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# MOT moots for lower threshold

In a bid to improve tourism infrastructure in the country, the Ministry of Tourism has proposed to lower the threshold limit from ` 200 crore to ` 50 crore for small hotel projects, informs **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary, MOT.

**AHANA GURUNG**

The Ministry of Tourism is working towards giving infrastructure status to smaller units in order to meet the extensive room deficit prevailing in the country. This move will not only help smaller businesses to thrive, but will also encourage more investors to come forward and capitalise on tourism development.

Making the announcement, **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary-Tourism, Government of India, said that the development has been proposed

to the cabinet and added, "We have proposed for the threshold limit for smaller units to be set at ` 50 crore, which will hopefully encourage more players to invest in tourism. The country is short of about one lakh rooms and we need to meet this gap, for which we are also tying up with homestays."

The Tourism Ministry aims to boost tourism infrastructure to meet the growing number of foreign and domestic tourists in the country. Foreign tourist arrivals in May 2017 have grown by 19.5 per cent as compared



**Rashmi Verma**  
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism  
Government of India

to the same month the previous year, the highest during lean season, Verma pointed out. "Even in terms of Foreign

Foreign tourist arrivals in May 2017 have grown by 19.5 per cent as compared to the same month the previous year, the highest during lean season

Exchange Earnings (FEEs), it is one of the highest," she said. "What's encouraging to note is that May is usually considered the lean season, but even then such growth is taking place. This has been one of our dreams to make India an all-season destination and the progress towards this is notable."

Despite the encouraging growth, Verma added that much needs to be done to make the tourism industry a viable one. As more travellers walk the experiential route, she urges products to be 'experiential' in nature, with more focus on the experience of the destina-

tion rather than plain vanilla sightseeing. She stated, "Experiential travel is one of the trends we have noticed and there is a need to work on this aspect. India is abundant with tourism products and niche products like ecotourism and adventure tourism, and even textile tourism needs to be packaged well."

The last meeting on cruise tourism among the task force discussed promotional strategies, along with infrastructural upgrade of a number of major ports like Kochi, commented Verma.

# Air India's up for sale, who's buying?

Now that the government has decided to open the gates of Air India for disinvestment, experts and industry players are speculating what lies ahead for the national carrier. While many feel that the move is right, others believe that Ashwani Lohani, Chairman & MD, Air India, should have been given more time to turn it around.

**NISHA VERMA & NIKHIL ANAND**

You read it here first...

TravTalk India June 2nd issue

**AI invested on disinvestment?**  
In view of the Niti Aayog and Finance Ministry suggesting privatisation of the national carrier, there are lots of questions arising over the need of this step and how it would pan out, if at all.

**Nisha Verma**  
Union Finance Minister suggested disinvestment of Air India being to the debt of the airline is ` 50,000 crore. The Niti Aayog—the government think tank—had recommended strategic disinvestment recently, claiming that the airline does not need to put in more money into the FDI despite it being in debt of around `10,000 crore.

**A. Ashok Gopinath**  
Niti Aayog Member, said, "Niti Aayog has made a recommendation for the sale of Air India. They have suggested to have steps to make it a strong and viable airline." He remarked that they were examining all courses of action to ensure this and they are not closed to any options. Similar thoughts were articulated by Ajay Bhatia, Minister of State for Civil Aviation.

**R.N. Choudhary**, Secretary, Civil Aviation, claimed that the government's primary task is to deal with the debt. "I don't think it's wise to have a strategy for Air India right now. Selling the airline would of course be difficult because of the debt overhang. If that is not resolved, there are no options, coming from all quarters, but the single most important thing is how to handle the debt. Once we find a solution to that, which will require huge buy-in by the finance ministry and the banks, then we can look at new options available, and we will decide what to do. If we solve the debt problem, we will see if there is still the need to privatise Air India."

**Niti Aayog has suggested to take steps to make Air India a strong and viable airline.**

**Options for Govt**  
• Whether to privatise the airline or not  
• If the airline is to be privatised then will it be open to national or international buyers  
• Should the Govt maintain a stake in the ownership

"The government is planning its strategy for Air India disinvestment with NITI Aayog. Personally, I agree when the Prime Minister says that the government has no business to be in business. We are already seeing the difference between Air India and other airlines. Thus, it is time that they should find a solution and look for a new player to handle Air India more efficiently. They are considering a couple of options as there is a huge debt of more than ` 50,000 crores, which is not viable for any single player to take over. Ideally, a part of the debt should be taken up by the government and then the remaining part should be given to the private sector."



**K Narayan Rao**  
Director  
Delhi International Airport



**Subhash Goyal**  
India Travel Award winner  
and Chairman  
Stic Travel Group

"Every country needs a national carrier and it is also true that national carriers can be privatised. Air India has done a great service during the time of crisis and its Maharaja is a great brand. Although, in the past few years, the product and brand has seen a downfall. However, with the new CMD Ashwani Lohani came a new enthusiasm in Air India and I am confident that it will be turned around. With new destinations that Air India has added to its network, like Madrid, Vienna and upcoming destinations like Copenhagen and Washington, I am sure that the national carrier is going to be profitable. The debts from the old legacy should be taken care of by the government, especially when the airline is showing operational profit. Private equity should be infused. Instead of being answerable to politicians, the airline should be answerable to shareholders."

Contd. on page 14 ▶

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## India Travel Awards heads East

The fourth edition of the East India Travel Awards will be held on July 26, 2017, at Radisson Blu Guwahati. Like every year, these awards too will honour the stalwarts of the tourism industry in the region.



TT BUREAU

Renowned as India's first regional awards which honour the achievers of the tourism industry, India Travel Awards has made a mark in the industry to recognise those who have gone above and beyond to make a difference in the travel fraternity. **Gunjan Sabikhi**, Convener, India Travel Awards, elaborates that these are the first and only regional awards which recognise and reward the efforts of travel companies from every nook and corner of India. "These awards set a company apart from its competition and differentiate the quality of its achievements from others, thus placing the awardees at the forefront of the industry. It is very heartening to see that every year the number of nominations received for East India



**Gunjan Sabikhi**  
Convener  
India Travel Awards

Travel Awards keep increasing manifolds, which is a proof of the fact that winning this award is very prestigious and it bestows immense credibility to the winning company or individual. We have seen that being nominated or shortlisted for any category has proven to be helpful for an individual or a company in their business as it places



**Vikas Ray**  
General Manager  
Radisson Blu Guwahati

them at the forefront of their genre and industry and is accompanied by increased awareness about the brand," says Sabikhi.

According to **Vikas Ray**, General Manager, Radisson Blu Guwahati, the event and meeting space at the property covers more than 4,180 square meters. It provides

versatile options, from an outdoor banquet lawn to a classic boardroom, so that the hotel can accommodate a wide range of events with style and ease. The 196-key hotel offers various facilities to aid all kinds of meetings and events. He says that set in a peaceful section of Assam, the elegant Hotel provides its guests with stellar amenities and a restful location in the bustling city of Guwahati in north-eastern India. Guests can also go for interesting outings to the freshwater lake, Deepor Beel, or to cultural sites like Sankardev Kalakshetra.

### Save the date

4<sup>th</sup> East India Travel Awards on July 26, 2017 at Radisson Blu Guwahati

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### The wind beneath Air India's wings

The disinvestment of Air India is now inevitable. But, how it would be carried out is the big question. The decision to privatise the national airline, due to its overbearing debt of ₹50,000 crore, is already marred by many hurdles and how easily can the Maharaja get through this process is a question everyone's been asking. While there are speculations on how the national carrier would get private players with the huge debt on its head, there are airlines that have already shown interest. Apart from the Tata Group, that started Air India before it got nationalised, there is IndiGo, which too has expressed interest in buying stakes. Meanwhile, Air India continues its business as normal. After launching its Delhi-Washington direct flight without much fanfare, Air India has even discontinued non-vegetarian food for economy passengers flying on domestic routes in a bid to cut costs. Amidst huge criticism on this announcement, the national carrier is trying really hard to revive itself. Would it get its days of glory back? Guess, we'll have to wait and watch.

