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Market small for big numbers

As he gets set to take office after the recent Cabinet reshuffle, the newly-appointed Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism, **Alphons Kannanthanam** expresses that India needs to carry its ancient history in stride and reflect the Incredible India tagline through a cleaner and well-marketed country.



NIKHIL ANAND

The Ministry of Tourism recently welcomed the new Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism, **Alphons Kannanthanam**, a retired 1979-batch IAS officer, as he assumed charge of office. The bureaucrat-turned politician from Kerala has added several feathers to his cap during his administrative and political career, and earned the moniker 'Demolition Man' as the Commissioner of the Delhi Development Authority for demolishing several illegal constructions in the national capital.

Kannanthanam is also known for his strong views on

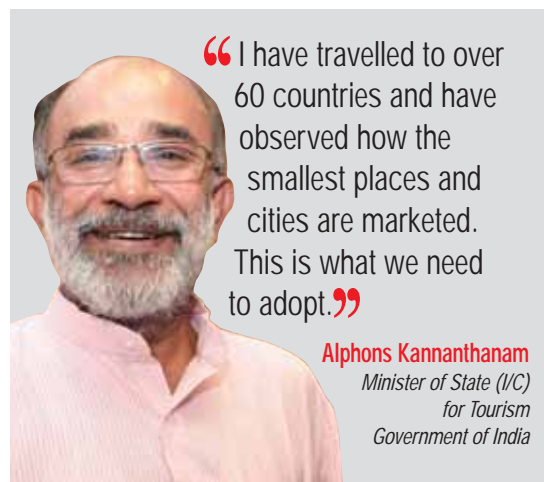
corruption and for pioneering the literacy movement in India by making Kottayam the first 100 per cent literate town in India.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, he said, "India is one of the oldest civilisations in the world, with a 5000-year-old history and rich culture. We first have to proudly own this before we encourage more people to discover the country's beauty. We are so much more of an incredible country and the world needs to see this."

He added that interlinked schemes like the 'Swachh Bharat' campaign and 'Digital

India' would be key in achieving the vision that will truly reflect the tagline 'Incredible India'. "I am proud to be a small part of PM Modi's big dream and we will work to ensure the growth of tourism. With the country's resources at hand, we need to grow multiple times," he stated.

Kannanthanam, in his own way, has made sizeable contribution to tourism in his state as a civil servant by playing an instrumental role in putting Munnar on the tourism map. "No one was aware of Munnar, not even Keralites!" he reflected. "It finally came on the national, and gradually on the international



"I have travelled to over 60 countries and have observed how the smallest places and cities are marketed. This is what we need to adopt."

Alphons Kannanthanam
Minister of State (I/C)
for Tourism
Government of India

map after it was developed as a destination. I have travelled to over 60 countries in the world and have observed

how the smallest places and cities are marketed. This is what we need to adopt." Similarly, he claims to have

recommended Kumarakom to the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who holidayed at the backwaters during the winter of 2000. It was this high-profile visit that promoted development in the otherwise unknown destination and achieved new found glory for Kumarakom.

Know your Minister

- Kannanthanam was one of the toppers of the IAS examinations in 1979
- He quit the IAS in 2006, and was elected MLA from Kanjirappally in Kottayam district
- Kannanthanam is also a practicing advocate

MOT presses for 'Adopt a Heritage'

Not only has the Centre announced a new campaign jointly with ASI, it is also giving final touches to its 'Incredible India' version 2.0 that will be market-specific and based on India's thematic circuits.



HAZEL JAIN FROM BHUBANESWAR

New Campaign

Two huge announcements were made by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, at the inauguration ceremony of the 33rd IATO Annual Convention that recently concluded in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Speaking at the event, Tourism Secretary, **Rashmi Verma** said, "The Centre needs the private sector to pitch in and bring in more investment in this sector. To facilitate this, we are in the process of launching a new campaign called 'Adopt a Heritage' in association with Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for upgrading facilities at some of the key ASI monuments. The idea is to offer these monuments up for adoption to the public and

private sectors for setting up world-class infrastructure and maintenance of that monument. This includes the toilets and the overall cleanliness inside and outside the monument premises. I think this collaborative effort between the government and the private sector will help us present a world-class tourism experience to the international as well as domestic tourists."

Incredible India 2.0

Verma added that the inbound traffic recorded a growth of 9.7 per cent in 2016 and this year till August 2017 the growth has been encouraging at 15.7 per cent. "But we cannot be complacent. If we want to compete, we need to

"We are in the process of launching a new campaign called 'Adopt a Heritage' in association with Archaeological Survey of India for upgrading facilities at some of the key monuments."

Rashmi Verma
Secretary, Ministry of
Tourism



have a competitive edge and create innovative marketing initiatives. We have come up with a global media campaign and MOT is now in the process of launching Incredible India 2.0 campaign which is going to be thematic in nature

and will be market-specific. The earlier campaign was generic and the entire idea was to create awareness about India as a tourist destination. This campaign will target the key markets and

emerging markets looking at their requirements such as the kind of experiences they are looking for. It will also be based on thematic circuits, which we are promoting under our 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme."

Guide Issue

Verma added that the Ministry has also resolved the issue of lack quality tourist guides after IATO had raised this issue. "They are our first line of defense. We are starting guide training programmes and will issue licenses for the guides jointly with ASI. We have also upgraded our website and made it more personalised. The industry also needs to upgrade their website and share their content with us," she added.

These announcements made by the MOT adhered to IATO's theme for this convention. To this, Verma said, "It is time we all re-invented ourselves, whether it is the Government of India in terms of its policies and marketing strategies, the state governments in terms of infrastructure development, aggressive marketing and coming up with new tourism products, and the industry at large, which has to collaborate with the governments to come up with world-class infrastructure in various destinations.

"The use of technology has become a buzzword in tourism sector also. There is demand for experiential tourism and a growth in cruise tourism and a preference for thematic packages," she concluded.

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Ladakh venue for EDWIN's debut

Global Panorama Showcase has introduced Educational Destination Workshop International (EDWIN) to educate and offer first-hand experience of destinations to agents from Tier-II and Tier-III markets.



Educational Destination Workshop International (EDWIN) is a series of workshops organised by GPS. The first EDWIN is being organised to Ladakh in association with Overland Escape and Ravine Trek from October 11-16, 2017. The workshops are exclusively by invitation and available to the attendees (exhibitors/ buyers) of GPS 2017 at any of the six cities – Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Kochi, Kolkata and Pune, informs **Harmandeep Singh Anand**, Managing Director, Global Panorama Showcase.

The registration is on first-come-first-serve basis. Anand says, "These workshops are not familiarisation trips and are intended for educational purposes. The aim is to educate and empower the travel



Harmandeep Singh Anand
India Travel Award winner and Managing Director, Global Panorama Showcase

Within 24 hours of the invitation, we received an overwhelming response of over 150 registrations and over 200 enquiries for the event

agents and tour operators from the Tier-II and Tier-III markets by giving them a first-hand experience of the destination as this would give them an exact idea of what they have been selling or would want to sell to their clients. This would also help in understanding whether the destination and the products and services experienced at the destination is suitable for their clients or not."

Upon completion of the workshop, the participants will be issued a certificate as a Destination Specialist (EDWIN'S). Elaborating on the process of registration and the deliverables under EDWIN-Ladakh, Anand explains, "There is a highly subsidised registration fee of `17,000 per person, which includes airfare ex Delhi; accommodation on twin-sharing basis; meals; sightseeing and transfers and ground handling. Within

24 hours of the invitation, we received an overwhelming response of over 150 registrations and over 200 enquiries for the event. However, for the current edition a maximum of 50 travel agents are being accepted."

He further points out that the company is open to work with destinations, both domestic and international, which are keen on promoting their products to the Tier-II and -III markets. "The upcoming destinations under EDWIN include Bali, Zanzibar, Malaysia, Star Cruises and many more are in the pipeline. The workshop in Zanzibar is expected to take place in November this year," adds Anand. For the current trip to Ladakh, the company has partnered with Vistara while for Indonesia and Malaysia, EDWIN has tied-up with Singapore Airlines/Silkair. ↴

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Change is inevitable

The last month saw big rejigs at major government offices, especially the ones related to tourism. It's only been a few months since Rashmi Verma joined as the new Tourism Secretary and now MOT has another new face with Tourism Minister Alphons Kannanthanam taking charge. In fact, the ministry has also seen the inclusion of a new Director General, Satyajeet Rajan. Another major change of office happened with Air India CMD, Ashwani Lohani becoming the Chairman of Railway Board, replacing A. K. Mittal who reportedly resigned owing moral responsibility of the Puri-Haridwar Utkal Express derailment in Uttar Pradesh. While Lohani goes back to Railways, where he has had many achievements to his credit before, joining in his place is Rajiv Bansal as the CMD of Air India at least for the next three months. This change is crucial, especially when the government is looking at the disinvestment of the national carrier. However, with new names there are new expectations, and we hope that all of them work towards making India as incredible as we want to see it.

India in(re)bound

We have many Indias within this country. Exotic India, unsafe India, cultural India, slumdog India, democratic India, and spiritual India are just some of them. Unfortunately, in our haste to project our country as THE destination for tourism to the rest of the world, we try and promote all the good things. Fortunately for us, this worked for a little while. Or perhaps foreign travellers still decided to come despite the chaotic messaging, the unsatisfactory service and poor infrastructure. So how do we promote a country that is so varied, so plural, so myriad in nature? The individual states and UTs need to come forward with adequate help from the Centre – financial as well as moral support. The states also need to thoroughly narrow down their offering to perhaps one or two products. That is how they will be able to sell their appeal and to specific markets. MOT's new idea of launching market-specific campaign-Incredible India 2.0-is more like it. Of course, nothing will work well and on a sustained basis if the product itself is flawed. Like all ad companies will tell you – don't touch a product unless it delivers on its promises.

Insure against claim rejections

Often travel agents and tour operators pay little or no attention to travel insurance and it is looked upon as an obligation. Here are some points that agents should inform their clients to avoid their travel insurance claim from getting rejected.

Planning a vacation for clients can sometimes get stressful in an effort to make it perfect and memorable for them. However, many travel agents and tour operators pay little attention to a crucial element – travel insurance – which is often acquired more as an obligation than as a protective cover against risks involved in travelling on a foreign land. Worse, your client could get a shock when their claim gets rejected due to their carelessness in dealing with the policy. Here are some circumstances under which their travel insurance claim can get rejected that you, as the service provider, can help them understand.

Incorrect information:

One of the major reasons to affect claims settlement is inaccurate information furnished by the claimant while explaining the circumstances under which the loss/damage has occurred. For example, if the insured has incurred a loss due to neglect (leaving valuables on display in car or baggage kept unattended or unlocked etc), it may result in non-settlement. Similarly, if the insured gets involved in an accident under the influence of alcohol or any intoxicating drugs, the insurance company can reject the claim. If the insured - while applying

for insurance - has not answered all questions truthfully and accurately, the claim can be rejected later on.

Undeclared medical conditions:

Often, we gloss over the need to declare existing medical conditions in the insurance form. However, this could prove a costly mistake. In case the existing medical condition leads to an accident or falling sick in the transit, you could end up paying your own money for the treatment without any reimbursement.

