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SpiceJet scales new heights

In the light of SpiceJet's recent operations between Delhi and Shirdi, **Ajay Singh**, Chairman & Managing Director, SpiceJet, shares expansion plans of the low-cost carrier, both in terms of routes and fleet.



Nisha Verma

SpiceJet is currently leaving no stone unturned to add new routes and aircraft to its fleet, claims Ajay Singh. "We have had 41 months of flying with load factors in excess of 90 per cent. In fact, starting September we have added new aircraft in our fleet with our first MAX aircraft. Between the current period and December 2019, we will

add close to 50 aircraft to the fleet. Our expansion plans entail a reduction in cost, increase in profitability and the launch of several new destinations," he revealed.

The airline has also won many routes under UDAN and has already started operations on many of them. SpiceJet will be the first airline to fly to the 100th airport in India – Pakyong airport



Ajay Singh
Chairman and Managing Director
SpiceJet

in Sikkim. "Under UDAN, we have started flights from Mumbai to Porbandar and Kandla. We've started a flight from Hyderabad to Puducherry, from Jaipur to Jaisalmer and from Delhi to Kanpur and Jalandhar. Apart from that, we have 20 odd flights for which we have the rights to fly under UDAN. We will be starting flights to Hubli soon along with a few more slated to begin op-

erations within this calendar year," he informed.

SpiceJet recently became the first airline to operate a flight on biofuel in India from Dehradun to Delhi. Speaking on the feat, Singh said, "With a lot of carbon emissions from ATF, biofuel essentially reduces these emissions by a significant amount. Hence, the flights are cleaner when biofuel is used. In addition, the fuel stock

is agricultural, and it is made of Jatropha plant. SpiceJet is the first airline among the developing countries to experiment with a biofuel flight."

By the end of this year, Singh expects the airline to achieve a double-digit growth. "We will continue to grow, but aviation is in a challenging space right now. We all need to try and find ways to increase our yield," he suggested. 🐦

Travel undeterred despite rupee fall

While Indian travellers have been affected by the falling rupee, they have not changed their international travel plans. The trade feels that there has not been much impact on tourism as the rupee continues to slide.



Mahendra Vakharia
President, Outbound Tour
Operators Association
of India



TT Bureau

"The rate of the dollar is not favourable, but I still hope that everyone does successful business in spite of this drop. I believe that we will overcome this and the outbound tour operators and travel agents will make sure that business grows. We have seen a temporary setback, but things will happen and people will get used to this. However, this will not continue for long. Hopefully, our government will take some necessary steps and things will turn in our favour soon."



Achinto Bose
Director
TripShapers.com

"The sharp depreciation of the rupee against major currencies will help inbound tourism to grow while outbound travel will be affected. I personally feel there is a drop of about 20-25 per cent. With the approaching Lok Sabha elections, people are apprehensive about travel movements. However, the Indian market has always been unpredictable. You can never be sure of its sudden rise or downfall. So, we aren't losing hope yet, but the rise of dollar is definitely a matter of concern. I think it's just a short-term fall, and travel is not much affected. People will anyway keep travelling!"

Contd. on page 8 ▶

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Mandarin Orchard Singapore has been a landmark of Asian hospitality on world-renowned Orchard Road since 1971, preferred by discerning international travellers for its service excellence and prime location in the heart of Singapore's most prominent shopping district.

The hotel boasts some 1,077 spacious guestrooms and suites that offer views of the city skyline from higher floors. Each room is equipped with advance in-room technologies including a smartphone solution that provides registered hotel guests complimentary local and international calls, as well as access to unlimited 4G data throughout their stay. Guests can also enjoy the latest blockbuster movies through a complimentary movie platform available in all rooms.

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personalised service by Meritus Ambassadors, to elegantly prepared all-day refreshments served in the exclusive environment of the *Meritus Club Lounge at Top of the M*.

Mandarin Orchard Singapore offers over 30,000 square feet of versatile meeting and function spaces, backed by the dedicated service of Meeting and Event Specialists.

Starring in the hotel's vibrant lineup of restaurants is the all-time favourite *Chatterbox*, home of the legendary Mandarin Chicken Rice; *Triple Three*, a Japanese-inspired international buffet restaurant; and *Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro* which was awarded two stars in the Michelin Guide Singapore 2016, 2017, and 2018, making it the highest Michelin-rated Chinese restaurant island-wide.

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Reimagine travel at ITB Asia

ITB Asia, to be held in Singapore from October 17-19, will focus on MiCE, technology and millennials. **Katrina Leung**, Managing Director for Messe Berlin (Singapore) talks about all that is on offer at the show.



TT Bureau

What is the theme for this year's event?

ITB Asia, 'Asia's Leading Travel Trade Show' is excited to host its 11th annual conference on the theme 'Travel Reimagined'. Key leaders from travel and technology industry will share



Katrina Leung
Managing Director for
Messe Berlin (Singapore)

insights on the major trends provoking disruption across the travel industry while analysing how companies are innovating to stay ahead. Hosted at the

Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Marina Bay Sands, the conference will take place from October 17-19, 2018. This year, we are proud to welcome Singapore Tourism Board, Singapore Airlines and Marina Bay Sands, to name a few.

Is there a special focus on millennials this year?

This year, we will be looking at the US\$180 billion Muslim travel market and partner with key experts, for the third edition of the Halal in Travel Asia summit. The conference will kick off with the official release of the Mastercard-Halal Trip Digital Muslim Travel Report (DMTR) 2018, revealing the latest insights and in-depth analysis into the Muslim travel market and behaviours. While our newly-dedicated Muslim Travel Hub will offer panels, showcases and important discussions on Halal travel, key topics covered include how to attract Muslim travellers to

“ Key highlights include an opening session with global leaders from Google, Microsoft and Trip.com who will provide insights on the major trends driving change in the travel industry, followed by a panel session on the future of travel distribution ”

destinations throughout the year, how to further develop the growing Muslim travel market and developing Muslim-friendly travel packages.

What are the important seminars for B2B partners?

Key highlights include an opening session with global leaders from Google, Microsoft and Trip.com who will provide insights on the major trends driving change in the travel industry. On day two, ITB Asia 2018 will host a keynote panel session on the future of travel distribution with insights from leading online

travel agencies (OTAs) and intermediaries on how they are innovating to stay ahead. Day three will see a dedicated session on the Chinese market as the panel explores the ways to win over Chinese travellers and Chinese millennials.

Major Trends

- ITB Asia will host a series of talks on travel technologies
- Speakers from leading tech firms will demonstrate how emerging and innovative tech can offer meaningful connections



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Festive fervour runs high

With the Durga Puja festivities on in full swing, the festive season for the travel industry has kick-started. The travel trade industry is geared not only to offer the best destinations to celebrate the autumn break, but is also planning for the big Diwali travel boom. Indians travel in big numbers in this season and prefer short haul destinations during this period. Operators are introducing interesting itineraries to pack the best experiences for their clients. While many are still selling old favourite destinations, there are new countries with diverse offerings for Indian travellers, who have increased marketing budgets to woo this crowd. Although the falling rupee against the dollar might have dampened the market slightly, but this is believed to be a temporary phase. The Indian outbound boom is only going to continue with Indians always asking for new destinations and experiences. This is only going to get better!

New avenues for Northeast

With the opening of Pakyong airport in Sikkim, India has turned a new page in its aviation history. With many firsts, the 100th airport of India is one of the highest airports in the country, and boasts of an airstrip that can put many scenic runways around the world to shame. The new airport will be the second gateway to Sikkim, after Bagdogra Airport, which also allows access to Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. The Pakyong airport is set to witness a boom in visitor numbers as more flights will start operating from here under the UDAN scheme. While SpiceJet is the only airline operating to the airport currently, more are on the cards in the near future. This, along with the lifting of the PAP restrictions on special zones in the region for foreign visitors, would create just the right momentum for that much-needed tourism boom for the Northeast. While inbound has already initiated infrastructure development in the region, it would be sustained by the growth in domestic tourism powered by increased connectivity and interest towards Northeast India.

TRAVTALK brings to you news and events that made headlines 25 years ago with relevance even today. From the archives, we present the October 1993 issue:

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Then



Narendra Singh Rathore
Founder & MD, Garha Tours & Travels

Now



Narendra Singh Rathore
CEO, Garha Tours & Travels

25 years ago, **Narendra Singh Rathore** was at the helm of Garha Tours & Travels, which he founded in 1981 in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Indore. Today, the company has won numerous awards and accolades. In 1990, he started VNV Travel Plan in Rajasthan and has also been an EC Committee member of IATO.

Then



Uttam Dave
Partner, Tourism Futures

Now



Uttam Dave
Managing Partner, Atmanya Projects

In October 1993, **Uttam Dave** was the partner in Tourism Futures, a specialist tourism, hospitality and leisure development marketing consultancy firm. Today, he is Fellow at the prestigious Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and Managing Partner, Atmanya Projects.

On a promising growth path

Attaining a total revenue growth of 17.5% in the last one year, Crowne Plaza Kochi is in the process of building a convention centre to cater to MiCE. **Shuvendu Banerjee**, GM, Crowne Plaza Kochi, talks more about the upgrades.



