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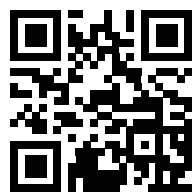
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Tourist facilities need a push

As the Budget draws closer, spokespersons of the tourism and hospitality industries talk about their expectations, some of which include, further reduction in GST and improvement of tourist facilities.

Subhash Goyal
Secretary General
FAITH

“The tourism industry should be treated on a par with the export industry, particularly export of IT where software is developed here, but it is used by foreign companies. Similarly, even though the tour is here, the foreign exchange company is international. Hence, tourism should be treated as a services export and receive the same exemptions. Also, GST should be charged either at the place of origin of tour or where our office is.”

Rajiv Mehra
Senior Vice President
IATO

“We want the government to look at GST reforms. Even now, our main problems are with the GST, but we have given our recommendation for export status to be given to our industry. We hope that this request is considered this time, because all our details have been given to them. Similarly, there are certain issues on the taxation front as well, that have been given to them. We are following this up. Hopefully, certain things might be reflected in the new Budget in February.”

Pradip Lulla
Acting President and Vice
President, TAFI

“We, as an association, will appreciate if tourism & travel, which contributes up to 9.5 per cent to the GDP, is given special industry status. Special incentives such as tax breaks on development of tourism in upcoming fields such as rural areas as well as agriculture will be welcome as well. Our request is to reduce GST on travel and tourism to make us more competitive on the global front.”

Contd on page 6 ▶



2020 goes digital

Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) will go completely digital in 2020, with the first event of the year being hosted in Nagpur between January 27 and 28.



Nisha Verma

Harmandeep Singh Anand, HMD, GPS, has said that starting with GPS Nagpur from January 27-28 this year, they will go completely digital

and have adopted quite a few resolves for 2020. “This year, we will have only 70 table spaces with a fixed format, wherein the backdrop will be eco-friendly. Instead of using flex, we are giving 15-inch Ultra

“This year, we will have only 70 table spaces; we are giving 15-inch Ultra HD screens to everyone”

HD screens to everyone. Even the sticker or paint used will be

reusable.” GPS has also tied up with TripperWiFi, a global Wi-Fi

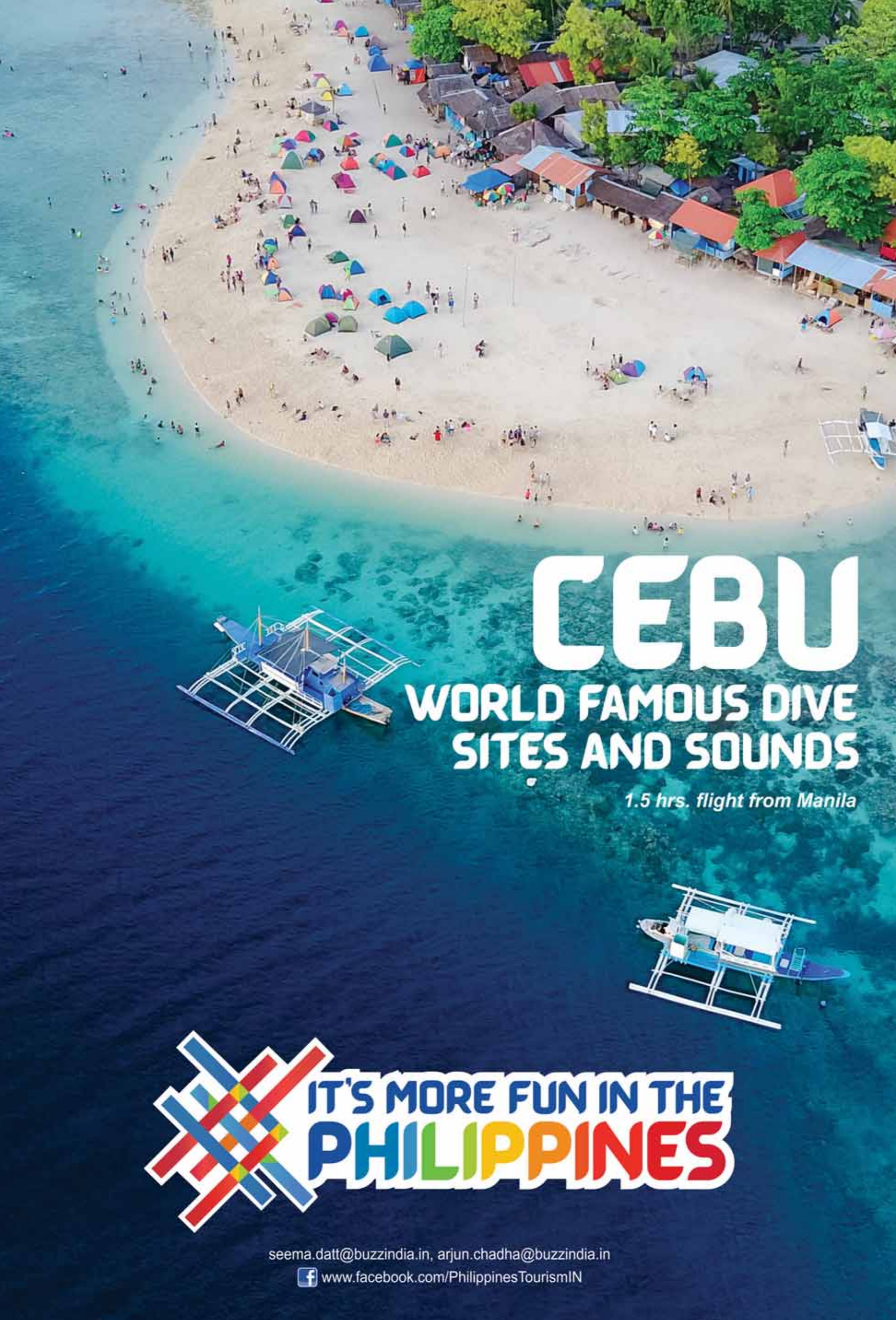
device that people travelling anywhere in the world can rent out, revealed Anand, adding that the device will be launched at GPS Nagpur. Any corporate or individual can rent out this device and up to 10 people

Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director
GPS

can get connected to it at a low rental of around ₹ 400 a day with unlimited data usage. ▶

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Separate VAC for agents

In an effort to make visa application more convenient for travel agents, VFS Global will soon start an exclusive Visa Application Centre (VAC) for them in the heart of New Delhi.



Manas Dwivedi

To maintain and strengthen its relationship with the travel trade, VFS Global is taking a slew of measures in 2020. Sharing details, **Sanjeet Joher**, Head - South Asia, VFS Global, informed that the new VAC will provide visa assistance to travel agents for non-Schengen countries and visas that don't require biometric data. He also shared that VFS Global will have a

the strategic location, this VAC will be easy for travel agents to access," he said.

"Our most important customer is the travel agent," said Joher, adding that VFS wants to collaborate with them and in turn enhance services for their customers, because "their customers are our customers and we are here in this business because of them." Thanking travel agent partners for their support,



Sanjeet Joher
Head - South Asia
VFS Global

Sundays as well across all locations in India."

Besides these dedicated services for agents, VFS Global is also increasing its operational hours by extending the centre timing (8 am-6 pm). For prime-time customers, the centre will open from 6 pm-10 pm. Major VFS centres will also be operational on Saturdays from 9 am-4 pm. VFS Global is also coming up with 'Visa at Doorstep'. There are 16-17 countries for which VFS can come up with mobile biometrics for customers. ↴

All Schengen, UK or US visa holders can apply for Saudi visa on arrival

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has relaxed its visa norms for visitors to the country, encouraging travellers from around the world to visit. The Saudi Commission for Tourism & National Heritage (SCTH) has announced that visitors can now use their existing UK, US, or Schengen area country visas to obtain a Saudi Arabia visitor visa upon arrival in the country through visa kiosks at immigration, irrespective of their citizenship. It is important to note that visitors who intend to benefit from the new regulation must have previously used the visa to travel to any of the above-mentioned countries, before entering Saudi Arabia. The new policy allows for stay of up to three months per entry, with visitors able to spend 90 days a year in Saudi Arabia. The visa is valid for one year with multiple entries, and in no way affects the electronic/online visa applications. The new visa system is a historic milestone in opening Saudi Arabia to tourism.

“We are going to have a lot of non Schengen missions out there and operate six days a week, 8 am onwards”

dedicated helpline for travel agents apart from special weekend visit arrangements for large groups.

"We are opening an exclusive VAC for travel agents in Connaught Place, New Delhi. We are going to have a lot of non-Schengen missions out there and operate six days a week, 8 am onwards. Due to

he said, "In 2020, we are upgrading our infrastructure across all our locations in order to give the customers a seamless journey. We are going to ensure that there are customer relationship managers on arrival to guide them. For agents who have other requirements and are not able to cope up with demand, we are willing to open on

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VIEWPOINT

A long way to go...

With another year gone by, we now step into not just a new year, but a new decade as well! The year 2020 holds a lot of promise for the tourism industry and even as countries all over the world are reeling under some crisis, everyone hopes that tourism will salvage the economy. India has its sights set on increasing inbound arrivals while improving the image of the country among foreign tourists. The Ministry of Tourism is making all the right noises to attract tourists and with their increased focus on domestic tourism, they surely know where the goldmine is.

As we step into the new year, we are also expecting the Budget and like every year, the industry has a set of demands that they want fulfilled so that they can assist the government to bring in the tourists. The agents still feel India is costly for tourists as compared to neighbouring countries and that's the reason tourists prefer to visit these countries. To make India a more viable destination, they want further reduction in GST.

The agents also call for more thrust on infrastructure development, better roads and better connectivity, to introduce tourists to lesser-known destinations within the country. UDAN, the scheme to connect smaller cities and towns, has been very effective in increasing accessibility and more work needs to be done on those lines.

Sustainability has been a major concern of the industry lately. Tourism is in a very special position to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and for conservation of the environment. Within the tourism sector, economic development and environmental protection should be pursued as aspirations that should be mutually reinforcing, and practices that commensurate with these values can provide long-term benefits to the industry as well as the community. India's brand-building exercise also needs reinforcement. Incredible India 2.0 needs to strike a chord with tourists.

With these demands listed, it's time to work towards our goals. Let's make this indeed a Happy New Year!