Exclusions in the policy:

You will have to look for exclusions in every policy and judge whether you need them or not. These are the most common reasons for international travel insurance claims getting rejected. Travellers mostly buy a policy by merely signing and paying the premium rather than reading a single line though they will take extreme care to fill up other travel documents such as visas. Hence, it is advisable for clients to understand the terms and conditions of a policy before buying one to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

Missing documentation:

When the client files a claim, ensure that it is substantiated with enough proof

such as copy of bills and receipts (especially if it is a medical emergency), proving that they have availed the services. Moreover, they may furnish or keep ready contact details of the doctor who treated them.

Adventure activities:

If the clients injure themselves while indulging in an adventure sport, the claim is unlikely to be entertained as majority of policies are unclear regarding which sports should be categorised as adventure sports and a risk to life.

Travelling against international advisory:

Foreign and Commonwealth Offices (FCO) and World Health Organisation (WHO) have a list of locations and places that are termed risky or unsafe for travel. If your clients are planning a vacation to such blacklisted areas, an insurance claim will be rejected outright.

Claiming beyond a time frame:

Insurance companies usually expect travellers to file a police report or seek medical assistance within 24 hours for their claim to be viewed as valid. Thus, a prompt record of the same on paper can get them faster reimbursement.

Changing rules:

The insurance company will modify or alter rules as per regulatory or internal guidelines. Travellers must read and understand the terms and conditions. The insurance company may be well within its right to reject the claim but if clients feel aggrieved with the decision, they have a right to complain.

They must check details of their policy to see if the explanation offered by the company is a valid reason for the rejection. Sometimes, poorly explained documents can hamper their claims.

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



Sukhesh Bhawe
Deputy Vice President
(Accident & Health Claims)
SBI General Insurance

India's promising inbound growth

In Q2 2017, international visitor arrivals to the 27 Asia Pacific destinations was a combined inbound total of 83.7 mn with 6.9 per cent growth over the same period last year.

Asia and The Pacific top inbound performers (by IVAs Growth – Y-O-Y)



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INDONESIA ↑ 19.4%

THE PACIFIC

NORTHERN MARIANAS ↑ 41.0%
NEW ZEALAND ↑ 16.2%

South Asia reported a year-on-year growth of 18.2 per cent, driven mainly by a gain of IVAs to India with a growth rate of 22.4 per cent.

Within Asia and the Pacific, Thailand has remained top of the chart with 1.1 million visitor arrivals from Europe, reporting 8.6 per cent increase during 2Q 2017.

Source: Key highlights of Quarterly Tourism Monitor (QTM) 2Q 2017

Mumbai prepares to cruise away

The Mumbai Port Trust has set lofty targets for the next five years to jumpstart cruising in the city. Under the watchful eye of the Ministry of Shipping, this just might become a reality. However, it's not all smooth sailing for the sector as the issue of taxation for cruises still remains unresolved.



HAZEL JAIN

After the colossal ₹8 lakh crore-Sagarmala programme that is being orchestrated by the Ministry of Shipping, the cruise tourism project seems to be one that has involved a lot of key government agencies which have put in coordinated effort towards a common goal. This

passengers to four million (40 lakh). Of this, 3.2 million (32 lakh) is just in Mumbai. It can become like Miami where we will have to reserve five berths for cruise ships alone!" Bhatia adds.

Ever since MPT took action a year ago, 158 ships have come into Mumbai. But the potential is for 955 ships which

can take the passenger count per ship from about 1,250 today to 4,200 passengers when the demand increases. The economic and employment effect of this is huge.

Facilities for passengers

Most of the five major ports – Mumbai, Goa, Kochi, New Mangalore, and Chennai – will have e-visa facilities

and e-landing cards from this season. "There is an issue of biometrics, which we are getting resolved by putting additional machines of 30 each at Mumbai and Kochi ports. Then, for security, so that passengers are not stopped multiple times, a majority of the ports now have access control and RFID on vehicles so that everyone can swipe and en-

ter. This will be introduced at Mumbai port from September 2017," Bhatia reveals.

After separating the cargo and cruise terminals at all five ports, they now have electronic permits and e-payments, and single-window systems. Port charges are also getting reduced. Mumbai, of course, is getting an

upgraded terminal reportedly at the cost of ₹225 crore for a modern passenger terminal. "The only issue that still needs resolution is taxation. The industry does not want GST here and excise duty in international waters is an issue. Income Tax is another issue that needs discussion. We will sort this aspect out soon too," Bhatia adds.



Sanjay Bhatia
Chairman
Mumbai Port Trust (MPT)

Both the Secretary of Shipping and Secretary of Tourism are co-chairing this task force, apart from every agency that is a stakeholder and a facilitator

comprises all the five major ports of India including Mumbai Port Trust, Ministry of Tourism, Central Board of Excise and Customs, Bureau of Immigration, the CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) and of course, the ministry.

Playing a key role in ushering in this sunrise tourism is **Sanjay Bhatia**, Chairman, Mumbai Port Trust (MPT). He had started the process of developing cruising in Mumbai in 2015 when the task force was set up. "Both the Secretary of Shipping and Secretary of Tourism are co-chairing this task force, apart from every agency that is a stakeholder and a facilitator," Bhatia says.

International consultants, Bermello and Ajamil (B&A) published a report that showed the potential that exists in India. "It also said that we need to take these 30 steps to be able to tap this. The report is divided into various aspects such as regulatory, port facilities, etc., and it is in four volumes. In short, it says that we can take the current 0.2 million cruise



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Few steps closer to woo India

With the Holland Tourism expecting 15 per cent growth on arrival numbers from last year and new flights being added by Jet Airways and KLM, the growth from the India market looks promising. TRAVTALK asks travel agents how they have been promoting the destination and factors driving growth for Holland.



SHAHZAD BAGWAN



Sampat Damani
Chairman-Western Region
TAAI

“The quality of sellers at the Holland roadshow was excellent. I think we have missed out on a lot of opportunities but it's never too late and they have come in just at the right time. Holland should conduct such roadshows more often. As I have always said, what we see is what we sell and regular presence will make a lot of difference in promoting the destination. Holland as a destination has everything for a visitor, be it a business traveller or a tourist. It is a complete destination which offers history, nature, culture and entertainment.”

“The roadshow was well organised with a perfect blend of DMCs and attractions. Holland has become a major destination in Europe for Indian travellers, especially with daily flights on Jet Airways. KLM will be coming back from November, so the connectivity to Holland will be better. Holland as a destination is a perfect blend of art, history and a lot of entertainment. The most unique part of Holland is its canals which one cannot find anywhere else in Europe. We cater to top-end clients who we send to boutique properties into other parts of the Netherlands away from Amsterdam, which are very popular among Indians.”



Mehernosh Colombowalla
Director
Beyond Borders



Suzanne Pereira
Sr. Vice President Trade
Relationships &
Communications
Thomas Cook (India)

“The format of the roadshow has been great as we got an opportunity to meet with the key destinations and key sightseeing elements along with Airport Schiphol. We see a lot of opportunities for Holland as it has been a key destination for our MICE events. There is Holland beyond Amsterdam, which we would like to discover for our customers. I didn't know that there is a Space Centre in Holland and a lovely theme park called Efteling. Madurodam is another key destination. For the new age Indian traveller, Holland offers diverse experiences which we at Thomas Cook are looking to explore across MICE, Group Inclusive Tours (GITs), Fully Independent Traveller (FIT), our luxury brand indulgence and other groups.”



Jay Bhatia
India Travel Award winner
and Treasurer & Chairman
Tourism Council, TAAI

“We had fantastic meetings with the Holland Tourism Board and suppliers coming from Holland at the roadshow. It makes a great difference when you meet the suppliers on one-to-one basis and interact with them to get better knowledge about the destination. Apart from the major attractions in Holland such as the city of Amsterdam, Rijks and the Van Gogh museum, canal cruises, food markets, the Anne Frank museum and the vibrant flower auction at Bloemenmarkt, windmill village of Zaanse Schans, dutch village of Edam, the most popular among Indian travellers are tulips and canal cruises.”

“Holland has always been a popular tourist destination. This roadshow had good quality repeat suppliers and some new ones. The tourism industry needs to increase at least one more night in Holland. There are a lot of things to do in Holland, generally everyone has been selling it for one or two nights, but after seeing new things on offer, we can increase the duration of stay. Holland has of late become a favourite among Indian travellers. Known for its tulip fields, windmills, and artistic masters, the Netherlands continues to enchant with its artistic masterpieces, famous tulip fields, and well-known nightlife.”



Kulin Shah
CEO
Kulin Kumar Holidays



Nagsri Prasad Sashidhar
Senior Consultant - Leisure,
Mercury Travels

“Holland is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered. It is nice and encouraging to see that there have been new suppliers who have come in for the roadshow. People need to understand that when you talk about Holland, it is not just Amsterdam, there is much more to Holland beyond Amsterdam waiting to be explored and discovered. Places like Rotterdam, Madurodam, etc., have so much to do that Holland can be a product which spans close to 10 nights. The destination is fit for families, honeymooners and for other discerning travellers.”



Veneeta Rawat
Director
Amazing Vacations

“The roadshow witnessed a huge turnout and the quality of sellers was also good. I got to interact with the sellers and know more about the destination. Holland is a superb destination to sell. Amsterdam is the most preferred destination, but there is much more to Holland than this. For instance, Utrecht city has the largest convention centre and great potential for MICE. We have been promoting Amsterdam for family travel, friend groups, etc. as it offers a mix of shopping, nightlife and great food. Holland is a mixed-bag destination for all types of travellers. With KLM starting direct flights from November 1 from Mumbai, it's only going to add to the numbers.”

“This roadshow has been interesting because of the new experiences being promoted, like the Henri Willig cheese farm, Blue Boats, apart from Madurodam, which most travellers know about. There was a good mix of suppliers present at the roadshow. There is a great potential in demand for travel to Holland. With the KLM flight starting from November and Jet Airways adding new flights, people are increasingly becoming aware of the destination. There are special interest groups keen on travelling to Holland. The good thing about Holland is that it's a small country and one can get to any corner of the country in a couple of hours.”



Subhash Motwani
Director
Namaste Tourism



Amey Amladi
COO
Akbar Travels of India

“It is good to see the Holland market growing from the MICE perspective as well. The awareness being created by the Holland Tourism Board is very important considering that India is a huge market. Recently, we sent two corporate groups to Holland. As a destination, Holland offers you a mix of culture, heritage and the people there are cordial, which is important for a destination to have human touch to it. People in their search for newer destinations and Holland fits well. With the connectivity from India improving, the destination has great tourism potential.”

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Should we brace for an airfare hike?

The industry is waiting and watching for a possible spike in domestic airfares this festive season after Indian Oil Corporation hiked ATF prices by 4 per cent with effect from September 1.



HAZEL JAIN

“Airfares in the Indian domestic sector have been declining over the last two to three years. Airlines have come out with flash sales to outdo competition as they have more than adequate capacity. A slight increase in airfares will not deter travel plans of most people. Secondly, capacity on most domestic sectors is also increasing, thereby putting pressure on airlines to hold on to the fares and not raise it.”