Manas Dwivedi

Given the rising need of using high-end technology in the hospitality industry, Crowne Plaza Kochi has very well adapted to the process of digitalisation. The hotel has recently upgraded from Holidex (world's first computerised hotel reservation system) to IHG Concerto, the next generation online reservation system offering best-in-class tools to manage reservations, rates, inventory and yield management to ensure a seamless booking experience for guests.

Shuvendu Banerjee, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Kochi informs about his plans of building a convention centre in the hotel. He says, "We

are in the process of building a convention centre, which would have a capacity to cater more than 1,500 guests. I think it would be a reasonable thing to do looking at the upward trend of MiCE business in the city."

Looking at business in the last one year, Banerjee says

we have achieved a steady growth in 2018. This year, we have attained a growth of 16.2 per cent in occupancy, 2.1 per cent in ADR and 18.7 per cent growth in RevPAR.

"A while ago, we realised that our success is dependent on how people in our

“We conduct unique food festivals and special events to create buzz in the market. The strategy works well for us as we have attained 17.5% growth in total revenue”

that 2018 has been a critical year for Crowne Plaza Kochi. "We faced setbacks one after another; first Nipah outbreak and then the recent floods. Despite all these challenges,

vicinity perceive us not only in terms of reputation but also in terms of business. For the past two years, we have been using a Food & Beverage-centric approach to



Shuvendu Banerjee
General Manager
Crowne Plaza Kochi

engage more with residents of the city. We conduct a lot of unique food festivals and special events to create excitement in the market. The strategy works well for us as we have attained 17.5 per cent growth in total revenue year to date against last year," he further added.

Oman eases visa process

The introduction of e-visas and easing of the entire process for Indian nationals combined with a 70 per cent reduction in visa fee will definitely increase the inbound numbers from India. The only question is, by how much?



Hazel Jain

The Sultanate of Oman has been present in India since 2010 through Blue Square Consultants and while it took some time for the destination to take roots in the market, the groundwork that took place was solid and is showing results. Since 2014, Oman has witnessed over 31 per cent growth in Indian arrivals. This figure is only expected to increase, what with the easing of visa process and a reduction in visa fee for Indian nationals.

Her Excellency, Maitha Saif Al Mahrouqi, Undersecretary, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), who was in India recently, said, "India is a big market for us. We have therefore expedited the visa process for Indian nationals. To encourage more travellers to visit the country, Oman has also

announced a new short-term tourist visa at five Omani Riyal (OMR) which is equivalent to ₹940 for a period of 10 days. Indians who hold a valid visa to any one of these countries – United States of America, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Japan and Schengen States can also avail the Oman visa through an e-visa process. This is in addition to the existing e-visa for Oman which is available at 20 OMR with a validity of one month. The amendments include dividing tourist visas into three sections: 10 days, one month and one year."

She was part of the three-city roadshow conducted by the Ministry of Tourism, Oman that travelled to New Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad. She was leading a delegation of 14 companies from Oman apart from the Government of Oman



representatives as well as from the Embassy.

She added, "As part of the Sultanate's National Tourism Strategy 2040, the Ministry of Tourism seeks to introduce the sector's latest developments, services, projects and facilities of the tourism industry, such as opening the new passenger terminal at Muscat International Airport and launching the

electronic visa, which takes a maximum of 48 hours."

Numbers from India

Speaking about the numbers from India, she said that from January to June 2018, Oman saw a growth of 15 per cent in Indian arrivals as against the same period last year. "In 2017 alone, Oman received 321,161 Indian visitors, showcasing growth of over 7 per cent in just

one year. We expect that by the end of this year, we will see at least 20-25 per cent increase in numbers between July to December 2018 versus the same period last year. This can be attributed to the activities we have been doing in the market as well as the increase in air connectivity, not only with our national carrier but also other airlines from India flying directly to Oman," Mahrouqi revealed.

Oman is now promoting itself as a long weekend getaway because of the proximity and connectivity to India. "We also have stopovers through our national carrier where people mainly travelling to Europe are choosing to stay in Oman for a day. But our main strategy is to promote it as a stand-alone destination for a minimum of five to seven days and we believe now that with our diversified products, we can definitely achieve this," she added.

Number Game

✦ In 2017, Oman received 321,161 Indians, a growth of over 7% in just one year

✦ The country saw a growth of 15% in Indian arrivals from January to June 2018

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Rupee fall doesn't dampen spirit

► Contd. from page 3

“So far, we haven't seen any decline in business. It is maybe because of the past bookings. The current season looks quite full for us in the month of October and November. Although we don't know the effort on booking from December onwards as of yet. We will have to test the water on that. Meanwhile, travellers can cope with the rupee fall by compromising on expenses like five-star accommodation, shopping, entertainment and dining.”



Tarun Malhotra
Director
InOrbit Tours

“Personally, I really feel that it is not affecting the outbound market. The ones who have to travel, are planning in advance to block their plans. So, I feel that it is only affecting the immediate travellers, who are doing the bookings at the last minute because the ROA is fluctuating every time. If you look at the pre-purchase offers for the cruises or for the other components of package, you really have a better option to book at the lowest prices if you pre-book.”



Manheer Singh Sethi
Co-Founder & Director,
Holidays by Sahibji

“I think it is a temporary phase for one month. We always feel that the fluctuation in the value of rupee has a month's effect. After that, people get used to it. Also, it is very rare that travellers cancel or reconsider their choice of foreign trips that has been planned for several months. Every year, we find out that whenever the value of rupee goes up, people make an initial fuss about it after which everything becomes normal.”



Amit Shah
Proprietor
Star Holidays



Rajesh Rateria
Director
Cirrus Travels

“I don't think the rupee's present condition is affecting the tourism market. I don't see any effect during the Diwali season but the future bookings could get affected. We haven't seen yet any drop in the bookings; people are still going ahead and booking. People like going on holidays, so they can perhaps cut short a few days but it is unlikely they will cancel the travelling plans. The weakness in the rupee against the dollar, therefore, has not had any impact on the travel plans of Indians.”



Jyoti Singh
CEO
Sailor Travel & Tours

“I don't think that it will affect the industry because if you see the GDP today, it is at a very good position. We have to take it positive because definitely there will be growth and tourism and cruising will never stop. It will always grow since we have passengers coming from all over the world. Plus a lot of currency is also flowing in; travel with cruising will never stop. Also, the best way to beat the blues is to just modify and readjust your travel plans, essentially by reducing the duration of your vacation.”




Gaurav Bhatura
Country Head/Director—
India, THAI Smile Airways

“Every factor related to travel and tourism affects aviation. When it comes to oil specifically, we purchase it in terms of USD. So, if the rupee fluctuates, it severely impacts our business line. The total land arrangement costs will rise for travellers going abroad. Airlines, in turn, will have to refuel at international destinations. Fuel forms a majority of our expenses. Currently, we are in trouble due to this fall in rupee. However, I hope that the rates will come back to normal and airlines will witness a boom in business.”

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TGI Hotels on expansion drive

Providing consistent excellence in quality, offerings and service, The Great Indian Hotels, popularly known as TGI Hotels & Resorts, ensures that it remains the first choice for travellers.



TT Bureau

With 10 more projects in the pipeline in South India, North India and Rajasthan, TGI Hotels & Resorts is currently on an expansion spree. As the brainchild of two hotel management graduates, **Amitava Roy** and **Arun Kumar V K**, the hotel started operations in 2014 with 22 rooms at Yelagiri in Tamil Nadu and has now grown to 13 hotels with 450 rooms.

Amitava Roy, Founder and CEO, TGI Hotels & Resorts, shares, "We operate on an



Amitava Roy
Founder and CEO
TGI Hotels & Resorts

asset-light model and do not invest heavily in properties, hence we are able to expand at a rapid pace." The company works on a management contract model with the hotel and resort owners, where it can operate its properties directly under the TGI brand and benefit from its expertise and market network.

Arun Kumar V K, Executive Director and Co-founder, TGI Hotels & Resorts, says, "At TGI, our endeavour is to be ahead of the curve while never compromising on the traditions that form the basis of great hospitality. Today, we are a company that is almost unrivalled in its versatile offering in all segments from economy to luxury, with the same consistent excellence in quality and service at the industry's most competitive pricing."

According to **Amit Kumar**, Chief Marketing Officer, TGI Hotels & Resorts, the group has witnessed an upswing for more than four years. "We started

our first footprint in Yelagiri, followed by a portfolio of 13 properties across nine cities which include Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. You can expect to see and hear a lot about TGI

Hotels in the coming years," assures Kumar.

Moving forward, the company is set to invest in expansion, innovation and improvement. TGI Hotels is set to soon debut in

Kerala (Kuttikanam, Wayanad), the Andamans, Coimbatore, Ooty, Mahabalipuram, Bangalore, Coorg, Hyderabad, Jodhpur and Ghaziabad with innovative concepts to maximise value for guests. ✈️



Arun Kumar V K
Executive Director and Co-Founder
TGI Hotels & Resorts



Amit Kumar
Chief Marketing Officer
TGI Hotels & Resorts

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Tata retains Taj Mansingh

The lease for The Taj Mahal Hotel has been granted to the Tatas for 33 years at a license fee of `7.03 crore per month, including GST.