### Clearing the 'GST' air

After much discussion, the Goods and Service Tax (GST) bill was finally rolled out on July 1, 2017. The 'one nation, one tax' ethos of the new tax rule is being strongly debated by the industry with the introduction of many other components in the new tax, like CGST, SGST and IGST, which has further added to the confusion within the industry on how to comply with it. Many agents have not even started the billing process and are attending seminars with tax experts and government bodies to understand the law and address the functional issues of their business. The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) is also helping them by hearing out the grievances and stepping in to clear the doubts. In fact, they have created a GST cell for the travel agents and are meeting the association heads as well to help as much as they can. While changing the law is difficult, the industry is hopeful that they will find a way.

# 25 years

THE ROTARY LION SCHEME: FRIENDS, WRITERS, MEDIAMEN

## Trav Talk

TRAVTALK brings to you the news and events that made headlines 25 years ago and are relevant even today. From the August issue of 1992:

### Park Hotel, Calcutta - Relaunch

Park Hotel, Calcutta was getting ready for a relaunch in 1992. It stands strong today at Park Street, the famous shopping and social hub in the now Kolkata, West Bengal, and treating the City of Joy with its hospitality for so many years.



### IATO TALK INDIA GETTING EXORBITANT

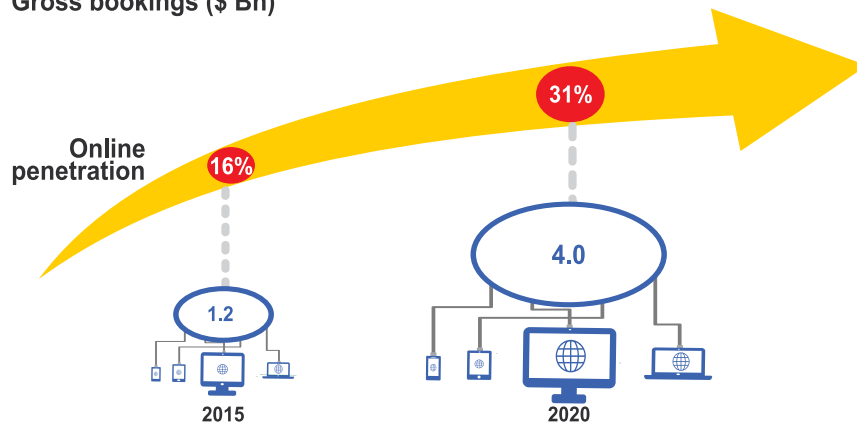
- In 1992, O. P. Ahuja, the then IATO President talked about India overpricing itself as a destination for international tourists. While he said that India needed strong marketing to make its presence felt in international markets, the problem of increased airfare and hotel tariffs were proving to be a deterrent to the growth of inbound tourism.
- The problem still remains the same, as featured in TravTalk's last issue, where inbound stakeholders shared how the country is exorbitant as compared to its neighbours that offer better value for money.



## \$4bn hotel bookings online by 2020

With the increase in online penetration, online hospitality in India is expected to become a \$4 billion market by 2020. Online hotel bookings is projected to grow steadily from 16 per cent in 2015 to 31 per cent in 2020.

Gross bookings (\$ Bn)



The study estimates suggest that overall online transactions should increase at the historical rate in the coming years, but due to heavy discounting, rebates and lower online order values, the growth of gross bookings will not be as high.

Source: 'Demystifying the Indian Online Traveller' by Google and Boston Consulting Group



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# Dunk your stress at the Dunsvirk Court

Era Hotels and Resorts, a hotel management company under the aegis of CTC Holdings, recently took over the management of Dunsvirk Court, Mussoorie, and is planning to make it a preferred destination for holistic family holidays, wedding ceremonies and also MICE events.



Era Hotels and Resorts, which manages three properties in Goa, namely the Santiago Beach Resort, Baga, Goa; Turtle Beach Resort, Morjim, Goa; and Mayfair Hotel, Panjim, Goa; with a total of 200 keys, has expanded its domestic footprint with the takeover of the management of the 40-room



mer Palace, was converted to a hotel in 1960s and has been welcoming guests ever



all luxurious amenities. In order to showcase the renovated and upgraded Dunsvirk Court Mussoorie, Era Hotels and Resorts recently organised a familiarisation trip for 20 members of Association of Domestic Tour Operators - Delhi Chapter.

In the words of Era Hotel's Chief Operating Officer, **Vinay Albuquerque**, Dunsvirk Court, Mussoorie is a luxury boutique hotel, which has the unique distinction of being the highest point in Mussoorie, offering panoramic mountain views on one side and overview of the Library Chowk and the Mall Road on the other. "If you're looking for a peaceful private



**Vinay Albuquerque**  
COO  
Era Hotels and Resorts

Dunsvirk Court is located at the highest point in Mussoorie, offering panoramic mountain views on one side and overview of the Library Chowk and the Mall Road on the other

destination surrounded by mountains and woods, then this hilltop resort in Mussoorie is the place for you.

With our experience in the hospitality industry, we aim to offer our guests a great destination for holidays and a perfect venue for MICE events. We look to offer all our guests top-notch service and hospitality at a great location and price. Great service, warm hospitality, good food and a relaxing experience at a great value pricing makes us the ideal destination," says Albuquerque.

Era Hotels and Resorts has positioned Dunsvirk Court, Mussoorie as a holistic holiday destination for Indian families. This image makeover is planned keeping in mind to meet the expectations of holidaymakers among families, wedding groups, FIT travellers as well as the MICE segment from across India. The hotel offers various facilities to its guests, such as: Mana - the spa with four treatment rooms; Sakala - the multi-cuisine restaurant with an emphasis on traditional north Indian special-

ties; and a conference hall, with a large outdoor area, for corporate meetings and various other events.

The company has been closely working with the travel trade and has also offered various incentives to promote the property better. "We have offered some great deals to the travel agents and tour operators through our offices across the country and are looking at an online and print media campaign to promote the hotel besides participating in various exhibitions across the country. We recently organised a familiarisation trip for members of Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) - Delhi Chapter, and will be doing one for Punjab, Maharashtra and Gujarat agents as well," informs Albuquerque. He believes that a two-way support structure is key in order to offer the guests a great experience while creating a win-win situation for both the hotel and the travel agents and tour operators.



Dunsvirk Court, Mussoorie. Dunsvirk Court, originally known as the Baroda Sum-

since. The hotel has recently undergone renovation and has been refurbished with

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# One tax, one nation—many problems

All the major travel associations organised dedicated sessions with tax experts and Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) executives to explain and address the working problems and issues that come with the implementation of GST. Heads of these associations here give a consolidated list of the concerns that their members have and which need attention at the earliest.