John Nair
Head (Business Travel)
Cox & Kings, India Travel
Award winner

“A hike in aviation turbine fuel will increase the cost and fares of airlines for the upcoming festivals of Dussera and Diwali. Currently, with the impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST), most companies are feeling the impact of low volumes due to the rollover. The anticipated airfare hike is likely to impact MICE, travel, and corporate budget and definitely delay travel plans for MICE as it would impact their entire packages.”



Pradip Lulla
Chairman & Managing
Director, Cupid Travels & Tours

“With ATF hike by 4 per cent an immediate hike in flight ticket prices is expected to affect the festive season of September through November which might be a mood spoiler as people already have a budget in plan. MICE has already been effected due to GST norms and every new increase in tax or ATF prices is again a challenge for us to sustain the regular business. Due to this hike, it will definitely affect air traffic.”



Joe Rajan
CEO & Managing Director,
Harvey World Destinations



Alefiya Singh
Director
Iris Reps

“I do not see this possible increase in domestic airfare this festival season to affect corporate travel or FIT, but it would definitely impact the MICE sector as they are on a budget. The airfare component plays a major part in the complete package and also in the decision making process of choosing a destination. Any increase in the airfare component will definitely affect the MICE business as clients would like to choose destinations with cheaper air tickets.”



Marzban Antia
Managing Director
Avesta Travels

“There will be an initial reaction by the corporates but eventually it will be accepted. There will be no major impact on travel plans whether it is corporates or MICE. This increase and decrease in ATF prices is normally due to the global economy on oil prices. However, even in the past when the price of an oil barrel was brought down, airlines did not show an immediate and a corresponding decrease in the ATF pricing. We hope our government will be responsible enough to monitor and control this price increase.”



Rajat Bagaria
Managing Director
Shristi Tours & Travels

“Fuel prices have been deregulated. A four per cent hike in fuel price will not have a major impact on corporate travel. It may have some impact on FIT and MICE as it's a price-sensitive segment with budget caps. However, alternate destinations are chosen to fit in the requirement. Thus overall, this would more or less go un-noticed. Repeated increase may have an impact on corporate travel. Demonetisation and now GST has brought about a slowdown leading to a reduction in corporate travel. It is important that we see a positive trend in the economy so that the spends continue.”

B&Bs in remote spots: MTDC

MTDC's tie-up with online hospitality service Airbnb is with the aim of developing areas such as hill stations and fort areas as economic and tourism destinations.



TT BUREAU

Appointed this May, **Vijay Waghmare**, Managing Director, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has been busy since. If it's not tackling the tourist guide problem that has been hampering Maharashtra tourism, it is the hectic co-ordination with Mumbai Port Trust (MPT) for easing processes for cruise tourism in Mumbai.



Vijay Waghmare
Managing Director, Maharashtra Tourism
Development Corporation (MTDC)

In the first phase, we are planning to certify 100 tour guides and we will be focusing on people who have proficiency in foreign languages

But on top of his mind is developing tourism in areas that are remote yet beautiful by virtue of it being unexplored. He says, “While the initial work after our tie up with Airbnb recently has started with Mumbai first, we want them to concentrate on remote areas of Maharashtra such as hill stations and fort areas – spots that are beautiful but lack infrastructure and accommodation facilities. We recognise a new and exciting opportunity of promoting these areas as bed and breakfast destinations. This will also strengthen the economy of these areas apart from tourism.”

Community-driven hospitality company, Airbnb has been bringing economic benefits of tourism to communities around the world that have not shared these benefits in the past. This is a particularly promising value

proposition for emerging destinations such as India.

Tourist guides

Training of tourist guides is also a major concern for Maharashtra's tour operators and the new MD has announced developments on that front. “With the inception of cruise tourism in Mumbai, the demand for tourist guides is going to increase, especially the foreign language speaking guides. We will be providing training for this. In the first phase, we are planning to certify 100 tour guides and we will be focusing on people who have proficiency in foreign languages. Four cities have been identified for the first phase: Mumbai, Aurangabad, Nasik and Nagpur,” Waghmare adds.

MTDC will be co-ordinating with MPT for cruise operations. It is currently chalking out the nitty-gritties of it and fixing the logistical aspects that the tourists disembarking at Mumbai get annoyed with. For more details on cruises tourism, turn to page 7.

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Udai Vilas offers new charm @ Bharatpur

■ Udai Hotels has refurbished its flagship property- Hotel Udai Vilas Palace, Bharatpur, offering new character and added facilities to its inbound and domestic guests alike. Udai Hotel's aim is to provide luxury at affordable prices; the focus of the company is to provide an experience of nature, points out **Udai Singh**, Owner, Udai Hotels. He says, "Our hotels, Udai Vilas Palace, Bharatpur, and the Castle Mewar, Udaipur, are a paradise for nature lovers which offer huge gardens filled with flowers, palm trees and many more species of flora. We have re-renovated our flagship Hotel Udai Vilas Palace, Bharatpur. Keeping in mind the needs of our guests with the changing times, we have renovated our rooms; we have added an open live kitchen in the multi cuisine restaurant and a new bar has also been added. Now, Udai Vilas Palace, Bharatpur, will be more charismatic than before."

According to Singh, all properties of Udai Hotels performed very well in the first half of 2017. The new hotel of the company- The Castle Mewar, Udaipur, received an exceptional response and witnessed

over 50 per cent growth in business over its debut year in 2016. "We cater to almost all segments of travel. We have a major share of inbound guests at the hotel, more than the



Udai Singh
Owner, Udai Hotels

domestic guests. The online market is growing and in line with that, we receive and equal share of business from both the online travel agents and the traditional travel agents."

Udai Hotels plans to participate in major travel exhibitions and trade shows this year to promote its properties. "We are tapping travel agents from across the country to grow business. We always support travel agents in all possible ways, whether it is with promotional activities; hosting accommodation for foreign travel agents or with better rates for them," adds Singh.

Specialist programme by Nov

German National Tourist Office-India (GNTO) hopes to enlist at least 1000 travel agents for the Germany Specialist programme and those who successfully complete it will be given preference at trade events and Fam trips.



TT BUREAU

Germany received 329,860 Indian visitor overnights during January-May this year, reflecting a 12.8 per cent growth over the same period in 2016, informed **Romit Theophilus**, Director, Sales and Marketing, German National Tourist Office (India), at the Discover Germany roadshow held in Delhi recently.

"We grew by 8.6 per cent year-on-year and recorded over 413,000 overnights last year. By the end of this year, we hope to close nearly 800,000 overnights from India to Germany. We are on track to achieve our goal of a million Indian visitors to Germany by 2020, and hopefully receive two million Indian arrivals by 2030," says Theophilus. The roadshows were also held in Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

German Tourism will launch a training and education programme for Indian

"We are on track to achieve our goal of a million Indian visitors to Germany by 2020 and hopefully receive two million Indian arrivals by 2030."

Romit Theophilus
Director, Sales and
Marketing
German National Tourist
Office (India)



travel agents from November this year. India is one of the first countries where German National Tourism Board is scheduled to launch this Germany Specialist programme for the travel trade. Commenting on the same, Theophilus says, "The programme will be a more generic introduction to Germany initially, with more in depth modules to be rolled out in due course. We estimate to enlist about 1000 travel agents pan India through this online training

programme over the next one year. Those who register and successfully complete the programme will get preference in various trade events and Fam trips that the tourism board will be hosting."

Theophilus further informs that until now, Germany had especially been very popular for MICE and business travel from India, but lately, the destination has picked up for leisure travel as well. "It is now a 50-50 split between MICE,

business and leisure travellers from India, and we are hopeful that Germany will be seen as a choice destination for all segments," he adds.

Talking about the future campaigns, Theophilus points out that GNTO (India) will highlight the theme Culinary Germany in 2018, with sub-themes like nature, along with its current theme of Palaces, Parks and Gardens. This year, besides the regular suppliers like Cologne Tourism, Saxony Tourism, KD German Rhine Line, Rail Europe, Lufthansa, Stuttgart and SouthWest Germany, etc., India roadshow also saw two new exhibitors- Vienna House, a hotel chain with footprint across Europe, and McArthur Glen Designer Outlets, Europe's leading owner, developer and manager of designer outlets.

Specialists in demand

GNTO estimates to enlist about 1000 travel agents pan India through this online training programme over the next one year

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B2B

Emirates adds Zagreb to its network

As Emirates continues to provide seamless connectivity across the globe, it has added yet another popular destination, the Croatian capital city, Zagreb, to its expanding network. With daily direct flights between Dubai and Zagreb, the airline is making sure to cater to Croatia's growing popularity.



DEVIKA JEET FROM ZAGREB

Demonstrating a high level of interest in the new route and ease of connection to Zagreb, Emirates' first flight to Croatia carried passengers from more than 16 countries, including India, Taiwan, Australia, Korea, China, Japan, Singapore and South Africa.

a full picture, the route has proven to be really popular for Indian passengers whether for leisure, business, honeymoon or MICE. We're seeing an increase in booking and the forecast for the next few months is also looking positive. In the month of June alone (when the route was launched), Emirates has received bookings for flights

to Zagreb from passengers originating from no fewer than 36 different countries around the world."

The growing popularity of Croatia after the filming of the famous television show 'Game of Thrones' has attracted tourists from across the globe to visit the country and now Emirates will be the

preferred choice. The new route in Croatia is an important one for Emirates as it strengthens its European footprint and taps into a new part of the continent – the south eastern part. Zagreb's location at the crossroads of Central Europe, the Mediterranean and the Balkans, opens many new doors for the airline.

The service to Zagreb, Croatia, is operated by an Emirates Boeing 777-300ER with a three-class cabin configuration, offering eight private suites in First Class, featuring automated sliding doors for privacy, personal mini-bar and fully inclined seats, 42 lie flat seats in Business Class and 310 spacious seats in Economy.

Attractions galore

Following the filming of the award-winning TV series 'Game of Thrones', the popularity of Croatia across the globe has skyrocketed and now Emirates will be the preferred choice of travellers to this destination



Essa Sulaiman Ahmad
VP India & Nepal,
Emirates


The new flight will open up access to more than 80 worldwide destinations for Emirates' global network for Croatian travellers and vice versa. It will enable increase of trade relations between countries

"The direct scheduled flight between Dubai and Zagreb will bring many benefits to Croatia. It will enable significant increase of trade relations between countries and will have a positive impact on tourism. The new flight will open up access to more than 80 worldwide destinations in Emirates' global network for Croatian travellers and vice versa," says **Essa Sulaiman Ahmad**, VP India & Nepal, Emirates.

Zagreb is an ideal destination for tourism, leisure and business. A very walkable city, both the upper and lower parts of it offer visitors an insight into the past, with the 19th century style of architecture prominent across the capital. Tourists can also enjoy the parks or visit one of the many theatres, museums and art galleries dotted around the city.



Further discussing the popularity of the route from India, Ahmad adds, "Although it's too early to get

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With offices and teams in India, Europe, the Middle East, USA, South America, Australia and China, Innstant Travel aims to equip travel agencies with one of the largest inventories of unique accommodation products. The company boasts a portfolio of more than 300,000 properties worldwide including hotels, apartments, holiday homes and villas, and offers direct reach into major international hotel chains such as Hilton, IHG, Wyndham, Best Western, Iberostar, Universal, Riu Hotels, etc., and a large number of independent hotels.