GST to be reduced further

► Contd from page 3



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President
FHRAI

“The hospitality sector is at an inflection point after a decade of stunted growth and the government must capitalise on the huge potential of this sector. One of the major boosts to achieve this target is to grant an industry status to the sector on a national level and compensate states for any notional loss. **The industry needs to be made eligible for tax incentives and concessions available to infrastructure industries under Section 80 I/A of the IT Act.**”



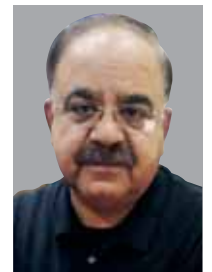
Jyoti Mayal
President
TAAI

“We expect the finance minister to declare tourism as an industry and set up a corpus fund for the same, as well as classify hotels, resorts, and convention centres under the RBI infrastructure lending norm criteria. There is a need to develop policy mechanism for single-window clearance. The government should create a global bidding fund for enabling Indian companies to bid for MICE events. There is also a need to enhance funding limits to raise SEIS rates to 7 per cent for foreign exchange earnings and enable SEIS to discharge GST liabilities.”



Sandeep Dwivedi
Chief Operating Officer
InterGlobe Technology Quotient

“There has been a spike of 4.7 per cent y-o-y in the 2018 Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE), with an expectation to grow at 7 per cent by 2028 (Source: IBEF report on Hospitality & Tourism – Oct 2019). As our travel fraternity marvels at the recorded figures, there is no ounce of doubt how hopeful we are about amiable provisions for tourism this year. **We need further expansion in infrastructure following the government's sanction for development of 10 prominent sites into 'Iconic' tourist destinations.** We definitely expect more focus on expansion.”



Deepak Narula
Managing Director
GRN Connect

“We are expecting a positive, moderate-approach Budget with the continuance of thrust on improving infrastructure across the country. There is lot to be done in the tourism sector, and an urgent need is to make India a safe and tourist-friendly country. Furthermore, **visa on arrival needs faster clearances so we need some effort there as well. Our monuments need to be glorified, so a lot needs to be spent on brand building.** Northeast India also needs urgent attention in terms of connectivity and safety of travellers.”



Rajesh Arya
Vice President
ADTOI

“We need a big gift from the finance minister for the tourism industry, in terms of relieving the tax burden on businessmen. **Similarly, we want the GST regime to be revised further. We need a uniform GST because the slabs do not work well for us.** Also, in the tourism sector, there are some crucial concerns that affect business, like the water crisis and pollution. There is a need for the government to invest money to deal with these issues. For domestic tourism, there is a need to increase or improve road connectivity to most destinations.”



HS Duggal
Managing Director
Minar Group

“Inbound tour operators have high hopes from the Budget, with a focus on push on infrastructure, connectivity, more efforts on pollution control and environment safety. Since tourism is facing headwinds, we look forward to some support in the Budget. **With tourism directly dependent on air transportation, the government must consider bringing Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under the GST regime so that cost of air travel is reduced.** Another long-pending demand of operators is to be under exporters category.”



Sanjeev K Nayar
MH, General Manager
WelcomHeritage

“The government should continue with its tax reforms, be it further rationalisation of the GST or personal income tax so that there is some surplus income available in the hands of the consumer to facilitate travel. Though the infrastructure has improved considerably over the years, there still remains scope for improvement. **There needs to be focus on National Skill Development Corporation, to train the youth in hospitality and travel operations, as there is shortage of a skilled workforce at the bottom of the pyramid.**”



Pushpendra Bansal
Chief Operating Officer
Lords Hotels & Resorts

“The government should strengthen its initiatives to create sustainable hospitality. This, in my opinion, is the need of the hour. It should also waive off tourist visa fee for a shorter period to increase outbound tourism. Another important aspect is the lack of adequate infrastructure. **The focus should be on developing amenities like building good quality roads and constructing public restrooms on highways as well as petrol stations to make road trips safer and more women-friendly.**”

Inputs by Hazel Jain, Kanchan Nath, Nisha Verma, Manas Dwivedi

OTOAI convention in Antalya

The fifth OTOAI convention, scheduled from March 15-18 in Antalya, Turkey, will be accompanied by optional pre and post-convention tours of three days each. As preparations are afoot, the theme for this year is yet to be revealed.



Manas Dwivedi

Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) will organise its fifth convention in Antalya, Turkey, from March 15-18, 2020, said **Riaz Munshi**, President, OTOAI, during an official announcement ceremony organised by the association and the Turkish Embassy. It was also revealed that **Himanshu Patil**, Vice President, OTOAI, will be the Convention Chairman, while Joint Secretary of the association, **Vineet Gopal**, will be the Convention Co-chairman.

Sharing more details, Munshi said that the convention will be accompanied by optional pre (March 12-15) and post (March

“Once our tour operators experience the destination first hand, they will be able to sell it better to their clients”

18-21) convention tours of three days each, to experience places in and around Antalya such as Istanbul, Cappadocia, Pamukkale, and Izmir. The airline partner of the convention is Turkish Airlines, which offers convenient connections between India and Turkey.

“Preparations are going on in full swing. Apart from the pre and post tours, we are finalising flight travel arrangements and business sessions of the convention. Our aim is to bring the outbound tour operators from various parts of the country together and showcase a new destination to them each time.