TT Bureau

The Tata group's Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) has retained the iconic The Taj Mahal Hotel in Lutyens' Delhi after the much-awaited auction conducted by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). "The lease for the property will be granted to the group for 33 years at double the license fees. IHCL will pay a license fee of `7.03 crore per month including GST. Earlier, it was paying `3.94 crore per month as license fee," a senior NDMC official said. As per the new commercial terms, NDMC will get around 32.5 per cent of the hotel's gross turnover.

In a statement, **Puneet Chhatwal**, Managing Director and CEO, IHCL said, "We are delighted that The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, which has



Puneet Chhatwal
Managing Director and CEO
IHCL

"We would like to thank our customers for their enthusiastic support and our employees who have always offered exceptional service to our guests for over 40 years. We look forward to investing in the hotel and taking it to new heights. The Taj legend will continue to serve Delhi with elegance and charm," he added.

The other bidder in the auction was ITC Hotels. The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi was given to

“We would like to thank our customers for their enthusiastic support and our employees who have always offered exceptional service to our guests for over 40 years”

been an important part of the cultural and historic fabric of the national capital, will continue to remain a part of the IHCL family.”

the Tata group in 1978 for a lease of 33 years, which concluded in 2011. The company was since then given nine temporary extensions. ↴

Soak in religious fervour

Positioned at the highest point of the Kumbh Mela, Sangam Nivas is located on a hillock overlooking the Sangam and offers the perfect vantage point for guests.

TT Bureau

The Ultimate Travelling Camp, facilitating the country's first mobile luxury camps, covers a range of destinations and festivals around the places. TUTC's latest offering - Sangam Nivas aims to provide the quintessential essence of the Kumbh Mela to seekers of spirituality and well-being, while bringing forth the holistic aspects of Indian philosophy and mythology.

Briefing more about Sangam Nivas, **Dhun Cordo**, Co-founder, TUTC says, "To introduce travellers to an unparalleled, multi-sensory journey into the very heart of the Kumbh Mela, TUTC is coming up with Sangam Nivas, a perfect combination of a nomadic lifestyle with all the facilities of a super-luxury stay. Set to become operational from January 10 to March 6, 2019, the camp has weaved



Dhun Cordo
Co-founder
TUTC

in exclusive activities specially curated to enhance the Kumbh Mela experience."

"We've chosen the best destinations and the most perfect locations across the country, timed perfectly to coincide with events and festivals of each region, to allow you to experience the very best in glamorous camping or glamping," she adds.

The camp is at an hour's driving distance from the Allahabad airport, five hours from Lucknow and three hours from Varanasi. The closest rail-head is Allahabad junction. With 27 super luxury deluxe tents and 17 spacious luxury tents, Sangam Nivas Camp offers exceptional services.

Bringing forth the holistic aspects of Indian philosophy and mythology, Cordo mentions that Sangam Nivas is dedicated to provide the quintessential essence of the Kumbh Mela to seekers of spirituality and well-being. "We have put together an unparalleled journey that will help our guests connect with the spiritual aspect of this unique spectacle. The camp is directly in line with the Sangam, the main bathing area, and overlooks the *akharas* of *sadhus*, religious communities and seers," concludes Cordo. ↴



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Inspiring connections



Awarded for a creative itinerary

For an incentive group of 53 passengers, 'The Best Creative Planning Itinerary' was quickly planned and well executed by **Kulin Shah**, CEO, Kulin Kumar Holidays and his team.

As a precursor to the Visit Japan Travel & MiCE Mart 2018 (VJTM) by Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), **Kulin Shah**, CEO, Kulin Kumar Holidays was awarded by **Satoshi Seino**, President, JNTO for 'Best Creative Planning Itinerary' comprising an incentive group of 53 passengers. The company took just an hour to plan the itinerary and covered different activities, including sites covering nature, industrial visits, snow activity and city life.

Japan is an ideal destination for Indian MiCE with abundant facilities to offer to participants like high standard of hospitality, ease of transport, variety of Indian restaurants, ample sightseeing and a bustling nightlife. Since Kulin Kumar Holidays is operating tours to



Japan since 2005, it also has a DMC in the country that helps the company execute its plans conveniently by understanding

customers' requirements. After receiving the award, Shah expressed his gratitude

towards every member of team JNTO and thanked them for their constant support. He felt extremely proud and happy to have been honoured with this prestigious recognition and looks forward to increased business into Japan from India.

At the event held in Hotel New Otani, Tokyo, names

Best Community Contribution. Prize winners also made a presentation on how their programmes made use of the distinctive features of venues and the benefits that were obtained by the sponsoring companies.

The selection criteria for the awarded applications were based on itineraries

demonstrated innovative use of technology and planning and an outstanding contribution to the region through cultural exchanges with the local community.

Satoshi Seino, President, JNTO, also expressed his joy on receiving several applications for the awards. Besides, it was quite interesting for him to learn about such wonderful incentive programmes in Japan.

The selection criteria were based on itineraries that made the best use of the features of the destination, illustrated successful post-event impact on attendees and demonstrated innovative use of technology

of other winners were also unveiled. These included Comfort Travel Services, Taiwan for Best Incentive Travel and JTB Australia for

that made the best use of the features of the visited destination, illustrated successful post-event impact on attendees and corporates,

While addressing a large number of MiCE professionals from across the world, Seino expressed hopes that with the help of a continuous support, the incentive travel to Japan will continue to grow in the future. He believes that MiCE buyers can share more knowledge and resources to create a variety of incentive travel programmes with excellent content.

Advertorial

Cox & Kings' 260th in Mumbai

Cox & Kings' 260th anniversary in Mumbai was graced by **Jaykumar Rawal**, Tourism Minister, Maharashtra, along with several diplomats and business leaders from the travel fraternity. The company has several firsts to its name, including chartering a special plane to view the longest solar eclipse, introducing Russia's first luxury train & launching luxury railway journeys in India.



Glimpses of era bygone

Sunil Gupta, CEO, WelcomHeritage, believes that the diversity and unique experience that each of their hotels offer, has a story to tell, and this is exactly what sets them apart.

 **Inder Raj Ahluwalia**

Q*What is unique about heritage hotels in terms of attraction?*

In the pages of history, Indian heritage has a significant contribution. Indian heritage hotels have preserved the charm and elegance of the palatial mansions of royalty and converted them into hotels. These magnificent houses of kings, queens, maharajas and nizams retain the charm of bygone eras, and also have modern luxurious amenities to pamper their esteemed guests. It is a perfect hospitality package.

Q*What are the unique selling points of WelcomHeritage?*

India is a vast country with diverse culture and traditions with each destination offering something different from the other. With some 40 properties spread across the country, each hotel offers a unique experience which is locality-driven. These include nature walks in the

first heritage village of India, buggy rides, heritage walks in the streets of old Delhi, village tractor tours, a turban tying experience, horse safaris, sand dune experiences, etc. Each of our hotels has a secret to reveal and a story to tell.

Q*How many properties does the company manage? Are they pan-India?*

We currently have a portfolio of over 40 properties ranging from forts, palaces, havelis and nature resorts spread across the length and breadth of the country.

Q*Which are the three latest additions to the company's portfolio?*

In the current financial year, we

good medium to showcase the experiences of a property.

Q*Are heritage hotels boosting India's overall tourist status and image?*

In the heritage category, no two properties, or even two rooms for that matter, are identical. That's the uniqueness of heritage properties. Heritage hotels are playing an important role in diversifying India's tourism product portfolio. Dissemination of information and access to important global communication media has become easy, and many heritage properties are getting international recognition. The increased interest in heritage hotels among foreign tourists is helping to unlock the economic potential of heritage

“With some 40 properties spread across the country, each hotel offers a unique experience like nature walks, buggy rides, heritage walks, village tractor tours, etc”

have flagged two properties, namely, WelcomHeritage Ashdale in Nainital and WelcomHeritage Ayatana in Coorg.

Q*Is marketing heritage hotels different from marketing normal hotels?*

Yes it is. Each heritage hotel offers a significant historical, architectural, cultural and cuisine aura of the region in which it is located. The changing trends of today's travellers makes us drift towards digital platforms. Advertisements, media and social networking sites aren't enough for successful heritage hotels' marketing. Sellers should try to provide an enriched experience to tourists. For this, one needs to be as detailed as possible in painting a picture of the properties through words. Video presentations are a

properties. Besides, even today's domestic tourists are inclined to visit these properties to experience India's rich cultural heritage.

Q*What are your future plans?*

The next property to be flagged off will be WelcomHeritage Tadoba Vanyavilas Resort & Spa, a nature resort amidst the Tadoba National Reserve popular for spotting tigers. Thereafter, we propose to flag WelcomHeritage Inderpura Haveli, another heritage hotel in Udaipurwati, Rajasthan. Both these properties are in an advanced stage of project, and hopefully, both will be launched within this financial year.