Elaborating on the services, **Gagan Kakkar**, Country Head, India, Innstant Travel, says, "In addition to providing for all accommodation requirements, Innstant Travel is able to offer several transfer and car hire options, event and attraction tickets for city tours, music concerts, theatre, international sporting events and shows.



Gagan Kakkar
Country Head, India
Innstant Travel

The Innstant Cruise feature is due to launch in the coming months and new innovative dynamic package booking tool

Service is also very important to us and that's why we operate local and international 24x7 support team via phone, email and live chat."

The company provides travel inventory and XML so-

lutions of its globally contracted rates to retailers and tour operators in travel industry.

Among the new launches this year, 'Book Flexible' is a hotel cancellation protection that allows customers to cancel a non-refundable reservation up to 24 hours before check-in and receive an 80 per cent refund. Kakkar says, "This 'Book Flexible' cancellation protection enables agents to offer maximum value and flexibility to customers without the risk of lost revenue due to cancellation."

Alongside, the Innstant Travel Smart Agent price drop notification tool has been designed to help travel agents to increase profits, drive sales and improve customer retention while the newly designed Innstant Dashboard offers travel agents a user-friendly and intuitive interface. "We are also pleased to announce that the Innstant Cruise feature is due to launch in the coming months," adds Kakkar.

Enroute to Tiger Routes

Tiger Routes is targeting a 30 per cent y-o-y growth by the end of 2017. The company is undertaking aggressive marketing and promotional activities this year.



Dnyanesh Kale
Co-founder
Tiger Routes

We have dedicated focus on our agent network in both India as well as the international markets and we actively engage with them

We have an increased focus on international customers," adds Kale.

He informs, "This year our largest market has been from domestic customers. We are focusing heavily on international customers for domestic products as well. In the near future, we also intend to launch international products for both domestic and international customers."

The company has revamped its product catalogue with strong emphasis on customer experience. Tiger Routes aims to offer up-market retail products with great quality of service and affordable pricing point. "We are investing heavily in marketing for the next three years. We have dedicated focus on our agent network in India and international markets, to actively engage with them. We are also investing heavily in a digital marketing strategy by revamping our website and digital marketing plan," says Kale.

Tiger Routes is a niche player, providing a fresh perspective to wildlife and nature travel through responsible tourism, believes **Dnyanesh Kale**, Co-founder, Tiger Routes. He says, "We focus on the complete experience of the customer by providing high-quality service, diverse product catalogue, with each product comprising of a rich mix of components. We actively engage and invest in local wildlife and community conservation and development." The company is committed to offer the best nature and wildlife experience, including wildlife safaris, jungle stays, points out Kale.

Tiger Routes had a good business year in the first half of 2017 and the company is keen to do better in the second half as well. "We handled over 4,000 guests out of which 10 per cent were inbound guests. We did over 10 MICE programmes with more than 30 corporate clients. We

also increased our network of travel agents by associating with more than 500 new agents in 2017. We are tracking a 30 per cent year-on-year increase in revenue generation, primarily through increased number of guests.

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SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

India in top 3 markets for Star Cruises

With two new mega-ships, new itineraries and increased capacity entering the market, Genting Cruise Lines is re-arranging its product offering in a way that will appeal to Indian cruisers. **Michael Goh**, Senior VP (Sales), Genting Cruise Lines, tells TRAVTALK that 2017-18 will see a lot of changes in its itineraries.



TT BUREAU

Genting Cruise Lines is expanding its product base to not just target novice Indian cruisers but also high-end seasoned cruisers who want to try out something different. It will now have eight ships home-porting in various parts of Asia that will include two of its mega ships – Genting

Dream and World Dream. Genting Dream will be in Singapore from this November and will go to new destinations like Bali and Surabaya in addition to its regular destinations, and World Dream will be in Hong Kong.

Michael Goh, Senior VP (Sales), Genting Cruise Lines, who has been in the

cruise industry for 17 years, says that 2017-18 will see a lot of changes in its itineraries. Of the six Star Cruises ships, SS Gemini will be ported in Thailand (Koh Samui, Phuket), and SS Libra will have three homeports in Malaysia (Port Klang, Penang) and Thailand (Phuket) from September onwards. "It means our partners can

send their guests to any of these destinations. We are very happy with the numbers we are getting from India which figures in the top three markets, with year-on-year growth in double digits. This is one of the markets we will continue to develop and invest in. India contributes to almost one-tenth of our total business," he says.

Increased capacity

With these new ships joining the fleet, the company will have an increased capacity to offer to the Indian market. The six Star Cruises ships have a total capacity of 9,000 pax per day. Genting Dreams has a capacity of 4,500 pax a day and Word Dream will offer a capacity of 4,500 pax per day. This takes

the total capacity of 18,000 pax a day. To this, Goh says, "We have to re-look at our distribution channel in order to cater to this increased capacity and expand our distribution channel through our PSA network. This means



Michael Goh
Senior VP (Sales)
Genting Cruise Lines

We are very happy with the numbers we are getting from India which figures in the top three markets with year-on-year growth in double digits

include smaller cities as well. With such long-term plans, we need to understand how the Indian consumer will book cruise holidays in the future. It is a very dynamic market."

This also means aggressively educating the trade in India and creating a new market altogether. "Traditionally, cruising for Indians is about two or three night itineraries. We are now focused on educating our partners about selling five-night packages. It is about changing the mindsets of agents. It is not just for FITs; there are loads of things that a ship can do for you. Anything can be created as long as it is not a safety hazard," Goh assures. The company is also working with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) to promote cruising to the trade.

New products

➔ **Dream Cruises for luxury market:** Genting Dream and World Dream

Crystal Cruises for ultra-luxury market

Crystal Air: Boeing 777-200LR with 300 seats converted over into 80 first-class seats starting from September 30, 2017

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Experience before selling a cruise

Trying to sell cruise packages without ever getting on a cruise ship is like learning something by rote without understanding it. Ark Travels ensured that its partners, even from smaller towns, made it to its annual Big Bang Nautical Fiesta on SuperStar Gemini, some for the first time, so that they understand the concept of cruising.



TT BUREAU

“This was a unique concept of organising a motivational session in the guise of a presentation, combined with fun and parties, to create an atmosphere of bonding and camaraderie. This session gave us a chance to exchange ideas on how we can sell cruise packages better and how other regions of India are performing. Partners from smaller cities got connected to many companies. We could also develop business in new areas through ties up. Through the presentations, we also learned about niche products like Crystal Cruises.”



Himanshu Kapadia
Director
Hallmark Tour

“This is a wonderful initiative by Ark Travels to bring all its partners onboard Star Cruises. There were many agents who were cruising for the first time. This experience will help them sell cruise packages to their clients better. Apart from that, people like us who have experienced cruising the world over and have been selling cruise with Ark Travels for many years, there is still more for us to learn about cruising, especially Star Cruises, because they are coming up with larger cruise ships and more itineraries. There is a big change happening in the cruising industry, which holds a lot of promise for agents given our thinning margins.”



Himanshu Agashiwala
Managing Director
Columbus Travels

“Such events serve as an eye-opener for travel agents, especially for those who have come onboard a cruise line for the first time. They are the ones doing good business from smaller cities and they are the ones who should get more exposure to new products. Who-soever has been selling cruises on the basis of brochures or the Internet, they may not be well-versed about the product. But once they come in, they see for themselves the product and understand the nitty-gritties of cruising, like check-in process, deposit of luggage, shore excursions, difference in cabin categories, the inclusions etc.”



Sunil Satyawakta
Managing Director
Civica Travels



Sameer Shah
Owner
Dolphin Travel

“Travel agents enjoyed their time on the cruise. I have been selling cruise packages for the last 17 years but for the new agents who are experiencing cruise for the first time, it is an excellent experience and a huge learning curve. They went on cabin inspection. The presentation and Q&A session were also a very important part of the learning process. The agents who are new to cruising had so many questions. An agent from Bhopal has already committed to 20 people on Crystal Cruises after experiencing this which is not an easy task. They can gauge the potential that cruising has in their markets through such an event.”



Peddi Harish Babu
Owner
Money Point Tours & Travels

“The event organised by Ark was a great opportunity to experience the cruise, especially for those travel agents who sell cruise packages but never get to experience sailing. This nautical fiesta on SuperStar Gemini helped travel agents like me from smaller cities like Karimnagar in Telangana, to explore, learn, experience, enhance our selling skills and face the client with loads of confidence. The two-hour presentation followed by a Q&A session was helpful and made us understand the challenges faced by travel agents pan India. However, the session should have been longer for agents like us.”



Amit Shah
Director
Rovercation

“This was a great experience. All three days onboard were action-packed and well-planned so that we could acquaint ourselves with the cruise liner and its facilities. It was a great move to get everyone familiarised with the product that they have been selling, especially for the ones who were from smaller towns and experiencing a cruise for the first time. The rest of us were made aware of the future plans. The presentation and Q&A session helped us understand the product and the company as Ark and Star Cruises allowed us to clear all our doubts.”

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An 'Alliance' with trade

Zia Siddiqui, Managing Director, Alliance Hotels and Resorts, wants to make his brand a prominent one in the market while staying ahead of stiff competition.



TT BUREAU

Q Please tell us briefly about Alliance Hotels & Resorts and the property you are focusing on?

Alliance Hotels & Resorts (AHR) is a pioneer in establishing the concept of hospitality marketing franchise company in India in early 2000. The major focus of the AHR is to give marketing and management support services to mid priced stand alone hotels and resorts as well as regional hotel chains.

Q What would be the USP of the brand?

AHR comes under the mid-priced hotels segment. Its high operational standards result in excellent guest experience and ensure a prompt response to the supplier.

Q How do you stay ahead or deal with competition?

Owing to our excellent guest experience and value-for-money hospitality, AHR boasts of repeat clientele

and retains MICE business year-on-year.

Q What kind of promotional strategies are you adopting to create visibility about the brand?

In view of the growing market competition, currently AHR's major focus is on digital marketing, social media marketing and of course traditional marketing.

Q How are you engaging with the travel agents to boost the sales?

AHR is a very trade-friendly hotel chain. We participate in various travel marts and roadshows. Regular sales blitz, updating AHR development from time to time, hosting Fam tours and always seeking feedback from travel agents for betterment is the most suited way to know the upcoming trends and requirement within the trade.

Q What kind of growth have you seen in the last one year?

All AHR Hotels have wit-



Zia Siddiqui
Managing Director
Alliance Hotels and Resorts

All AHR Hotels have witnessed 27 per cent growth in 2016-17 over 2015-16. AHR has plans for growth in 2017-18 by adding 20 hotels and at least 3-4 owned resorts

nessed 27 per cent growth in 2016-17 over 2015-16. AHR has plans for growth in 2017-18 by adding 20 hotels and at least 3-4 owned resorts.

Rejuvenate @Aura in luxury

The 18-room Aura Luxury Retreat, Goa, is set to open in October this year, offering its guests with a bespoke, wellness holiday experience.