Active members can opt for 3 nights in the pre or post-convention tours along with 3 nights of the convention at ₹ 54,990 (plus GST) ex-Mumbai/Delhi on twin sharing basis and ₹ 69,990 ex-Mumbai/Delhi for single supplement.

Antalya and the region around it have much to offer to the discerning traveller and once our tour operators experience the destination first-hand, they will be able to sell it better to their clients in India,” Munshi said.




H.E. **Sakir Özkan Torunlar**, Ambassador of Turkey to India; **H Deniz ERSÖZ**, Culture & Tourism Counselor, Turkish Culture and Tourism Office in

India; **Huseyin Ozbek**, General Manager - North and East India, Turkish Airlines and **Komal Seth**, Director, Linkin Reps, were present during the ceremony, where OTOAI invited its members, travel trade and the media to the convention.


The theme is yet to be finalised along with topics for business sessions, as well as the list of panellists who will discuss and debate on issues prevalent in the industry. The previous OTOAI convention was held in South Africa in 2018. ↴




Riaz Munshi
President
OTOAI




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Tourism Breaking News

■ MP Tourism plans 100 campsites to develop adventure tourism

■ MoCA to issue expression of interest for AI disinvestment within next few weeks

■ Malaysia offers visa-free entry for Indians with 15-day validity throughout 2020

■ Rail fares hiked; up by 1-2 paisa/km for non-AC and 4 paisa/km for AC classes

■ Dutch government drops 'Holland' name, now to be known only as 'The Netherlands'

■ Delhi to have 768 more hotels in next one to two years: JLL

Digital marketing to woo China

Ministry of Tourism is innovating its approach to tap some of the biggest outbound markets of the world, China being its focus for now. A dedicated China cell and marketing through the Chinese multipurpose digital platform, WeChat, is a move in this direction.



Nisha Verma

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), claims that the ministry is leaving no stone unturned in promoting India as a destination for tourists around the world and adopting a region-specific approach in marketing the country. For instance, MOT uses WeChat — a Chinese messaging, social media and mobile payment App — as a marketing tool in China. Brar says, "We have a global media agency that assists us in deciding our campaign and there is a clear understanding that in the eastern part of the world, there is a lot more usage of digital platforms. Hence, we've tried to incorporate that as part of our strategy, as we take up the promotional campaigns this year. Though we've been



Rupinder Brar
Additional Director General
Ministry of Tourism

“The agenda now is to increase the footprint of the digital platform far more; it will bring the necessary dividends”

there before, the agenda now is to increase the footprint of the digital platform far more, and I am sure that it will bring the necessary dividends.” In fact, she reveals that MOT has created a dedicated 'China

cell' to work on strategies to get more tourists from the neighbouring country. "We went for roadshows in China in November and there have been roadshows earlier, too. China is a huge market. The Chinese are touring the world, but we are somehow not able to capture the market as much as we can. We have the potential and that's the purpose of creating the China cell. That said, we

want to focus on China and eventually create a propelling impact," she says.

When asked about the launch of the global tourism campaign, Brar informs that

Why Chinese outbound?

- ❖ China consolidated its leadership as the top spender with \$257.7 billion in international tourism expenditure in 2017, equalling an average of \$1,780 per person.
- ❖ With the growing levels of English spoken in China, the fact that India is an English-speaking country helps to attract Chinese visitors.
- ❖ The shorter distance of India to China compared to Europe or Australia and the simplified visa regulations offer the opportunity to the 'money-rich, but time-poor' Chinese visitors to come to India.

Source: China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI)

it is at the brink of being launched and that MOT is "almost done with valuation and formalities."

She goes on to add that 2019 was a great year for tourism not just in terms of the number of tourists arriving, but also with regard to flagging of the sector as

a significant contributor to the India growth story. "The Prime Minister has often mentioned the importance of tourism in the development of the economy; he's reminded us of the value of domestic tourism. We now have lots of expectations from 2020 and there are many miles to go," she concludes. 📌

Odisha eyes 5 lakh FTAs by 2022

Odisha Tourism is targeting to receive 500,000 foreign tourists out of a total of 2.5 crore by 2022. The state tourism board is also keen on promoting Odisha in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and replicate its environmentally-sensitive Marine Drive Eco Retreat model at suitable times of the year.



Hazel Jain

After facing severe setbacks caused by Cyclone Fani in 2019, Odisha Tourism is recovering slowly and has set a milestone target for itself for 2022. According to **Vishal K Dev** IAS, Secretary, Odisha Tourism, "Through our efforts, we are targeting to receive foreign tourist arrivals of about 500,000, out of a total of 2.5 crore tourist arrivals, by 2022. Our top 10 source markets for FTAs are USA, UK, Japan, China, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Malaysia



Vishal K Dev
IAS, Secretary
Odisha Tourism

and the CIS, with the top four markets contributing over 30 per cent of total FTA. We

are additionally very keen on promoting Odisha in the Middle East and Southeast Asia now. Sports tourism and sporting events as well as eco-tourism are a few segments that have been witnessing the most promising response from these markets."

