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New minister, new agenda

Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Tourism and Culture, will now be at the helm of affairs at Ministry of Tourism (MOT). In his first interaction with a trade media, Patel spoke to **TRAVTALK** on the day of his appointment and promised to deliver his best to promote and develop tourism circuits in India.



Nisha Verma

Prahlad Singh Patel believes that the new portfolio would give him a chance to fulfil the Prime Minister's vision of 'New India'. "I would like to express my gratitude towards the PM to honour me with this new role. Tourism remains a major source of employment generation. Numerous places

across the country are ignored or underdeveloped. While I don't know the entire country and all the schemes underway at MOT, I will update myself with everything and take the necessary steps to bring them to fruition, to the best of my capabilities," he asserted.



Lauding the Prime Minister's policy of making tourism circuits as a ground-breaking step, he said, "The many tourism circuits across India include religious, historical, archaeological, etc. If anything is missing in these circuits, we will try to increase the pace of progress. However, I can't promise anything at

the moment as my knowledge about these projects is only at the surface level. I am going to weigh their prospects and decide on expansion plans accordingly."

When asked about industry concerns, Patel added, "The government is only a facilitator and good mediator for the industry and the trade. We

need to run our industry while protecting our identity, and I believe that we can create a coordination between the two." With a dual portfolio of tourism and culture, he believes that he would be able to perform well. "There won't be any coordination issues between the two and making policies would be seamless," he insisted.



Prahlad Singh Patel
Minister of State (Independent Charge),
Tourism and Culture

Have agents got visa power?

Unrest prevails among the agent community across the country this holiday season as visa facilitation centres aren't being agent friendly. **TRAVTALK** seeks the opinions of some of the industry stakeholders...



Sunil Kumar
President, Travel Agents
Association of India (TAAI)

"Agents are of the opinion that they are not given their due importance. They claim that they are in a situation where customers are being pushed for premier access, a reason behind their heartburn and unrest. This is especially because the season started late due to the elections, and there is a huge rush for visas creating a huge challenge for appointments for people."



Mahendra Vakharia
President
OTOAI

"Visa facilitation centres have now become more than just a collection centre of applications on behalf of the consulates. They have started offering many additional services that a tour operator was already offering to their customers since ages. This is resulting in the centres competing with the travel agent community indirectly."

Contd on page 12 ▶



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to revamp website

OTOAI is set to launch its website with a new interface called OTOAI Bazaar which would allow members to showcase their products and deals.



TT Bureau

Exciting times ahead for Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) as the association is geared up to re-launch its website soon. Revealing this is **Sidharth Khanna**, Treasurer, OTOAI, who shared, "The website will be re-launched in the next month or two. The newly-designed website will be a very user-friendly experience for our members," he shared.



He shared that the current website has become outdated since it was made in 2013. "With the way the market is evolving, the new website would offer our members a platform where they can share their individual products with other members. Hence, it'd be more of an interactive interface, which we are trying to create on the website, where one can post top deals," he claimed.

“We are coming up with an interesting concept called OTOAI Bazaar, where members can update their information to enjoy benefits of other agents and members”

The highlight of the new website will be OTOAI Bazaar. "We are coming up with an interesting concept called OTOAI Bazaar, where members can interact and update their information to enjoy benefits of other agents and members so that they can avail each

other's services. It's an online process where members can login and they have a personal interface, allowing them to download the data available. Members can get access to the membership base as well as get this facility where they can post their products on the website and other members can interact and look at that product and get back to you," informed Khanna.

Amongst other initiatives of OTOAI, one is to conduct roadshows or education seminars with tourism boards. "We have executed two roadshows and educational programmes with GNTI India. One was held in Mumbai and the other in Delhi. We are in talks with other tourism boards to educate the frontline staff of our member base," shared Khanna.

SpiceJet chairman elected to IATA's Board of Governors



Ajay Singh
Chairman & MD
SpiceJet

Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, SpiceJet, has been elected to the Board of International Air Transport Association (IATA) at its recent annual general meeting held in Seoul, South Korea. The new Board will be chaired by Carsten Spohr, Chief Executive Officer, Lufthansa Group, for a one-year term. Other board members include Calin Rovinescu, President and CEO, Air Canada; Alan Joyce, CEO, Qantas; and Akbar Al Baker, CEO, Qatar Airways. In March this year, SpiceJet made headlines when it became the first Indian low-cost carrier to take membership of IATA.



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TRAVELTALK
VIEWPOINT

The summer visa unrest

The summer holiday season, which was supposed to hit its peak this year, took a whole new turn when queues at the visa facilitation centres grew longer for aspiring travellers. The probability of getting an online visa appointment reached almost zero, while people waited in queues to submit their applications. However, travel agents and operators have raised complaints not only because of the delays their customers are facing but being forced to pay extra through walk-ins and premier lounge services. The complaints have reached a level that agents are now raising their voices against visa facilitation centres, and calling their systems unethical and a means to mint money from customers. Complaints have been made, meetings have been called and discussions are due to reach a conclusion. The uproar has aggravated to a limit where embassies have been asked to come forward. However, with the holiday season almost over, the travellers' rush at these centres are now expected to go down. Even if the agent fraternity reaches an agreement with the visa centres, it would only be applicable now for the next year, and the new year might just bring in new policies. We still hope that something fruitful comes out of the meetings which are due in the next few days.

Renewed vigour at MOT

Prahlad Singh Patel has joined as the new Minister of Tourism and Culture (I/C) with much fervour post elections. Belonging to a small region in Madhya Pradesh, the new minister seemed keen on developing and working on the tourism circuits and bringing smaller destinations to the fore. From what he has said, it appears that he is keen on getting the MOT work hand-in-hand with the industry. Another development at MOT is having Meenakshi Sharma as the new DG. With so many years of experience as ADG, Tourism and an earlier stint at the MOT, Sharma has been a known face in the industry and has been dealing with the trade for quite a long time. With a new minister at the helm of affairs, we hope to see a lot more happening. One of the biggest projects, which has been due, is the launch of a formal National Tourism Policy which has been under work for the last four years, and we hope it finally gets released.

GST & its impact on agents

With GST 2.0, are air travel agents required to change their business model to maintain profitability in GST regime? Kapil Mahani, Indirect Tax Leader—India and UAE VAT Market, GSTExpertise, figures out...

With GST 2.0, almost two years after the implementation of GST Act in India, there have been several circulars issued under GST to provide clarity to the industry to compete with international tax principles and cater to the needs of domestic players. Among the industries impacted on account of GST Act is Air Travel Agents (ATA) who are being forced to change their business model. We have

ing margins on the ticket price. With the introduction of GST Act, corporates or any business house registered with the GST Act are required to take credit of the GST basis on the direct invoice from the airline. With the same, the airline should ideally upload output invoices against GSTIN of customers (with the applicable GST rate of 5% and 12% for Economy and other than Economy Class respectively) and basis the

started adopting the principal-to-principal (P2P) model or the 're-supplier model'. However, the said model has certain challenges from the following standpoint:

- 1. Whether the ATA can use the HSN code of the principal since they are actually facilitating the trade between the supplier of service and actual consumer of the service.
- 2. Whether the ATA can indemnify the actual customer for the claims made to him by the customer since in the principal-to-principal model, responsibility of the service lies on the ATA and for ATA lies with the airlines.
- 3. Since the ATA cannot use the service of airlines, so can that be called as the user of the services for availing the credit of GST issued by the airlines.
- 4. Does the Circular No 67 dated August 28, 2017, issued by Air India support

the aforesaid contention by clarifying that travel agents, at their option, can operate in two capacities for the airline—one as an agent and the other as the principal customer—has any legal validity with the GST principles.

- 5. Since the ATA is regulated by International Air Transport Association (IATA) agreement, for ATAs to function on a principal-principal basis, they should suitably amend the present clauses in the agreements.

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



“ Among the industries impacted on account of GST is Air Travel Agents who are forced to change their business model ”

discussed the business model of ATA below in pre- and post-GST arena and also the suggestive model which ATA is re-thinking to maintain the profit of survival.

Impact of GST on ATA
In the pre-GST regime, the business model of generating revenue was booking commission from customers and airlines. The income also includes earn-

said invoices, the customer who is booking the tickets via such ATA has to provide a copy of the invoice received in the name of the final customer, resulting in disclosing the price of the tickets to the final customer. Hence, this has resulted in huge losses to ATAs which were dealing with corporates.

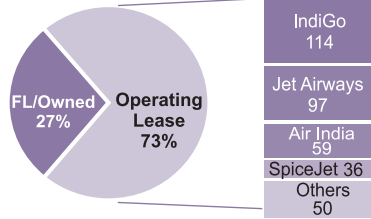
Accordingly, to maintain the margins, many ATAs have

70% of aircraft deliveries on lease

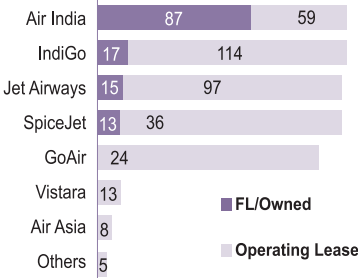
According to FICCI's recent report titled 'Opportunities and Financing Outlook for Aviation Sector', there will be a huge number of aircraft deliveries in India in the next few years.

- The report quoted a CAPA study, which estimated that out of 400 aircraft deliveries by FY22 to Indian carriers, 70-80 per cent of them will be either on direct lease or sale and leaseback transactions.
- To fulfil growing demand, the Government has envisaged huge capex of around US\$ 15.5 billion towards development of Greenfield airports, expansion of Brownfield airports, fleet addition & maintenance by Indian Carriers and strengthening ancillary services like skill development, MRO, Cargo handling, amongst others in the value chain.
- This development plan by airports and airlines requires strong support from Banks, Lessors, Private Equity Firms and other Financial Institutions to cater their funding requirement.

India Aviation Fleet Financing – Mar 2017



Company wise break up – Mar 2017



Source: CAPA



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takes the partnership route

Goa Tourism is looking to tie up with different operators with the likes of charters and DMCs to strengthen inbound tourist numbers in the state.

 Manas Dwivedi

Goa wants visitors to experience the state as gateway for tourism in India, feels **Gavin Dias**, General Manager—Marketing, Hotels & Cruises, Goa Tourism Development Corporation. He said that the coastal state introduces visitors to different cultures and monuments in a welcoming manner. By attending major travel trade shows, the state is not only educating visitors but also travel agents to avail many new options available in Goa.

“A lot of key and emerging markets are very keen on Goa. We are looking for a tie up with different operators in terms of

“Some innovative services introduced in Goa include hot air balloon and BLive, India’s first curated electric cycle tours”

“With this pace of degradation, marine life will get damaged and it would hurt all stakeholders in tourism. GTDC is working

with many organisations to look into this matter and a sufficient time has to be given to the natural wonders to blossom

on their own. There can be an option of closing marine sensitive places around the country for three to six months a year rather than closing it forever. This is not the best practice certainly until people and organisations start cooperating with these ideas and make visions out of it,” he told.



Gavin Dias
General Manager—Marketing, Hotels & Cruises, Goa Tourism Development Corporation

availing charters facilities and working with DMCs. We are trying to make Goa a lucrative mid-segment destination for international tourists. Some of the new innovative services that has been introduced in the state include hot air balloon and BLive, India’s first curated electric cycle tours with package experience tours in Goa. Besides this, we are planning to curate people-centric festivals, where visitors can participate and have local experience. Soon we will be installing India’s second tallest bungee jumping in Goa. We are constantly innovating and evolving from the feedbacks we are receiving. India has witnessed around 11 million foreign visitors out of which 800,000 have come to Goa,” said Dias.