New Hotels

- The next property to be flagged off will be WelcomHeritage Tadoba Vanyavilas Resort & Spa
- Thereafter, WelcomHeritage Inderpura Haveli, another heritage hotel in Udaipurwati, Rajasthan are set to be flagged off

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Ready to make headway in India

Andrea Andorno, Chief Commercial Officer, Air Italy, reveals how India is just the right market for the Italian carrier to start operations and why they have an edge over other airlines operating between India and Italy.



Nisha Verma

Scheduled to begin operations in India late October, Air Italy is set to fly from Delhi and Mumbai to Milan. Chief Commercial Officer **Andrea Andorno** shares the airline's plans, stating, "Last June, we started flying from Milan into JFK in Miami and are now looking eastbound from Italy. The presence of several important markets in growing economies has made us recently launch the Bangkok flight for Milan. The second market we are entering is India as it is a fast-growing market. We see value on both sides."

However, after Jet Airways stopped operations to Italy, Air India started flying to the European nation, followed by Alitalia restarting operations from Delhi to Rome. With already

two airlines regularly serving the route, how feasible it would be for Air Italy to operate in India now remains to be seen. Addressing the issue, Andorno said, "Some competitors have

recently made investments in India but we have been investing the most because we are not only launching a Delhi flight from Milan but also opening the Mumbai flight. Therefore, we'll be flying more than 11 flights a week from Italy to India. We have noticed a growing interest

We have a long-term ambitious plan in India. We'll be receiving many wide-bodied aircraft in the coming years and expect to have 50 aircraft by 2022."

Sharing the dates of the inaugural flights to India, Andorno revealed, "The Milan to Delhi

with fully flat beds and even a turn-down service, which means that on a night flight, passengers will get an Italian mattress added to their seat with a pillow and a pyjama. This is something that none of our competitors offer from India to Italy."

as its GSA in India. "We rely on Bird Group's long-term expertise in the market. The trade is well connected with Bird Group and we trust them to push our flights," he said. He further added that they would be quite generous in terms of incentivising the trade as well. "With the launch of the flight, there is a very good combination with competitive fares and incentives that are given to the market," he informed.

On the MiCE front, he said, "We trust our corporates in Italy; we will launch some inaugural fares for Indian corporates to get them on board so that they can try the product and continue to fly with us."

He further revealed that their marketing approach would be both for trade and consumer as well as online buyers. ✈



“The Milan to Delhi flight will start on October 29 while the Mumbai flight will begin operations on October 31. All our competitors only operate a Delhi flight from Italy”

among Indians to visit Venice, Milan as well as Rome. Within our hub system from Milan, we offer flights to six Italian cities, which none of our competitors in India can offer.

flight will start on October 29 while the Mumbai flight will begin operations on October 31. All our competitors only operate a Delhi flight from Italy."

On the aircraft and seat configuration, he said, "We'll be using A330-200, which will have 24 seats in Business Class

However, despite the absence of low inaugural fares, Andorno shared that they have the most competitive fares currently. "We want our product to be tested and believe that the market will understand this as soon as they try our quality. Mumbai would be our exclusive route to Italy. From Delhi, we will be competing with fares and quality. In fact, from Milan, we will be offering onward connections to JFK and Miami too."

As a first step, Air Italy has teamed up with Bird Group

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Targeting 15k agents

After just one year of going online, Akquasun Group has been witnessing a huge return on its investment through its B2B portal.



TT Bureau

One major change and up-gradation that the Akquasun Group has done as a DMC is going online. It is completely online for Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles. Revealing this **BA Rahim**, Group Director & CEO, Akquasun Group, adds, "For Maldives, we have allocated 300 rooms. We have some features which are not there in many other online portals such as 'split-stay'. This means that guests can book different category rooms at the same resort. For instance, they can choose to experience two nights in a water bungalow and two nights in a beach bungalow at the same resort."

The group has set a target of reaching up to 15,000 agents by the end of June 2019. "We are tapping Tier-II cities and



BA Rahim
Group Director & CEO
Akquasun Group

speaking to agents to educate them about our product. It has been working so well for us that today, our online business is enhancing our overall business," Rahim adds.

Speaking about the idea behind 'split-stay' concept, he says that the partners came up with the idea after understanding



Sujit Nair
Founder & Group Managing Director
Akquasun Group

what the clients demand having sold Maldives for so many years. "With the online platform coming up last year, the numbers have increased specially for leisure destinations such as Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles. Our target now is to ensure that the online bookings are complete in less than three minutes flat," Rahim adds.

Destined to prosper

The introduction of new products and support from clients, amongst more, helped Destinos India grow rapidly, informs the company's Senior VP **Pankaj Hingorani**.



TT Bureau

Running successfully in the market for the past one year, Destinos India is emerging as a major player in the travel industry, informs **Pankaj Hingorani**. He elaborates, "With our professional team's first-hand experience in tour operations and marketing, there are people who have been in the business for over three decades and understand ground realities, positioning of the product and create a brand for the company. Above all, we have gained the trust of FTOs who have worked with us for years and show confidence in our ability of delivering quality services on time."

After witnessing a successful year, Hingorani's immediate plan includes developing new products and strengthening their domestic base as a DMC, with



Pankaj Hingorani
Senior Vice President
Destinos India

support from their offices and associates in India as well as South Asia. He says, "We plan to venture into the direct selling space where we do not have market relationships, develop these new markets for inbound business and expand our network of overseas marketing offices, along with better utilisation of our fleet of transport."

Even though it is a start-up, Destinos India receives complete support from its clients who have entrusted in its business. "We have surpassed and lived up to their expectations and continue to grow with their blessings. We have also been proactive to their requirements and ensured that we are able to provide timely services with value additions to help them sell India in a better way," mentions Hingorani. Destinos India is also selling inbound into Vietnam, therefore further giving a boost to his business.

In the Offing?

Destinos India is looking at venturing into the outbound space for golf and leisure holidays, and is in the process of setting up a new website

Nurturing a pool of talent

Radha Bhatia, Chairperson, Bird Group announced that India will be hosting the next IATA Global Training Partner Conference in April 2019.



Manas Dwivedi

In a bid to develop skilled human capital for the aviation industry, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has appointed Bird Academy as its Regional Training Partner in India. The partnership was made official during a signing ceremony between **Alexandre de Juniac**, Director General and CEO, IATA and **Radha Bhatia**, Chairperson, Bird Group. Speaking on the partnership, **Conrad Clifford**, Regional Vice President—Asia Pacific, IATA said, "India is expected to treble to 520 million passengers travelling to, from or within by 2037. The demand for trained aviation professionals will continue to grow."

Emphasising on supporting India's talent needs by offering IATA courses, Clifford said, "Today, aviation supports 7.5 million jobs in India. Appointing Bird Academy as an IATA Regional



Training Partner means that we are able to better support India's talent needs. We look forward to a successful partnership with Bird Academy to fulfill India's training requirements."

On the occasion, Bhatia also announced that India will be hosting the next IATA Global Training Partner Conference in April 2019. "India, among the fastest-growing aviation markets globally, is expected to become the third largest aviation market by 2025. We believe that the most important building block

to any industry's success is its people and this joint initiative will help build a talent pool of trained professionals across all facets," she further said.

The partnership will allow Bird Academy to host training by IATA that covers the entire industry. Some of the key IATA trainings initially offered in New Delhi will include Passenger Assessment and Travel Document Checks, Document Control Systems, Safety Management Systems (SMS) for Airlines, and Passenger Fares and Ticketing.

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20 years of promoting Canada

In its 20th year, Mazda Travel is spreading joy with the trade and extending incentives it will receive from its suppliers on to its travel partners for an entire year! Its endeavour is now to make Canada a year-round destination whilst promoting its new winter programmes.



TT Bureau

When Mernoz Shastri, Director, Mazda Travel started this company with his wife 20 years ago, little did they know that it would grow to be this big. Celebrating 20 years of Mazda Travel this October, Shastri talks about the groundwork that has gone into making the company great. "We have a simple philosophy – nothing beats attention to detail and personalised service. That forms the core of our business. We invest a lot of time, energy and resources in developing our human capital; not a fancy office or good location but on our people. We make sure that our team is knowledgeable and are able to hand-hold the travel trade," he says.



As part of the anniversary celebrations, Mazda Travel has reached out to its supplier network to extend special incentives. Shastri reveals, "We will be able to go out in the market with some real price incentives for the next year that we will receive from our suppliers. The contracting team is talking to

them and this will come into effect next year. The 2019 programmes are ready and the incentives will keep coming in periodically. Right now, we are running incentives on Rocky Mountaineer."

Training for staff and trade
Training is important because

Canada is still a developing product. "It's a huge product and Indian travellers have just about seen the tip of the iceberg. So, as the numbers increase and as more people from Canada come to India to do business with the travel trade, I'm sure they will attract products, more sellers, more

DMCs and more foreign tour operators to India and offer a lot more variety," Shastri adds.

He says that while the numbers to Canada are increasing, product knowledge in India is limited, particularly in Tier II, III cities. To overcome this challenge, Mazda Travel has developed its own training modules that it uses to train its team as well as the trade. It has conducted training for over 1,100 travel agency staff across India so far.