According to official statistics, the damages borne by public sector tourism properties

“We are also looking to consolidate an investment-ready land bank of over 2000 acres for the sector in the coming years”

from Cyclone Fani amounted to about ₹ 25 crore, while the private sector suffered damages amounting to over ₹ 130 crore. The total revenue loss for the tourism sector was pegged at over ₹ 1300 crore. Another challenge that Odisha



Tourism faced was creating a land bank for developing premium tourism and hospitality infrastructure. "We are looking to consolidate an investment-ready land bank of over 2000 acres for the sector in the coming years," Dev revealed.

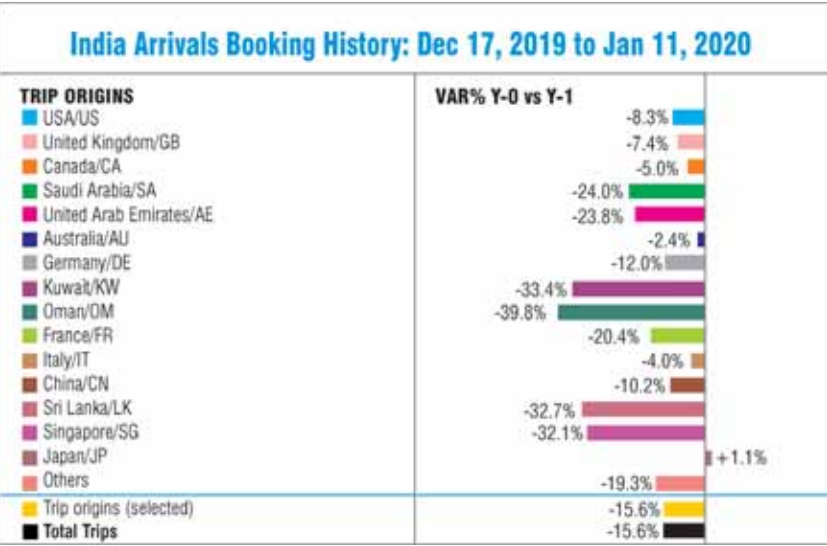
He also spoke about a few milestones that the tourism board has achieved in 2019, the most prominent of them being the launch of Marine Drive Eco Retreat. It has been developed as an environmentally sustainable model incorporating best practices in material utilisation, zero liquid and sewerage discharge, and holistic waste management. It has been envisioned as eastern India's first glamping setup at the Ramachandi Beach

near the grand Konark Sun Temple. Scheduled from 14 December 2019 to 31 January 2020, the Eco Retreat is a unique experience of glamping in 50 luxury cottages along with adventure activities and water sports. "We plan to replicate the Eco Retreat model at suitable times of the year on prominent beach stretches along our 482 km coastline, each having its own unique experience," Dev added. 📌

Year	Domestic Tourist Arrivals	% growth in domestic tourist visit	Foreign Tourist Arrivals	% growth in foreign tourist visit
2014	1,07,90,622	—	71,426	—
2015	1,17,86,117	9%	66,971	-6%
2016	1,28,42,899	9%	76,361	14%
2017	1,40,11,229	9%	1,00,014	31%
2018	1,52,08,540	9%	1,10,818	11%

Air bookings dip 16%

Amid ongoing issues, inbound air bookings for India have declined 15.6 per cent for the period since December 17, 2019 to January 11, 2020, reveals ForwardKeys.



An analysis of over 7.5 million bookings by ForwardKeys has revealed that inbound air bookings have seen a sharp decline since December 17, 2019 till January 11, 2020 compared with 2.5 per cent annualised decline. The analysis was conducted to assess the impact of ongoing issues in the country on inbound air bookings into India at both country and state level. The study took into consideration actual travel bookings growth/ decline into India in the period between January 11, 2019 and January 11, 2020 and showed an annual decline 2.5 per cent decline in passenger bookings into India.

Looking at the markets which have seen the decline in air bookings the most are Oman, Sri Lanka and Singapore with 39.8 per cent, 32.7 per cent and 32.1 per cent decline, respectively. Incidentally, Japan is the only country from where the number of bookings has seen rise with 1.1 per cent hike in the bookings. Air bookings from Australia witnessed the lowest dip on the list with 2.4 per cent decline.

Source: ForwardKeys
(The views, information, or opinions expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the view of the publication.)

Specialisation @FITUR

The fair strengthens its B2B meetings agenda with the sections — FITUR B2B MATCH and FITUR MICE, stressing on the importance of specialisation and professionalisation.

Manas Dwivedi

The 40th edition of FITUR, organised by IFEMA at Feria de Madrid from the January 22-26, 2020, is looking to once again become the international benchmark event in the tourism industry. With a focus on specialisation, business and professionalisation, FITUR this year presents its enhanced B2B meeting programmes with FITUR B2B MATCH and FITUR

(Fitur)

companies from 160 countries and 253,000 participants.