TT BUREAU

Aura Luxury Retreat, Goa, is a new luxury boutique property tucked in the virgin belt of Mandrem in North Goa, which will be officially launched in October this year, informs Pragati Kumari, Business Development and Operations Manager, Aura Luxury Retreat, Goa. She says, "We had a soft opening of the property where we invited friends and family to review the property and give us their feedback and suggestions. Meanwhile, we were fortunate to receive guests from Russia and the UK for the soft opening."

According to Kumari, the USP of the property is its location. "Atop an ascending forest landscape with untouched natural habitat, located just a kilometre from the beach, the retreat endeavours to offer its guests a holistic rejuvenation escape with the quintessence of Goa. An 18-room property, Aura Luxury Retreat



Pragati Kumari
Business Development and Operations
Manager, Aura Luxury Retreat, Goa

We were fortunate to receive some guests from Russia and the UK during the soft opening of the resort

encapsulates two suites with private outdoor plunge pool, 10 cottages, six rooms, a full-size swimming pool and spa, two yogashalas, a recreation arena and a restaurant that

offers healthy organic cuisine to restore balance and harmonise energy," informs Kumari. She further adds that the property is eyeing the honeymoon segment of travellers who can visit the resort and start their healthy holiday as the retreat is replete with all wellness needs.

Backed by Alliance Hotels, the Aura Luxury Resort plans to market the property in the B2B segment. The property also has its own marketing team, which has representatives located in the key source markets of the UK and Russia. Apart from this, the property is well promoted via digital marketing and online promotions.

Healthy Holiday

The property is eyeing honeymoon travellers who can visit the resort for a healthy holiday as the retreat is replete with wellness needs

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Odisha welcomes 4th Swosti

Launched in late July 2017, the new resort, set on the banks of the Chilika Lake, aims to become a serene getaway in the lap of nature.



TT BUREAU

Swosti Group recently opened the doors of its latest property, Swosti Chilika Resort, located on the banks of the famed Chilika Lake. Inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik, the essence of the resort is to deliver a sanctuary of comfort and wellness amidst the tranquil settings.

space for corporate events as well.

Swosti Group is the largest hotel chain in Odisha. With 305 rooms, 9 restaurants and the largest convention centre in the eastern region, two of its majestic hotels, Swosti Grand and Swosti Premium are in Bhubaneswar, Gopalpur Palm Resort is at Gopalpur-on-Sea, and the

newly launched Swosti Chilika Resort. All these hotels are supported by the largest inbound tour operator of the state, Swosti Travels, established in 1988.

Four Jewels

- ↳ Swosti Grand
- ↳ Swosti Premium
- ↳ Gopalpur Palm Resort
- ↳ Swosti Chilika Resort



TT BUREAU

According to **Bharat Aggarwal**, Managing Director, Mansingh Group of Hotels, tourism trends have not changed much in the past few months and will continue as is. "We have noticed that during the weekend there is a high demand for Agra among domestic travellers. I am optimistic that the inbound, espe-

cially European market, would stabilise this year," he says.

On the hotel group's upcoming initiatives and growth plans, Aggarwal says that the Mansingh Group is concentrating mainly on upgradation of the existing properties to meet the demand and beat competition. In terms of future expansion, the group is looking at destinations with domestic and

MICE demand and the reliance on inbound tourism is minimal.

Aggarwal believes that the inbound movement to India has been same and noticed no growth. The main challenges remain to be our negative publicity. Lack of long term planning in terms of marketing India as a destination, however, in future we would see upward trends in inbound also. ↳



J K Mohanty
CMD
Swosti Group

This resort's aim is to unify guests with nature and channel the restorative powers of this landscape to harness a tired body and mind

Giving more details on the new property, **J.K. Mohanty**, CMD, Swosti Group, says, "Rooted in the scenic setting of the famed Chilika Lake, this resort's aim is to unify the guests with nature and channel the restorative powers of this landscape to harness a tired body and mind. Four types of accommodation are offered here, namely The Sanctuary - The Presidential Suites (1 key), Millpond - The Pool Villas (5 keys), Windchime - The Quad Villas (36 keys) and Midlake County - The Hotel Blocks (36 keys)."

The restaurants at Swosti Chilika Resort offer an array of local delicacies and the choicest of international cuisines, in a soulful ambience, further soothing the mood. The property's Ekayaa Spa is equipped with single as well as double treatment suites, beauty treatment rooms, and meditation and relaxation decks, where wellness lovers can have their fill of pampering. With well-anoointed conference halls, this Resort provides a perfect meeting

Optimistic on MICE demand

The Mansingh Group of Hotels is pinning hopes on destinations with domestic and MICE demand for future business expansion.



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Focused promotion is key

MGM Hotels & Resorts is taking a focused approach to promote all its properties, and chart a growth path for the company.



MGM Hotels & Resorts boasts a total of six diverse properties—MGM Beach Resorts, ECR, Muttukad; MGM Vailankanni Residency, Vailankanni; Eastwoods, ECR, Injambakkam; MGM Hi-Way Resorts, Ranipet; MGM Hill Worth Resorts, Coonoor and MGM Mark Whitefield.

“We have strategic brand placement for all our six properties. Each property is strategically positioned on the basis of the location, grade and size. However, we promise customers the best of service and standard with better price,” says **A. Laxman**, Director, MGM Hotels & Resorts.

“At MGM Vailankanni Residency, we achieved around 148 per cent growth, and at the other properties, we have recorded a growth of around 70-80 per cent. In fact, our restaurants at various properties are also showing growth. We have a new multi-cuisine restaurant



A. Laxman
Director
MGM Hotels & Resorts

We are promoting the lawns at MGM Beach Resorts, that can accommodate around 15,000 people and are spread at around 150,000 square feet

called *Virundu* at some of our properties. We are promoting the lawns at MGM Beach Resorts, that can accommodate around 15,000 people and

are spread at around 150,000 square feet,” he adds.

They have recently renovated MGM Beach Resorts to fine tune their quality standard. In fact, Laxman claims that their service quality makes them stand apart from the competition. They are heavily marketing the properties through various channels including advertisements, social media presence, sponsoring corporate events. “Our USP is the service standards of the properties, quality and positioning of the brand in the market. We are planning many promotional events in the next nine months, including food festivals, special full moon dinners, digital marketing, discount marketing, joint promotions, loyalty programmes as well as live music programmes,” he informs.

Number Game

MGM Vailankanni Residency achieved around 148 per cent growth

MGB, Lemon Tree join hands

MGB Group of Hotels has partnered with Lemon Tree Hotels for a management contract for their property, which will be re-branded as Lemon Tree MGB Hotel Alwar.



The new tie-up with Lemon Tree Hotels is going to boost the business for the MGB property, says **Manish Bhatia**, Managing Director, MGB Group of Hotels. “We have tied up with Lemon Tree Hotels for our property MGB Shanti Kunj Alwar. The partnership is a management contract, which would put us on the map of Lemon Tree Hotels. The new branding is flagging off on September 21, and it will be called Lemon Tree MGB Hotel Shanti Kunj. More people would come to know about Alwar and our properties, which would lead to growth in our business and increase in occupancy, revenue as well as standard of the hotel. The hotel is going to get an upgrade. With this partnership, a local brand of Alwar will be a well-known brand,” he adds.

Bhatia informs that their other properties will now come under their existing brand called Sparrow



Manish Bhatia
Managing Director
MGB Group of Hotels

The hotel is going to get an upgrade. With this partnership, a local brand of Alwar will be a well-known brand

Inn. They are also expanding with new properties in Jaipur and Gurugram, which are nearby cities, reveals Bhatia. “We are looking at properties in these cities, but we have not set a time limit for the same.”

Despite the industry showing a downward trend, Bhatia claims that their business has been stable through this year. “For us, the business has been the same throughout, and we have not seen any growth or loss. However, we are looking at increasing the occupancy, ARRs and business for our properties, and we are working towards the same. Apart from the partnership with Lemon Tree Hotels, we are planning to grow our chain of hotels,” he shares.

In terms of competition, he says that all the other hotels in the region are in the unorganised sector and are stand-alone properties, which gives MGB an advantage which would be stronger with the Lemon Tree partnership as well.

New Identity

The new branding will flag off on Sept 21, and will be called Lemon Tree MGB Hotel Shanti Kunj

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Abad Hotels in Wayanad

With properties covering most of the key tourist spots in Kerala, Abad Hotels will soon set up yet another resort in Wayanad by 2017 end.



TT BUREAU

The Abad Group, based in Kochi, owns and operates 11 hotels and resorts in 'God's Own Country' asserting its presence in Kerala's tourism and hospitality landscape. This includes unique beach resorts in Marari and Kovalam, resorts in Kumarakom backwaters, resorts in Thekkady and Munnar, backwater tourism in Alleppey and

als of the total, overall international arrivals to all its properties will be about 20 per cent, he says, adding, "A positive trend is perceivable."

Apart from the large domestic market, Abad Group gets inbound arrivals from France, Germany, Middle East, Far East and Eastern Europe. "Many travellers are environment conscious and we must address this factor.

Clean environment and safety are paramount if we as a hotel group as well as India want more visitors," Ahmed adds. Abad hotels have adopted ecofriendly applications, community engagements and waste management systems as part of their responsible tourism initiative, he says. Regarding GST, he feels that it is a good initiative but its smooth implementation may take some time.



TT BUREAU

Meritus Hotels & Resorts offers Asian hospitality in Singapore and Malaysia. Its current portfolio includes the flagship Mandarin Orchard Singapore, Marina Mandarin Singapore, and Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi. **Adrian Tan**, Regional Vice President, Sales & Revenue Strategy, Corporate Sales & Distribution, Meritus

Hotels & Resorts, adds, "At the moment we are very focused on driving quality and optimising business profitability for each of our hotels."

They continue to see a significant increase in business from India, particularly for its hotels in Singapore. "In terms of international visitor arrivals into Singapore, India ranked in the top five in 2016 – a clear indica-

tion that there is indeed exciting potential for us to further grow our share of this market. We are targeting New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai as a matter of priority. We are also looking at making inroads into Delhi NCR," Tan adds. Meritus Hotels & Resorts has a Global Sales Office in India to drive awareness efforts and business within the Indian market on behalf of its hotels.



Riaz Ahmed
Managing Director
Abad Hotels and Resorts Kerala

By end of this year, we will be opening our premium resort at Lakkidi – the gateway of Wayanad district in Kerala

hotels in Kochi city centre and Fort Kochi.

Sharing more details about the group's expansion plans, **Riaz Ahmed**, Managing Director, Abad Hotels and Resorts Kerala, says, "By end of this year, we will be opening our premium resort at Lakkidi – the gateway of Wayanad district in Kerala. It is one of the highest locations in Wayanad situated 700m above mean sea level."

He reveals that the period between this April and August has been quite encouraging compared to the previous year's occupancy which shows an increase of 10 per cent. "We have the ARR and the upcoming period looks great too. To ensure this happens, we will be attending the Kerala tourism roadshows in the domestic and international markets apart from the major marts in India and abroad. Online promotions also pay rich dividends," Ahmed adds.

