREAU

Tourism Malaysia, in association with Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) and Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), recently held their first roadshow for the year in New Delhi. A total of 15 exhibitors, comprising tour operators, hotels and attractions, were present on the occasion to interact

and network with the Indian trade on the latest tourism offerings. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between MATTA and TAFI in an effort to promote tourism between India and Malaysia.

Speaking on the occasion, **Sulaiman Suip**, Director – North & East, Tourism Malaysia, said, “We are here to network, enhance our re-

lationship with the Indian trade and curate packages that will be suitable for the Indian market. We are selling Malaysia as a family holiday destination as we have a lot of theme parks in the country and numerous niche products, such as weddings, for this market.”

Suip highlighted that while destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Pulau Penang and Genting Highlands have been immensely popular with Indian tourists, Tourism Malaysia is also bringing places like Johor Bahru, Sabah, Pulau Perhentian, Pulau Tioman and Ipoh among others, to the fore.

Ganneesh Ramaa, ExCo Incoming India Market, MATTA, added on, “Delhi is our first stop for the year and it has been a success. We will



Sulaiman Suip
Director – North & East
Tourism Malaysia

be holding additional workshops in September in the cities of Bengaluru, Kochi, Pune and Kolkata while in December, we will focus on Ahmedabad, Mumbai, etc.”

India is amongst the top 10 source markets for tourists for Malaysia and has consistently occupied the sixth rank. Around 63,800 Indians visited the ASEAN nation in 2016, who spent approximately \$640 million on shopping, sightseeing and various other activities. Suip commented, “This year, we are aiming for one million visitors from India. We have noticed a spike in bookings for April, May and June.”

In a bid to boost tourism, Malaysia also introduced the e-visa waiver programme for Indians in April, where the visa can be applied online after paying a \$20 entry fee. The number of applications has increased considerably, revealed Suip, with around 70,000 applications received in April alone. “Multiple-entry on the e-visa would definitely give us more leverage so we are hoping this is implemented in the near future.”

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Trade must negotiate GST with Govt.

► Contd. from page 24

► Best Destination Management Company – STHI Holidays

Positive sign for tourism

Gagan Kumar, Director, STHI Group, points out that Goods and Services Tax is a good move, all in the interest of the nation and will bring all players on a level playing field. "The single tax structure will avoid differential selling in the industry. I believe, for the initial period, there will be hiccups and we will have to figure out the functionality of the regime, but it is for the betterment of the industry in entirety. There will be resistance in the initial phase as there is towards any form of change, but in the long run, GST will make a radical change if it is instituted in letter and spirit," says Kumar.



► Best Business Travel Agency – Archana Travels

Need to negotiate the GST with government

Trade and hospitality associations need to come together and take the concerns of businesses of all scales over to the government, feels **Baddam Bhoja Reddy**, Proprietor, Archana Travels. "Those who have business will not be so concerned as they can afford to manage the tax rate. Earlier too they were paying a high rate and now the good part is that the tax is uniform. However, various associations need to get together and have to negotiate with the government to show them the plight of small-scale businesses and only then can we hope for a resolution." He further adds that this is peak season for travel and implementation of GST has to be done carefully to not impact the industry.



► Best Debut Resort – Glyngarth Resorts Ooty

Domestic luxury travel will suffer

The luxury segment and mid-segment of travel will reel under the ill effects of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) for at least two years after its implementation, feels **Shahid Sait**, Director, Glyngarth Resorts Ooty. He points out that the hospitality industry in many cities of South India is driven by the IT industry, which is mostly domestic tourism, and with such high tax rates, the industry is bound to suffer lower occupancy and returns. This will also be an added burden on both foreign and domestic tourists. "The last decade has seen an addition of more than a thousand rooms at hill stations in South India like Ooty, by converting homes to cottages and only 20 per cent of these room owners are registered to pay taxes. The hotels are the most affected as cottages with three-four bedrooms are leased out at non-standardised tariffs. The government needs to look into this when it comes to uniformity of taxes," adds Sait.



► Best Luxury Hotel – Park Hyatt Chennai

One tax will help inbound tourists

GST is a very bold move and a welcome one in order to bring in the concept of one country, one tax, feels **Shalab Verma**, General Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai. "It was very difficult to explain to foreign guests that they'd have to pay different taxes as per the states that they will travel to. Also, the luxury tax varied from one state to the other creating confusion amongst the travellers regarding the costs they incurred, but with this new regime, the tax structure will be simplified," says Verma. He feels that the tax slab of 28 per cent will not make much of a difference to hotels who are already operating in the five-star premium segment.