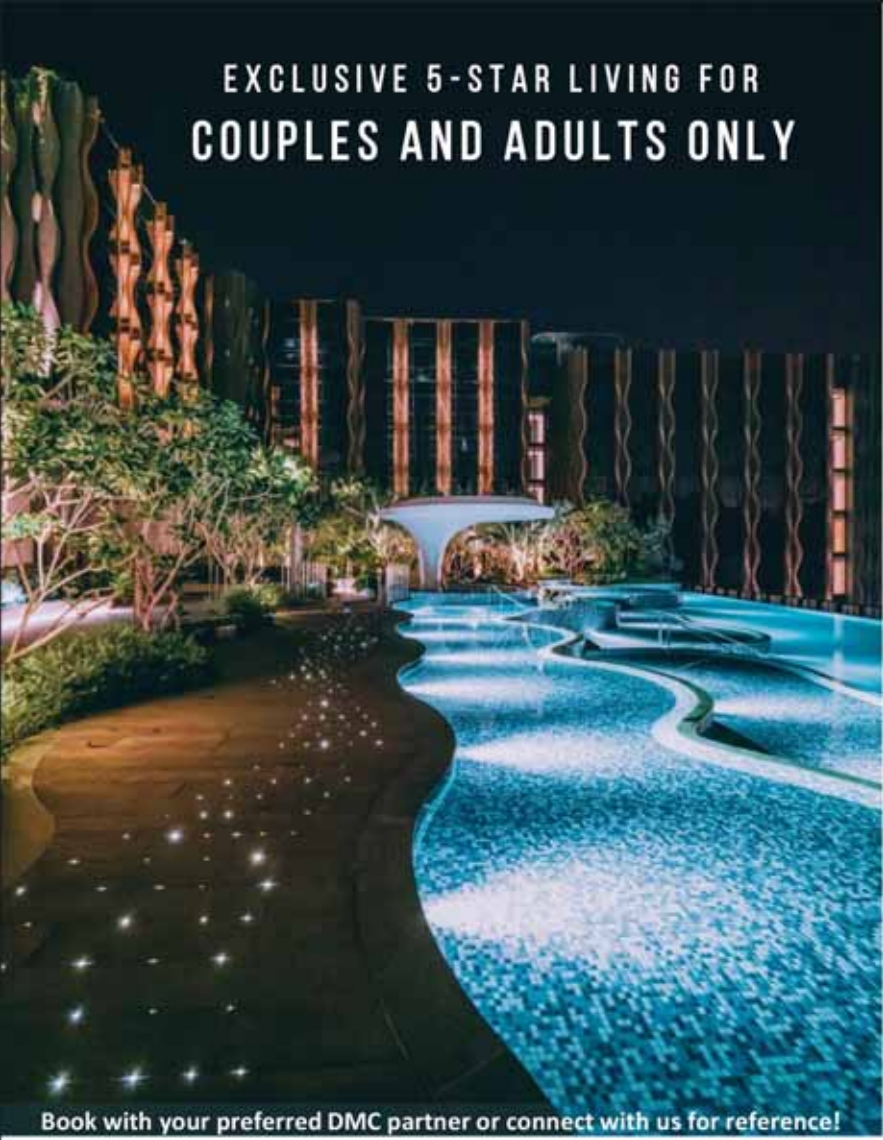
The FITUR MATCH platform, which will be available on January 23 and 24, will put the participating companies in contact with a total of 140 professionals. To prepare the programme, FITUR has worked with different sources in the tourism industry and with

23, representatives of 100 MICE tourism providers with 120 qualified buyers from around the world.

FITUR TALENT is also set to launch this year, which highlights people, their talent, skills and professional qualification, as a competitiveness factor in the present and future of the global tourism industry.

Diversification and new business niches will also be well represented at FITUR through its different specialist sections that make up its portfolio, such as FITUR SCREEN, FITUR FESTIVALS, FITUR GAY (LGBT+), FITUR HEALTH, FITURTECHY, and FITUR KNOW-HOW. In addition, the FITURNEXT Observatory continues its work focusing on sustainability for the tourism industry and will present important research findings during the fair.

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Turkey eyes Indian MICE



Turkish Culture and Tourism Office organised a Fam to Turkey for representatives from corporate houses, in association with Accor and Turkish Airlines. The delegation visited the cities of Istanbul and Antalya, and had the opportunity to explore the MICE venues that Accor provides at the two across its brand offerings that include Swissotel, Fairmont, Rixos, etc.

New flight to Ethiopia

After seeing huge success from its Bengaluru flight, Ethiopian Airlines will not only increase route capacity but also launch a new India-Ethiopia connection from April 3, 2020.



Hazel Jain

Ethiopian Airlines is looking to expand in the South Indian market with the launch of Chennai flights to its capital, Addis Ababa. Sharing more details on this was **Tadesse Tilahun**, Regional Director, India Sub Continent, Ethiopian Airlines, who bid goodbye to the India market after completing a stint of 7.5 years in December 2019. He said,



Tadesse Tilahun
Regional Director, India Sub Continent
Ethiopian Airlines

“We will be upgrading to Dreamliner at the end of this season; this will be a 100% capacity increment to 278 seats”

“We have seen that the South India market has huge potential and is growing. To tap this, we have finalised the launch of Chennai operations. We will be starting this from April 3, 2020 with three frequencies per week. We had recently

launched Bengaluru operations connecting Addis Ababa with a direct flight with four frequencies on the 737 aircraft. This takes the total to seven flights, which means daily operations out of the southern region to our capital.”

He added that since the numbers are good and there are no restrictions on the number of seats that can be deployed between the two countries, the airline plans to increase the capacity on Bengaluru and Chennai routes very soon. “We have been encouraged by the market response from Bengaluru and will be upgrading the aircraft to Dreamliner at the end of this season. This will be a 100 per cent capacity increment from 150 seats to 278 seats on the Dreamliner. We will do the same for our Chennai flight in one or two seasons,” Tilahun shared. The airline operates Airbus A350 on the Delhi and Mumbai routes.