International guest arrivals for the Abad Group vary depending on the location and genre of the property. While resort destinations show almost 30 per cent international arriv-

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Connect with East for better inbound

The eastern part of India needs better air connectivity and aggressive marketing and promotions, say winners of East India Travel Awards 2017. The stalwarts of the industry from the region talk about the challenges in tourism and hospitality as they suggest the way forward.



ANKITA SAXENA

► DDP Trailblazer – Tsering Wange

Connect North East beyond Guwahati

The North East has witnessed growth in terms of foreign tourist arrivals and has also gained in development of tourism infrastructure, believes **Tsering Wange**, Managing Director, Himalayan Holidays. According to Wange, "In the last three years, tourism industry has grown in the North East as compared to previous times. With development of tourism infrastructure at various destinations, there is a positive sentiment towards the industry. Even though air connectivity has been improved, the focus has been on Guwahati. There is a need to connect all state capitals of the North East to grow the industry further." He says that as a company they are focusing on adventure tourism in the region. "North East too has many adventure tourism opportunities and we hope that we can attract more tourists for this segment of travel," he adds.



► Best Debut City Hotel – Ramada Darjeeling Gandhi Road

Difficult to maintain high service at nominal cost

Seasonality trends are observed in foreign tourist arrivals to the North East with October-March being the peak period, says **Vivek Shukla**, GM, Ramada Darjeeling, Gandhi Road. Pointing out impediments in growth, he says, "With the minimal availability of fine goods and services in North East India, it is very difficult to maintain the high service standards at nominal pricing. There is a concern that operating expenses will escalate at a greater rate than income, potentially eroding the bottom line." Shukla further adds that a regulatory framework is a must for generating and dissemination of information. "Private sector investments may be encouraged for boosting infrastructure development," adds Shukla.



► Best Luxury Resort – Polo Orchid Resort, Cherrapunji

More direct flights to North East

The hospitality industry in the North East, especially in states like Assam and Meghalaya has gained traction due to the gradually transforming economy of the states and the extraordinary support from the Ministry of Tourism, believes **Gunjan Kumar**, General Manager, Polo Orchid Resort, Cherrapunji. "We have witnessed rapid growth in all travel segments and hope to see the industry grow even further. However, there is an urgent need for more direct flights into capital cities such as Shillong," he says. Kumar further informs that the property caters to the leisure, corporate and MICE segment of travellers. Out of the total guests, international guests contribute 2-3 per cent, which Kumar believes is an improvement. "We are expecting approximately 8-10 per cent growth in occupancy compared to H1, 2017," adds Kumar. The company is planning to come up with more projects in the North East including Agartala.



► Best MICE operator – ICON Planners

MICE infrastructure needs upgrade

Tourism has been good and increasing steadily. Inbound has tremendous scope but the detriment to successful inbound foot fall in our region is the lack of desired infrastructure, says **Sunaina Chatterjee**, CEO, Incentives and Conference Planners LLP. "We need to have proper infrastructure which is in sorry state currently. We do not have enough good four-star or three-star hotels.

Many a times when there is an average size conference in city the demand is higher than the supply both in terms of hotel rooms as well as good cars. We have lost bigger conferences to other states due to lack of these facilities," she says. Chatterjee feels that the biggest challenge for the industry is shortage of trained and experienced staff. "NTOs, states and associations should organise more roadshows, seminars, from the East," adds Chatterjee.



► Best Tour Operator - Inbound – Clubside Tours and Travels

Lack of trained manpower plagues the East

The government has made sustained efforts and launched initiatives which have helped boost tourism in the East, explains **Suresh Periwal**, MD, Clubside Tours and Travels. "Prominent cities like Kolkata and Guwahati have witnessed an increase in the inventory of hotel rooms. The last three months, however, paint a different picture because of the political unrest. Trained manpower is a challenge as most people venture out to larger cities for better opportunities. The trend was changing with new opportunities that this region was beginning to offer but the strike in the Darjeeling will have a deep and far reaching impact which will take a while for the region to recover from," says Periwal. Obtaining permits for inbound tourists travelling to the North East needs to be made more tourist friendly, adds Periwal.



► Excellence in Customer Service – New Orchid Hotel, Sikkim

Professionalism needed in hospitality

The tourism and hospitality industry in East India had witnessed the most successful season in 2017 and it was expected that there would be no lean season this year, according to **Rahul Khandelwal**, Director, Voyage Hospitality. However, Khandelwal points out that the industry faced a setback in recent months due to the political unrest in the region. He says, "The East faces a three-fold challenge. First is its geographical position, where many restrictions have been imposed for tourists. There is a lack of aggressive marketing of the region from the Centre and state governments at both national and international level. To add to all this, with GST the prices of the products have escalated further." Khandelwal further adds that there is a need to promote the region as one collective destination rather individually by states to increase footfall and the region also needs better air connectivity. "There is a lack of professionalism in the hospitality industry of the East and this needs to be addressed at the earliest to improve business," says Khandelwal.



Experience Rameswaram with Hyatt

Although recently opened, on April 27, 2017, Hyatt Place Rameswaram has rapidly gained recognition in the Indian as well as overseas market because of its international-standard property and amenities. It now aims to be popular amongst the MICE players as well.



TT BUREAU

Being the only international property in the city of Rameswaram, Hyatt Place is offering the best of global comfort as well as local experience of the destination. "Hyatt Place Rameswaram offers 101 spacious guest rooms and suites, with all the state-of-the-art amenities, including a swimming pool, multi-cuisine restaurants, a gym and 2700 sq ft of flexible, high-tech meeting/function space," says **Deepak Sharma**, Director of Sales, Hyatt Place Rameswaram.



Deepak Sharma
Director of Sales
Hyatt Place Rameswaram

We have created a local itinerary of 2 nights and 3 days, especially for the MICE segment, including tours to key unexplored points as well as mythological sites in Rameswaram

Sharma insists that they do not have any competition in Rameswaram. "We are the only renowned brand presently available in the city, rest are stand-alone hotels, which we do not consider as competition. However, the market continues to evolve for Rameswaram as a destination, which is visible with two domestic flights being added to Madurai from Delhi and Mumbai in the past couple of months. One more domestic flight and one international flight have also been launched on the route, which will start operating from mid-September. They will not only bring in more visitors, but also link the major cities of India to Madurai and Rameswaram," he asserts.

To cash-in the most from the growing market, the property is marketing itself extensively, especially on digital and social media, and has received overwhelming recogni-

tion. Explains Sharma, "Since the inception of the hotel, we have managed to reach out to more than five million people through online platforms in a record time. Quite a few online reports indicate our reach has moved beyond the border and has also reached the US, Canada, the UK and rest of Europe." Sharma further added that they are currently focusing on devel-

oping the unexplored leisure segment of Rameswaram so that the city is not just known for pilgrimage. They are also working towards creating a name for themselves amidst the MICE sector. "We participated in GITB, held in Jaipur this year, and have plans to actively participate in all other travel and tourism trade shows in India and abroad. Also, we have created a lo-

cal itinerary of two nights and three days, especially for the MICE segment. It includes tours to key unexplored points as well as mythological sites in Rameswaram, along with a few water sports," he informs.

In terms of occupancy, the property has seen month-on-month increase of 5 to 7 per cent. "It's not only the room sales, but our brand

recognition across numerous other cities in India that is working really well for us. We have extensive signage and branding done across cities starting from Madurai, Shirdi, Varanasi and others, which has brought in unexpectedly high number of customers to our property and increased our F&B sales," Sharma reveals.

Guest Tales

Since its inception, the hotel has managed to reach out to more than five million people through online platforms and has reached the US, Canada, the UK and rest of Europe.

They are currently focusing on developing the leisure segment of Rameswaram



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WTM 2017 Premier Partner is Italy

The Italian National Tourist Board will be the Premier Partner at WTM London 2017 – the leading global event for the travel industry – as Italy takes a "fundamental step" towards a new marketing strategy.

Known as ENIT, the tourism body has signed the Premier Partnership deal to ensure widespread media coverage; to offer maximum support to its tourism industry; and to highlight Italy's diverse range of holidays.

ENIT will have two main stands at WTM London (EU2000, EU2070) and will share its exhibition space with around 230 Italian travel trade partners, including regional tourism bodies, hotels, travel agencies, resorts and operators.

Through its Premier Partnership status, Italy aims to "reposition and widen the Italian tourist offer" beyond the traditional tourist destinations.

ENIT will also shine a spotlight on its themed years, with Italian villages being the focus for 2017, and food and wine in 2018.

Both themes promote the Italian way of life, which can be experienced by tourists across the whole country – from its mountains to the coast, lakes and cities.

Indeed, the country's cuisine is already a major draw, and it is regarded as the number one destination for food and wine tourism, according to the Food Travel Monitor.

Italy will also use WTM London to highlight its cultural attractions and the

fact it has more UNESCO World Heritage sites than any other country, with 53.

According to FutureBrand's Country Brand Index, it is ranked top for Tourism & Culture – and it is the most photographed country on Instagram, with 64 million tags and counting.

Its varied attractions mean Italy is the fifth most popular destination worldwide for international arrivals, with 52 million visitors in 2016 – up 3.2% on 2015.

These visitors generated more than €36 billion euros last year for the Italian economy, with Germans accounting for the highest amount at €5.7 billion. The US was the second biggest market (€4.6bn), followed by France (€3.6bn), the UK (€2.9bn) and Switzerland (€2.4bn).

Cities famed for their art and culture – such as Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, Naples and Turin – are the most popular option for overseas tourists, who spend about €14 billion in this sector. Overseas tourists visiting for seaside holidays, meanwhile, generate almost €5 billion.

Dario Franceschini, Minister of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, said the special themed years mean that regional tourist boards and cities can work together with the trade to create itineraries which enable overseas visitors to experience Italian lifestyles.

"In the tourism sector, where competition is so fierce, it is fundamental for Italy to diversify its attractions and spread tourist flows over the entire national territory," he said.



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REGISTER FOR WTM LONDON

WTM London has opened registration for its 2017 edition, which takes place between Monday 6 – Wednesday 8 November, and is poised to be the most successful yet.

Exhibitors will be able to conduct even more business than last year's record £2.8 billion, due the introduction of a second buyers' speed networking session on the Tuesday morning. This means every morning will have a speed networking session taking place at 9am – before the exhibition floor opens at 10am. Monday and Tuesday sessions are for buyers with the Digital Influencers' Speed Networking (formerly called

the Bloggers' Speed Networking), sponsored by Whalar on Wednesday.

A taste of ILTM at WTM returns across all three days of the event and is joined by a new Wellness & Spa section on the exhibition floor.

Monday 6 November will remain an exhibitor invite-only day. Tuesday 8 November will host the UNWTO & WTM Ministers' Summit.

Wednesday 9 November will host World Responsible Tourism Day – the largest day of responsible tourism action in the world.

Register at www.wtmlondon.com/register

NEW EXHIBITORS SIGN UP FOR WTM LONDON 2017

Sixty new exhibitors have already signed up to do business at this year's WTM London – the leading global event for the travel industry – including major tourist boards, innovative technology specialists and famous attractions.

Others making their debut represent sectors spanning the travel trade, such as tour operators, cruising, hotels, travel insurance, car hire and restaurants.