Speakers ▶	 <b>Pronab Sarkar</b> <i>President, IATO</i>	 <b>Guldeep Singh Sahni</b> <i>India Travel Award winner and President, OTOAI</i>	 <b>P. P. Khanna</b> <i>President ADTOI</i>	 <b>Sarabjit Singh</b> <i>India Travel Award winner and Vice Chairman, FAITH</i>	 <b>Rajan Sehgal</b> <i>Chairman TAAI-NR</i>
Concerns ▶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Five per cent GST is not on margins but on the package, with different GST for hotels, IGST and SGST, which makes it tax on tax.</li> <li>❖ We are involved in a lot of foreign business. For export in GST, goods are exempted and services are not. Rules should be the same for all.</li> <li>❖ For outbound, you cannot export the taxes as the place of service is not in India.</li> <li>❖ For hotels, there is a lot of confusion if the GST is on the rack rate, published rate or the charged rate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There is no clarity on the GST imposed on tour operators, which, by law, is 5 per cent. However, there is confusion on whether transportation, as mentioned in the law, includes airfare or not.</li> <li>❖ Buying from another B2B operator would result in the multiplicity of taxes.</li> <li>❖ If we are selling only a hotel and not the entire tour, then we don't fall under the purview of a tour operator.</li> <li>❖ In ticketing, since credit for the air ticket is being directly given to the customer, we have to open our cards and share our client data with the airlines and our business model as well as profit with the customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ If we only sell hotels, it doesn't make a package and would have 18 per cent GST on it. Even hotels with sightseeing come under the 18 per cent slab.</li> <li>❖ Selling a hotel or sightseeing package in any city other than our own city, will not get us input credit. To get the input credit, we need to register in that city.</li> <li>❖ On dealing with a local agent, there would be his margin along with 18 per cent GST. The package would become expensive. There would be IGST and SGST as well.</li> <li>❖ International Online Tour Operators do not come under the same tax regime, despite selling in India.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Recommendations on behalf of the industry were made with respect to the limited information available regarding GST by the government. However, the final notification has many changes.</li> <li>❖ For hotels, the GST should have been 18 per cent. For restaurants, 18 per cent GST is higher and should be brought down to 10-12 per cent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Airlines are asking for the GST number of the client to have the credit generated to the customer.</li> <li>❖ Invoicing and billing is posing as the biggest problem to everyone.</li> </ul>
Suggestions and solutions ▶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The five per cent GST should be on margins only. If not taxing on margins, they should treat us under the same rule as for small traders.</li> <li>❖ Our services should be deemed as export and should be exempted.</li> <li>❖ For hotels, we have asked the government representatives to remove the term '5 star' from the law so that a hotel, when charging ₹4000, pays 18 per cent GST and the same hotel pays 28 per cent for a room of ₹10,000.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The term transportation under GST should include transfers and providing transport services for sightseeing and not airfare.</li> <li>❖ If we are buying from another B2B operator, they should give us input credit.</li> <li>❖ The government should come forward to address the concerns and save the industry.</li> <li>❖ Since the industry is very vibrant, dialogue is needed with all the segments, like inbound, outbound and ticketing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A tax regime should be for everyone and needs to be applicable on outside tour operators selling in India as well. MOT needs to take care of this.</li> <li>❖ Tour operators are not just doing one thing; there are many components, like passport visa, packages, ticketing, sightseeing, insurance, hotels, guide, etc.</li> <li>❖ The tax should be simplified. There is no clarity in the current system. Things need to be smoothened.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The problem needs to be resolved in 2-3 weeks.</li> <li>❖ Five-star hotel is luxury for the person staying there, not otherwise. Hotels are creating business and give a return to the economy. At this juncture, over 50 per cent of tourism infrastructure across the country is unutilised, including convention centres, hotels and transport. The government should look at it and bring a tax regime which makes it competitive internationally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Airlines should not raise the GST invoice to the customer as agents have to give all the data of their client to the airline or the consolidator. This would mean sharing our business secrets with the customer.</li> <li>❖ A lot of clarity is needed in the next 2-3 weeks, to understand how to go about invoicing.</li> </ul>

As told to Nisha Verma




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# Banking on Buddhist circuit

Odisha is going all out to promote its Buddhist heritage and hopes to attract South East Asian tourists through its international air connectivity, informs **Nitin Jawale**, Director-Tourism, Odisha.

AHANA GURUNG

The commencement of international operations at the Bhubaneswar airport has given renewed push for tourism in the state. In 2016, Odisha registered a growth of 9 per cent in domestic arrivals while international visitor receipts grew by 14 per cent. **Nitin Jawale**, Director - Tourism, Government

tion and thanks to our rich religious history and heritage, we feel this is the most appropriate market to tap."

The 4<sup>th</sup> Kalinga International Buddhist Conclave was held in the state earlier this year in a bid to boost religious tourism and hosted numerous monks, tour operators, hotels and various stakehold-

ers. "We are also planning to conduct some roadshows and promotional campaigns in SE Asia. However, we expect to receive significant traffic from other neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka as well, which has a big Buddhist community." The state is looking forward to hosting IATO Convention from September 7-10, in Bhubaneswar.

# Cygnett Park Asia launched in Jammu

Cygnett Hotels and Resorts has forayed in Jammu & Kashmir with its latest opening, Cygnett Park Asia in Jammu. The hotel comes just in time for the city to boost its business, at the same time providing great value for money. Centrally located, the property makes for the perfect destination for leisure as well as business.

Cygnett Park Asia offers well-designed, comfortable rooms and various delicious dining options, along with state-of-the-art modern amenities and facilities. Providing a great blend of traditional hospitality with



contemporary advantages, Cygnett Park Asia is an obvious choice for the discerning traveller looking for a reliable luxe-for-less option.

The property boasts of spacious rooms, offering modern amenities, immediate secretarial services, comfortable beds, and other required services, certainly

making one feel home away from home. One can relish the exquisite Kashmiri cuisine at the Cygnett Park Asia as well.

For relaxation, there are many other facilities, including the swimming pool, as well as an in-house multi-gym, sauna, steam and whirlpool.



**Nitin Jawale**  
Director - Tourism, Government of Odisha  
and Managing Director, Odisha Tourism  
Development Corporation

We expect to receive significant traffic from other neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka as well, which has a big Buddhist community

of Odisha and Managing Director, Odisha Tourism Development Corporation, says they are looking forward to seeing the growth multiply by the end of this year.

"A growth of 150 per cent is expected in terms of foreign arrivals. Several promotional activities are in pipeline and we hope the numbers double this year," he comments.

Odisha's primary focus is Buddhist Tourism owing to the numerous ancient religious sites located in the state. Relics from the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, like the Shanti Stupa and the monastery of Pushpagiri, which are of immense significance for Buddhists, can be found in Lalitagiri, Ratnagiri and Udaygiri hills among many others.

Additionally, Air Asia has commenced direct flights from its capital Kuala Lumpur to Bhubaneswar, giving impetus to tourism. Jawale adds, "Our target is the South-East Asian market since we have direct connectivity to Kuala Lumpur now. It will help open avenues to the other countries as well. The ASEAN countries have a huge Buddhist popula-

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# Will hotels & wedding planners tie the knot?

With the wedding industry pegged at over ₹240,000 crore and expected to grow at 25-30 per cent annually, the market share for destination weddings and tourism has increased for all stakeholders. Representatives from India's hotel giants and wedding planners deliberate on the synergy required to foster growth in this industry.