Winter wonderland

While Canada is currently a four-month market for India, Mazda endeavours to make it a year-round destination. "We are working with destination partners and supplier partners to create a winter programme

– it's a complete family experience. You don't have to be a skier or a snowboarder to enjoy Canada. Travellers can do snow-tubing, ice-shoeing and ice walk activities that are easy and family-friendly. And of course, Christmas here is unbelievably beautiful. We have some programmes for the west and east coast of Canada. We aspire to bring in as many numbers during winter as we do in the summer," Shastri adds.

Winter Tales

One of Mazda Travel's itineraries for winter is flying into Calgary, keeping Banff as a base where guests do a variety of activities in Banff and Lake Louise area



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Akbar is poised for big leaps

With more than 30,000 registered travel agents and over 100 branches pan-India, Akbar Travels is looking to accelerate business in the Gulf market with its innovative approach.



TT Bureau

Pioneers in providing all kinds of travel solutions, Akbar Travels is riding high on fruitful business and strong presence in the Gulf market. Keen on shifting its focus to online business, KV Hidayath, Vice President, Akbar Offshore (a division of Akbar Group) shares that the company's immediate strategy is to develop online business of B2C, B2E and B2B in the Gulf market. "Currently, Akbar Travels has more than 30 branches in the Middle East and with a leadership position



KV Hidayath
Vice President
Akbar Offshore

in Dubai with our online trading, plans are afoot to garner a stronghold in other countries with our revolutionary B2B products," says Hidayath.

Talking about a prosperous summer season for the company, Hidayath takes pride in the company's growth ahead of its goals. "Summer has brought in a lot of success and prosperity for Akbar Travels. Though we had projected 15 per cent growth, we have achieved 20 per cent growth despite the hindrance of the US visa detriments," he adds.

Hidayath applauds the support and dedication of partners and tours operators in the success of Akbar Travels. He shares, "Our tour partners and operators play a major role in the growth and success of the company. We owe our success to them, even in markets where we don't have a physical presence. Our agents have played key roles in developing our products to a 360-degree fare experience. Their innovative approach has helped us become more

competitive. Our SOTO fares from getfares.com and DMC America tours from get2americas.com have helped in fortifying our position in the travel market," he adds.

With a number of promotional activities planned for the rest

of the year, Akbar Travels is looking to provide new opportunities with every event. Whether they are automated solutions and corporate tools for corporate services or best SOTO air fares for B2B clients in India and across globe, Akbar Travels is dedi-

“Our agents have played key roles in developing our products to a 360-degree fare experience. Their innovative approach has helped us become more competitive”

cated to provide better deals to its clients.

Commenting on the needs and demands of Indians travelling

abroad, Hidayath points out that relaxation in visa norms and favourable currency exchange rates can be a wishful change for the country's travellers. He further says that Indians are well versed, equipped and far more evolved today when it comes to travelling abroad.

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PTM 2018 brings APAC closer

Pacific Asia Travel Association continues to be a key partner for tourism players in the Asia Pacific region. Its recently-concluded PATA Travel Mart (PTM 2018) held in Langkawi, Malaysia, was another such event that proved to be an ideal platform for buyers and sellers to network, engage and interact.



Tripti Mehta from Langkawi

PATA Travel Mart 2018, held recently at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre in Langkawi, Malaysia, was attended by a staggering 389 sellers and 252 buyers from across the world. The Indian contingent comprising Maharashtra, Odisha and Tamil Nadu, among others, gave visiting delegates a chance to witness the variety of tourism products the country had to offer.

Several interesting events were held on the inaugural day such as PATA Youth Symposium, Travolution Asia Forum 2018 and World Tourism Forum Lucerne Start-up Innovation Camp. The gathering this day was graced by Dr Wan Azizah, Deputy Prime



Minister, Malaysia; Mohamad bin Ketapi, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia; Dr Chris Bottrill, Chairman, PATA; Dr Mario Hardy, Chief Executive Officer, PATA and several other dignitaries.

Speaking on the occasion, Ketapi said, "I am pleased

to see the overwhelming response and participation of delegates from all over the world, including China, India, Japan, Nepal and others." The minister also spoke of Malaysia's growing tourism and hospitality sectors, saying that the latter grew by 8.5 per cent, with 250 new hotels coming up in 2017.

"PTM 2018 is the perfect opportunity to showcase all the attractions of this place, while also allowing members and delegates a chance to network and interact. The event also gives us a perfect occasion to celebrate our strong partnership with Tourism Malaysia as an invaluable member for over 60 years," said Bottrill.

PATA Grand and Gold Awards 2018

The PATA Grand and Gold Awards 2018 presentation ceremony was hosted by Macao Government Tourism Office. Bagging several Gold awards, India showcased its growing tourism sector and the spectrum of innovative marketing. While the PATA

Gold Award 2018 for Heritage went to Sahapedia for the India Heritage Walk Festival, the Marketing Media—Travel Advertisement Broadcast Media award was won by SOTC Travel for 'Holidays Bring You Closer'. Kerala Tourism bagged two awards in the Marketing Media category, under Travel Advertisement Print Media for Yalla Kerala campaign and under the category of Travel Poster for its Live Inspired campaign. Cox & Kings India won the PATA Gold Award for Marketing Media—Travel Brochure, an innovative piece set on the premise of showcasing India to the world through the lens of a bioscope. Another PATA Gold Award for Marketing Media was won by The Ultimate Travelling Camp in the Travel Video category for 'Uncommon Experience'.

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ETAA's trips for members

The Enterprising Travel Agents Association (ETAA) conducted educational trips to Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh to provide members with destination knowledge.



TT Bureaui

ETAA recently conducted two educational trips to Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. The purpose was to give on-field destination knowledge

Routes Trail. Rajasthan Educational Trip was a seven-night itinerary covering Udaipur, Kumbhalgarh, Ranakpur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Jaipur. Rajasthan Routes Trail provided the delegation with

from Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru, Chennai and other Tier-II cities like Bhusaval and Latur. The Himachal Pradesh tour covered places like Shimla, Naldhera, Kullu and Manali. Chutney Hotels provided the



to members and show around the best hotels, which will help them to design their itinerary for their clients in a better way. It will also help to build brand of their company in the market.

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good hotels, coach and guides for sightseeing. The company has its own fleet of vehicles and offices at all major tourist destinations of Rajasthan.

A total of 40 travel agents and tour operators participated

delegation with good hotels, coach and a guide for sightseeing. A total of 25 members participated in this tour. ETAA's upcoming event includes a two-night three-days education tour to Jim Corbett post SATTE 2019.

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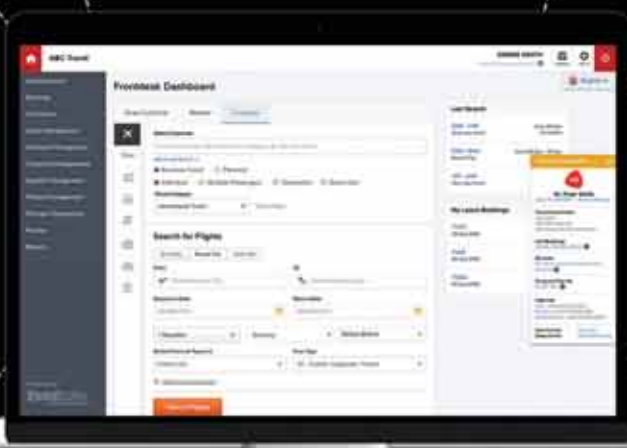
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EKTTA marches for a cause

The members of EKTTA (Enterprising Knot of Travel & Tourism Associates) in Odisha, a robust community comprising travel agents, tour operators, guides, hoteliers and allied professionals joined together for a 'Tourism Walk' and distributed more than 500 caps to participants. The event was organised by Department of Tourism (Govt of Odisha) on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2018.



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Greeted with open arms at KTM

Apart from the contributions made to the CM's Relief Programme in August 2018, Riya Group is also pushing tourism in to Kerala through internal and external means through its team and agents.



TT Bureau

Riya Group was overwhelmed by the response it received from attendees at the recently-concluded Kerala Travel Mart (KTM). **Thomas Mathai**, Director, Riya Group, who attended the event said that the response was so good that it received five times more buyers at its stall than normal who made inquiries about its products. "Most of the products we were promoting in Kochi were for Wayanad packages for the spring season, upmarket



Thomas Mathai
Director
Riya Group

accommodations at hill stations and ayurvedic treatment packages. The agents were also interested in combination packages for North and South India. We are in touch with the agents now to get more such inquiries as many were positive that they would be able to sell our curated packages to their database," Mathai says.

Speaking about the on-ground status that he witnessed while in Kerala, he adds, "Tourism is regaining its glory in Kerala and has rebounded at an amazing pace. Around 95 per cent of hotels, resorts and other facilities are operational and the rest will follow soon. The response we received at KTM proves that buyers are still interested in selling God's Own Country. Overall, the tourism fraternity of Kerala is looking forward to a good season."