Talking about some of the best practices to preserve and protect marine life in the coastal areas, Dias said that certain visions and master plans should be made to tackle mass tourism.



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Tales of adventure escapades

Tejbir Singh Anand, Vice President, Adventure Tour Operators Association of India and Founder & MD, Holiday Moods Adventures, is an adventure enthusiast who has successfully turned his hobby into business.

With his passion of adventure tours and holidays, **Tejbir Singh Anand** developed an interest in photography. His pursuit of adventure and travels of over 33 years now has taken him to the vast canvas of the Himalayan range and the Indian subcontinent. As a mountaineer, he has been climbing and exploring the Himalayas.

"One thing I feel connected to is nature and capturing its memories. Way back when I started frequenting the mountains in the 80s, the camera I had was not of a high-end one, but I still picked up decent skills and started taking pictures wherever I visited. They turned out to be out-of-the-world purely because I used to visit places where a normal person could not drive up and see such landscapes. Photography was something



close to me, to which I found a liking apart from the business I was doing. It is still a passion and is growing," says Anand. Today Anand has a stock of thousands of pictures, which include images of landscape, people

and culture. The result of adventure travel of 33 years is a huge collection. In fact, all the brochures/posters/catalogues/calendars printed every year of Holiday Moods Adventures are designed and published by him.

Another of his interests include music, singing, reading and cooking. Anand used to sing very well in school. However, he says that he could not take it up later. also used to play football as a child in the school.

He is fond of cooking and sometimes while on tours, he cooks with customers too. It was on one of the tours that he discovered another passion—community empowerment. "While engaging in adventure tourism, we chanced upon another segment—the communities. When I was introduced to community-based tourism, the first project made me really compassionate about that programme and the activities. We adopted a small segment of the village near Dharamshala and we have been microfunding a project where we involved eight women and made a Mahila Mangal dal to engage them in making handicrafts out of strewn pine needles. We trained these women, and today over 32 women are engaged in this activity. We are also helping them in selling these handicrafts, which has added a new angle into their

economic benefits. We started this in 2013 and since then we have come a long way, and it gladdens our hearts because that was something we chanced upon and we have become so passionate about," he claimed.

Guldeep Singh Sahni, Managing Director, Weldon Travels, shares a glimpse from the lives of travel professionals, where they indulge in hobbies and interests, away from their professional commitments.





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Turning 'watermaker'

With over three decades in travel, this dynamic lady has ventured where few have the courage to go. **Meher Bhandara** is now dedicated to 'making' water.

 Hazel Jain

"I ventured into this quite by chance when my brother heard about atmospheric water technology from a scientist and innovator in USA in 2004. At that time, I was in Travel Corporation India, partly owned by the Katgara family of which I am a part. We decided to introduce this technology to India as the country needed



Meher Bhandara
Director
WaterMaker (India)


“It would be an innovative step towards conservation of water if hotels and offices want to install our WaterMakers”

safe and clean drinking water which required no water source and thus actually conserved existing water resources. It was a futuristic business which not many had heard of," says **Meher Bhandara**, Director, Water-Maker (India).

She has been involved with the travel industry for over 30 years as Vice President, Corporate Communications, Trail Blazer Tours India. Explaining the technology, she says that uses optimised dehumidification techniques to extract and condense moisture in the air to produce

healthy purified drinking water as per IS 10500 2012 standards.

This would not only help the hospitality industry but could also be installed in big to medium-sized offices. "It would be an innovative step towards conservation of water if hotels, restaurants and offices want to install our WaterMakers ranging from 25 litres to 2,500 litres per day. If the requirement is more, they can be used in multiples. They need to figure out how many litres they would require per day and advise the location of installation after which we would be able to guide them as to the right model for installation," Bhandara adds. The WaterMakers are ideal for decentralised uses.

Cost and waiting time depends on the model selected. Companies can also include Water-Makers under their CSR activity by donating them to schools, health clinics and more. 

Delhi-Warsaw now on

The new route launch will provide the shortest and most convenient connection from New Delhi directly to the centrally located hub in Warsaw, Poland as well as access to many central, eastern and western European cities.

 **Manas Dwivedi**

Scheduled to commence operations in India from September, **Amit Ray**, Regional Director—DACH + India, LOT Polish, is thrilled about the airline's inaugural non-stop flight on Delhi-Warsaw route. Sharing his excitement, he says, "As a member of Star Alliance, we are excited about the launch of our first flight out of Europe from September 11 from Warsaw to Delhi and Delhi to Warsaw on September 12. We will be introducing our latest flagship aircraft, Boeing 787-8 on the Indian route as we commence with five days weekly operations from Delhi."

The Polish flag-carrier, which generally begins with thrice-a-weekly flight for any new long-haul routes, has announced five weekly

flights on India route. Stating the reason behind the decision, Ray mentions, "The Indian market is of key strategic importance for us, and based on our internal assumptions, business case and the overall scenario, we have agreed to commence flights on five days in a week as we have confidence in the Indian market. We see a huge momentum especially in the outbound division as corporates and leisure travellers are wanting to have a new alternative besides the established legacy carriers."

Working closely with the Indian travel trade, Ray tells that India is a strong agent market. "We work in a collaborative way with the travel trade industry given that the India is a strong agent market. In terms of market penetration, we work with various segments



Amit Ray
Regional Director—DACH + India
LOT Polish

of trade whether it is on travel management company site or online travel agents, consolidators and business agents. We work with different segments as we consider India as an important market," he says.

With the new flight, the airline is also looking to promote other destinations in Europe apart from the established

ones. "Our connections to more than 40 destinations on the European network make it a valuable proposition to not only the Indian traveller but also to foreign travellers coming from India to explore the touristic infrastructure in Europe. We see Indian

“ When we fly into the Indian market, we can not only promote Warsaw but also parts of Scandinavian nations & central Europe ”

operators setting up their operations in Warsaw and Indian visitors in the streets of the many cities of Poland. We want to introduce a new travel experience to visitors originating from the Indian region visiting the central European continent," Ray explained.

LOT Polish airlines is also working very closely with the

Poland Ministry of Tourism in Warsaw to enable the destinations in Poland being promoted into the Indian market and other markets as well, where it has launched a number of flights in the past. "We promote Poland in such a way that it looks a

new value proposition in the market which needs to be explored apart from working with different ministries in many countries. When we fly into the Indian market, we can promote not only Warsaw, but also parts of Scandinavian nations and central Europe. We also work with Ministry of Tourism, Government of India to attract outbound tourism

from the European countries," says Ray.

The Polish airline is expanding its networking of destinations and has also increased occupancy on the trans-atlantic sector. On the airline's plans, Ray informs, "We are among the fastest growing airline in Europe. We have recently launched our product in Miami, Florida as an addition to the destination of North America. In July, we will be launching in Beirut, Lebanon as the additional destination in the Mediterranean area. Last three years have been very exciting and profitable for the Polish airline. In terms of enhancement, we are looking to introduce Boeing 787-9 dreamliner to our fleet of which two have already joined and other two will be joining by the end of this year." 



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- MoCA to increase aviation security fee for passengers from July 1
- Schengen Visa Fee to increase to 80 euros from January 2020
- Globus family of brands supports The Ocean Cleanup, to eliminate single-use plastics by 2020
- Delhi-Chengdu on IndiGo from September 15
- India to get its second Fairmont in Mumbai; to open with 646 rooms
- France to help develop world-class railway stations in India

For more news, log on to:
www.tourismbreakingnews.com

Explore destinations with Hertz

Hertz Car Rental, through its India GSA—InterGlobe Air Transport (IGAT)—organised a joint presentation with VisitBritain and Tourism Ireland, to educate the trade about their offerings and destinations that can be covered in the two countries with a self-drive option.

TT Bureau

The idea of self-drive fit in beautifully with the destination offerings of Britain and Ireland both, feels Amit Mishra, Manager—Sales & Marketing, India, Hertz. “VisitBritain and Tourism Ireland share mutually beneficial goals with IGAT and Hertz. We all share the desire to encourage travel to overseas destinations from India, driving tourism and encouraging tourists to explore independently. Renting a car is one of the best ways a tourist can explore the beauty and greenery of Britain and Ireland, so partnering with the destination boards only felt natural.”

Shuja Mehdi, B2B Manager – India, VisitBritain and Kavya Chawla, Account Manager – North, Tourism Ireland, presented the self-drive



Amit Mishra
 Manager—Sales & Marketing India,
 Hertz

offerings for the respective destinations. Speaking about the event, Mehdi said, “As part of our India marketing strategy, we are trying to promote travel beyond London. London is obviously our biggest strength, but we are trying for Indian audiences to travel outside of London as well to explore the rest of the UK, and Hertz is the



Shuja Mehdi
 B2B Manager – India
 VisitBritain

perfect partner for us because self-drive is quite big in the UK. The best part is that British also drive on the same side of the road as we do, and the Indian driving licenses are valid there. That is why Indians are increasingly choosing to reach out to companies like Hertz and take self-drive part as part of their package; primarily a reason

why we have tied up with Hertz for this presentation.”

Mishra shared details about IGAT’s partnership with Hertz, saying, “Our partnership with Hertz, which commenced in 2017, continues to grow from strength to strength. IGAT is

IGAT to partner with Hertz was its commitment to constantly evolve its offering to meet changing customer needs. In 2019, the company has been upgrading its fleet with distinctive premium vehicles for the Hertz brand. Hertz will continue to focus on exceeding

With 30 years of experience in the tourism industry in India, IGAT showcases why the Hertz rental portfolio is the perfect choice for your next rental

managing the outbound sales of Hertz’s rental brands, including Dollar, Thrifty, Ace and Firefly. With 30 years of experience in the tourism industry in India, IGAT showcases why the Hertz rental portfolio is the perfect choice for your next rental. What attracted

the expectations of partners and customers, as well as training employees for success. Also, when travelling to the UK, customers can now rent from the Hertz British Collection, a collection of luxury vehicles adding an elegant touch to exploring the country’s city.”



TourTalk/2F, June 19

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EBIXCASH on mission acquisition

EbixCash initiated and pioneered the concept of 'digital cash' to the Indian consumer and various business entities, heralding the beginning towards enabling a cashless transacting society.



TT Bureau

Riding high on an acquisition spree, EbixCash is looking to consolidate its share in the Indian market while aiming to lead the sector it caters its services to. With a 'Phygital' strategy (physical experience with digital back-end) that combines more than 260,000 physical distribution outlets to an omni-channel online digital platform, EbixCash has established an Enterprise Financial Exchange portfolio that encompasses leadership in digital payments solutions, money transfer services (domestic and international), travel, insurance and, corporate and incentive solutions.



Naveen Kundu
Managing Director, Mercury- A Luxury Initiative of EbixCash

Talking about the recent acquisitions and the growth of EbixCash, Naveen Kundu, Managing Director, Mercury- A Luxury Initiative of EbixCash says that with all the acquisitions, the company is growing organically. "2018 has been a great year for us. We acquired a lot of companies and simultaneously grew organically. Now with more acquisitions and consolidated revenues, we are aiming at about 10,000 crores of GMV (Gross Merchandise Volume) by 2019 in the travel sector. It's almost happening and the target is round the corner as we have already reached 9,000 crores; so 10,000 is something we are aiming at. It will give us the top leadership position in this country as far as travel is concerned."