Moderator	Participants			
 <p><b>▲ Rajeev Jain</b> Director Rashi Entertainment</p>	 <p><b>▲ Hema Hariramani</b> Director, National-Sales- India Marriott Hotels India</p>	 <p><b>▲ Hemant Mendiratta</b> Senior Vice President The Oberoi Hotels and Resorts</p>	 <p><b>▲ Saurabh Bhargava</b> AVP Sales-North Taj Hotels Palace Resorts and Safaris</p>	 <p><b>▲ Vinod Bhandari</b> Partner Wedding Xtraordinaire LLP</p>
<p><b>Working Relationship:</b> Do you trust wedding management agencies for whatever they do will benefit both the parties? Don't you feel that a wedding planner who brings the clients to your hotel should be treated with respect as that increases the chances of closing business with clients?</p>	<p>In metros, most of our weddings come directly while almost 35 per cent of our destination weddings are sourced through wedding planners. We consider wedding planners thorough professionals. We don't entertain undercutting the wedding management companies and work together to protect them as well. We offer educational trips to the wedding planners to inform them about our various offerings as well.</p>	<p>Almost 80 per cent of our destination weddings are through wedding planning companies. We feel that a tripartite contract must be signed between the hotels, wedding management companies and the clients in order to have transparency in business. If a wedding planner is protected by a hotel and then also charges a management fee from the client, then it is important that all the parties are clear on the operating structure.</p>	<p>Even when we get wedding queries directly, we suggest to the clients to hire a wedding planner because these management companies take away a lot of stress when dealing with multiple parties, and become one point of contact. If a wedding planner offers value to the clients, then they pay. Let the client know that the wedding agency is getting a commission from the hotel and they have to pay a management fee as well.</p>	<p>Seven out of 10 weddings are in a 5-star property. Getting dates from the hotels is the most difficult part as they inform us about tentative bookings. While a property and its features are pertinent while choosing a venue for weddings, the relationship with the management and ease of doing business is more important for wedding planners. We put in a lot of effort in managing weddings, but commissions are a way of covering our cost of operations and also, running the infrastructure.</p>
<p><b>Commissions:</b> If a wedding management agency comes to a hotel, you offer commissions on rooms but not on banqueting. Say, an agency brings a wedding which has six banqueting functions and wants 750 rooms, the commission should be on the total value. Don't you think that if you start offering commissions on banqueting as well, then we, the wedding planners, will be able to increase the pricing of your hotel?</p>	<p>Marriott and Starwood together did 3000 weddings at our hotels in 2016. Since social events are more demanding and are mostly banqueting events, we do not offer commissions as such. Rather, we believe on partnership building and incentivising business in general.</p>	<p><b>Based on the inputs gathered from the last edition of Travel Wedding Show, we have implemented the concept of buyouts at our properties.</b> We offer destination weddings only if we can provide a buyout at our properties. The offer is packaged in such a way that a net price is given to the wedding planners who can mark up on the same to their clients. This takes care of the commissions and other expenses.</p>	<p>At times, when the price quoted by the hotel management to a wedding planner is negotiated further due to some business decisions, the client is informed about it first. We are changing this system so that the wedding planners are informed first and they do not lose on their margins.</p>	<p>Even though relationships are most important, a commissionable business model is key as the management fee model is depleting. In a social sector, there is no budget unlike the corporate sector. When a hotel is already charging all the expenses to the client and getting profit from it, then there should be no problem in passing on a percentage of that profit to the wedding planners as well.</p>
<p><b>Differential rates:</b> If a corporate event comes to a hotel, then rooms are offered at, for example, ₹5000 per day, including tea and biscuits twice a day and both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food options. But the same room is offered at ₹8000 to a wedding group. My submission to the hotels is that why there is such vast difference between the room rates for a corporate event and for a wedding?</p>	<p>There is a misconception that corporate room rates are different from rates given for weddings. Most of the corporate events happen in off season while weddings have limited dates and everything has to be accommodated in those dates. Also, the operating cost for F&amp;B services for corporate and weddings is very different, thus the difference in pricing.</p>	<p>We do not offer room rates anymore. The purpose is to offer a package for the entire wedding which can be multiplied with the number of days, and keep it transparent. There is a need to evolve for all the segments.</p>	<p>The corporate business is 365 days a year. A corporate keeps coming back for events but a wedding client comes only once. Even those going in for a second marriage rarely choose hotels to host their big day. Thus, there can be a difference in rates being offered.</p>	<p>There is a huge difference in room rates and F&amp;B prices offered to the corporate clients and the wedding clients. If a corporate comes with a budget while the social sector is more open to spending, the difference should not be impractical.</p>

As told to Ankita Saxena



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# SQ's A350 on Mumbai-Singapore route

In a bid to enhance the travel experience of Indian passengers, Singapore Airlines introduced its Airbus A350 aircraft on its daily service route of Mumbai-Singapore with effect from July 1, 2017.

**SHAHZAD NASIR**

With this development, Mumbai becomes Singapore Airline's 16<sup>th</sup> destination within its network to receive the Airbus A350-900 aircraft. The aircraft is fitted

ing on the occasion, **David Lim**, General Manager-India, Singapore Airlines, said, "Singapore Airlines continually looks for opportunities to enhance the travel experience of our Indian patrons. The launch of A350 services



David Lim  
General Manager-India  
Singapore Airlines

The launch of A350 services to India is a testament to our commitment towards operating a modern and young fleet across the world



A Business Class seat on Singapore Airlines' Airbus A350 aircraft

with 253 seats, in a three-class configuration, with 42 in business class, 24 in premium economy and 187 in economy. Singapore Airlines took delivery of its first A350-900 in March 2016 and now has 15 of the aircraft type in its fleet, with another 52 on firm order, including 7 of an ultra-long-range A350-900ULR variant. Comment-

to India is a testament to our commitment towards operating a modern and young fleet across the world."

The flight departs from Mumbai at 11:45 hours and arrives in Singapore at 19:50 hours, while the flight from Singapore to Mumbai departs at 07:40 hours and arrives in Mumbai at 10:30

hours. The Airline is also celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and so, is offering special fares, starting from ₹22,070, for the Mumbai to Singapore route from July 1, 2017, with tickets valid for travel till April 30, 2018.

## Airbus' New Delhi training centre to be operational by 2018



Airbus and Singapore Airlines recently took **TRAVTALK** on a tour of the Airbus Pilot Transition fixed simulators at their Airbus Asia Training Centre (AATC) in Singapore, led by Capt. BK Chin, Head of Training, AATC. AATC is in discussion with some Indian carriers and in process of getting necessary regulatory approvals from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India for their training centre in New Delhi, scheduled to be operational by 2018. The AATC, a joint venture between Airbus and Singapore Airlines, has 40 airline customers till date. The 9,250 sq.m. facility offers training courses for all in-production Airbus aircraft types. Today the centre has six full-flight simulators, comprising two A330, two A350 XWB, one A380 and one A320.



©Airbus S.A.S 2016 - Photo by Vernon Leow

## ITQ's next stop: Bhubaneswar

ITQ has conducted roadshows in Jaipur and Lucknow with over 50 travel agents and plans to conduct about 20 roadshows across Tier-II and III cities.

**TT BUREAU**



Sandeep Dwivedi  
CCO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient  
India Travel Award winner

In a bid to popularise Travelport and IndiGo's collaboration, which allows the airline's content to be available on the GDS, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, the official distributor of Travelport in India has conducted roadshows in Jaipur and Lucknow until now, with more locations lined up in the coming months. Being attended by around 50 travel agents, the roadshow heads to Bhubaneswar on July 19, 2017.

Giving more details, **Sandeep Dwivedi**, CCO, ITQ, said, "In the next few months, we are planning to conduct over 20 roadshows across India - primarily in the Tier-II and III cities. This new partnership is a dream come true for the travel industry. Not only does this make all IndiGo content available to travel agencies in a single window, it also helps the airline reach a vast travel agency network with its fares and ancillary products. This distribution capability ena-

and booked in exactly the same way."

Dwivedi adds that the Tier-I market has responded with great enthusiasm and has embraced the seamlessness of content availability. This offers a great opportunity for agents to browse the LCC content of one of India's largest domestic airlines along with the content of other full-service carriers in a single window. "The effortless shopping minus the toggling between multiple interfaces saves time and effort of the agent and makes their job much easier," he says.

ITQ has been committed to redefining technology in the travel and tourism domain. Dwivedi adds, "With top-notch technological introduction in the industry and our ever-increasing market value and history of innovation, we are determined to cross as many milestones as possible. We are and will be focused on troubleshooting as many problems as the industry faces today."