► Best Corporate Incentive Tours Operator – Parry Travels

Mid-segment hotels to benefit

The present taxation system has a cascading effect on the cost of service provided by travel agents, which will be addressed with the introduction of Goods and Services Tax, believes **M. K. Bhaskar**, Senior Vice President, Parry Enterprises India (Parry Travels). "The differential Goods and Services Tax rates based on per night tariff will incentivise hotels operating in the mid-segment whereas hotels charging above ₹5000 per room night will incur higher costs, which may impact the individual travel segment. However, in terms of corporate travel, the company can avail Input Credit on the expenses incurred by the executives, a facility hitherto was not available," says Bhaskar.



► Best Travel Agency – Narayani Holidays and Hospitality

GST to have a neutral impact on the industry

The revised GST rate will eliminate the multiple tax structures which will give a boost to hospitality and tourism, points out **A.V. Moorthy**, Director-Operations, Narayani Holidays and Hospitality. "A lower tax rate for budget hotels sector or even zero charges in case of those charging less than ₹1000 per day per room will ensure that the industry's quality upgrade continues while delivering standardised accommodation to millions of middle-class travellers. GST of 28 per cent for those charging per day tariff of ₹7500 will impact the end consumers. Even though the government has given opportunity to claim Input Tax Credit, the consumer has to bear more cost than the current rates," says Moorthy. He further adds that the high incidences of taxes will make India an uncompetitive tourist destination and international tourists will skip the country. However, the states which apply luxury on rack rates like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and states which have high luxury tax like Kerala have total tax summed up to approximately 19-25 per cent. The GST of 18 per cent will be positive leading to considerable reduction of 4-7 per cent in tax, respectively.







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EVENT TALK

JULY 2017

Arabian Travel Awards	Dubai	4
FICCI Tourism Investors Meet	New Delhi	5-6
Learn South Africa workshop	Mumbai	6
Learn South Africa workshop	Rajkot	7
Learn South Africa workshop	Baroda	8
Travel Wedding Show	Jaipur	8-9
Learn South Africa workshop	Ahmedabad	10
Learn South Africa workshop	Jaipur	11
Learn South Africa workshop	New Delhi	12
Annual Kiwi Link	New Delhi	12-14
Learn South Africa workshop	Chandigarh	13
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Ahmedabad	13-15
Learn South Africa workshop	New Delhi	14
IITM	Chennai	15-17
GBTA Convention	Boston, USA	15-19
Learn South Africa workshop	Lucknow	17
Learn South Africa workshop	Kolkata	18
Learn South Africa workshop	Hyderabad	19
Learn South Africa workshop	Chennai	20
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Chandigarh	20-22
IITM	Bengaluru	21-23
Learn South Africa workshop	Bengaluru	21
Learn South Africa workshop	Coimbatore	22
Learn South Africa workshop	Mumbai	24
Learn South Africa workshop	Indore	25
Learn South Africa workshop	Nagpur	26
Learn South Africa workshop	Pune	27
Learn South Africa workshop	Goa	29
India Travel Awards East	Guwahati	26
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kolkata	27-29

AUGUST 2017

Indonesia B2B meeting	Ahmedabad	1
Indonesia B2B meeting	Pune	3
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Kochi	3-5
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Kochi	7
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Bengaluru	8
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Chandigarh	9
Global Panorama Showcase (GPS)	Pune	10-12
Amazing Thailand roadshow	Lucknow	11
GBTA India Convention	New Delhi	18
TAAI Convention	Kunming, China	18-20
ACTE Conference	Tokyo, Japan	22-23
Destination Australia roadshow	Mumbai	22
Israel roadshow	Bengaluru	22
Destination Australia roadshow	New Delhi	24
Israel roadshow	New Delhi	24
Israel roadshow	Kolkata	26
Israel roadshow	Hyderabad	28
Israel roadshow	Chennai	30
La Cita	Florida, USA	29-31

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

ASSOCIATIONTALK

TAAI Western elections on 24/7

It's time for TAAI's Western Region chapter to gear up again for its biennial elections that will take place on July 24, 2017, at The Orchid in Mumbai.



HAZEL JAIN

Sampat Damani, Chairman Western Region, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), has urged members from the Western Region Chapter to come forward and file for nominations for the upcoming elections. The elections will be held on July 24, 2017, at The Orchid Mumbai.