Terming consolidation as the need of the hour, Kundu shares, "Travel industry is growing exponentially and at the same time it's consolidating. To consolidate this sector, so many acquisitions are taking place in the industry currently. Having

been in the industry for a long period of time, I have realised that travel requires consolidation. We need to bring serious players in the industry together and build an ecosystem around travel by creating value for the stakeholders, shareholders and people who are interested in

travelling with us. Looking at the trend, I have been consistently insisting that speciality travel is the next big thing."

Taking leadership in the digital payments market in India, Ebix acquired ItzCash to form 'EbixCash'. The same year, Ebix

acquired online travel portal Via.com for \$75 million in 2017. The acquisition of Via.com gave the company an expanded foothold in the travel booking space and also an entry into the South East Asian market.

In early 2018, Ebix agreed to

buy Mumbai-based Centrum Group's foreign exchange business, Centrum Direct for approximately US \$175 million. Later, EbixCash acquired Mumbai-based Mercury Travels and Delhi-based Leisure Corp for a cumulative amount of approximately \$14.2 million, with

the goal of creating a new travel division to focus on a niche segment of the travel market. To further invest in the growth of its B2B business, EbixCash acquired assets of Business Travels and had appointed its owner Praveen Chugh as the CEO of Via agency sales. ↗

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Trade worries about visa services



Pradip Lulla
Acting President & VP, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI)

“We have received various inputs from our members regarding improper guidance from the VFS staff. The checklist also differs from the requirements at the VFS centres. Further, premium charges are charged for timely visa processing and the normal visas are delayed. Agents are treated shoddily and superseded by direct VFS clients. We therefore have an urgent meeting with the VFS management to address the above issues at the behest of our members.”



Jyoti Mayal
Hony Secretary, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

“We have been receiving a lot of complaints from our members for which we have also visited VFS. During our TAAI national region meeting, we have come up with a team to look into the issue. I wish embassies and VFS are more equipped to handle the peak travel rush. Despite booking in advance, the visa somehow still gets hooked on till the last moment. We have thoroughly been in touch with VFS and are urging them to look into our problems and not make a monopoly for themselves.”



Sanjay Narula
Vice President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

“We have been getting feedback from our members across India that they are facing difficulties in the way the process is being managed for visa appointments and on ground facilitation of travel agents. Issues have been raised and we are investigating the matter. The India outbound story is growing bigger and much faster than the expectations and the crowd seem to be growing. So, managing those crowd online or on site is a challenge. We are engaging with VFS and embassies to see how we can bring more assemblage of cooperations between all of us.”



Ashwini Sharma
Chapter Chairman—North, TAFI

“As far as VFS for European countries is concerned, they were very good with a quick turnaround time. With certain embassies like China and the UK, problems persist. For the UK, the turnaround time is quite high and as far as China is concerned, limitation of taking only 200 cases from travel agents is still an issue. However, I agree that the appointment system should be liberal for everybody. I am already talking to the concerned embassies to ease out the regulations about the visa, and I hope things get sorted out at the earliest.”



Manish Kriplani
Chapter Head—South, OTOAI

“The core problem is that VFS is not giving us any appointments. They want to encourage that people come at the VFS centre and pay the premium fees, and when we ask them for appointments, they turn us down. Clients are forced to take the premium lounge service where they are getting the appointment immediately. In order to solve this issue, they should give more slots to regular clients and not push the premium lounge just to make extra money, because the client is also aware of this. We will be talking to VFS authorities soon.”



Sanjay Mehta
Chief Executive Officer, Transglobe Travels

“For the UK visa, apart from standard appointment there are separate slots available for submitting applications under walk-in or prime time, if ready to pay additional cost. Also, UKVI has introduced online applications, where we try submitting the documents online, however most of the times online uploading system is under maintenance. VFS charges an additional amount of ₹900 for scanning documents unnecessarily and clients have no other option but to pay. It is only in India where applicants are facing issues.”

VFSTAKE



Vinay Malhotra
Regional Group COO—South Asia, Middle East & China, VFS Global

“We would like to state that the allegations made in a recent social media post on VFS Global operations circulating among the travel trade fraternity are completely unfounded. The claims made in the post about our processes and services (with relation to availability of appointments, fees and staffing) have no basis in fact and we reject them as pure hearsay. In fact, the applicant in the video

added to the post wanted to access the visa application centre without appointment, which is only allowed during certain hours as per Embassies' instructions. Further, they run counter to widely-held positive feedback received over the years from the travel agent fraternity with whom we have had long-standing and fruitful relationships.

Further, all services, fees and processes are managed at VFS Global as per stringently regulated service-level agreements with client governments worldwide. A strong culture of compliance and exhaustive frameworks in the areas of information security and data protection have earned us key certifications in process excellence.

We value the travel agent fraternity as one of our biggest stakeholders and engage with them on a regular basis to improve the overall visa services ecosystem. This is done through regular meetings in all cities of operations, road shows, and special offers and packages, to enable their customers to enjoy the superior visa application experience that VFS Global is proud to offer. We would like to add that during the course of this year, one of our busiest yet, we have successfully serviced well over 1.8 million applicants applying to 48 countries from all Visa Application Centres (VAC) in 17 cities across India.”



Himanshu Patil
VP, OTOAI & Director, Kesari Tours

“Visa facilitation centres are a boon not only for the consulates but also tour operators and travellers. They help resolve a lot of issues and avoid unnecessary waiting time and visiting different consulates for applying and collecting passports. However, they need to look at improving their infrastructure to reduce wait time at the centres. During season time, they should try and avoid situations that force people to opt for premium services.”



Lokesh Chawla
Director, Extra Mile Travel Services

“Today, VFS is more than a document processing institution that has become a shopping mall. One can go to VFS without an appointment, pay a hefty fee and get instant appointment. Services like premier lounge service, world cup packages, call back service, documentation assistance, courier assistance and walk-in without appointment, are ways to make money. The travel fraternity should unite and raise their voice to sort this out.”



Arun Verma
CEO, ALWAYS Marketing and Travel Services

“VFS has been working very smoothly, but this year has been a little unfortunate as people have to pay an extra fee by way of premium lounge. Every year, there has been a similar load, and it's appalling to see why this year they have been charging more for the same services. If VFS knows that they have a yearly overload, they should increase their capacity to handle passports. However, more charge for the same service doesn't sound right.”



Ashwani Gupta
Managing Director, Dove Travels & Chairman—Punjab Chapter (India), Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI)

“When we book an appointment with the VFS centre in Chandigarh or Jalandhar and if the client is late by a few minutes, they are not allowed to enter inside. Instead they are suggested to get the premier lounge facility, where they charge ₹3,500 for visa processing. In Jalandhar VFS, we have to pay ₹5,000 more than the Chandigarh centre. Besides, VFS has started to offer form-filling service for which they again charge ₹2,000 from applicants.”



Chandhi Patnaik
Leisure Travel Curator & Owner, Travel at Blue

“Ever since the diplomatic missions outsourced the vacillating services, applying for a visa has become easier. The online guidance for application and documentation are very informative and comprehensive for travel agents and applicants in general. The consular districts of various missions have been expanded with a choice of applications centres. Certain Missions have also allowed the service providers to receive the applications at home or office. As the outbound travel in India is increasing every year, more application centres would rather be more welcoming especially in Tier - II, III cities. Implementing new features (like online biometric) rather than modifying the underlying platforms and tools would also be widely welcome.”

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New ventures for Cozmo

Cozmo Travel has not only ventured into global visas but also carved a new space as an OTA purely for its B2B travel partners in the avatar of Travtrolley.

TT Bureau

Cozmo Travel, one of the largest travel agencies in the UAE and GSA for Air Arabia in the Indian market, has ventured into the OTA space with its new B2B travel trade portal called Travtrolley. Revealing this is Praveen B Nair, Chief Operating Officer, Cozmo Travel, who says,



Praveen B Nair
Chief Operating Officer
Cozmo Travel

"Initially we will keep it free of cost for our partners. Anybody who deposits money will get a login id through which they will be able to experience the platform. If the agency wants to



do only ticketing, we will only give them ticketing, and the fee will be charged accordingly," Nair adds.

Cozmo Travel had recently ventured into a new area of global visas about eight months ago. "A huge gap exists in the information that travel agents are getting with regards to global visas. To ease their process, we have created a tool providing new information and visa updates," Nair adds.

"Travtrolley is purely a B2B portal for the industry operators in India. We will launch this in the first week of September"

"A lot of companies are using OTAs today so we decided to get into the OTA space ourselves. Travtrolley is purely a B2B portal for the industry operators in India. We plan to launch this on September 3, 2019."

This platform will have everything – air, hotels, insurance, visas, online visas, global visas, forex, etc. To source hotel content for this, Cozmo Travel has tied up with a consolidator from China that offers quality content for the end customer.

Agents pick up digi skills

The skill development workshop by IATO was attended by 55 members comprising small and medium tour operators and their owners and directors.

TT Bureau

In a constant endeavour to study the growing competition in the industry, international as well as domestic, IATO is working tirelessly to support tour operators to face such situations and empower them with digital skills. In this context, the association organised a two-day digital marketing workshop, 'Double Your Leads (Digital Marketing Level-B)'



Zia Siddiqui
EC Liaison—Skill Development Committee
IATO

"The focus this year is on digital marketing to train and educate various levels of leadership and tour operators"

under the leadership of the Skill Development Committee. Organised for owner, director of small/medium tour operators or General Managers and high-level executives, the workshop focused on making the small

and medium tour operators ready to take on competition with OTAs.

Zia Siddiqui, EC Liaison—Skill Development Committee, IATO, informed that the workshop focused on lead generation,

concept and strategies, contextual marketing, identifying leaks, effective email marketing, targeted Facebook advertising and other useful digital marketing concepts. "Every year, IATO works out a few programmes for its members from April to September. The focus this year is on digital marketing to train and educate various levels of leadership and tour operators. We are also starting some programmes for the junior staff like office attendants to provide them professional knowledge," he said.

Talking about participation, Siddiqui said, "Initially, we had decided to take 25 participants, but the enthusiasm from members had us ultimately agreed upon 55 participants. We are going to organise the next workshop 'Get Overbooked' (Digital Marketing Level - C) on June 10 and 11, 2019."

Agents to boost numbers

Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country plans to collaborate with the travel trade with the help of Nijhawan Group to create awareness about the destination.

TT Bureau

India market is of utmost importance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, claims Muhamed Cengic, Ambassador, Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. "The Indian market is relatively new for us. Travel agencies in India have immense interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina and our region," he said.

While Bosnia and Herzegovina does not make for a solo destination for Indians, it is usually part of the Slovenia or south-eastern Europe itinerary. Cengic informed that visa for the destination only takes two days to process. One can even visit there with a Schengen visa and stay for as long as 30 days, he informed. According to Cengic, an itinerary of five to seven days is perfect to explore the country along with its history and its pool of offerings.



Muhamed Cengic
Ambassador, Embassy of
Bosnia and Herzegovina

In order to create awareness in India about the destination, Cengic claimed that they are

"We are engaging with the film industry to shoot in Bosnia and Montenegro to increase our visitor inflow from India"

in contact with the agents. "We have a few representations in Mumbai and Kolkata who have taken the charge of promoting our tourism to vari-

ous travel agencies. We are also engaging with the film industry and producers to shoot in Bosnia and Montenegro to increase visitor inflow from India. Croatia, for instance, benefitted from Bollywood films. We are, therefore, trying to attract more producers," he said.