First-time exhibitors hail from countries as diverse as the Balkan country of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Islamic Republic of Iran; the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan; and Vietnam in South East Asia. Others come from as far afield as Australia, Bahrain, Ghana, Iceland, Lithuania and Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, many exhibitors have

decided to upgrade and take a main stand, instead of sharing exhibition space with others, in order to raise their profile during the event.

They include international attractions giant Merlin Entertainments – which runs brands such as Legoland and Madame Tussauds – and the tourist boards of Grenada and Moscow.

English Lakes Hotels Resorts & Venues is also new as a main stand-holder and will be celebrating the Lake District recently attaining the status of a World Heritage Site.

The Grenada Tourism Authority had been a main stand-holder in previous years, then shared with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation in 2015 and 2016.



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Holland wows agents in India

The NBTC Holland Marketing team along with Jet Airways India, and Schiphol Airport hosted 'Holland Sales Mission' in Bengaluru as well as Delhi to showcase various products to the trade and promote new flights to Amsterdam from Mumbai and Bengaluru. The table-top event was attended by more than 80 travel agents in each city, who met seven suppliers from Holland.



BENGALURU



DELHI

Responsible Tourism finds favour @WTM

WTM London will celebrate Responsible Tourism Day on November 8. A dedicated platform will address ‘overtourism,’ reducing carbon footprint and highlight Kerala’s Sustainable Development Goals.



TT BUREAU

This year’s WTM London brings Responsible Tourism to the fore with the introduction of a dedicated theatre on the exhibition floor where several sessions addressing the cause will be held. With 2017 being the United Nation’s International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, it is fitting that this year, WTM London plays host to more responsible tourism sessions than ever before, with almost 30 panels taking place across the three days.



As the global tourism industry feels the heat of overtourism, the new theatre will host a panel exploring how destinations ranging from Barcelona to Seoul are addressing the impact of overtourism, as well as a dedicated session looking at the issue in the remote Scottish islands of Orkney and Arran. This year’s programme will explore the challenges of managing the effects of more and more people becoming tourists and their impacts on the places in unparalleled depth.

The 2017 edition will also look at other topics currently prevalent, such as fighting plastic pollution and protect the oceans; how the industry can fight trafficking in its supply chain; and animal welfare. In addition, Kerala’s focus on integrating Sustainable Development Goals into its tourism development model will also be discussed.

With so much going on, there’s also scope for looking at emerging issues, such as how to deliver slum tourism responsibly; rethinking certification; and the inspiring story of a remarkable project in Bwindi, Uganda. Furthermore, the annual Re-

Responsible Act

WTM London plays host to more responsible tourism sessions, with almost 30 panels taking place across the three days

Upswing in domestic sector

Travel House Chandigarh is currently developing packages for Israel and Jordan to promote outbound, apart from a value-for-money Swiss packages.



TT BUREAU

Sonit Soni, Manager (Sales and Services), Travel House Chandigarh, says “Chandigarh and in fact, most of Punjab, is a huge market for domestic travel. Chandigarh is the main gateway to travel to Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. So, we get a lot of transit business.”

However, the company, which has been in business

for over 22 years, plans to tap the growing inbound traffic into India as well. Soni reveals, “Chandigarh does not get having much inbound travellers. We deal mostly with outbound and domestic travel. However, we would be very interested in getting on any platform that will help us tap this segment, particularly the European market. We would also look at conducting roadshows and sales missions to generate the inbound travel

business into Chandigarh and Punjab.”

The company has been working on creating new products that will interest outbound segment. “This includes luxury holidays packages. We are working on Israel and Jordan to promote them in this region. I am also working on a good, value-for-money Swiss package tour so that middle income travellers can also visit Switzerland. We also work with a lot of



Sonit Soni
Manager (Sales and Services)
Travel House Chandigarh

corporate clients in India and look forward to doubling our business,” Soni adds.

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EVENT TALK

SEPTEMBER 2017

Seychelles Tourism Board roadshow	Delhi NCR	18
ATOAI Convention	Kumarakom, Kerala	18-21
Seychelles Tourism Board roadshow	Ahmedabad	20
IITM	Mumbai	21-23
JATA Tourism Expo	Tokyo, Japan	21-24
Seychelles Tourism Board roadshow	Mumbai	22
IITM	Mumbai	22-24
World Routes	Barcelona	23-26
Tourism Ireland roadshow	Mumbai	24-26
IATA World Financial Symposium	Dublin	25-28
IT&CMA and CTW Asia-Pacific 2017	Bangkok, Thailand	26-28
IFTM Top Resa	Paris, France	26-28
Astana Leisure	Astana, Kazakhstan	27-29
Tourism Ireland roadshow	Delhi NCR	27-29

OCTOBER 2017

IATA Global Sustainable Aviation Summit	Geneva	3-4
Spain roadshow	Delhi NCR	4
Spain roadshow	Ahmedabad	5
Skal World Congress	Hyderabad	5-9
Spain roadshow	Chennai	6
UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook	Guangxi, China	10-12
CAPA-ACTE Global Summit	London, UK	11-13
CII Tamil Nadu Travel Mart	Chennai	12-15
India Travel Awards West	Ahmedabad	15
Odisha Travel Bazaar	Bhubaneshwar	15-17
CITM	Kunming	20-22
Madhya Pradesh Travel Mart	Bhopal	27-29
Promote Iceland roadshow	Mumbai	31

NOVEMBER 2017

Promote Iceland roadshow	Ahmedabad	1
Promote Iceland roadshow	Delhi NCR	3
South Australia roadshow	Bengaluru	6-7
WTM	London	6-8
South Australia roadshow	Mumbai	8-10
South Australia roadshow	Delhi NCR	11-12
Scandinavian Tourism board roadshow	Delhi NCR	14
Scandinavian Tourism board roadshow	Chennai	15
Scandinavian Tourism board roadshow	Mumbai	16
Swiss Tourism roadshow	Mumbai	17
India Hospitality Awards	Delhi NCR	27

DECEMBER 2017

IITM	Hyderabad	1-3
Travel Business Show	New Delhi	2-3

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

OBITUARY

Late Inder Sharma



(1932-2017)
Chairman, The Select Group

A pioneer in the Indian travel industry, **Inder Sharma**, Chairman of The Select Group, passed away in New Delhi on September 4. He was 85 years old and is survived by his wife Dr. Aruna Sharma and his daughter Neeraj and son Arjun.

Sharma opened the first SITA World Travel (India) office in New Delhi in 1956. Among the many hats he donned includes being awarded the Padma Shri in 1990 by the Government of India for his contribution in the field of Tourism. He was the president of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) from 1966-69 and 1978-79. TAAI presented him with the 'The Agasthya Award' in 1993 for his achievements in travel and tourism.

Sharma was also awarded by the British Tourism Authority with the Holder of the Keys to Britain Award in 1980, the only Indian to have been so awarded. He was inducted to the 'Hall of Fame' in 1993 by the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). He was honoured with 'Life Membership' of PATA at the 44th Annual Convention held at Auckland in April 1995. In 1998, the Government of Nepal honoured him with the 'Friend of Nepal' award while the Government of Sri Lanka recognised his efforts to promote tourism to Sri Lanka in the same year. He was awarded Life Time Achievement Award 2007 by the World of Travel & Tourism, among other accolades.

The travel industry comes together in this time of grief and deeply mourns his demise.

ASSOCIATIONTALK

Nusa Dua Beach hotel's new GSA in India

■ Five-star luxury resort, Nusa Dua Beach Hotel and Spa, Bali, Indonesia, has appointed hotel marketing and consultancy firm, India Sales Associate for its GSA representation in the Indian market. The five star luxury resort is a palacelike structure that expands over nine hectares of exquisite architecture, beautifully manicured gardens and tropical grandeur.



Manas Sinha
Director, India Sales Associates, GSA-Nusa Dua Beach Hotel & Spa

On this new venture, **Manas Sinha**, Director, India Sales Associates, GSA-Nusa Dua Beach Hotel & Spa, Bali said, "The

capacity ranging from 30 to 1000 persons; makes this resort undoubtedly a superior choice for Indians trav-



Nusa Dua Beach Hotel & Spa, Bali is an authentic Balinese resort with 200 metres of white sandy beachfront, offering 382 rooms in varied categories, its unique design and architecture, spa, superlative personalised services and multiple restaurants and meeting and wedding venue

elling to Bali." He went on to add that the Nusa Dua Beach Hotel & Spa has been recognised as the 'Outstanding Beach Resort Destination in Asia,' 'Best Spa Resort Destination in Indonesia' and 'Best Wedding Destination in Indonesia' at the 7th Asian Lifestyle Tourism Awards 2017.

TAFI Convention in 2 Turkish cities

In an association first, TAFI will hold its annual convention at two separate destinations in Turkey – in Dalaman and Antalya – to give a wholesome flavour of the country to its members.



TT BUREAU

Let's face it – experiencing two destinations is way better than just one. Using this as the underlying foundation, the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has decided to conduct its annual convention in two different places in Turkey this year – a first for any travel trade association. One part of the convention will be held in Dalaman and the other one in Antalya. The convention, which is to be held from October 27-31, has been split between two destinations so as to enhance the members' experience of Turkey.

Pradip Lulla, Vice President of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), informs, "The opening night



Pradip Lulla
Vice President of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI)

will be held on September 27 in Dalaman. The next day will have one business session at the same venue. On September 29, delegates will leave for Antalya after the business session by road. We are putting up our members at five-star deluxe properties. Combined with pre- and post-event tours, `80,000 per

member that includes registration fee is good value for money." The theme of the convention is 'Sustainable Success: Smart Way Forward.'

He adds that the convention committee headed by **Bharat Shah** had also considered Russia as a venue for

speakers for our business sessions that includes big dignitaries from the trade in India and Turkey as well as from the Ministry of Tourism and are awaiting their confirmation. We are expecting a total of about 750 delegates to attend this convention." Turkish Airlines is the chosen airline partner

Know your convention destination

Dalaman is a district as well as the central town of that district, situated on the southwestern coast of Turkey. **Antalya** is a Turkish resort city with a yacht-filled Old Harbor and beaches flanked by large hotels. It's a gateway to Turkey's southern Mediterranean region, known as the Turquoise Coast for its blue waters.

its convention before finally deciding on Turkey. Speaking about convention agenda, Lulla adds, "We have invited

for this event and TAFI has booked about 600 Economy seats plus Business Class seats on the airline.✈



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- Have a good understanding of technology
- Able to work well and collaborate within a team environment
- Well organised and process driven
- Well versed in verbal and written English

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- Graduate
- 3+ years of experience in Sales (ideally selling a service not a product)
- Responsible for developing strategy in a sales environment
- A good understanding of Technology (not technical)
- Ability to learn, grow and adapt
- Experience selling enterprise software Industry (a plus but not a necessity)
- B2B sales experience (advantageous)
- Would be beneficial if they have worked in the travel industry
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Ministry of Tourism

New Delhi

Satyajeet Rajan has been appointed as Director General, Tourism, in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary to Government of India. The IAS officer of 1987 Kerala cadre was previously Principal Secretary of Personnel & Administrative Reforms – Government of Kerala; Managing Director of Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) and has been associated with the Ministry of Defence and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in the past.