This was a relief for the team as things have not been too good in Kerala this year. Mathai shares that while inquiries did drop due to the virus scare in May and then due to the floods in August, Riya Group is seeing good results since mid-September.

"The Kerala market is very close to our heart. Apart from the contributions made to the CM's Relief Programme in August 2018, we are also pushing tourism in Kerala through internal and external means to our team and agents. As the prices are very competitive now, we should

see some great results very soon," he says.

According to him, approximately over 150 suppliers showed keen interest in their products and the team is in touch with them to push long and short tours to Kerala. "We are also planning

“Around 95% of hotels and resorts are operational and the rest will follow soon. The response received at KTM proves that buyers are still interested in selling the state”

some joint promotional activities in various cities in India. KTM

is a great platform for inbound and domestic tourism and will

definitely help boost the tourism back to Kerala. The kind of awareness and belief KTM has generated was required at a time like this to show that Kerala is still a strong state and nothing can stop the amazing experience millions of tourists have here every year!" Mathai adds.



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TTM emerges bigger & better

As a young association, Travel Trade Association of Uttar Pradesh (TTAUP) had initially started its journey with 10 core members, now growing up to 125 registered members from UP and around 35 associate members.



Amrita Ghosh from Lucknow

The second edition of Travel Trade Mart (TTM) 2018 organised by Travel Trade Association of Uttar Pradesh (TTAUP) at Hyatt Regency, Lucknow, recorded around 161 travel trade professionals from

Lucknow, 22 from Kanpur, 18 from Varanasi, 44 from across UP and 85 metro cities. Sharing the idea behind the mart, Vivek Pandey, President, TTAUP, said, "TTM has been particularly conceptualised to cater to local travel agents and travel trade partners of UP. With more than

“With more than 25 years of experience in the UP market, we felt the need to involve our UP partners and association members in a business networking show”

25 years of experience in the UP market, we felt the need to

take an initiative and involve our UP partners and associa-

tion members in a business networking show.”

Strictly adhering to the rule of quality over quantity, TTM does not accommodate more than 36 exhibitors. "We have only registered 36 sellers despite receiving several requests for



Vivek Pandey
President
TTAUP

stalls. We have have maintained our quality this year too and hope to do so in the coming years. However, we are reconsidering a venue change as the increasing growth and visitor numbers demand a larger space," Pandey shared.

According to Pandey, TTM aims to reach out to travel partners who are based out of the smaller towns of UP such as Bahraich, Barabanki, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Shahjahanpur, to name a few. "These lesser explored towns have a lot of tourism scope but travel agents of these markets are not much equipped and updated to induct a new product for clients. Therefore, we want to train and educate travel partners, specially from these Tier II, III cities to enhance the opportunity of mutual business. Once the opportunity of the mutual business partner versus buyer is increased, the tourism potential of the region is going to be unlocked," he explained.

He further informs that in the coming year, TTAUP has plans to improve the scale and quality of TTM besides focusing on more educational seminars and activities for its members to increase the market share of Uttar Pradesh in the total travel business of India.



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TTM aims to reach out to travel partners who are based out of the smaller towns of UP such as Bahraich, Barabanki, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Shahjahanpur, to name a few

TTAUP wants to train and educate travel partners, specially from these cities

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Taking great strides in tourism

Union Minister for Tourism (I/C) **K J Alphons** recently presented the National Tourism Awards 2016-17 in Delhi on World Tourism Day. This year, a total of 77 awards were presented to the tourism industry stakeholders, state governments, central agencies and individuals in recognition of their performance in their respective fields.



HOTELS

IHG bullish on India

With InterContinental Hotels Group's (IHG) inauguration of Holiday Inn Express Gurugram Sector 50, **Vivek Bhalla**, Regional VP—SWA, IHG and **Ashutosh Pandey**, GM of the hotel, reveal more about the group's plans.



Kanchan Nath



Vivek Bhalla
Regional Vice President—
South West Asia, IHG



Ashutosh Pandey
General Manager, Holiday Inn
Express Gurugram Sector 50

Q What is the strategy behind Holiday Inn Express brand?

The Indian market is driven by domestic travel which results in an increased demand for hotels in the midscale category. Consequently, our focus is to tap into this growing category with our Holiday Inn brand family – Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, which comprise more than 85 per cent of our pipeline (number of hotels). Holiday Inn Express is our fastest-growing brand globally, and we see a great opportunity in the South West Asia market to expand our footprint. Towards this, last year we signed an agreement with SAMHI to manage 14 Holiday Inn Express hotels across 10 cities in India. Further, this year, so far, we have signed seven Holiday Inn hotels in the country.

Q What is IHG doing as far as development in the luxury and resorts segment is concerned?

In recent years, we have seen a shift in the Indian hospitality landscape to focus on quality midscale hotels. This is largely in response to the rising middle class and a significant increase in domestic travel in India. While our focus is on the midscale segment, we are committed to growing our upscale brand, Crowne Plaza and luxury brand InterContinental Hotels and Resorts. We also intend to debut Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants and Hotel Indigo in key city and resort locations in SWA.

Furthermore, in July 2018, we completed the acquisition of 51 per cent stake in Regent Hotels & Resorts, adding an exciting brand at the top end of the luxury segment. We are actively looking for strategic partners to grow our footprint across SWA, while keeping ourselves open for discussions about introducing new brands to the sub-region.

Q How has business been in the first eight months of 2018?

In 2017, we delivered great performance in India with a comparable +11.2 per cent revenue per available room (RevPAR). We see the positive sentiment continuing this year with double-digit growth.

Q What are your expectations in 2019?

With 9-10 more hotels from our portfolio set to be launched by the end of 2018 and 3-4 in 2019, we are looking at significantly expanding our presence across the country.

Q What is the USP of your hotel? When will it be fully operational?

Holiday Inn Express Gurugram Sector 50 is open for guests and offers 205 design-led, contemporary rooms. For seamless connectivity, the hotel offers free high-speed internet in all rooms. Featuring an enhanced 'Great Room', the hotel offers a dynamic space to socialise and entertain. Situated at an excellent location, Holiday Inn Express Gurugram Sector 50 is strategically situated in a mixed-use complex, populated with a shopping mall, restaurants, entertainment and wellness facilities, making it a perfect destination for business travellers as well as leisure seekers. The hotel is just 30 minutes away from Indira Gandhi International Airport and the railway station and is in close proximity to the metro station, providing great accessibility and connectivity to its guests.

Q What is your marketing strategy? What are your target occupancies, ARR and RevPAR?

In order to drive awareness and conversions from the key source markets, the hotel will be supported by an extensive Holiday Inn Express 'More than Ready' brand campaign which will leverage both traditional and digital media. The hotel also has opening offers for transient shoppers and is running early-bird promotions on the GDS. The aim is to encourage footfalls, trial usage in the initial days and then focus on driving conversions for repeat usage by leveraging both quality stays as well as IHG Rewards.

Q Do you have any specific incentives for travel agents to sell the newly-opened property?

We have received a good response from the travel and trade fraternity and the hotels will offer standard commission rates to travel agents.

Q Which are the nearby corporates you are looking at for business?

Gurugram has emerged as a preferred destination for the IT industry in North India with more than 400 IT and ITes companies. The city is also a hub for the corporate sector which includes companies from different segments like consultancies, financial advisers, etc. Sohna Road in Gurgaon is one of the nearest areas from the hotel and is preferred by large office setups due to good infrastructure, affordable rentals, good-quality and large-floor plates.

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Limitations turn into opportunities

Apart from facing various obstacles while executing business plans, India Travel Awards winners from different regions speak about overcoming hurdles and converting them into an opportunity.



★ Best MICE Hotel —
Crowne Plaza Kochi (South 2018)



“Amrita Ghosh, Director—Sales, Crowne Plaza Kochi, believes that the availability of quality manpower is a challenge. “In a location like Kerala, where the heritage and culture are best expressed by Keralite hosts, we are facing trouble getting the native people onboard to give an authentic experience to the discerning traveller. As a state, we faced back to back adversities in the year 2018. Travellers still doubt whether we are ready to welcome guests, but honestly speaking, we have made a strong comeback and are just as ready to welcome them as we were before the floods. Somehow this message has not been communicated effectively,” shares Ghosh.”

★ Best Inbound Tour Operator- Western Europe —
ACME Voyages (North 2017)



“Surinder Yadav, Manager, ACME Voyages feels that OTAs have changed the dynamics of the business, “Online reputation of big players in the industry is more, so their market share is also big as well. This is causing problem to small tour operators. Hotels and resorts are now taking direct bookings on website and air tickets are also available online; so active internet users are directly booking their trip. We are trying to overcome hurdles by adopting digital marketing as a preferred tool and making our web platforms more realistic,” he reveals.”



★ Best Serviced Residency Provider —
Hotel White Pearl Serviced Apartments and Residences (North 2017)

“Priya Bhanot Sethi, Director, Hotel White Pearl Serviced Apartments and Residences feels that most companies have opted a conservative approach since the Indian and the international market is facing a period of continued slow growth. She says, “Lesser expatriates are travelling in the country for longer stays and this has raised challenges for us in terms of growth. Another challenge is to provide quality accommodation at a low cost. Since we customise our apartments as per the client's requirement, it is a real challenge in terms of pricing, as customisation of the apartment is usually an expensive affair.”