With 5,000 to 10,000 Indians visiting Bosnia last year, the country is now looking to double this number in 2019. In order to reach this target, it is working closely with Nijhawan Group for promotions. "We have a collaboration with

Nijhawan Group to increase visitor numbers from India to Bosnia. We are looking forward to enhance relations to boost tourism," revealed Cengic.

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Caravela felicitates top performers



Goa's five-star deluxe hotel, Caravela Beach Resort, recently hosted agents in Delhi for the travel trade and corporates. Sunder G Advani, Chairman & Managing Director, Caravela Beach Resort, along with Vivek Chaturvedi, Director of Sales & Marketing; Sanjiv Swain, General Manager—Sales & Marketing, and Prasad Kanoth, Hotel Manager, felicitated some of their top performers.

TOFT bets big on sustainability



TOFTigers has launched South Asia first 'Eco-certification' in Delhi for accommodation providers across the lodge and resort segment of the market, that is compliant with Ministry of Tourism's Indian Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The Footprint will seek to help drive up standards of sustainable 'eco-friendly' accommodation provision across the Indian subcontinent.

Expansion on radar

Hans Hotels is likely to open new properties in Goa and Rajasthan in the near future. The new properties will be either built by the company or will be acquired.



Hans Hotels recorded a fruitful 2018, informed Rita Shah, CEO, Hans Hotels. "2018 was a good year for Hans. The ADRs had increased much better than the occupancy levels, which remained more or less the same. There was a slight increase in the ARR of the hotels and the company both," she shared.



Rita Shah
Chief Executive Officer
Hans Hotels

“We need to upgrade some rooms in the Delhi property as well as in Puri. We are essentially looking at a good 2019”

Going forward, the hotel expects to perform better than last year. "We are hoping to do better than 2018 by not only increasing the ARR and ADRs but also the occupancy. We need to upgrade some rooms in the Delhi property as well as in

Puri. We are essentially looking at a good 2019."

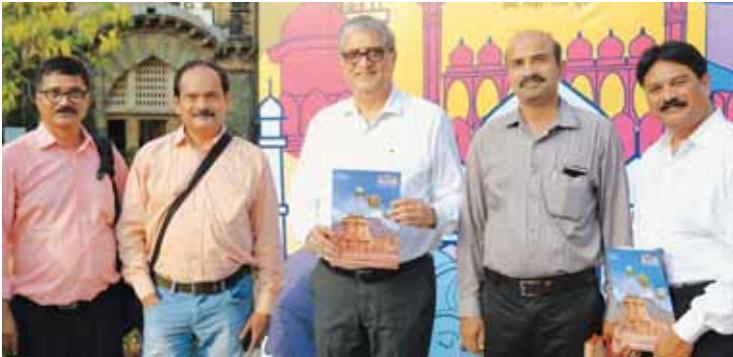
Claiming that the company is now looking at expansion, Shah shared, "We are currently in the planning stages and want to

expand the company further. We are deciding on the destinations and are looking at Rajasthan and Goa for opening new properties. Things need to coordinate and combine with the hotel company profile. Currently, all our three hotels are running and performing well, and that's why we are looking to grow further. The new properties will be either built by us or will be acquired. The company believes in having their own properties and running them, and not opt for management contracts."

Shah strongly believes in the power of social media when it comes to promotions. She explained, "Social media nowadays is one of the most powerful tools for promoting not only brands but also anything and everything on the planet."

MOT paints a colourful evening

The Ministry of Tourism recently organised a cultural evening titled 'Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan' under its 'Adopt A Heritage' scheme at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya lawns in Mumbai. It was led by Neela Lad, Regional Director, Indiatourism, Mumbai and the guest of honour was Aashima Mehrotra, Director, Ministry of Tourism, who had flown down from New Delhi.



Bleisure is the mantra at this resort

Shibil Malik, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Resort and Spa, Chennai, shares why the property is unique in its positioning and offerings for both leisure and corporate guests.

TT Bureau

Overlooking the pristine Bay of Bengal, Sheraton Grand Resort and Spa, Chennai, comes under the Marriott portfolio, which opened only 10 months back. The property is an urban resort, only an hour away from the airport and 15 minutes from Mahabalipuram. **Shibil Malik**, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Resort and Spa, Chennai, shared, "Our biggest USP is that we are a city hotel as well as a resort, overlooking the beach. We have 125 keys in the hotel with various categories of rooms, for instance, crocodile park rooms from where one can spot crocodiles in the park situated



right next to the hotel. We also have ocean view rooms and garden view rooms, nine suites and a presidential suite. All our rooms come with a sit-out and are quite spacious with an average size of 4800 sqm."

In terms of business, the hotel receives a good mix of both corporate as well as leisure guests. "We have a lot of corporate and MICE operations over weekdays, thanks to the proximity to the city and the stretch known as OMR, which has a lot of IT companies and back office operations. Over the weekends, we transform into a resort where we get families from Chennai and Bengaluru as it is not far away. The design of the hotel is such that you have a view of the sea from every corner. We have a beautiful lawn where events can be organised overlooking the Bay of Bengal. We also do big weddings in the season and cater to many segments," he informed.

Malik insisted that they want to position the hotel as a premium resort in the country as this is their first year of operations. "We are trying to add all the elements for both leisure and business side, and even have a holiday host concept for families to share their needs and concerns

“ We have a lot of MICE operations over weekdays, thanks to the proximity to the city and the stretch known as OMR ”

with one person in the hotel, who will be taking care of their entire stay right from the booking stage till the time

guests leave the hotel. Apart from dedicated kids and game areas, we also do half-day and full-day sightseeing tours

in Mahabalipuram, as well as Puducherry which is only 1.5 hours away from the resort," he added.

Claiming that the entire stretch of ECR is transforming other properties, they are collectively trying to position the area as a separate

destination. "We want to reach out to the trade and travellers in India and abroad so that people are aware of what Mahabalipuram has to offer. In fact, many Indians are yet to explore this area with a lot of destination weddings happening here," he said.



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Staying ahead of the curve

Big Data and Artificial Intelligence are set to transform the travel ecosystem, claims **Sandeep Dwivedi**, Chief Operating Officer, InterGlobe Technology Quotient, whilst sharing insights on the future of GDS technology and changing dynamics with LCCs on board.



TT Bureau

QWhat kind of growth did InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ) witness in the last one year? Year 2018 has been a great year for ITQ. Not only have we

been acknowledged for our efforts but also have been able to grow better as a team. With technology having made its way into the travel and tourism sector, we have ensured to provide technologically advanced travel solutions to our diverse clientele.

In terms of growth, we have witnessed a lot of landmark moments such as Travelport bagging the competitive bid for sole distribution supplier to Air India, Travelport and Jet Airways signing a new long-term supplier agreement effective from April 2019 and Travelport becoming the first GDS operator to offer NDC content. The latest accomplishment in this line is Travelport completing onboarding of the first wave of New Distribution Capability (NDC) customers.

QWhat can we expect from ITQ in 2019 in terms of plans, initiatives and growth?

As the official distributor of Travelport in six markets across Asia Pacific including India and Sri Lanka, we connect the

as a business but also for the overall travel and trade industry. This would ensure seamless, integrated and wider choice of travel content to travel agents, TMCs and OTAs. ITQ believes in identifying the future needs and analysing the scope of

“LCCs are leveraging the GDS technology to maximise revenues and profitability as well as upselling their airlines’ content including ancillary services on a global level”

world’s leading travel providers with online and offline travel buyers in a proprietary (B2B) travel marketplace. Travelport, which is the first NDC Level 3 certified aggregator, has recently completed the onboarding of its first batch of NDC customers. This is a valuable moment not only for us

developments. Keeping this approach in mind, we are focused on enhancing our existing travel technology product range — Travelport Smartpoint (Galileo) to uAPI, VR3, ITQ Financial, Galstar, Corporate/Self Booking Tool, etc in order to meet the varied needs of customers in the best possible way.

QHow do you think GDS technology is going to transform in the future, especially with so many LCCs coming on board?

LCCs have basically highlighted how old-fashioned were the earlier GDS models and this in turn, provided a scope of improvement in the GDS technology. Now, LCCs are leveraging the GDS technology to maximise revenues and profitability as well as upselling their airlines’ content including the ancillary services on a global level. With the dawn of technological era, GDS technology is also evolving and the players in the industry are keeping their game up by utilising the advanced solutions.

QHow are AI & chatbots changing the travel business ecosystem?

Chatbots and travel today go hand-in-hand. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is all set to be the next big thing in this industry by helping travellers and businesses in easing out travel arrangements along with streamlining the business procedures. Undoubtedly, AI has immense power to transform the travel business ecosystem as a whole.

Online travel agencies such as Expedia and Booking.com are leading the way into technologically sound future of travel industry. A chatbot can help users organise their trips, save time and even suggest places to visit. In fact, 24*7 accessibility of chatbots, multilingual support and quick response to travellers’ queries is a boon for businesses to maintain customer interaction.



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Showcase, network and interact

Converting leads into prospects is what all major exhibitions aim for, and GITB is no exception. Attendees share a mixed feedback on the quality of buyers they encountered this year.



Jean Luc Benhaim
Managing Director
Buena Vista Resort

“I am attending GITB for the first time and we are here to exchange proposals with potential clients which in turn will help us to build contacts with new people around here. We are indeed very happy with the atmosphere and the response that we have received is pretty good. The people involved with GITB advertise our destination and we do invite them to our resort. They also receive foreign agents and in turn help them in getting clients in India and abroad.”



Arun Kundu
Director—Incoming, The Rail Journeys, Mercury Travels

“A lot of work has to be done on GITB and we need to invite more buyers for India. An urge is to oversee the people where India as a destination is not being sold much. Probably, if we can shift the dates of the show so as to suit most of the Europeans, India will sell very well. We need to explore the markets where India is not sold at all. We want people to experience the kind of products we sell by recognising them and help us improvise our products.”



Zia Siddiqui
Managing Director
Alliance Hotels & Resorts

“GITB provides a linkage with international operators and we get a chance to update ourselves with the global scenario. The highlight of this signature mart lies in how well organised it is. The event can improve its stakes by giving an entire market to Southeast Asia where international operators can also participate as India is equally into the outbound market as well, thereby promoting the regional tourism market.”



JK Mohanty
Chairman & Managing Director, Swosti Group

“GITB has been adding new buyers to its realm who could experience India as a destination to be explored. The Ministry of Tourism is also spending a lot in the inbound division market of India to attract tour operators from all over the world. The event tries to bridge the gap between the inbound market and outbound number, which is immense, by promoting India as a destination. We should be involved in doing more shows like GITB.”



Pankaj Mishra
Director
Journey Asia

“This is for the first time that I have attended GITB. There was a proper interaction with a couple of buyers whose quality was remarkable as they were interested in India, but the overall quality of the buyers is not up to the mark. The main attraction for me was the location as Jaipur is away from the metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai. It would not only boost tourism of the Tier-II cities but also the local economy of that region.”



Ravi Gosain
Managing Director
Erco Travels & Tourism Enterprises

“I've attended GITB after eight years and the quality of buyers was still not up to the mark. There is a lack of tour operators, product managers and decision makers at the event as most often, we see the representatives of tour operators in the form of counter staff or from the sales department. The entire concept is good for marketing India as a destination, but GITB should do a lot of Fam trips and sell more experiences to tour operators at large.”