Speaking about his term as the Chairman for the region, Damani says, "I am grateful to my members of the region for the support they extended to me in my tenure. They are keen on me continuing for another term. But its time I



Sampat Damani
Chairman Western Region
Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

moved out and made space for some young blood from our association. My earnest request to all the members is to please come forward for the elections. Being part of the Managing Committee entails hard work but gives

MoU with Malaysia

TAAI Western Region has signed an MoU with Malaysia Tourism to offer training workshops to its members in the Western Region. The workshop is titled 'Malaysia - Beyond KL' and will be offered to front liners and representatives of tour operators. The association also launched a concise booklet on Malaysia that features 1001 packages and aims to serve as a ready-reckoner for agents who want to sell the destination. Damani adds, "Fourteen states from Malaysia have worked out detailed packages in this booklet, along with pricing. Agents just need to look at it."

a lot of satisfaction. It's their chance to give something back to the association and the industry at large."


He also said that when his team took charge in 2015, TAAI Western Region had 375 members.

"In this term, we added 22 members but also terminated 35 memberships because of inactivity. We now have interested and committed members. TAAI credentials means agents that travellers can trust," Damani adds.

Embracing change for future

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) organised a special luncheon where they formally bid farewell to former secretary tourism Vinod Zutshi and welcomed Rashmi Verma on board as the new Secretary, Ministry of Tourism. The association addressed the members' queries and had experts from the Central Board of Excise & Customs and GST Council explaining how GST would work.















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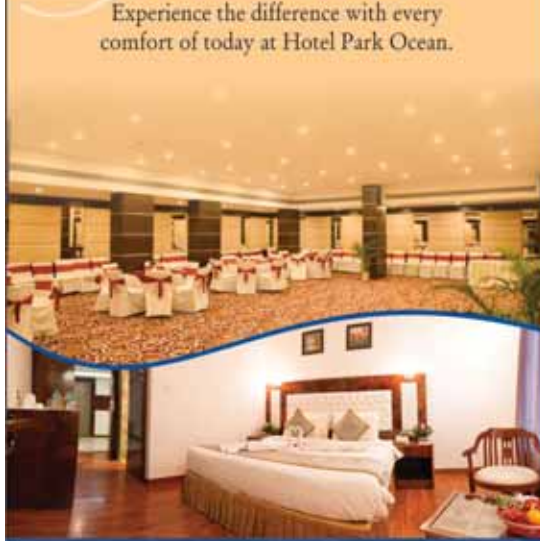
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Carlson Wagonlit Travel
Gurugram



Geeta Jain has moved to the position of Strategic Program Vice President from her previous role as CEO at Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT). Jain has also held the post of COO of CWT India in the past. She has a successful international track record of over 18 years in various industries, including senior management positions at American Express India. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Social Sciences from Punjab University and a Post Graduate degree in management from the IIM Ahmedabad.



Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) has appointed Vishal Sinha as Chief Executive Officer of CWT India. Reporting to Kai Chan, CWT's President for Asia Pacific, Sinha will be a member of CWT's Asia Pacific leadership team. He has more than 20 years of experience in the travel industry. Most recently, he was the Chief Operating Officer of TUI India. He has also worked with British Airways in India, the UAE, Hong Kong and China. Sinha holds a Master of Arts degree from Delhi University, as well as a Diploma in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing in the UK.

Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity
New Delhi



Pride Hotels has announced the promotion of Pankaj Mathur to the post of Vice President. Mathur spearheads the hotel's efforts in building the Pride Plaza brand. His in-depth understanding of planning, supervising and managing operations, including new setups and properties, have a wave of transformation and have strived to position Pride Plaza as a leading brand in the premium segment. Mathur comes with more than three decades of experience in the hospitality industry and has worked with brands like JHM Interstate, Starwood, Hyatt, Marriott, Oberoi, Taj and WelcomGroup.

Pride Group
Kolkata

Pride Group has promoted Binay Thakur, General Manager, Pride Plaza Hotel Kolkata to Area General Manager. He has been associated with Pride Hotels for the past nine years and has successfully handled the Nagpur and Ahmedabad hotels of the group before taking over the operations of Pride Plaza Hotel Kolkata. In his new role, he will be overseeing the expansion of Pride Hotels in the eastern region of the country apart from the operational responsibility of the Kolkata hotel.