★ Most Enterprising Business Couple —
Sucheta Nagpal & Pankaj Nagpal (North 2017)

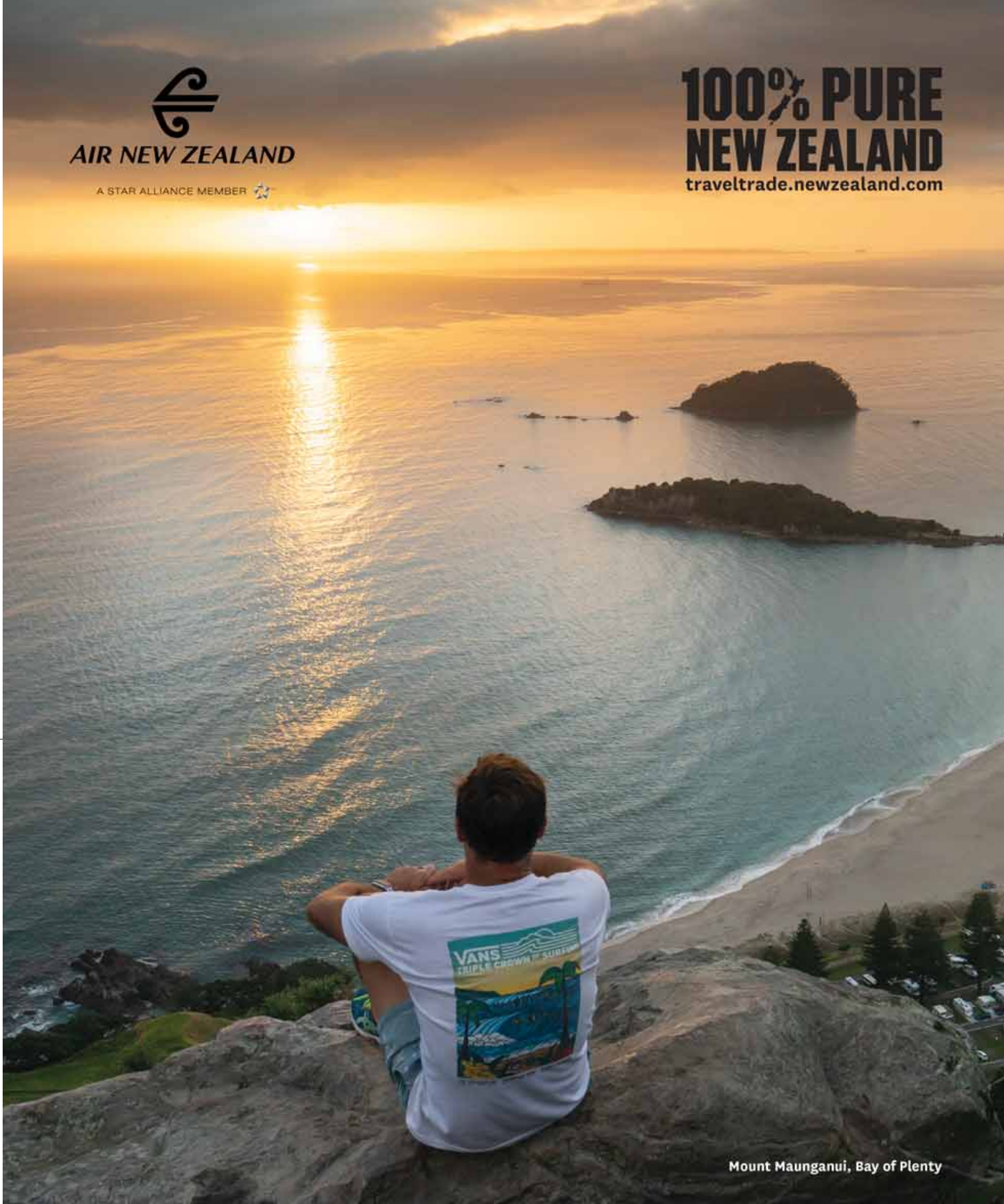
“Pankaj Nagpal, MD, Travstarz Global Group feels that the biggest hurdle for trade is GST. “The biggest challenge for the outbound market is GST. We have always contested that levying any tax on outbound tours does not make sense. The services are not being rendered in India; it is being used by a third party outside. Also, there is no clarity on how the entire system works. But I think, these concerns will be addressed over time. The industry as a whole is working on that. I perceive good growth going ahead,” he concludes.”



Hahn Air awards top agents in Delhi

Hahn Air hosted an awards ceremony to celebrate its top performing travel agencies from Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Over 150 travel agents attended the event at The Metropolitan Hotel and Spa. The airline awarded 21 certificates of appreciation and nine 'Martin Awards' to recognise its top agencies for their continued support and growth.





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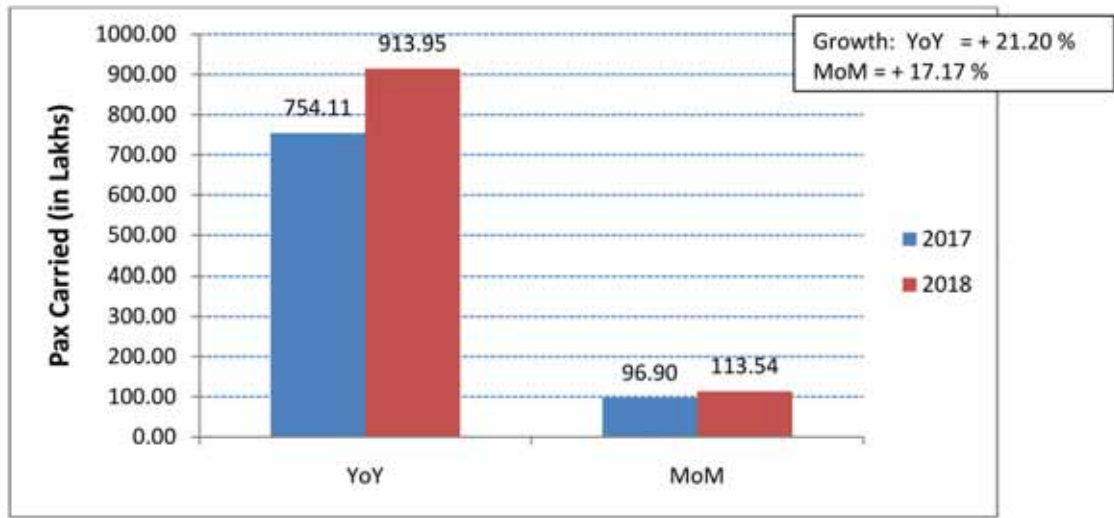


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Domestic air traffic rises to 21.2%

Domestic air traffic has grown by 21.20 per cent from January-August YOY, according to a latest report by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).



Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January-August 2018 were 913.95 lakhs as against 754.11 lakhs during the corresponding period of previous year. The passenger load factor in the month of August 2018 has shown increasing trend compared to previous month due to beginning of festive season, the report said.

Growth forecasts for India indicate a trebling of passenger demand by 2037 when some 500 million people are expected to fly to, from or within India, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Aviation already supports 7.5 million Indian jobs and US\$30 billion of GDP (1.5 per cent of the economy).

IATA also encouraged the government to look at ways to improve India's competitiveness by aligning with global standards and reducing excessive government imposed costs.

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Source: DGCA

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EVENT	CITY	DATES
Spain National Day Celebrations	Delhi	17
Skal World Congress	Mombassa	17-21
ITB- Asia 2018	Singapore	17-19
ETAA Diwali Networking Meetup	Delhi	20
India Travel Mart	Dehradun	20-22
MOT & PATA India Roadshow	Milan	23
MOT & PATA India Roadshow	Rome	24
Uttarakhand Travel Mart	Dehradun	24-26
MOT & PATA India Roadshow	Barcelona	25
ATOAI 14th Annual Convention	Araku Valley	25-28
12th UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook	Guilin	25-27
HPMF Convention	Varanasi	25-27
Holiday Expo	Vishakhapatnam	26-28
MOT & PATA India Roadshow	Geneva	29
Scandinavian Tourist Board Roadshow	Delhi	29
MOT & PATA India Roadshow	Paris	30
Scandinavian Tourist Board Roadshow	Bengaluru	31
MOT & PATA India Roadshow	Frankfurt	31

NOVEMBER 2018

Scandinavian Tourist Board Roadshow	Mumbai	1
India International Travel Exhibition (IITE)	Mangalore	2-4
The Holiday Expo	Kanpur	2-4
World Travel Mart	London	5-7
Indian Corporate Aviation Summit (ICAS)	New Delhi	9
Cambodia International Travel Fair 2018	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	15-17
China International Travel Mart (CITM)	Shanghai	16-18
India Travel Mart	Jammu	16-18
PAICE Expo	Auckland	20
India International Travel Mart (IITM)	Hyderabad	23-25
Taipei International Travel Fair 2018	Taiwan	23-26
World Tourism Conference	Hyderabad	26-28
TAAI 65th Annual Convention	Kunming, China	27-29
IBTM World	Barcelona	27-29
International Conference on Heritage and Culture	Cuttack	28-29
PATA Destination Marketing Forum	Khon Kaen, Thailand	28-30

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Cathay Pacific

Mumbai

Cathay Pacific has announced **Anand Yedery** as its Regional Head—Marketing and Sales for South Asia, Middle East and Africa. In his current role, he will be responsible for overseeing the business of Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon Passenger sales in the regions. Yedery has been working with Cathay Pacific since 2004, having joined in the customer services department at Mumbai Airport. In 2007, he moved to the commercial side of business, heading passenger sales for Southern India based out of Chennai. He moved to Mumbai in 2010 to head passenger sales for the Western India region.