He welcomed the new Regional Director for the region, **Tigist Eshetu**, who took over the reins from him on December 23, 2019 and will be stationed in Mumbai. 🇪🇹

Kesari MICE to expand

The primary agenda for Kesari MICE now is to expand out of Maharashtra and to cater to people in high-potential cities of Bengaluru, Kochi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Delhi. Service and innovation will lead the way forward.



Hazel Jain

“I believe that in the coming years, MICE will see a boom unlike anything we have seen before,” says **Zelam Chaubal**, Director, Kesari MICE. She feels that the MICE industry in general will grow and that the company aspires to grow along with it.

“The legacy of Kesari has stood strong for 35 years; service will remain our primary concern and we will never compromise”

“The legacy of Kesari has stood strong for 35 years, and we are keen to take it ahead with the same service standards. Service

will remain our primary concern and we will never compromise on it. We have big dreams of what Kesari can and will be-

come in the near future, but our primary agenda right now is to expand out of Maharashtra and cater to travellers in cities such as Bengaluru, Kochi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Delhi,” Chaubal adds.

Innovation will therefore play an important role in this expan-

sion roadmap. “Innovation is daily improvements at all levels of the organisation whether it is exploring newer markets or better products, or changing the way we do things. Anything to improve the customer or employee experience is innovation. It was Kesari that started educating people about



Zelam Chaubal
Director
Kesari MICE

travel through newspapers, which has now become a big marketing strategy. Twelve years ago, we started women's tours in India and today, it is a niche business for many,” she says. 🇮🇳



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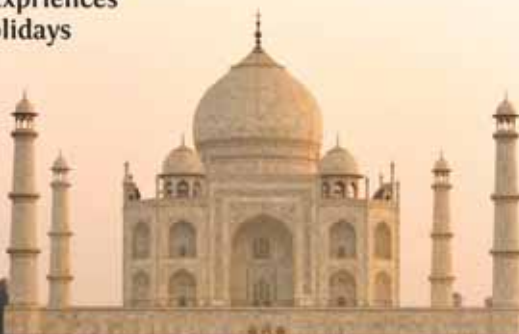
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Australia faces the heat

Warning bells have not stopped ringing as a series of wildfire raging predominantly in southeast Australia, is expected to go on for months. We speak to six travel advisors to find out what the ground reality for them is, with a majority of them agreeing that tourism remains largely unaffected.



Shiv Wagle
Director
Meandering Vacations

“We continue to get queries and though it's peak season for Australia, it's not a holiday season in India. But, we do have live queries for MICE for March, and despite there being concerns, we have not received any request for deviation. **There is no impact on tourism at least for now. Hence, we continue to promote regular destinations.**”



Maitreyee Patel
Director
Pathfinders Holidays

“We have not seen any cancellation and our passengers are travelling as per schedule. I have not seen a very high demand for the T20 matches scheduled later this year, possibly because it will be exam time in India. We have received an advisory from the tourism board as well as updates from local tour operators with regard to travel within Australia.”



Nishant Patel
Managing Partner
The Grand Vacationist

“Despite the current fire situation, we haven't faced any cancellations yet. However, there have been questions and worries on safety, and this is where the tourism boards and the travel advisor play key roles. They have been providing regular updates on the situation and how we can track the situation. Safety is top priority and we continue selling the safe zones.”



Dev Karvat
Founder & CEO, India & Emerging Markets,
Trawelltag Cover-More

“The bush fires in Australia are unfortunate and have largely affected the New South Wales region. For such inevitable catastrophes that may arise during trips, TrawellTag Cover-More has introduced a first-of-its-kind product in India, Crisis Assistance Plus, a travel assistance membership programme that provides 'boots on the ground' support and evacuation.”



Veneeta Rawat
Founder & Director
Amazing Vacations

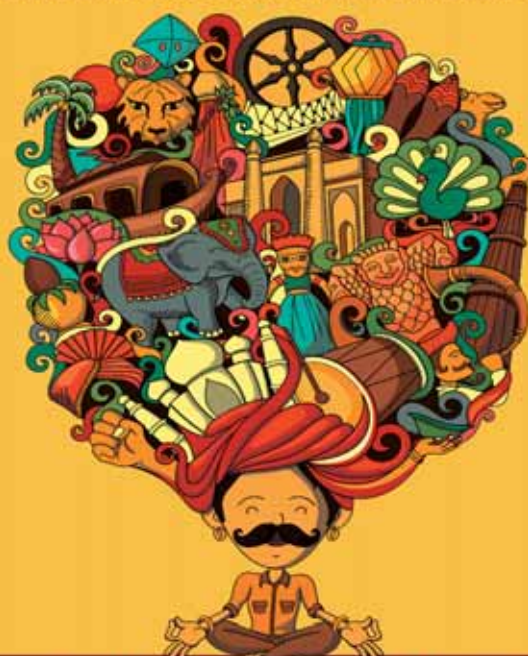
“Despite the present conditions, we continue to sell Australia packages. We have not seen any cancellations. Most states in parts are fine and, of course, all the cities are fine. Most tourist attractions are also operational. The support and timely updates by all Australian partners is commendable. We also see demand for the T20 matches happening in Australia.”