This distribution capability enables the airline to provide its content via an API connection rather than the more traditional fare filing methods

bles the airline to provide its content via an API connection rather than the more traditional fare filing methods, often favoured by network carriers, and still have its fares and ancillaries displayed, compared

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# Bringing in the big bucks

The two-day FICCI Tourism Investment Meet set the pace for driving investments for tourism development by bringing together state governments and investors.

**TT BUREAU**

FICCI Tourism Investment Meet was held in New Delhi on July 5-6, 2017, in an attempt to facilitate investment in tourism through one-on-

one meetings. State tourism departments showcased their policies and facilities that would encourage potential investors to capitalise on tourism. Governments of states like Uttarakhanda, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal took part in the meet and solicited investment in tourism infrastructure through presentations and face-to-face pre-scheduled meetings with the investors.



Speaking at the inauguration, **Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson, FICCI Tourism Committee, said, "Three years ago, we embarked on this journey and once again, we are back here to help facilitate investments in tourism infrastructure development. We have gath-

ered investors from all around India - from hotels and resorts, convention centres, theme parks, adventure tourism, roadways, etc. and hope this will give tourism the essential push it needs."

**Rashmi Verma**, Tourism Secretary, Government of India, said, "India has been jumping positions in several tourism-related reports and has been doing well, especially in the month of May, where the growth has been 19.4 per cent and is one of the highest achieved. This has been

encouraging, as May is considered a lean month in our country. However, we have a long way to go and if we really want our industry to reach greater heights, investing in the development of tourism

is the way forward." Other notable personalities present at the inauguration were **Satpal Maharaj**, Minister of Tourism, Government of Uttarakhand; along with **Meenakshi Sundaram**, Tourism Secretary, Government of Uttarakhand; **Hari Ranjan Rao**, MD, Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Council; **Nikhil Sahni**, Senior President and Country Head of Government Relationship Management and Strategic Government Advisory, Yes Bank; and **Rahul Chakravarty**, Senior Director and Head - Tourism, FICCI.

# AI to rise like a phoenix?

► Contd. from page 3

"Disinvestment of Air India was on cards in 2001, when Singapore Airlines backed out of the JV with Tata, which was followed by 9/11 and no airline was interested. Had it been divested to a strategic partner back then, Air India would have been a first-class airline today. Disinvestment is a positive move, because in its present state, Air India is bleeding with debt. It's doing well operationally. The present CMD has done a good job, but the environment is not conducive as it has to compete both on domestic and international sectors."



**Sanat Kaul**  
Chairman, International Foundation for Aviation and Development



**Deepak Bhatnagar**  
MD, Aamantaran Travels

"Over the years, Air India has been doing a good job. The new CMD has taken very bold decisions. Going back to the European source markets is a good move for the airline. I don't think it's a good time to talk about disinvestment and disturb the airline's momentum. I think the government should give them 2-3 years to see how it goes. If it works, then they can consider a joint venture of 49-51, instead of going 100 per cent out of the government fold. The government should keep the majority stake and CMD Ashwani Lohani should be given more time and get a fair chance to deliver."

"Privatisation of Air India is a very complicated issue especially with `52,000 crore debt, it is very difficult for any private sector unit to handle this PSU. The government should take a decision in the interest of the future operation of Air India if it goes to a private player to make it successful and bring it back to its old glory. By privatisation, there would be tremendous growth in passenger traffic, provided proper infrastructure is there. Second, there will be tremendous growth in tourism, and it would have a serious impact on India and its economy, as the civil aviation sector is booming."



**Anil Khaitan**  
Senior Vice President, PHD Chambers of Commerce





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# From destination wedding woes to wows

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Travel Wedding Show, held at Jaipur Marriott Hotel, brought together exhibitors and buyers in a B2B speed-meeting format to transact business and promote the destination wedding market from India.



ANKITA SAXENA

The second edition of the Travel Wedding Show saw a total of nearly 2000 meetings conducted among 32 exhibitors and nearly 64 buyers. Representatives from various hotels like The Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, Taj Hotels Palace Resorts and Safaris, Shangri-La Hotels, Rotana Hotels, Alila Hotels and Resorts, AccorHotels, Marriott Hotels India, Samode Hotels, etc. showcased various properties that can cater to Indian weddings. Various tourism boards, like Austrian National Tourist Office, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism, Tourism Fiji, Holland Tourism, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Cultural Authority, also participated at the Travel Wedding Show to inform the buyers about various offerings of the destination particularly suited to cater to Indian weddings abroad. On the first day, the exhibitors interacted with travel agents specialising in wedding tourism, and on day two, prominent event managers and wedding planners from across the country came under one roof to discuss business opportunities with the exhibitors.

**Rajeev Jain**, Director, Rashi Entertainment, said, "It is a privilege to be a part of this Travel Wedding Show for two consecutive years. It is a very good initiative and is the need of the hour. The wedding market is growing at an exponential rate; it is estimated to grow at least by 20-25 per cent in the next 2-3 years. The market has become competitive with multiple players entering the industry, and we need such shows to bring together the suppliers and buyers of this segment to create a better business module, grow partnerships and increase the revenues out of it."

**Hema Hariramani**, Director, National Sales-India, Marriott Hotels India, complimented the quality of buyer turnout at the show and also informed that the hotel chain managed to receive highly potential leads for further business opportunities. She said, "We are targeting the wedding segment in India very aggressively and for that we have launched 'Shaadi by Marriott,' a one-stop shop for all the needs of this industry. We have also rolled out a package called 'Honeymoon On Us,' which awards the partners who do weddings with us. I feel a lot of Indian weddings are moving

out of India, which is a challenge. India has amazing experiential destinations and we need to educate the audience to contain the revenues within India and grow our economy."

According to **Hemant Mendiratta**, Senior Vice President-Sales, The Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, the table-top for-

mat of the show was very cost effective, crisp and precise, and also, resulted in better return on investments. "The coordination at the show was fantastic; the quality of buyers was well monitored and the show was a fruitful investment of time for us," he said. In the words of **Saurabh Bhargava**, AVP Sales-North, The Taj Hotels



Palace Resorts and Safaris, Indian weddings are increasingly moving towards experiential destinations and have become more intimate. Now, instead of

600-700 guests, the wedding size has reduced to 150-300 invitees and it is expected of the venue to offer an experiential element to the once-in-a-

lifetime event. "The challenge is that the wedding dates are limited, and multiple bookings have to be catered to during this period." ↴



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Surya Palace rebranded as AccorHotels property



Surya Palace, the iconic hotel in Vadodara, has been rebranded to Grand Mercure Vadodara Surya Palace, at a ceremony held in the hotel's grand ballroom.

# More feathers in their cap

Tourism Enterprise has added more DMCs like Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia to their portfolio and aims to grow business by around 20 per cent, reveals **Ravi Gosain**, Managing Director of the company.



TT BUREAU

Tourism Enterprise has recently added new DMCs to their portfolio and will now be catering to the Balkan region as well as Italy, France and Poland. Elaborating on the development, Ravi Gosain, Managing Director, Tourism Enterprise, says, "We have added new DMCs from Balkans (Bulgaria, Ser-

bia and Macedonia), BOHEMIA and ACE Tour for Italy, France and Poland. Although we have got good response for our new destinations which we added mid-season, I am sure they will do better in coming months."

Tourism Enterprise has successfully completed three years and have grown their market share by reach-

ing out to the right crowd, tour operators and travel agents in India. He adds, "We have adopted a systematic approach, both in terms of adding destinations as well reaching important outbound markets. Overall, a considerable growth somewhere between 15-20 per cent on an average is expected in our business."



Ravi Gosain  
Managing Director,  
Tourism Enterprise

Training of counter staff or sales staff of travel agencies should be mandatory for more product knowledge for outbound destinations

This season has witnessed Dubai, Greece and Central Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria) to be to most popular destinations among Indians he states.