The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace
Hyderabad

Rohit Dar has been appointed as the new General Manager at The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace. Prior to joining The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, he was the General Manager at Jaipur Marriott Hotel. Dar started his journey in hospitality as a management trainee with Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development (OCLD). He joined OCLD post completing his Business Studies graduate degree from Delhi University. He brings over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry, having worked at properties like The Oberoi in Mumbai and New Delhi, The Oberoi Rajvilas, Oakwood Premier Prestige, Bangalore and The Trident Kochi.



VFS Global
Mumbai

VFS Global has appointed Mukesh Jain to a newly created role of Chief Technology Officer. In this role, Jain will lead the company's strategic thrust towards introducing advanced technology-driven projects that involve digital transformation, innovation, analytics and interoperability of systems. He joins VFS Global's senior leadership team and reports directly to VFS Global Group CEO Zubin Karkaria. Jain comes to VFS Global with a rich experience of 21 years. Prior to joining VFS Global, Jain has worked for Microsoft Corporation and Reliance Jio, among other companies.



Grand Mercure Mysuru
Mysuru

Grand Mercure Mysuru, an AccorHotels brand, announced the appointment of Tushar Garg as the new Director of Sales and Marketing. He has been in the hospitality industry for over 15 years. Garg was the Associate Director of Sales at Hyatt Raipur. After pursuing his degree in hospitality and tourism management, Garg started his career with Preferred Hotels & Resorts in USA and then went on to hold various positions across leading hotel chains in India and abroad.



JW Marriott Pune
Pune

Jeslin Mathews has been appointed as Director of Sales at JW Marriott Pune. Mathews brings over 11 years of experience working in various sales functions and different brands across the Marriott portfolio. He began his career at Le Méridien, Pune. His Marriott journey began with Courtyard by Marriott Hinjewadi, Pune, and subsequently Kochi Marriott Hotel and JW Marriott Pune. Mathews completed his graduation from Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University in Hotel Management and further got a Master's from Symbiosis, Pune in Marketing Management and HR.



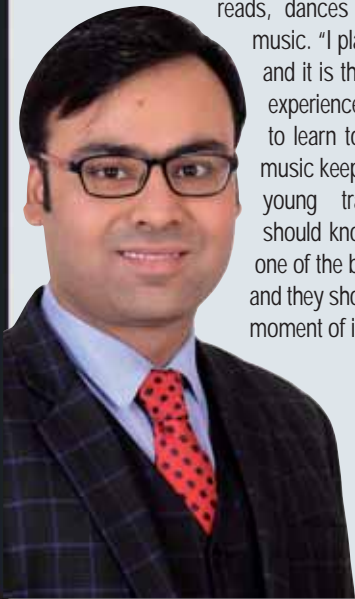
Outbound Marketing
Mumbai

Outbound Marketing announces the appointment of Nupur Dhandharia Mishra as Associate Director-Sales, Corinthia Hotels pan India and as shared sales resource for The Meydan Hotel and Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa Southern & Western India. A commerce graduate with IATA certification, she has over ten years of experience in product sales-hotels and holidays-with Imagica, Tavelguru.com and Ezeego1.



TALKing People

Switzerland, London and New Jersey are three bucket listed destinations for Arun Khurana, Cluster General Manager, Mosaic Hotels. He works hard for his reputation and believes that challenges are meant to be taken head on. During his free time, Khurana reads, dances and listens to music. "I play the keyboard and it is the most relaxing experience for me. I want to learn to play guitar as music keeps me alive. The young travellers today should know that travel is one of the biggest teachers and they should enjoy every moment of it," he says.



Varun Sahani, GM, Orchid Hotel, loves to play and watch cricket, badminton and tennis. "I barely get the time for these luxuries but I still love watching whenever I can. I am also passionate about cooking." One rarely-known thing about Sahani is his love for singing. "I have travelled extensively with my family and we try to go on road trips whenever possible. Venice is one place I really enjoyed and was mesmerised with. But if I have to pick a favorite, it will have to be Kashmir."



Apple Woo, Head-Sales and Marketing, Celebrity Cruises, defines herself as a vivacious and fun loving person. Her job is the driving force in her life and she believes that today's millennials need to try something new as life is too short to redo things. "I would love to visit the Galápagos Islands, Antarctica and Russia, if I have to revisit a place then it would be Japan," says Woo. She spends her free time exercising, trying new sports and listening to music. Currently, she is trying her hand at water skiing.