Ctrip now connects India

As Naspers exchanges shares in MakeMyTrip for shares in Ctrip, TRAVTALK asks Ctrip more about its investment and commitment to the Indian market.



Ctrip generated more than USD 105 billion in Gross Merchandise Value in 2018. It is the largest online travel agent in Asia and the second largest in the world with roughly 30 per cent of the total revenue generated internationally. Ctrip has strengthened its presence in India with MakeMyTrip.

“India is one of the fastest growing emerging economies in the world. We are attracted to the great potential of India travel



Wendy Min
Spokesperson
Ctrip

market. Its population is the second largest in the world, and the youngest among the major economies. In addition, India is expecting a fast growing middle class population and expansion of Internet and mobile Internet penetration,” says Wendy Min, Spokesperson, Ctrip.

Ctrip offers a one-stop shopping experience for users with over 60 products and services related to travel. They are the

largest consolidator of hotels and other accommodations in China, approximately 700,000 hotels in China and approximately 700,000 hotels abroad. “MakeMyTrip can leverage our experiences and strengths to offer better products and services for Indian travellers. The two companies will explore more ways and work together to benefit our respective customers and investors. We are delighted to repose our faith behind the management team and are confident that they will continue the success and will bring the company to a higher level in years to come,” adds Min.

Adding a personal touch, Min highlights her experience in India. “I have travelled to India – backpacking throughout the country due to my love for history and the sheer number of UNESCO sites that India has to offer. There is a lack of Chinese speaking tour guides.”



Lalit Verma
Executive Director
Rajasthan State Hotels Corporation

“GITB is a great opportunity for B2B players to interact and attend meetings and conferences. The immense business we received through this event is quite remarkable. We also received business for ‘Palace on Wheels’ and it was 20 per cent in advance amounting to Rs 4 crore from our sales agents. The occupancy of business in the event will increase with positive growth of the business of individual tour operators. We have been getting business continuously for the last six years and we are hoping this will boost our bookings in the coming times. The show gives us a great opportunity to showcase our products to audience and foreign tour operators from newer markets.”



RS Rathore
General Manager, Hotel Mansingh & Mansingh Towers

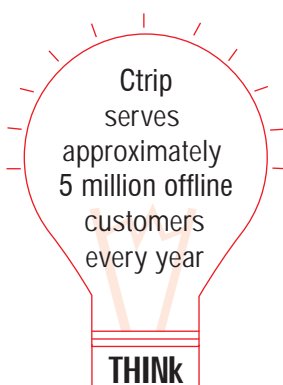
“GITB was doing extremely well in Jaipur previously, but with time, its operations are becoming mild in the eyes of tour operators and attendees. We are hoping that its way of conducting operations changes soon. Obviously, the prominent locations of the event do make a difference. People would like to come to Jaipur to experience the destination and see what Rajasthan has to offer to foreign tourists. The number of people coming to the event has gone down this time and we are not getting good number of buyers to facilitate the operations of our business. But still, GITB is a premier travel trade show for the inbound market and we are expecting to go a long way in the coming editions and improve its shortcomings.”



Arun Khanna
Owner
Colonel's Retreat

“The show seems to be getting noticed every year and is becoming large year by year. It is also receiving better quality of participants in the form of buyers which was not the case earlier. As long as they pay attention to that, the show will go on and on. It's the only specialised inbound B2B show in the country, it has its own value. The efforts of the organisers shall not be to engage more crowds on the show as it's not a B2C show, rather the focus should be on bringing better and significant buyers from important countries to facilitate the movement of exchange and inbound tourism to India. I think, the show was organised in a better manner this year. I wish the organisers more success in the coming editions.”

Inputs by Manas Dwivedi from Jaipur



Nature's therapy in Whistler

Mazda Travel promotes Whistler, Canada's favourite year-round destination located just two hours north of Vancouver.



While Whistler's winter and the renowned skiing and snowboarding is what draws people, there's a reason that the residents are often overheard saying, "We came for the winter but stayed because of the summer". As the seasons transition from winter into spring and summer, new experiences open to immerse visitors into the stunning natural landscape and the healing secrets of the Coast Mountains temperate rainforest that surround Whistler.

Originating in Japan in the early 1990s, Forest Bathing Therapy is a powerful, preventative and healing medicine. By taking in the forest atmosphere visitors



Michelle Dehne
Manager—Market Development
Tourism Whistler

can boost the immune system, reduce blood pressure and stress while increasing happiness, energy, focus, intuition and improve sleep. They can join the Canadian Wilderness Adventures team on a guided journey into the Medicine Trail that meanders through Whistler's majestic old growth forest.

Continuing through the old growth forest on Cougar Mountain, legend speaks of a long-lost trail that leads to a secret valley. Visitors can join Vallea Lumina, a twilight expedition to explore this enchanted trail, while following the story of a long-lost father and daughter who history says disappeared decades ago while walking in these woods. The Adventure Group and Moment Factory bring the forest to life with a new and improved Lumina experience, heightening the natural landscape with multimedia to create a world filled with adventure and enchantment. This 1.5 km forested pathway takes visitors of all ages on an

“There is nothing that compares to experiencing the Canadian wilderness and reaping the rewards both physically & mentally”

hour-long night walk in pursuit of hidden wonders, telling a story that unfolds in chapters along the way.

Michelle Dehne, Manager—Market Development, Tourism Whistler, speaks about the destination and says, “There

is nothing that compares to experiencing the pristine Canadian wilderness and reaping the rewards both physically and mentally. To experience Vallea Lumina in Whistler, I was in absolute awe of how they were able to transform the natural forest setting into an exciting multimedia night walk!”



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Beijing International Tourism Expo 2019	Beijing	18-20
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Malaysia	21-24
Incredible India Roadshow	Washington DC	24
Maldives Tourism Roadshow	Bengaluru	24
Incredible India Roadshow	Boston	25
Maldives Tourism Roadshow	Mumbai	25
Incredible India Roadshow	Vancouver	26
Maldives Tourism Roadshow	Kolkata	26
GPS	Hyderabad	26-27
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Singapore	26-29
Incredible India Roadshow	Seattle	27
Maldives Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	27
Incredible India Roadshow	San Francisco	28
Maldives Tourism Roadshow	Chandigarh	28

JULY 2019

Incredible India Roadshow	Johannesburg	1
Asian Destinations Expo 2019	Indonesia	2-5
Incredible India Roadshow	Durban	3
GPS	Ahmedabad	3-4
International Conference on Tourism and Hospitality (ICTH)	Singapore	4-5
Incredible India Roadshow	Port Louis	5
TTF	Hyderabad	5-6
Kiwi Link India 2019	Mumbai	8-9
Kiwi Link India 2019	Kolkata	11
Kiwi Link India 2019	Delhi	12
TTF	Kolkata	12-14
Travel Wedding Show	Mumbai	13-14
GPS	Chandigarh	17-18
MICE INDIA and Luxury Travel congress	Delhi	17-18
Amazing Thailand Roadshow to India	Ahmedabad	22
MICE INDIA and Luxury Travel congress	Mumbai	23-24
GPS	Lucknow	24-25
Amazing Thailand Roadshow to India	Pune	24
TTH Expo	Vadodara	26-28
Travel Allied Show	Jaipur	27-28
TTF	Ahmedabad	30-1 Sept

AUGUST 2019

IITM	Bengaluru	2-4
Qatar Tourism Roadshow	Mumbai	5
Qatar Tourism Roadshow	Delhi	6
GPS	Kochi	6-7
Qatar Tourism Roadshow	Ahmedabad	7
Tourism Australia India Travel Mission	Kochi	8-11
IITM	Chennai	9-11
Tourism Australia India Travel Mission	Mumbai	12
ADTOI Convention	Gujarat	16-18
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Mumbai	20
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Ahmedabad	21
GPS	Kolkata	21-22
Tourism Fiji Roadshow	Chennai	22

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

SL continues VoA for Indians

In a bid to mitigate the after-effects of the terrorist attacks, the Sri Lankan Consulate along with its tourism board is on a mission to ensure that tourists return to the island nation.



Hazel Jain

Chamari Rodrigo, Consul General of Sri Lanka in Mumbai, has said that the visa-on-arrival scheme for visitors of Indian nationality continues undisturbed. An email statement from the Consulate to **TRAVTALK** states, 'We have contacted relevant officials of Sri Lanka Immigration and they too have confirmed that there is no such suspension of on arrival visa facility for Indian nationals.'

Sri Lanka had suspended its plans to grant visas on arrival for citizens of 39 countries after the devastating Easter suicide bombings. The country had started offering free visa-on-



Chamari Rodrigo
Consul General
Sri Lanka in Mumbai

arrival to Indian travellers as part of its efforts to promote tourism starting May 1, 2019 for six months in its initial run. This scheme was aimed at a total of 36 countries that included India and Pakistan.

The Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Mumbai, India along with the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) has started taking measures to ensure that tourists return to the island nation soon.

Speaking about this Rodrigo says, "The country's secu-

revive the industry." Military has its presence in all tourist spots, she says adding, "We are meeting TAAI and TAFI associations along with SriLankan Airlines to ask them to continue promoting Sri Lanka. We are now working towards inviting the SLTPB to India and for the Chairman Kishu Gomes to ad-

“ We are working towards inviting the SLTPB to India and for the Chairman Kishu Gomes to address the travel trade soon ”

urity situation now is normal. However, it has had a direct impact on tourism and we have taken some measures to help

dress the travel trade in June or July 2019. We hope that India will completely lift the travel advisory for Sri Lanka.”

Delhi-Dhaka on Biman again

Targeting high seat-load factor on the only direct flight available between Delhi and Dhaka, representatives from Biman Bangladesh Airlines share more about the service that operates three flights weekly.



Kanchan Nath

Travellers between India and Bangladesh travel for various reasons, including business, medical tourism, higher education, official purposes, medical reasons and more. It will be very convenient for them to go to their destinations within a very short time. Shakil Meraj, General Manager— Public Relations, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, says, "It's a matter of privilege that we have been able to come to Delhi again on popular demand. Presently, there is no other airline that operates a direct flight between Dhaka and New Delhi. Biman Bangladesh Airlines is the only

People from Delhi can travel to Guangzhou and many other far east destinations via Dhaka from next July

airline to operate a direct Delhi-Dhaka-Delhi flight. Initially we will operate thrice in a week, every Monday, Thursday and Saturday. In a very short time,



Shakil Meraj
General Manager—Public Relations,
Biman Bangladesh Airlines

we hope to increase the flight frequency to four."

A Boeing 737-800 aircraft is used for the route. The flight departs from Dhaka at 3:00

pm (Bangladesh local time) and arrives in Delhi at 5:00 pm in the evening. The two-hour flight departs from Delhi in the evening by 6:20 pm. Com-



Shakia Sultana
Country Manager—India, Biman
Bangladesh Airlines

menting on the success of the first flight, he says, "We are overwhelmed to see the cabin factor in our first flight as out of 162 seats, 152 tickets were sold out."

On feeder markets, Meraj adds, "Though we are operating from point to point, Delhi-Dhaka-Delhi, the demand of the flight remains high. When we will start operating in more destinations in the feeder market beyond Dhaka, demand is further set to shoot up. People from Delhi can travel to Guangzhou via Dhaka from

next July. Many other far east destinations will be convenient for Delhi passengers via Dhaka, like Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Bangkok."

As far as spreading its wings in the Indian market is concerned, he says, "With 14 weekly flights to Kolkata, we are now looking to operate regular flights to Chennai by early next year and add three more Dash 8Q 400 to our fleet."