In coming months, Gosain has planned an extensive marketing campaign through print and online social media, product knowledge sessions in major cities, as well as study tours and Fam trips to destinations promoted by the company. He feels that more training the staff is the need of the hour to be able to sell the destinations better. "Training of counter staff or sales staff of travel agencies should be mandatory for more product knowledge for outbound destinations," he says. "It will reduce the complaints and ease the job of DMC's to provide better services to Indian tourists. Tourism boards from different countries are doing great job in this area."

**New additions**

- ↳ The company has added new DMCs from Balkans (Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia), BOHEMIA and ACE Tour for Italy, France and Poland
- ↳ They have planned an extensive marketing campaign through print and online social media, product knowledge sessions in major cities, as well as study tours and Fam trips to destinations promoted by the company

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# Air Canada spreads its wings to Mumbai

Canada's national airline, Air Canada, celebrated its inaugural Mumbai-Toronto-Mumbai direct non-stop service as well as Canada Day with a grand cocktail dinner in Mumbai. The evening had a Bollywood theme and was attended by corporates, travel operators, diplomats and socialites.





## ETAA organises edu trip to Hampi

The Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) South Chapter plans to keep Goa as its next destination for 'Destination Expert Programme'.

**HAZEL JAIN**

The Enterprising Travel Agent's Association (ETAA) South Chapter organised a four-day educational trip for its members to Hampi. This was under its 'Destination Expert Programme' and was held from June 28-July 1, 2017.

Sharing more details is **MP Joy**, Board Member and Chapter Chairman (South In-



**MP Joy**  
Board Member and Chapter Chairman (South India), ETAA

Seeing is believing and exploring the real Hampi with experts has helped our members understand the product better

dia), who says, "Forty-six members signed up for this programme that was held in Badami. From the tourism point of view, Hampi is a gold mine which is yet to be explored. There is growing demand for Hampi, for leisure packages as well as conferences. That is why we chose this destination. Seeing is believing and exploring the real Hampi with experts has helped our members understand the product better. We even conducted a test after the training. We issued our 'Destination Expert Certificate' to participants which can be displayed in their office." The programme involved resort visits, sightseeing, attending destination presentation by experts, as well as games. The team stayed at Orange County Resort, Heritage Resort and Royal Orchid Keerthi Resorts.

The association is scheduled to have its board meeting

in Mumbai on July 26, 2017, where the team will discuss the plan of action for the rest of the year. "We will be discussing about new sub chapters in South India (Chennai and Kerala) and other matters," Joy reveals.

## Cruise Club is CLIA's executive Asia partner

Cruise Lines International Association has appointed Cruise Club as its first executive partner in Asia.



**Tarique Hussain**  
Director  
Cruise Club

Cruise Club Vacations will now be CLIA's first executive partner (Travel & Tourism) in the Asian region. Commenting on the partnership, **Tarique Hussain**, Director, Cruise Club, said, "In appointing Cruise Club as the first Executive Partner (Travel & Tourism) for CLIA in Asia, the partnership recognises the contribution Cruise Club has made in the Indian cruising industry in training and empowering travel agents to grow their cruise business from India. India is one of the fastest growing



**Peter Kollar**  
Head of International Training & Development  
CLIA

source markets for cruise lines, and Indian guests are now expanding their horizon from mainstream and popular cruises to exploring

luxury, expedition, river and small ship cruising."

**Peter Kollar**, Head of International Training & Development, Cruise Lines International Association, has been working closely with Cruise Club to get the programmes on its way. He said, "We value the focus on training that Cruise Club brings, and through this partnership, Cruise Club will work with us and represent CLIA at regional cruise trainings and introduce CLIA to the Indian travel industry."



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# Making destination weddings

The stakeholders of the wedding industry and tourism and hospitality sector from across the country came together to network with one another to facilitate business from and within India during the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Travel Wedding Show held at Jaipur Marriott Hotel.





# in India an exuberant affair





# 1<sup>st</sup> Arabian Travel Awards charms Middle East

Durga Das Publications presented the first-ever Arabian Travel Awards on July 4, 2017, at the JW Marriott Hotel Dubai. Over 150 notable personalities of the Middle East travel and tourism industry were present to celebrate the winners. **Dr. Tanushree Pandey**, Gladrags Mrs. India, along with **SanJeet**, Mentor, Arabian Travel Awards, and **Sumeera Bahl**, Director, Durga Das Publications, handed out the awards to the winners. Due recognition was given to each sector in the industry through 48 categories of awards.



**FACE OF THE FUTURE**  
Kulwant Singh



**BEST CRUISE PROFESSIONAL**  
Lakshmi Durai



**BEST GENERAL MANAGER**  
Dominic Sherry



**BEST TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL**  
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**BEST TRAVEL AND TOURISM CONSULTANT**  
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# South Africa awaits 100,000 Indians in 2017

South African Tourism hopes that the ranking of India will raise higher from the 8<sup>th</sup> spot, with its annual mega training event aptly titled 'Learn South Africa'. The target is to cross 100,000 Indian tourists this year.



TT BUREAU

South African Tourism (SAT) picked Mumbai to start its 17-city training programme that it calls 'Learn South Africa' – and aptly so. The city has consistently been the top source market for driving tourist traffic in to South Africa. Mumbai's session witnessed an impressive attendance of 150 travel players. The seventh edition of

in South Africa has been on a rise amongst Indian travellers over the past few years and is expected to continue in 2017. Last year was a milestone year for us at South African Tourism in India and we are determined to set new benchmarks for the industry as well as ourselves by making 2017 bigger and better. Our internal target is to welcome more than 100,000 Indian visitors in 2017."

Indian leisure numbers to South Africa surged 21.7 per cent during 2016 to close at 95,377, climbing to number 8 among South Africa's international source markets. This is vis-à-vis 78,385 arrivals in 2015. Last year also saw the overall spends from India (only in-country on-tour spends, excluding flights and attractions, hotels booked in advance) crossing 1.2 billion ZAR by the year end.

Slabber also revealed a significant trend about Indian travellers to South Africa. "Not only do Indians make for the top two nationalities to undertake the thrilling Bloukrans Bridge bungee, they also rank number 3 in undertaking shark-cage diving in South Africa. Both these trends point to a fast-emerging group of travellers that are adventurous," she adds.

## What to expect at 'Learn SA'

The sessions give agents updates about new products in South Africa and basics like visa and logistical know-how. New destinations being promoted include Oudtshoorn, Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, Port Elizabeth and the Drakensberg region. Some of the participating South African suppliers include DMCs like Africa Incoming, Trav Care, Tourvest Destination Management, African Link, Centurion Travel and Tours and Southern Africa 360; also hotel chains such as Tsogo Sun and Sun International and RwandAir are also showcasing their products.



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

Our internal target is to welcome more than 100,000 Indian visitors in 2017

'Learn South Africa' (Learn SA) that it is conducting along with the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) will cover metros as well as Tier-II and III markets.

On the Indian market, Hanneli Slabber, Country Manager India, SAT, says, "The preference for holidays

## AssociationSpeak



Lokesh Bettaiah  
Hon. Secretary General, TAAI

Lokesh Bettaiah, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI, says, "TAAI's endeavor through training programmes is to educate travel agents so that it is easy for the staff of travel companies to effectively sell the product. With South African Tourism, this is the second time that we have undertaken this training. We are happy that the trade is getting exclusive marketing tips from the SAT team and stakeholders from SA who have come to India."