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Kerala Tourism Policy in July

Kerala Tourism is targeting double international tourist arrivals and 50 per cent increase in domestic arrivals, reveals **P. Bala Kiran**, Director, Kerala Tourism. In an exclusive interaction with **TRAVTALK**, he also shares details of the new projects and confirms July launch for the tourism policy.



NISHA VERMA

Q What are the latest growth figures for Kerala Tourism?

I am very proud to tell you that international tourist arrivals in Kerala have crossed 1 million for the first time this year. In fact, we have recorded 1.03 million tourist arrivals this year. On the domestic front, the situation is rosier, as we have crossed 1.31 crore domestic arrivals. We are bullish on the arrival figures. In fact, the target, which has been set by the Government of Kerala, is to increase international tourists by 100 per cent by 2021 and increase domestic arrivals by 50 per cent, which would put our growth rates to almost 8.5 and 13.5 respectively every year.

Q What is the status of the new tourism policy for the state and when would it be launched?

The draft policy has already been submitted to the government and it would be launched once the cabinet approves the tourism policy. Many new initiatives have been put into the tourism policy, and I believe that it will have big support for tourism in North Kerala. We will also be incentivising the industry much better in this policy. We are hoping that the new policy should come before July this year.

Q How are you promoting tourism in Kerala?

Kerala is doing the tourism promotion in two ways—one, by building its own infrastructure, i.e. by creating various tourism parks and increasing cleanliness; second, by creating new tourism products and having light and sound show in St. Angelo Fort in Kannur, as well as in Bekal and Polmudi. We are also thinking of having ropeways in Jatayupara in Kollam district, as well in Polmudi and many other places. We are trying to bring in more activity- and adventure-based tourism this year to attract more young tourists, as 65 per cent of Indian population is young. In fact, we have recently submitted the river cruise tourism project, combining seven rivers of Northern Kerala to the government of India, which is worth ₹325 crores.

Q Do you think the liquor policy change is going to boost tourism?

The liquor policy change that has been announced by the new government has given a big breather to the

tourism industry. In fact, tourism industry was in a slight dilemma on how to proceed with the existing liquor restrictions, but the recent changes in the policy have given a big boost to the tourism industry, especially for MICE tourism. Last year, after five years, we registered negative growth for arrivals the first time (-0.5 per cent), which was earlier growing at a rate of almost 9-10 per cent. MICE tourism will take a big boost, especially when it makes for almost 28 per cent of the international tourist arrivals

Air to target East Asia, and we will be having tie ups with Etihad and Jet Airways very soon to target West Asian markets.

Q Which are the biggest source markets for you and which are the new markets you are looking at?

UK, Germany and France have traditionally been the major drivers and most of the European countries have been regularly coming to Kerala. However, off late, we have seen a surge from West and East Asia, especially countries



“We are trying to bring in more activity and adventure based tourism this year to attract more young tourists, as 65 per cent of Indian population is young. In fact, we have recently submitted the river cruise tourism project, combining seven rivers of Northern Kerala to the government of India, which is worth ₹325 crores.”

P. Bala Kiran
Director, Kerala Tourism

in the state. Kerala is also identified with leisure tourism, and liquor makes a huge component as it's a lifestyle thing for international tourists.

Q Are you also promoting the homestays and small resorts in the state?

Kerala Tourism has been driven by small operators and the operators who have emerged from the local population. We are not driven by five-star brands, and hence, for us, houseboats, homestays, serviced villas and resort owners play an equal role in the development of Kerala Tourism. That's why we have been fighting for their incentives and for their concessions, in terms of GST or any other issue in a big way.

Q Are you also joining hands with other countries to boost tourism in the state?

We are not tying up with individual countries, but we are targeting East Asia by having tie-ups with airlines. We have already entered into an agreement with Silk-

like Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE, Malaysia have shown a huge increase. This could be due to the aggressive marketing by Kerala Tourism and also because of direct flight connectivity which we have established to these places.

Q Can you elaborate on Spice Route and Kochi-Muziris project?

Spice Route represents our 1000-year old trade relations with West Asia, Europe and even some South African countries. We want to leverage that, and include Spice Route as a heritage project.

The Kochi-Muziris project is an amalgamation of Dutch, English and local cultures, which we are promoting. Almost 42 locations have been found and renovated under the Muziris Heritage project and now we are running a wonderful tourism circuit including a hop-on hop-off boat tour, which combines all the 42 locations including Dutch Synagogue and Kottappuram Fort. The excavations have revealed wonderful facts. ↴

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