Carlson Wagonlit Travel

Singapore

Carlson Wagonlit Travel has announced **Bindu Bhatia** as the new Managing Director, Asia Pacific. Bhatia has proven entrepreneurial skills, commercial savvy, and deep understanding of the global travel market. She has been with the company for more than 20 years in a number of key roles, most recently serving as Senior Vice President, Global Program Management, where she has looked after CWT's biggest global clients. She has extensive leadership experience in strategic client management, operations, people management, and business development. Ann Marie Stone will be taking over Bhatia's previous role.



Cathay Pacific

Hong Kong

Cathay Pacific Group has appointed **Mark Sutch** as the new Regional General Manager for the region of South Asia, Middle East & Africa (RGM, SAMEA). Sutch has been a dedicated employee with Cathay Pacific Airways for the past two decades. Previously the General Manager Cargo Sales & Marketing for Cathay Pacific, he was responsible for commercial aspects of their global cargo business. Previous roles held with Cathay Pacific include the positions of Country Manager in France, Philippines and Sri Lanka as well as an operational role within the Flight Operations Department. He has replaced Charlie Stewart-Cox previous Regional General Manager, SAMEA.



Radisson Blu Atria

Bengaluru

Radisson Blu Atria, Bengaluru has appointed **Gaurav Taneja** as General Manager. A seasoned hotelier with more than 22 years of industry experience, in his current role Taneja will continue to lead the formulation and implementation of strategies to enhance guest experience and operational efficiency within the hotel and most importantly building and inspiring the team to greater perfection. Prior to joining Radisson Blu Atria, he has worked with several leading brands in the country such as Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, Oberoi group of Hotels – Hilton Towers Mumbai and Renaissance Mumbai – Marriott exposure, to name a few.



Hyatt Regency Lucknow

Lucknow

Kumar Shobhan is now the General Manager of Hyatt Regency Lucknow. Shobhan has spent more than 17 years in the hospitality industry. Shobhan has acquired a deep knowledge of diverse aspects of hotel management and has gained experience in dealing with different cultural backgrounds while working in the UAE (Dubai) and across India. However, his true passion remains with food and beverage operations. Shobhan started his career in August of 2000 as an F&B Associate at Hyatt Regency Delhi. After a brief stint outside Hyatt, he returned to serve the hotel brand again in December, 2006.



Bonton Group

Mumbai

Bonton Group has appointed **Keyur Vora** as its new Director. Vora will oversee the spheres of marketing, operations and business development of the company. He would be responsible for managing the corporate office of the company in Mumbai, its UAE headquarters in Dubai and Bonton's DMC in Mauritius. Vora has built his wealth of experience from working at his father's professional consultancy and successfully leading real estate and export businesses based in Rajkot, Gujarat. An avid traveller himself, Vora has keen interests in taking tourism to a next level.



Dusit International

Mumbai

Dusit International has opened a new Global Sales Office (GSO) in Mumbai, India, to promote Dusit Hotels & Resorts in the country. Appointed to run the office is **Keshwar Bhagat**, Director of Sales – GSO India. She spent three years as project manager of Promosalone: The Global Partner Network of French Trade Shows, almost six years as Promotions Manager at Atout France: France Tourism Development Agency, and prior to joining Dusit International was Director of Sales & Marketing – India for the Akaryn Hotel Group. In her new role, Bhagat will be responsible for selling all Dusit Hotels & Resorts.



Fairmont Jaipur

Jaipur

Fairmont Jaipur has announced the appointment of **Amit Kandwal** as Director of Food & Beverage, Fairmont Jaipur. He brings with him an extensive experience of working and opening luxury hotels and has worked with brands like Oberoi hotels, Taj hotels, Hyatt and IHG. He is very passionate about food, beverages, concept of hospitality and work to instill the same passion in others striving to make a career in Food and Beverage. Having done his diploma in hotel management from IHM, Ahmedabad and Management development programme from Gurugram, Kandwal has a keen interest in guest relationship management and F&B marketing.



Radisson Blu Faridabad

Delhi

Mehak Sachdeva joined Radisson Blu Faridabad as Marketing & Communications Manager and has significant experience in brand development, brand communications, marketing and advertising from international brand led hospitality companies. She is responsible for planning, development and implementation of all marketing strategies, marketing communications, digital marketing and public relations activities, both internal and external for Radisson Blu Faridabad across India. She has worked with Radisson Blu, Hyatt, Stay-Well Hospitality Group, and Quorum Hotels & Resorts.



TALKing People

Brijesh Shaijal, Managing Director, World Architecture Travel, says sharing stories and experiences with people he meets, revitalises his spirits. "I am passionate about world cultures. Most people think that my way of travelling is all about business class flights and five-star hotels. But I am exactly the opposite. I travel light, use public transport, and stay with the locals. You don't get things like these in luxury travel," he says. His most memorable holiday was his trip to Petra and in India, he'd pick Varkala Beach.



Rishi Chopra, General Manager, Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa, says travel helps in enriching one's perspective towards life. "I enjoy spending time in natural surroundings. Thus, when it comes to domestic travel, I like to unwind at the beach resorts in Goa and also revel in the tranquil experiences that Kerala has to offer." He also likes to travel to understand new cultures and experience local markets. Maldives remains his all-time favourite destination for its pristine waters and activities. He also takes time out to play chess.



Listening to ace musicians like Eric Clapton, Stevie Wonder, and Modern Talking, is how **Vijay Krishnan**, General Manager, Alila Fort Bishangarh prefers to unwind after a hectic day at the fort. "I am an ardent cricket fan. I also enjoy travelling and one of my most memorable holiday moments was when I visited Ranthambore National Park with my wife and children where we sighted tigers," Krishnan says. In India, he prefers travelling to Kochi and internationally, Dubai is his favourite holiday destination.



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'Incredible and amazing India'

As the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) appoints its first female head and their first CEO from Latin America, TRAVTALK in an exclusive interview discusses India from a global perspective and highlights the importance of developing tourism products around a region.



DEVIKA JEET

Recognised as one of the most influential women in Mexico, **Gloria Guevara Manzo**, President & CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), has a professional career that has given her an opportunity to work in the private sector, the government and the academia. Manzo believes that a deep understanding can help bridge the gap among various interests.

"I had the opportunity to work in the private sector and in government. I know how governments deal with tourism and travel and I know the approach of the private sector. I believe, by working together we can find solutions to help strengthen and grow the industry," says Manzo.

Speaking the language of the government, private sector and the academia, Manzo says. "My vision is to move this organisation forward and take it to the next level. One of my core aims is to continue the partnership between the private sector and the government bodies. We will continue to work closely with UNWTO and represent the private sector worldwide. At the same time, we will help the cooperation between the private sector and the government with educated plans, well-tailored to specific regions and destinations. In other words, we'll have a more specific regional agenda so that we can move forward and continue supporting the different needs and requirements of our industry."

Further, explaining the agenda of growing regional tourism and focusing on specific areas, Manzo believes that it is important to develop tourism products around a region - supported by the necessary infrastructure - so that tourism can follow.



Having visited India and discussing the country in particular, she says, "When we look at India, it is very interesting, the total contribution of travel and tourism to India's GDP was 9.6 per cent of the GDP in 2016, and is

rise by 2 per cent per annum till in 2027. "I believe India is on the right path in terms of growth. Which is wonderful, this means a lot more jobs. Last year, there were 40.3 million direct and indirect jobs in tourism. This means that the industry in India is the second largest employer for travel and tourism globally. Today, the country has large resources and wonderful people and a huge upside to further grow

Mexico, we started accepting a valid US visa and saw our tourists number raise by 1.8 million visitors. India's new visa offerings are a great move but it's going to take time before you reap the benefits. In Mexico, we also introduced certifications for cleanliness and sustainability. This helped address the problem of hygienic food and drinking water. I know this is a concern in India as well."



I believe India can be in the top few destinations in the world. India is amazing, the 'Incredible India' campaign speaks volumes with its planning and execution



sign that the disposable income is increasing. India's domestic travel market is also very interesting. There is a big opportunity in this sector, and India's numbers are very impressive."

WTTC has seen growth in the industry, despite the various challenges like terrorism and security. The industry continues growing and is very resilient. "The world that we live in today, has many challenges that cannot be isolated. Our industry is very resilient, travellers know that they need to protect themselves but will continue to travel, to enjoy, to learn new cultures and visit new places. I believe we can use the technology available to provide increased security. If we share information and work together, we can facilitate a path so that the technology can be used to increase security, thus, increasing travellers and as a result, increasing jobs." The ongoing terrorism issues make it even more important for both in the public and private sector to work together.

Addressing regional concerns and working closely with various governments, while making the most of technology, will be key for

WTTC under the new leadership. Creating initiatives, working with the private sector, increasing connectivity, investing in a destination and working very closely to grow the product and develop the brand, are highly recommended for growing economies to attract higher tourist numbers. WTTC, one of the world's largest travel industry organisations, will continue working very closely with UNWTO and further the cause of tourism. "This partnership is fundamental and very important. However, there are some countries where we need to do something more." The WTTC works closely with non-UNWTO members including the UK and USA. "We have an agenda for specific regions. We want to strengthen our regional connect and help countries grow together. Our initiatives are for the needs of tourism such as more security and work closely with the government to create more jobs. More tourists, means more jobs," adds Manzo.

India's travel and tourism sector was also the fastest growing amongst the G20 countries, growing by 8.5 per cent in 2016. A further 6.7 per cent growth is forecast for 2017. WTTC says India's figures are predominantly generated by domestic travel, which accounts for 88 per cent of the sector's contribution to GDP in 2016.

Fact File

- Last year, there were 40.3 million direct and indirect jobs in tourism
- The total contribution of travel and tourism to India's GDP was 9.6 per cent of the GDP in 2016, and is forecast to rise by 6.7 per cent in 2017

"We will continue to work closely with UNWTO and represent the private sector worldwide. At the same time, we will help the cooperation between the private sector and the government with educated plans, well-tailored to specific regions and destinations."

Gloria Guevara Manzo
President & CEO
World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)



"India's domestic travel market is also very interesting. There is a big opportunity in this sector, and India's numbers are very impressive"



tourism. I believe, India can be in the top few destinations in the world. India is amazing, the 'Incredible India' campaign speaks volumes with its planning and execution."

Manzo discusses some of the successfully implemented strategies in her home country of Mexico as a good example for developing economies. "There are a few things that need to be considered for a growing economy, visa is an important factor but we need to look at connectivity, infrastructure and the product offering. In Mexico, we realised that we were not very well diversified, we understood that we were depending very heavily on one product, like the beaches. We then decided to promote culture and other attractions. Post the H1N1 flu crises in

Manzo was appointed Mexico's Minister for Tourism in 2010 and this role brought her to India. "In India, I met a lot of smiling people and felt very welcomed. India is very unique and important. India is amazing, offering everything from culture to history, nature and even adventure. The products and experiences are available. It just needs to be communicated more. Now, it's a matter of developing more infrastructure and connectivity and working on product specifications and showcasing experiences India has to offer".

Looking at the other side of the coin, India's increasing outbound tourism is a sign that the economy is growing. "When you see more people travelling, it's a

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