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# Maya reaches Dubai to spellbind all

► Contd. from page 22



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1115 - 1145Hrs	Redefining Travel Commerce	Team Interglobe Technology Quotient (ITQ)
1145 - 1200Hrs	Innovative International remittances & Forex - Earn additional revenues!	Team FXKart
1200 - 1215Hrs	Set Sail on Genting Cruise Lines ( Star / Dream / Crystal Cruise )	Team Genting Hong Kong
1215 - 1245Hrs	How to safeguard your Business from Cyber Threats	Team Prevoyance Cyber Forensic
1245 - 1300 Hrs	Travel Ancillary Services - The Next Growth Engine	Team TrawellTag - Cover More
1300 - 1315Hrs	Destination Spain presentation*	Team Tourism office of Spain
1315 - 1400Hrs	Lunch Hosted by GPS	
1400 - 1415 Hrs	Together we can Grow	Team Sahibji Group of Companies
1415 - 1430 Hrs	Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool for Travel Agents	Team Furturica
1430 - 1715Hrs	Insight to Goods & Service Tax (GST) for Travel & Tourism Industry	CA Manish Gadia - GMJ & Co.
1715 - 1730Hrs	How to make your business GST compliant Boost your business	Team Infozeal/ Clear Tax
1730 - 1800 Hrs	Boost Your Business**	Team Venture Marketing

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# EVENT TALK

## JULY 2017

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
GBT A 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

## SEPTEMBER 2017

TTF	Ahmedabad	1-3
Mauritius Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	2
German National Tourism Organisation roadshow	Delhi NCR	4-5
German National Tourism Organisation roadshow	Ahmedabad	6
German National Tourism Organisation roadshow	Mumbai	7-8
IATO Convention	Bhubaneswar	7-10
TTF	Surat	8-10
Busan International Travel Fair	Busan, South Korea	8-11
OTOAI Convention	Ras Al Khaimah	12-15
Czech Tourism roadshow	Bengaluru	13
PATA Travel Mart	Macau	13-15

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# HRANI looks to dispel GST doubts

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Northern India (HRANI) held a seminar for its members on Goods and Services Tax (GST) at The Imperial, New Delhi recently.



KANCHAN NATH

The Hotels and Restaurant Association of Northern India organised a GST seminar for its members at The Imperial, New Delhi, on July 6, 2017. The seminar was attended by nearly 80 members of HRANI which led to elaborate discussions on the new tax regime.

Addressing the gathering, **Sanjay Sood**, President, HRANI, said, "We welcome the new reform in the tax system—GST, and especially Ms. Rashmi Verma's proactive support to us, that resulted in the threshold of ₹5000 being increased to ₹7500 for the 28 per cent tax category."

Highlighting the main concern of hoteliers, **Surinder Jaiswal**, Honorary Secretary, HRANI, said, "We are very happy to get GST. Our main concern is that we expected lower rates of not more than 12 per cent." He pointed out that in Uttar Pradesh, there was only 5 per cent luxury tax and



9 per cent service tax coming to about 14 per cent, which has now been increased to 28 per cent. "Ultimately, this tax has to come from the consumer, but in the process of earning revenue we are going to lose out on travellers and our properties will be adversely affected."

**Sungita Sharma**, Principal Additional Director General (Vigilance), Government of India, said, "Our assessment shows that there is more concern in the tour operator sector than the hotel sector. This week we must concretise every problem so that we refer it to the law committee which can further brief the GST Council as to what is the way ahead. I am

here to capture your pain points and communicate them to the Council."

Addressing the gathering, **Rashmi Verma**, Secretary Tourism, Government of India, said, "This misconception that the rate has gone higher under GST, I think, is because of lack of communication. In effect, the rate for the hotel industry by and large has come down from 20 per cent to 18 per cent. As per my analysis; we found out that almost 90 per cent of the classified hotels come under the 18 per cent tax slab. It's only the remaining 10 per cent of the hotels, among the classified category, with suites and super luxury rooms and that

too in bigger cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru or Delhi, that fall under the 28 per cent tax bracket under GST."

On the GST cell, she adds, "We have already established a GST cell 15 days ago. Gyan Bhushan, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Tourism, is heading that cell and we have already started receiving a lot of queries. There is a dedicated number and Email ID on which you can raise any concern you have on the operational aspect or anything you fail to understand about GST. In the cell, we are also in the process of engaging a consultant who is well versed on GST." ↓



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**Shangri-La Hotels**

**Hong Kong**

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Oliver Bonke** as its new President and Chief Operating Officer. Reporting to Shangri-La Asia Limited Chief Executive Officer, LIM Beng Chee, Bonke will take up the responsibilities with effect from September 1, and will be based at Shangri-La's headquarters in Hong Kong. Bonke has nearly 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, most recently with Loews Hotels as the Chief Commercial Officer. Prior to joining Loews Hotels, he was CCO for InterContinental Hotels Group in the Americas; he was also worked with Starwood Hotels and Resorts in Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.



**The Orchid**

**Pune**

The Orchid, Pune, has recently appointed **Rajesh Kumar Gupta** as its new General Manager. Gupta is a Hotel Management graduate with an industry experience of 19 years. He has been associated with properties like Hyatt, Shangri-La (Delhi) and Lalit Hotels to name a few. For the last four years, Gupta was working with The Orchid, Mumbai. A commerce graduate from Calcutta University, Gupta has also done a three-year diploma course in Hotel and Catering Management. He has also successfully completed the Special General Managers Programme from Ecorneel Singapore.



**TravelBullz**

**New Delhi**

TravelBullz appoints **Amit Paul Singh** as General Manager-India. With over 13 years of experience in the travel and tourism business, Singh brings in a lot of expertise in both Sales and Operations. In his new role, Singh will be responsible for the overall business for FIT from India. Prior to this, Singh was the National Head-B2B Sales, Ezeego One Tours & Travels. He has also been associated with Kuwait Airways, TATA AIG General Insurance and Worldspan. After completing his Bachelor of Commerce from Delhi University, he did MBA in Marketing from Symbiosis, Pune, and Diploma in Basic Fares & Ticketing Course from IITTM, New Delhi.



**Jaipur Marriott Hotel**

**Jaipur**

**Monica Suri** is the new General Manager at Jaipur Marriott Hotel. Prior to this, she was the General Manager at Le Meridien Kochi. Suri started her journey as a hotel management trainee with The Taj Hotels Palaces and Resorts in the F&B service department. Then started working with Le Meridien Ahmedabad, and after a year, she also became the Corporate Trainer for a set of six hotels in Tanzania. She was responsible for Westin Hyderabad Mindspace during its pre-opening. She has also worked as the Complex Director of HR and Training at The Westin Sohna Resort and Spa and The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi.



**Concept Hospitality (The Fern Hotels)**

**Mumbai**

**Noshir A Marfatia** is the new Senior Vice President-Sales & Marketing at Concept Hospitality (The Fern Hotels). A seasoned hospitality professional, he has experience in developing and managing unit and regional sales teams, among other feats. His career of over 30 years includes stints at The Oberoi Hotels, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts, The Park Hotels and Advani Hotels & Resorts (Ramada Caravela Beach Resort Goa). Marfatia has done MBA in Marketing & Finance from SP Jain Institute of Management, Mumbai and is an alumni of The Oberoi School of Hotel Management.



**Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity**

**New Delhi**

**Deepak Verma** is the new Director of Sales, Pullman & Novotel New Delhi Aerocity. An MBA in Marketing with Finance and International Business, Verma was earlier working with the Hyatt Regency, New Delhi. Starting his decade-long career with The Leela Palaces Hotels & Resorts, he has worked with leading hospitality brands. The list includes, apart from the Hyatt and Pullman & Novotel, Mövenpick Hotel & Spa, Bangalore and also The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences.