Delhi

Neeraj Tyagi has been appointed as Regional Head—Business Development for South Asia, Middle East and Africa of Cathay Pacific. Tyagi began his career in Customer Services at Delhi Airport with American Airlines in 2005. He then moved to commercial sales in American Airlines managing Corporate Sales as an Account Manager. In 2011, Neeraj joined Cathay Pacific as Corporate Account Manager—North India. After a year, he was appointed as the Regional Corporate Sales Manager—South Asia, where he worked until January 2014 before moving to Hong Kong to work in Global Corporate Sales in Cathay Pacific Airways Head Office.

Radisson Bengaluru City Center

Bengaluru

Sapnil Kalkar has taken responsibility as General Manager Radisson Bengaluru City Center. In his new role, Kalkar will be responsible for all operational and commercial aspects of the property as well as providing exceptional experience for guests. He has been associated with the GRT Group for eight years in various capacities. A graduate of IHM Pusa, he began his career as a senior chef with Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi and then went on to pursue an operations role and has led large teams to deliver unparalleled customer experiences. He was associated with several leading hospitality brands including Starwood Hotels Fortune Group of Hotels and Royal Orchid Hotels.

InterContinental Hotels Group

Delhi

InterContinental Hotels Group has appointed **Nivedita Avasthi** as the General Manager of Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida. During the past 22 years of her career, Avasthi has been associated with reputed brands across the hospitality industry such as the Hilton, Carlson and Sarovar Hotels. She started her innings with IHG in 2013 as Director of Rooms and has successfully headed challenging assignments of pre-opening and brand conversions. Known for her significant operational expertise, she has received many accolades including the Winning Ways Future Generation Leader in 2017.

Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel

Pune

Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel welcomes General Manager **Rishi Chopra** who has been appointed to lead the entire Sheraton Grand Pune team onto a path of successfully curating Pune's finest hospitality. Chopra has spent five years in Pune during his tenure at Le Meriden. He embarked on his hospitality journey as Director, Food & Beverage at the Le Meriden Pune from 2001 to 2006. Chopra completed his degree in Hotel Management in the year 1989 and prior to this Starwood association, he has worked with hospitality brands like The Leela and The Taj Group.

Hyatt Regency Chennai

Chennai

Hyatt Regency Chennai has appointed **Tarun Seth** as the General Manager, where he will be leading a vibrant team of 400 professionals, while further building and strengthening the business and reputation of the 325-room property. With more than 17 years of experience in hospitality, Seth has been an integral part of some of the most iconic hotels in India. He started his career with Grand Hyatt, New Delhi, and developed a keen passion for F&B operations. Prior to joining Hyatt Regency Chennai, Seth was General Manager for Trident, Kochi and The Oberoi Motor Vessel Vrinda in Kerala.

Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport

Mumbai

Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport, part of InterContinental Hotels Group, has announced the appointment of **Ketan Salvi** as its Director of Sales and Marketing. His responsibility will include leading and further improving all aspects of the sales and marketing communications, promoting brand strategies and providing the best of Holiday Inn hospitality experience to guests. With 10 years of experience, Salvi brings an enriching insight into hotel sales and operations with large business and luxury chains like Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts, and Taj Hotels Palaces and Resorts.

JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu

Mumbai

The flagship property of JW Marriott Hotels in India has appointed **Sneha Jha** as the Director of Sales. With over a decade of experience in hospitality, Jha brings to the table proficient expertise and immense knowledge across sales and marketing, hotel operations, customer service, and business development. Before joining the JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu, she spearheaded a team as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Holiday Inn Mumbai, wherein she was responsible for exploring revenue, generating opportunities, and securing successful positioning for the hospitality brand.

Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel

Bengaluru

Bikash Gautam has been designated as the Director of Sales at Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. In his role at the hotel, he will be leading the management staff in planning and strategising for sales objectives, marketing communications, and direct sales force activities to increase profits and accomplish targets. With over eight years of sales and marketing experience in the hospitality industry, Gautam believes in an innovative approach to his management skills.

The following regular column provides you a brief update on world events and how they impact the tourism sector.

 **Nikhil Jeet**

Costa Rica

After remaining closed for 16 months, Costa Rica's Poás Volcano National Park has just re-opened for the public.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has cancelled a \$400m (£304m) Chinese-funded project to build a new airport outside the capital Freetown. Aviation Minister Kabineh Kallon said that the project, due for completion in 2022, wasn't necessary and its current international airport would be renovated instead.

Oman

Oman has started work on the country's first adventure resort being developed atop the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar mountains in Al Dakhiliyah governorate at an investment of over \$50 million.

Thailand

Maya Bay — one of the world's most popular beaches, made famous by the 2000 film The Beach, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, is to be closed indefinitely to allow it to recover from the damage caused by millions of tourists.

Singapore

Singapore Airlines will offer a non-stop flight between Singapore to New York, becoming the world's longest commercial non-stop route at 19 hours in the air.



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South Africa targets 104k tourists

Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism and **Neliswa Nkani**, Hub-Head—Middle East, India and South East Asia (MEISEA), South Africa Tourism, shed light on targeting more Indian tourists to the country, while promoting MiCE and Indian weddings.



Kanchan Nath from Cape Town

As far as tourism growth is concerned, 2017 was a good year for South Africa as the country welcomed more than 10.3 million international visitors that year. Talking more about strengthening the relationship between India and South Africa, Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism, said, "As India is a growing market for us, we want to remove all the existing barriers between the two countries, along with overcoming the visa challenges and enhancing the airline connectivity."

He laid emphasis on the Nigerian, Indian and Chinese (NIC) markets as their key focus in terms of new emerging source markets. He explained, "The continent of Europe continues to be strong for us. We are really striving to work on having direct connectivity between India and South Africa, so that one does not have to go through other countries to get here."

Lauding the OTOAI Convention held in Cape Town in August, he added, "The month of August is dedicated to women in South Africa. It is a month when we reflect on the quality of women, their importance and consistency. In South Africa, around 65 per cent of those involved in tourism are women. Besides, digitalisation has enabled us to welcome Indian travellers to the shores of South Africa."

Elaborating on the changing traveller dynamics, he said,

"Today's travellers want to travel off-the-beaten-track undiscovered places. We have nine provinces, and all of these are different from each other. There are beaches, safari, deserts —



Sisa Ntshona
CEO
South African Tourism

“The popularity of SA among Indians is evident from the fact that outside of India, their second-largest population is in SA”

all in the same country. So, it's about how we showcase South Africa, so that if one comes for the second or third time, it seems like peeling an onion, as the person gets more intimate with the country. The popularity of South Africa among Indians is evident from the fact that outside of India, the second-largest population of Indians is in South Africa."

Sharing his thoughts about Nelson Mandela, he said, "I think the world needs a bit of Nelson Mandela, considering what is going on. It's a time for us to reflect and to see how we can become better and helpful to each other. To celebrate his centenary

value-for-money. We want to offer an immersive opportunity to people, so that they may carry a bit of South Africa, when they leave," he quipped.

Throwing light on the number of tourist arrivals to the country, Neliswa Nkani, Hub-Head, Middle East, India and South East Asia (MEISEA), South Africa Tourism, said, "Last year, we had 98,000 tourists from India. Further, we have been given a target of 104,000 tourists. I believe that with partners like OTOAI, we can take this number to nearly 1,140,00-120,000. Though, this will also depend on how we process and manage the visa."



Neliswa Nkani
Hub-Head—Middle East, India and South East Asia (MEISEA), South Africa Tourism

“Indian weddings are big events and we want to make South Africa the wedding destination for Indians”

birthday celebrations, we have come up with 100 destinations across the country, which consist of a Mandela-inspired theme and have a story behind them."

"Our offerings are affordable, but we are clear about not making South Africa a cheap destination, otherwise we commoditise ourselves. We have unique offerings with

She also emphasised on simplifying the visa process saying, "I think we first need to articulate the requirements of the visas. We need a workshop to get to know what we can do to make the process smooth, precise and hassle-free. We are trying to move to an e-visa process, which will simplify it."

She further added, "We are interested in promoting MiCE and weddings. MiCE brings big numbers. Indian weddings are big events and we want to make South Africa the wedding destination for Indians. Even pre-wedding events are quite popular. The most important is strategic relationship alignment. I need to create a rapport with the travel agents and ensure that they send more business to South Africa." 🌹



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