Shakia Sultana, Country Manager—India, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, says, "The time couldn't have been ripe to grab this market. With 12 Business and Economy 150 seats, our load factor was 80 per cent. We are flying seven domestic, including eight Dhaka and 16 international routes. We are happy to work with our exclusive GSA in India, InterGlobe Air Transport (IGAT)."

On the airline's popular routes, Meraj says, "Middle East destinations are a high load factor for us, especially the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, along with European route."



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AltAir

Kolkata

Mayukh Ray is the new General Manager and Chief Operating Officer of AltAir in Kolkata. Ray has been handed over the role with a trust of maintaining the grandeur of the boutique hotel built by the Neotia Group. He is a competent leader with an experience of a Sales & Marketing head of The Oberoi Grand and The Park Hotel. Ray, an expert from the MARCOM field, has pursued Post Graduation Diploma in Marketing & Sales Management with a background in Mass Communication from St Xavier's Kolkata.



Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad

Sonika Chaturvedi has been appointed as the General Manager of Courtyard by Marriott, Ahmedabad. She brings with her an experience of motioning operations along with efficient management of resources available in-house. She has an adept knowledge of over 21 years with an excellent record of contributions in enhancing customer experience and satisfaction in the luxury hotel industry. Apart from overcoming the challenges faced in terms of growth in revenue, her calibre will focus on developing a work environment high in employee morale and bringing constant learning and development opportunities at all levels.



Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach

Mumbai

Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach has appointed **Govav Arora** as the General Manager of the property. With 18 years of hospitality experience, Arora will be responsible for spearheading operations at the hotel. His well-versed knowledge and dynamic guidance make him accountable for steering beneficial strategies for Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach. Under his leadership, team building skills, comprehensive knowledge of international standard service procedures and a strong background in sales and marketing, the team will be able to provide a strategic depth to the property.



PEAK DMC India

New Delhi

PEAK DMC India has announced the appointment of **Rama Mahendru** as its new General Manager. Mahendru has been a part of the PEAK DMC family for over 11 years. Joining the team as a finance executive, Mahendru worked her way up and was made Finance Manager for India in 2012. Having successfully implemented a whole host of improvements during her time in Finance, Mahendru became General Manager for India. Proud to be part of such a diverse organisation, Mahendru is incredibly passionate about the travel business and looks forward to driving growth in the years to come.



JW Marriott Kolkata

Kolkata

Soumodeep Bhattacharya has been recently appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at JW Marriott Kolkata. Bhattacharya's key responsibility area includes maximising the revenue of this brand. He is pioneering his team to develop marketing and promotional programmes to make profitable use of accommodation, conferencing and leisure facilities at the hotel. Preparation of the Annual Business Plan in co-ordination with other departmental heads, recruitment-training-mentoring of the sales and marketing team, managing marketing resources and funds, compliance to hotel policies and regulations, are also other significant engagements that fall under the ambit of his job profile.



Goldstone Hotels & Resorts

Delhi

Ashutosh Prasad has been appointed as the Corporate Sales Manager at Goldstone Hotels & Resorts. He is a seasoned hotelier with more than one and half decade of experience in branded national and international hotel chains. In his new role, Prasad will be responsible for accelerating the Sales & Marketing of the hotels under the group portfolio and ensure optimisation of revenues through effective strategies on both digital and offline channels.



Keys Hotels

Mumbai

Keys Hotels has announced the promotion of **Chirag Sheth** as its new Chief Financial Officer. He is a Chartered Accountant and brings 14 years of diverse leadership experience in finance, accounting and analytics. He joined Berggruen Hotels in 2015 and rose to many ranks from General Manager – Special Projects to VP - Business Strategy & Analytics and eventually Head of Finance to take the position of the CFO. His focus will be on ensuring adequate risk assessment and mitigation which is in compliance with the necessary regulatory and legal requirements in addition to support growth.



Hilton Bangalore Embassy GolfLinks

Bengaluru

Hilton Bangalore Embassy GolfLinks has announced the appointment of **Rishi Tiwari** as the new Cluster Director of Human Resource. In his role, Tiwari will be responsible for the smooth and profitable operation along with providing consultation to management on strategic staffing plans, training and development, budget, and labour relations for both Hilton Bangalore Embassy GolfLinks and DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Bangalore.



The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi & The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa

Delhi-NCR

The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi & The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa have announced the appointment of **Anurudh Khanna** as Multi Property Executive Chef. With a career spanning over 21 years of working with renowned luxury hotels, he brings with him vast knowledge and understanding of the evolving hospitality industry and food trends. Khanna will spearhead both hotels' diverse dining venues, as well as oversee the hotels' in-room dining and banquet operations, ranging from intimate gatherings and weddings to corporate events.



TALKing People

Linette Banerjee, Director, Global Anchor Cruises, has been on seven world cruises so far, and has therefore circled the globe seven times! "My most memorable holiday moment was when we had an unplanned sundowner barbeque on an island that appeared magically on the Mekong due to a tide change. It was a beautiful evening with my husband and a beautiful sunset," she says. Life has given her many opportunities to travel the world and her favourite holiday destination outside India is the rich Baltic region. When in India, she prefers to holiday in Goa with her family.



Nitin Pathak, General Manager, Novotel Pune Nagar Road Hotel, is passionate about reading, besides playing cricket and travelling. "Reading gives you a sense of fulfilment and many a times helps change your outlook towards life. In my free time, I like writing a lot and penning my thoughts on paper," he reveals. "Travelling is like one of those activities that has a kind of a reset button in our lives. I have travelled extensively in all parts of India but Rajasthan as a state has my heart," he adds.



Akash Kalia, Commercial Manager, DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Bangalore, loves to unwind by spending time with his friends. "I am a workaholic but whenever time permits, I enjoy going on long drives in and around Bangalore. Driving to Goa with my friends has so far been the most memorable trip of my life. With such a diverse and captivating mix of people, food, lifestyle, culture and things to do, I simply admire the vibe of the place," he shares.





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Gear up for Tamil Nadu Travel Mart

The Tamil Nadu Travel Mart 2019 is scheduled to be held from September 19-22 at Chennai Trade Centre with a huge turnout from both domestic and international buyers. Work is underway to promote the mart as well as the state.



Nisha Verma & Manas Dwivedi

The Tamil Nadu Travel Mart (TNTM) came into play when all the industry stakeholders decided to come together and made such an event possible. Sharing information about the same, Apurva Varma, Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Tourism, Culture and Religious Endowments Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, said, "Last year was very successful for TNTM with the attendance of as many as 250 foreign tour operators, for whom we also organised Fam trips. This year too, we are preparing aggressively for it as we want to make it bigger and better. The mart is essentially operated by the private sector but government handholds them and coordinates affairs."

for the first edition in 2017, which saw in attendance over 300 domestic buyers and 100 international buyers. The quality and management of the mart was greatly appreciated by everyone," he said.

This year the second edition of TNTM will be supported by Tamil Nadu Tourism Department, Ministry of Tourism and Confederation of Indian Industry. "Pondicherry Tourism board will also be a part of it. This year, we have created a lot of awareness along with Tamil Nadu Tourism Board, and tour operators and stakeholders of tourism in the state and outside are excited about the event. The market is very curious to know about Tamil Nadu, which

The 2nd Tamil Nadu Travel Mart, essentially operated by the private sector, will be supported by Tamil Nadu Tourism Department, MOT and Confederation of Indian Industry

S Sundar, Honorary Secretary, Tamil Nadu Travel Mart Society (TNTMS) shared that their one-point agenda is to discuss problems of the industry and the only way, he believes, this could be solved is by bringing more inflow of visitors to the state of Tamil Nadu. "We are likely to get over 300 sellers and more than 600 buyers for the second edition of TNTM. The TNTMS was conceptualised in June 2017 and the idea was to have the mart biennially to alternate with Kerala Travel Mart (KTM). We only got two months to prepare

has been receiving the highest number of international visitors since the last four years."

Varma agreed, saying, "We have maintained the position of the number one Indian state in terms of receiving foreign tourist arrivals since 2014. Last year, we received almost 50 lakh foreign tourists and around 34 crore domestic visitors in the state. We hope to attract more visitors and maintain the top position. Tamil Nadu as a state has everything to offer except snow and desert. There are mountains, wildlife safaris,



Apurva Varma
Additional Chief Secretary to
Government, Tourism, Culture and
Religious Endowments Department,
Government of Tamil Nadu



S Sundar
Honorary Secretary
Tamil Nadu Travel Mart Society
(TNTMS)

forests, beaches, etc. There are about 34,000 temples to visit as a part of spiritual heritage and we are not promoting any specific part of it but a mixed bag of destinations to promote the state holistically."

For further promotions, they will be participating in five or six travel trade shows domestically and around six to seven shows internationally to showcase their products. "We are also planning to organise roadshows in Tier-I, II cities of India in the next two years. We have our eyes set on international roadshows too," revealed Varma.

He also talked about medical and wellness tourism, saying, "Hotel groups like Svatma based in Thanjavur is already working in that segment and we are aggressively promoting it where people could experience Ayurveda, Yoga and various other therapies like mud therapy

to banana therapy. We receive many international visitors from around the world for wellness tourism."

In terms of policy making, no stone is left unturned either. "Every state government has to make sure that their domestic players are well organised. Till now, tourism had been biased in favour of north especially in Delhi, Rajasthan and other places. People hardly knew about Tamil Nadu, Telangana or Karnataka. Gradually, Southern India started getting the limelight with good marketing in the last 15 years. The local players need to come and work together. Unless you synergise, you won't gain anything. The Tamil Nadu state government has introduced the ecotourism policy 2018 in which we have given space to adventure tourism, forest trails and allied things," revealed Varma.

Last year, Tamil Nadu received almost 50 lakh foreign tourists and around 34 crore domestic visitors. The state has maintained the position of the number one Indian state in terms of receiving FTAs since 2014

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INDIA
TRAVEL
AWARDS
SOUTH 2019



GLIMPSES





Southern trade holds **Maya** in high esteem

The sixth edition of India Travel Awards – South turned out to be an evening of camaraderie and networking among the best of the travel and tourism industry from South India.



NISHA VERMA FROM CHENNAI

The India Travel Awards – South wrapped up its sixth edition with a glitzy ceremony at Sheraton Grand Resort & Spa, Chennai, that witnessed bigwigs from the travel and hospitality industry from South India under one roof. The chief guest for the evening was **Sreevats Sanjay**, Deputy Director General (DD)/ Regional Director (South), India tourism (MOT), Chennai, who not only felicitated the winners but also congratulated them for their contribution to the industry alongside **Dr Radhika Kopikar**, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up. The award, which was given in 41 categories, saw the winners from all sectors of travel and tourism in jubilation.

Sanjay said, “This award puts more responsibility on the winners to take themselves forward for performing better and achieving new heights in the future. Tourism is one of the major employment generators for

the country. It is doing a great service to the nation by generating a lot of foreign exchange for the country. DDP Group, which organises India Tourism Awards, is very close to my heart because when I was preparing for my UPSC exams, I referred to TravTalk for all my updates regarding tourism, aviation, cruises and everything that concerns tourism.”

Attended by around 100 guests from the tourism and hospitality industry of South India, the award ceremony acknowledged achievers in their respective fields.

SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, said, “These awards are powered by TravTalk, India’s leading travel trade publication. It is our aim to recognise, facilitate and reward outstanding contributors to the travel industry. Indian tourism is the fastest growing among the G20 countries that is responsible for 12 per cent of all jobs in India. Tourism has more funded start-ups than any other industry in

India. The total contribution of travel and tourism industry and India’s GDP has been forecast to increase to 280 billion dollars in 2026. India Travel Awards have been convened to recognise this excellence, hard work and success. Today, this industry is synonymous with progress development and opportunity. These awards are a benchmark for everyone—a benchmark for raising standards, benchmark of excellence and most importantly a benchmark for always doing the right thing.” He claimed that these awards, through their unique voting system, aim to celebrate the large global players as well as the smallest players who often go unnoticed.”

The awards were divided into four categories - Personal Awards for the legends and leaders of today and tomorrow; Business Awards for the organisations who have set the benchmark for themselves in their respective fields and have exceeded expectations; Trending Awards

which are decided by the critics, meant for individuals who have done extraordinary work; Partner Awards for the partners who have contributed to make India Travel Awards a success.

The winners of India Travel Awards are selected through an online nomination process, followed by online voting, and finalised after a jury verdict. Voting is carefully monitored to avoid duplications and maintain transparency.

V S Abdulkareem, CEO & Managing Director, Creative Tours and Travels, entered the Gallery of Legends at the prestigious ceremony. **Manish Kriplani**, Managing Director, Baywatch Travels was declared DDP Game Changer, and **Amarnath Reddy**, Promoter, AR Group received the DDP Trailblazer award. Torch Bearer of Wellness Tourism was **Sunil Varghese**, Director, Dune Wellness Group, for his contribution to ecotourism. 🐦





Gallery of Legends

V S ABDULKAREEM

V S Abdulkareem, CMD, Creative Group, claims that receiving the India Travel Awards — South holds great prominence and potential for the Kerala DMC that promotes South India as a region to a great extent. “I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to DDP Group for acknowledging our efforts. We are a Kerala DMC and are well known in Northern and Eastern India with a large number of B2B partners,” he said.”

The award was given to V S Abdulkareem, CMD, Creative Group. He was felicitated by SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, Shreevats Sanjay, Deputy Director General & Regional Director (South), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Dr Radhika Kopikar, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up

DDP Game Changer

MANISH KRIPLANI

Manish Kriplani, Managing Director, Baywatch Travels, believes that he along with his team are the ambassadors of the industry. “Holding Maya in my hand is a great achievement, and I am sure this recognition will encourage me further to outperform in the trade. I call South India as an ‘anti-recession’ region as people are extremely deep rooted here,” he added.

The award was given to Manish Kriplani, Managing Director, Baywatch Travels. He was felicitated by SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, Shreevats Sanjay, Deputy Director General & Regional Director (South), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Dr Radhika Kopikar, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up



DDP Trailblazer

AMARNATH REDDY

Amarnath Reddy, Promoter, AR Group, received the DDP Trailblazer award. “It is indeed a huge tribute to the efforts of the whole team. I am thankful to India Travel Awards for organising this event in Chennai at Sheraton Grand Resort and Spa, whilst recognising the efforts of all the entrepreneurs and professionals in the hospitality industry,” he said on receiving the award. Speaking about the property, he claimed that it differs from any other hotel in the city.

The award was given to Amarnath Reddy, Promoter, A R Group. He was felicitated by SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, Shreevats Sanjay, Deputy Director General & Regional Director (South), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Dr Radhika Kopikar, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up



Torchbearer of Wellness Tourism

SUNIL VARGHESE

Sunil Varghese, Director, Dune Wellness Group, claimed that they are a small chain of hotels located in South India. “We are ecosensitive properties involved in community development programmes and this award is testament to our specific services and initiatives,” he shared.

The award was given to Sunil Varghese, Director, Dune Wellness Group. He was felicitated by SanJeet, Mentor, India Travel Awards, Shreevats Sanjay, Deputy Director General & Regional Director (South), MOT, and Dr Radhika Kopikar, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up





Most Enterprising Travel Professional

M G BHUSAN

Caper Travels, according to General Manager, **MG Bhusan**, has surely raised the bar as far as South India is concerned. "We have received extensive growth for South India from markets like Russia, CIS countries and even from Eastern Europe. Indian Travel Awards is a good platform to explore and recognise the talents of individuals," he said.

*The award was given to **M G Bhusan**, General Manager, Caper Travels, South India*

Best Inbound Travel Professional

S KRISHNAN

Thanking the India Travel Awards team for the award, **S Krishnan**, Head – South India Inbound Contracting & Business Head Chennai, Le Passage to India Journeys said, "It has been wonderful to serve in the tourism industry for so many years and contribute to the growth of the same in South India."

*The award was given to **S Krishnan**, Head – South India Inbound Contracting & Business Head Chennai, Le Passage to India Journeys*



Chief Guest

SHREEVATS SANJAY



Shreevats Sanjay believes that South India has got tremendous potential as any product of tourism, right from hill stations like Kodaikanal, Ooty, to even wellness, always appears on tourists' list. "We have Ayurveda, massages and even good hospitals for medical tourism. The region is also home to mountains, beaches, hill stations, cultural diversity and temples with varied diversity and tremendous potential. Tamil Nadu tops the charts when it comes to India inbound. We will also be organising Tamil Nadu Travel Mart soon, which might be followed by Karnataka Travel Mart," he said.

***Shreevats Sanjay**, Deputy Director General (DD)/ Regional Director (South), India tourism (MOT), Chennai received the award for Chief Guest*

Guest of Honour

DR RADHIKA KOPIKAR

A perfect combination of beauty and brains, **Dr Radhika Kopikar**, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up, is a renowned dermatologist, cosmetologist and trichologist in Mumbai. She is a fourth generation doctor and a national swimmer, apart from being a mother to two daughters.

***Dr Radhika Kopikar**, Gladrags Mrs India Pageant (Maharashtra) 2018, 1st Runner Up received the award for Guest of Honour*







Best Airport

**KEMPEGOWDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
BENGALURU**

Arun Chandra, General Manager—Aviation Business, Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), claimed that they are a customer centric airport. "As a customer-centric airport where each effort and focus go into enhancing the customer experience, we are in the league above the rest and therefore we deserve this recognition," he informed.

*The award was received by **Arun Chandra**, General Manager- Aviation Business, BIAL and **Sharad Gambhir**, Manager- Airline Marketing (Passenger), BIAL*

Best 5 Star Corporate Hotel

THE OTERRA

For **Ajinkya Kulkarni**, Director of Sales & Marketing, The Oterra, their USPs include offbeat facilities, amenities and culture. "We are not a typical hotel with a snobbish atmosphere; we are a young and chirpy hotel. Although we are situated at Electronic City, our USP is that we have no competition as there is no other hotel situated in this area."

*The award was received by **Ajinkya Kulkarni**, Director of Sales and Marketing, The Oterra*



Best Designed Business Hotel

ALOFT BENGALURU CESSNA BUSINESS PARK

Sushma Khichar, Hotel Manager, Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park, claimed that India Travel Awards is a great platform to recognise the many branches of the hospitality industry that have excelled in various fields of product and service. Khichar said, "Bright, vibrant and young are all that would pop into someone's mind when they enter the hotel."

*The award was received by **Sushma Khichar**, Hotel Manager, Aloft Bengaluru Cessna Business Park (Sushma Khichar, Hotel Manager)*



Best Luxury Resort

SHERATON GRAND CHENNAI RESORT & SPA

Awards is a great forum to recognise talent, according to **Shibil Malik**, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa. He said, "It's great that DDP organises the award ceremony not only in metros but also in Tier II, III cities, because India is all about reaching the nook and corner. Ours is not an easy industry but a very important one for the economy."

*The award was received by **Shibil Malik**, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa*

Best MiCE Travel Agency

DREAM DESTINATIONZ

Dream Destinationz has been working in the MiCE industry for almost 13 years. **Manohar Jairam**, Managing Director, Dream Destinationz, said that they were overwhelmed to receive the award. "We have been serving to most of the corporate companies right from cement, pharmaceuticals and appliances industries," he said.

*The award was received by **Manohar Jairam**, Managing Director, Dream Destinationz*



Best Luxury Hotel

PARK HYATT CHENNAI

Vishal Mehra, General Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai, was happy to be a part of the award ceremony. "My team and I wish you all the very best and we look forward to winning again next year," he said. **Meena Rewari**, Director—Sales and Marketing, Park Hyatt, Chennai, added, "We deserve this award because we stand for our brand promise."

*The award was received by **Vishal Mehra**, General Manager & **Meena Rewari**, Director of Sales and Marketing, Park Hyatt Chennai*



Fastest Growing Hotel Brand

TGI HOTELS & RESORTS

Amitava Roy, Founder & CEO, TGI Hotels & Resorts, said that they have worked hard for the last five years. "With a strong team of professionals, we have grown significantly and today we are the fastest growing hotel chain in India." **Arun Kumar V K**, Co-founder & Executive Director, TGI Hotels & Resorts, added, "It is a great honour to receive the trophy."

*The award was received by **Amitava Roy**, Founder & CEO and **Arun Kumar V K**, Co- Founder & Exec Director, TGI Hotels & Resorts*

Best Tour Operator

68M HOLIDAYS

Syed Murtaja Ali, Managing Director, 68M Holidays, attributes the award to his team's sincere efforts. "I believe this award is a result of a very sincere effort of our team who are working very hard to make the trips of our clients more memorable and productive by providing personalised services. India Travel Awards has set a benchmark for everyone in the industry," he shared.

*The award was received by **Syed Murtaja Ali**, Managing Director, 68M Holidays*



Best Airport Service Provider

AIR INDIA SATS AIRPORT SERVICES (AISATS)

AISATS is the premier airport services company in India and excels in providing world-class airport services in ground and cargo handling. The employees, partners and associates at the prestigious organisation perform to their full potential, creating sustainable value to stakeholders. AISATS is known to maintain high level of safety and security in all its operations.

*The award was received by **Bobban Jose**, Senior VP, Bengaluru and **Satish Babu**, Assistant Vice President, Customer Service, AISATS*



Best Educational Tour Operator

KERALA AMAZING HOLIDAYS

With decades of experience in domestic and international educational tours, Kerala Amazing Holidays is a leading tour operator in the business, claims **Dhanesh MS**, Owner, Kerala Amazing Holidays. "We concentrate only on educational tours as it is a very important sector currently for children to be able to learn from educational tours," he said.

*The award was received by **Dhanesh MS**, Managing Director, Kerala Amazing Holidays*

Best Software Solution Provider

IWEEN SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

These awards are a testimony to the technology that iWeen has built and the kind of customer-centric ecosystem it has created around technology solutions. "We are a very diverse technology company providing a holistic solution to travel agents and travel management companies," **Sudheer Reddy**, Director, iWeen Software Solutions claimed.

*The award was received by **Sudheer Reddy**, Director and **Ranga Prasad D**, Director, iWeen Software Solutions*



Best Luxury Business Hotel

PARK HYATT HYDERABAD

Thomas Abraham, Area Vice President—South India/General Manager, Park Hyatt Hyderabad, was elated to have received the award as he thanked his team for their hard work. "My team at Park Hyatt Hyderabad is pivotal to where we have reached today and for the awards that we have earned today," he said.