**ibis New Delhi Aerocity**

**New Delhi**

**Anuj Chaudhry** has been appointed as the new Hotel Manager at ibis New Delhi Aerocity. Chaudhry has over 13 years of experience in hospitality, of which 10+ years have been with AccorHotels India. Prior to this appointment, Chaudhry was working in the capacity of Director of Operations in the same property. He got enrolled in the GM Pass Asia Program in 2012, which is AccorHotels' premier General Manager development programme, and completed it successfully. Chaudhry did his BA in Hotel Management from IHM Aurangabad and University of Huddersfield in 2004.



**Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport**

**Kochi**

**Vikas Kumar** is Courtyard by Marriott Kochi Airport's new Hotel Manager. Prior to his new role, Kumar was the Director of Operations at JW Marriott Hotel, Chandigarh. A veteran in the hospitality industry with over 16 years of experience, especially in the food and beverage department, Kumar has previously worked with properties like W Retreat & Spa Maldives, Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel, Sheraton Dammam Hotel & Convention Centre and Novotel Hyderabad International Convention Centre. Kumar is a Hotel Management graduate from IHMCT, Kerala.



**Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel**

**Gachibowli**

Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, Gachibowli, recently announced the appointment of **Ram Shetty** as Director of Rooms. Shetty comes with a broad spectrum of knowledge and an experience of 13 years in the hospitality industry. Prior to his current role, Shetty was the Director of Rooms at Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Hotel Management and Catering Technology from Regency College, Osmania University, Hyderabad. He has previously been associated with prestigious hotel brands like Novotel, Marriott Hotels & Resorts, The Westin and The Taj.

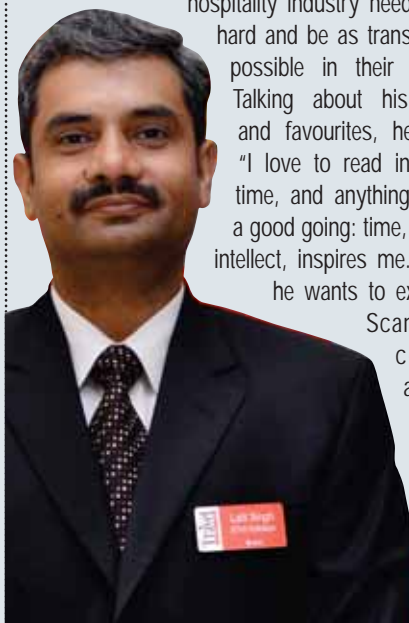


**TALKing People**

**Alisha Shirodkar Aggarwal**, Marketing Director, Tamarind Global, finds inspiration in the smallest as well as the biggest of things. "My parents inspire me every day. My multi-talented mother, who is a fabulous cook, homemaker, wife, mother, creative director, published author and artist, has been one of my biggest inspirations," she says. She loves travelling and has great memories of family holidays in Thailand, Bali, The Philippines and Cambodia. "One moment that stands out in my memory is swimming with the whale sharks in Cebu. My honeymoon in southern Italy was very exotic," Aggarwal adds.



**Lalit Singh**, Chief Operating Officer, STHI Group, believes that hard work is the only investment that never fails. Work is Singh's passion and he feels that the young professionals entering the travel and hospitality industry need to strive hard and be as transparent as possible in their business. Talking about his hobbies and favourites, he reveals, "I love to read in my free time, and anything that has a good going: time, people or intellect, inspires me." Further, he wants to explore the Scandinavian countries at ease and also visit South Africa.



**Samina Munshi**, Director, N. Chirag Travels, is a workaholic. Her work drives her in life and she draws inspiration from her family to move ahead of all obstacles. For today's generation, she has this to say: "I feel the young generation that is entering the travel and hospitality industry needs to be focused and have a vision." She loves to pamper herself in free time. "I love to get a massage and relax whenever I get time. I also love to watch movies and read about the entertainment industry," she says. Having seen umpteen countries of the world, the destinations that are still in her bucket list are Russia, Iceland, Croatia, Kenya and Egypt.





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# Air Canada bullish on India

Air Canada continues to invest in the India market, not just in terms of new and expanded direct services but also through the number of airplanes deployed here. This, says **Duncan Bureau**, Vice President, Global Sales, Air Canada, represents over \$500 million in terms of capital deployment.



HAZEL JAIN

**Q Where does India figure in the scheme of things for Air Canada?**

In terms of India, we are extremely pleased to have started our new Mumbai-Toronto direct non-stop service, four times a week starting July 2, 2017. Our advanced bookings look good too. We are very happy with the demand and we would certainly like to see that grow into higher frequency. That would then complement our operations for services from Toronto to Delhi and Vancouver to Delhi.

**Q Does that mean the airline will increase its investment in the market?**

Air Canada is very bullish on India. We have tremendous support here from the business community. We continue to invest in the market. If you look at the amount of capital investment that Air Canada has made into this market in terms of the number of airplanes deployed here, it represents over \$500 million in terms of capital deployment.

**Q Why has India become important for Air Canada?**

If you look at the capacity that we have put in to this market in a very short time, India represents a very strategic investment for us. We have a brand new airplane on the additional frequency linking Mumbai, in fact, the airplane that I came on was 10 days old. So we have our best equipment coming into India. It is our 787-900 series airplane, which is the newest addition to our fleet. This in itself indicates that we are committed to this market. We could have deployed them anywhere in the world, but we always look at what our returns on investment capital would be if we deploy them into India as against deploying it somewhere else in the world. This is why we made a choice of coming to Mumbai and increasing our capacity into Delhi which we have done in the last 18 months.

**Q Would you be adding more cities to the India route?**

We are constantly looking at new markets and although we have no announcements just yet, we're constantly looking at opportunities here. There are many cities in India that we find very at-

tractive and we are in discussions with a number of different airports right now.

**Q What about connecting to South India directly?**

Currently, we have connections to South India through our SPA agreements, although we don't have any direct service there. But we are looking at new markets and South India is the market we would consider when adding new destinations.

**Q What is your promotional strategy for India?**

We are very happy with the load factors right now. Once you get to a certain load factor, the next focus for any airline would be to improve yield. That would come in the form of the fact that we have a really good business-class product, with

another market, whether it is the Middle East or Europe. Non-stop service is very attractive, particularly to the business travellers as they want to get work done while flying.

**Q How is Air Canada performing globally?**

Air Canada has been one of the fastest-growing airlines in the world in the last five years. In 2009, we were doing about \$9 billion in top-line revenue. In 2017, we will do \$16.3 billion. So we have almost doubled our size in the last six or seven years. Our plan is to grow Air Canada to \$20 billion by 2020. That means that we will be operating in 260 markets with a brand new fleet. So, by 2020, we will have replaced a vast majority of our fleet with the narrow-body 737 Max aircraft. We have 65



“Currently, we have connections to South India through our SPA agreements, although we don't have any direct service there. But we are looking at new markets and South India is the market we would consider when adding new destinations.”

**Duncan Bureau**  
Vice President-Global Sales  
Air Canada

a very strong premium economy product. Our strategy will be to have as many products on as many shelves as possible. So we leverage both, the traditional high street agency, TMCs and OTAs, as well as our own website. We have competitive pricing in the market and a lot of partnerships in the market through our GSAs and travel agency partners.

**Q How has the direct competition affected competition?**

Prior to our direct service to India, we were first flying to Europe and then to India through one of our partners. Now, with the non-stop service, people want to fly non-stop on Air Canada. This suggests that we have taken a significant share away from the competing carriers who are doing a one stop over

of those on order. We will have the C series, of which we have ordered 90. Then we will have a full 787 to complement our fleet; we have ordered 35 of those with the options of up to 50 of those aircraft. Again, we will have re-fleeted a lot of our Airbus equipment and some of that equipment will leave the organisation, while some will move in to Air Canada Rouge.

**Quick Facts**

- ↪ Four times a week service between Mumbai and Toronto from July 2, 2017
- ↪ Daily service operational on the Delhi-Toronto-Delhi route
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