*The award was received by **Vishal Mehra**, General Manager and **Meena Rewari**, Director of Sales and Marketing on behalf of Park Hyatt Hyderabad (**Thomas Abraham**, Area Vice President—South India/General Manager)*



Best Wedding & MiCE Hotel

SHERATON GRAND BENGALURU WHITEFIELD HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center offers modern luxury in the heart of India's Silicon Valley. At the property, one can discover stylish, spacious rooms and suites with upscale amenities, delicious international dining at our multiple restaurants, a refreshing pool and the 24-hour Sheraton fitness centre.

*The award was received by **Jaya Dev Naka** on Behalf of Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel and Convention Center, Marketing & Communications Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa*

Best Green Resort

GLYNGARTH RESORTS

Ashwin Kumar, Director, Glyngarth Resorts says that receiving the India Travel Awards was a proud moment for him. "The property is unique and is situated 11 kms from Ooty, surrounded by natural scenery with 21 cottage rooms along with a restaurant, swimming pool and two suite rooms, which are comfortable and excellent in terms of amenities."

*The award was received by **G C Sivaraj**, Director and **Ashwin Kumar Vasanth**, Director, Glyngarth Resorts*



Best Business Hotel

THE WESTIN HYDERABAD MINDSPACE

Abhirath Sah, Director of Sales & Marketing, The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, dedicated the award to the team and all the associates at the property. "I think the award goes to the efforts of all associates and fellow colleagues that we work with. We are just leaders who work with them," he said.

*The award was received by **Abhirath Sah**, Director of Sales & Marketing, The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace*



Best Serviced Apartments

OAKWOOD RESIDENCE KAPIL HYDERABAD

As his second visit to India Travel Awards, **Deepak Angara**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Oakwood Residence Kapil Hyderabad, revealed, "This is the second time we are getting an India Travel Awards. Ours is the best serviced apartment in Hyderabad, located in the heart of the financial district of the city, offering rooms in seven categories."

*The award was received by **Deepak Angara**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Oakwood Residence Kapil Hyderabad*

Best Boutique Hotel

PURITY AT LAKE VEMBANAD

Vineeth H, General Manager, Purity and Malabar House, referred to the South India Travel Awards ceremony as a great evening. "I got an opportunity to meet fellow colleagues and we are privileged to have received this award. It was indeed my pleasure to represent our organisation at the venue. We bagged the award for the second time," he said.

*The award was received by **Vineeth H**, General Manager, Purity and Malabar House*



Best Luxury Tour Operator - Outbound

PEGASUS TRAVELS & TOURS

P Raghunath, Executive Director, Pegasus Travels, said, "We want to thank Indian Travel Awards for giving us the recognition. Recognition on this platform keeps us motivated and further encourages us to outperform. In 38 years of experience, I have been selling tours and showcasing exotic products that we have on offer in India."

*The award was received by **P Raghunath**, Executive Director, Pegasus Travels*



Best Foreign Exchange Company

ZENITH LEISURE HOLIDAYS

Harendra Choudhary, Business Head—Forex, Zenith Forex, claimed that their company is one of the fastest growing foreign exchange companies in India. "In over five years, we have been granted 82 licenses, which is an upgraded money changer license and we are proud to now cover 17 different activities in terms of foreign exchange," he added.

The award was received by Kalyan Bhattacharjee, Regional Manager- South and Senthil Kumar, Area Manager - Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Zenith Forex

Leading Destination Management Company

RED APPLE TRAVEL GROUP

Senthil Kumar, Group CFO, Red Apple Travel, attributes the award to Group Managing Director **Suneet Goenka**, who has tirelessly taken the company to a global level. "This award goes to the network we have created in Asia, Europe and Australia for the last 15 years. We have been handling around 250 thousand passengers per annum," he added.

The award was received by Senthil Kumar, Group Chief Financial Officer and Bharatwaj Priya Darshini, Controller, Red Apple, Chennai



Best B2B Travel Exhibition

GLOBAL PANORAMA SHOWCASE

After receiving the award, **Rishiraj Singh Anand**, Joint Managing Director, Global Panorama Showcase, said that they feel motivated to do better. "We are thankful to them for recognising us through this platform and they should continue to motivate us in the future too, to excel. It is because of our team's efforts that we have taken the trophy home," he said.

The award was received by Rishiraj Anand, Joint Managing Director, Global Panorama Showcase



Most Promising Hotel Chain

CROSSWAY HOTELS & RESORTS

Thanking the India Travel Awards, **Yangya Prakash Chandran**, Founder and CEO, Crossway Hotels & Resorts, said, "It is a fabulous event where local and regional talent is recognised and acknowledged. I think our quality of work and hotels coupled with our services offered to customers, has helped us gain this recognition."

The award was received by Yangya Prakash Chandran, Founder and CEO, Crossway Hotels & Resorts

Best Tour Operator-Inbound

CHOLAN TOURS

Pandian, Director, South Tourism – a Unit of Cholan Tours, believes that the USP of the company is the people who work for Cholan Tours. "We have the highest retention staff in the country, where around 93 per cent of our employees have been working with us for 15 years. We never recruit staff from other companies, but hire freshers," he said.

The award was received by Shankar, Manager - Fleets and Barath, Manager- Business Development, Cholan Tours



Excellence in promoting Tamil Nadu Tourism

TAMIL NADU TRAVEL MART SOCIETY

Sundar, Honorary Secretary, Tamil Nadu travel mart Society (TNTMS), shared that TNTMS has got a one point agenda that with a lot of problems in the industry, the only solution to all problems is to get the abundant inflow into Tamil Nadu. He thanked DDP for choosing Tamil Nadu as a venue for the award ceremony and recognising TNTMS.

The award was received by S Sundar, Honorary Secretary, TNTMS



Best Tourist Transport Company- Kerala

ASSOCIATED TRAVELS, CALICUT

Danjid T K, Managing Partner, Associated Travels, shared that they have been delivering great service and experience to customers for the last 75 years. **T K Abdul Majeed**, Managing Director, said, "Going forward, we will be opening new branches in three new destinations, namely, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru."

The award was received by Midhun Mohan, General Manager, T K Abdul Majeed, Managing Director & Danjid T K, Managing Partner

Best Indian Restaurant

SAMCO

Aboobacker Sadique of Samco multi-cuisine restaurant believes that India Travel Awards is a platform that motivates them to do better. "We have received this award as we were able to maintain the authenticity of Indian food in our restaurants. This award has also entrusted us with more responsibility to excel further," he said.

The award was received by Aboobacker Sadique, Managing Director, Mohamed Shabeer, Partner, and Mohamed Shaham, Partner



Best Aviation Training Institute

SPEEDWINGS AVIATION ACADEMY

Mohammed Ashraf KA, Product Manager—Aviation Training, added that it was an honour for them to receive the award, saying, "We offer 47 IATA courses and students who are trained here are placed at various airports in India."

The award was received by Mohammed Ashraf KA, Product Manager - Aviation Training and Prasanth G, Faculty and Business Developments



Best CSR Initiative

VALMIKI HARIKISHAN (VALMIKI FOUNDATION)

Excited to have received their first India Travel Awards, **Murali Vadla**, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions, said, "We deal with inbound, outbound packages and ticketing. It is due to the collective effort of the team that we have grabbed the best CSR initiative award today. The ceremony was well-executed and very entertaining."

*The award was received by **Murali Vadla**, Manager, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions*

Best Airport Aviation Marketing

BANGALORE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LTD.

Arun Chandra, General Manager—Aviation Business, Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), claimed that they are a customer-centric airport. "As a customer-centric airport, each effort and focus of ours go into enriching the customer experience. That's what puts us in the league above the rest and therefore we deserve this recognition," he claimed.

*The award was received by **Arun Chandra**, GM – Aviation Business, BIAL and **Sharad Gambhir**, Manager- Airline Marketing (Passenger), BIAL*



Best Travel Agency

EXPRESS HOLIDAYS

E Bharath, Business Development Manager, Express Holidays received the award on behalf of his team, and said, "It is satisfying to know that we can help our clients and enable them to connect the world affordably and comfortably. We are also committed to offering significant savings on worldwide travel and we do so by delivering access to all corners of the world in peerless comfort and style, with value and expertise."

*The award was received by **E Bharath**, Business Development Manager, Express Holidays*



Best Convention Center

FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON MAHABALIPURAM RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER

Girish Krishnan, Hotel Manager, Four Points by Sheraton Mahabalipuram Resort & Convention Center, shared that he was very excited to be a part of India Travel Awards. "We deserve this award especially due to the kind of product we offer as we have the largest convention space of around 22,000 sq ft, along with a big lawn of 1.5 acres," he said.

*The award was received by **Arun Suresh**, Owning Board and **Girish Krishnan**, Hotel Manager, Four Points by Sheraton Mahabalipuram Resort & Convention Center*

Most Opulent Serviced Apartments

PARK HYATT HYDERABAD

Thomas Abraham, Area Vice President—South India/General Manager, believes that it is the experience that they offer has made them a recipient of India Travel Awards. "I think the core reason we have received the two awards is because we delivered what we promised as a brand and as an experience that exceeded our guests' and partners' expectations," he said.

*The award was received by **Vishal Mehra**, General Manager, Park Hyatt Chennai on behalf of Park Hyatt Hyderabad (**Thomas Abraham**, Area Vice President—South India/General Manager)*



Best Tour Operator - Australia & New Zealand

PEEKAY HOLIDAYS

With an experience of 23 years in the industry, **Pawan Kumar Gupta**, Managing Director, Peekay Holidays, appreciated India Travel Awards for recognising their performance. "We have been involved in both inbound and outbound markets, and our operations are quite strong in Australia and New Zealand," he claimed.

*The award was received by **Pawan Kumar Gupta**, Managing Director, Peekay Holidays*



Best City Hotel

TURYAA CHENNAI

Arun Raj D, Assistant Vice President, Turyaa Chennai, claimed that their property is an outstanding contemporary hotel for business and leisure. "Turyaa has ensured to deliver the true definition of hospitality to their most esteemed guests. This award encourages to identify every organisation who maintains high standards and commitment," he said.

*The award was received by **Arun Raj D**, Assistant Vice President, **Thilanga Dewanarayana**, Head of Finance & **Darshana Chaudhary**, Public Relations and Marketing Executive, Turyaa Chennai*

Best New Travel Portal

BOOKOTRIP INDIA

Bivin Samuel, CEO & Director, BookOtrip India, shared that India Travel Awards always inspires by celebrating success together along with the veterans in the industry. "It was a great moment for Bookotrip to be recognised for its hard work and the urge to move along with the trends of travel industry fusing technology with exceptional, one-on-one customer service and wholesale pricing to create the world's highest-quality experience at the best value for the travellers," he added.

*The award was received by **Bivin Samuel**, CEO & Director, BookOtrip India*



Hospitality Partner

SHERATON GRAND CHENNAI RESORT & SPA

Shibil Malik, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa, shared that India Travel Awards is a great forum to recognise talent. **Jithesh Sankaran**, Assistant Events Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa, added, "I hope we were able to serve you with the highest degree of professionalism."

*The award was received by **Shibil Malik**, General Manager, Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa*



Travel

WEDDING SHOW

July 13 - 14, 2019 (Sat - Sun)
The Westin Mumbai Garden City

THE INDIAN WEDDING INDUSTRY

IS ESTIMATED TO BE WORTH
US\$40 BILLION
AND IS EXPECTED TO GROW

AT 25%
PER ANNUM

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Source: CNBCTV18.com report on Indian wedding. Report can be accessed on the following link:
<https://www.cnbctv18.com/retail/the-recession-proof-big-fast-indian-wedding-just-got-more-corporatised-1012991.htm>