Purvi Jhaveri
Director
Sunday Pure Holidays

“At the moment, the demand is very low due to the ongoing bush fires. Clients are not proactively asking for Australia as a preferred travel destination since they also want things to ease at the earliest so that they can plan accordingly. We continue to sell places like Melbourne, Cairns, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Great Ocean Road, etc.”

Inputs by Hazel Jain



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On-time performance matters

Air travel data and analytics company — Cirium, in its latest report titled ‘On-time Performance Review 2019’, names All Nippon Airways as Asia Pacific’s most on-time mainline airline and network airline. It also reveals that Aeroflot leads the global ranking in most on-time mainline airline, while LATAM is the most on-time global network airline.

The On-time Performance (OTP) Review identifies the world’s best performing airlines and airports for on-time flight operations in 2019. According to the long-running analysis by Cirium, which provides the definitive ranking of the top 10 most on-time airlines and airports globally, by size and region, 86.7 per cent of Aeroflot’s flights operated on time in 2019.

The On-Time Performance Review - Global Mainline - 2019

	On Time Ranking	On-Time Arrival	Total Flights	Comp Factor	Tracked Flights	Avg Delay Mins
(SU) Aeroflot	1	86.68%	290,539	99.18%	98.95%	46
(NH) ANA	2	86.26%	202,476	99.08%	99.92%	32
(DL) Delta Air Lines	3	85.69%	1,131,142	99.80%	99.78%	58
(AD) Azul	4	83.53%	288,883	99.26%	98.63%	34
(JL) JAL	5	82.82%	206,904	99.33%	99.75%	34
(AZ) Alitalia	6	81.87%	150,484	99.08%	96.21%	30
(AF) Air France	7	81.15%	246,843	99.19%	99.75%	41
(EK) Emirates	8	81.02%	184,095	99.86%	98.31%	33
(KE) Korean Air	9	80.30%	150,369	99.34%	98.80%	30
(SK) SAS	10	79.90%	197,074	96.65%	99.77%	31

Summary of Top Performers

Total Flights
3,048,809

Total Tracked Flights
98.99%

Total On-Time Arrivals
82.92%

Why OTP Matters

According to Mike Malik, Chief Marketing Officer, Cirium, in recent years, it has become clear that achieving world-class customer satisfaction and product differentiation is about more than just airfare discounts and flight availability. When choosing who to fly, savvy travellers also now consider airline OTP and operational reliability. ‘Airlines don’t always get the credit they deserve for delivering such a complex product. Ensuring a seamless customer experience requires vast effort around the clock by a dedicated ‘army’ of ground staff, flight crew, cabin crew, engineers, ground service agents and many more companies within a vast supply chain. They also have to contend with many factors beyond their control, such as inclement weather and air traffic control issues,” he says.

The 2019 Review also reveals that in the Asia Pacific region, ANA takes the top spot in both mainline and network airline categories, and Singapore Airlines achieves second place in the mainline airline category, followed by Thai AirAsia, JAL and Korean Air. India’s GoAir takes the tenth spot in APAC’s mainline airlines category.

The On-Time Performance Review - Asia Pacific (Mainline) - 2019

	On Time Ranking	On-Time Arrival	Total Flights	Comp Factor	Tracked Flights	Avg Delay Mins
(NH) ANA	1	86.26%	202,476	99.08%	99.92%	32
(SQ) Singapore Airlines	2	85.57%	91,629	99.99%	96.43%	31
(FD) Thai AirAsia	3	83.74%	142,885	99.95%	94.41%	24
(JL) JAL	4	82.82%	206,904	99.33%	99.75%	34
(KE) Korean Air	5	80.30%	150,369	99.34%	98.80%	29
(NZ) Air New Zealand	6	79.53%	78,666	99.20%	96.41%	31
(MH) Malaysia Airlines	7	78.98%	119,871	99.11%	96.20%	33
(AK) AirAsia	8	78.30%	226,116	99.92%	94.39%	35
(VA) Virgin Australia	9	77.45%	148,724	98.45%	92.12%	29
(G8) GoAir	10	76.94%	99,924	99.39%	97.09%	42

Summary of Top Performers

Total Flights
1,467,564

Total Tracked Flights
96.55%

Total On-Time Arrivals
80.99%

Key issues that will impact OTP

- Weather
- Ground operations issues
- Boarding
- Security processing
- Computer glitches
- Waiting for connecting passengers
- Crew operations
- Growth in air travel to result in greater congestion at airports with more planes and more passengers

Global airports

The On-Time Performance Review also tracks the on-time performance of airports, and has named Russia’s Sheremetyevo International Airport (SVO) the most on-time airport globally and among large-sized airports with 95.01 per cent on-time departures. As for medium-sized airports, Kaohsiung International Airport (KHH) in Taiwan topped the list with an on-time departure performance of 93.32 per cent, while Thailand’s Koh Samui Airport (USM) was the most on-time small airport with an on-time departure performance of 95.08 per cent.

Cirium On-Time Performance Review 2019 - Airports

Category	Airport
Global Airports	1. (SVO) Sheremetyevo International Airport (95.01%)
	2. (CAN) Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport (92.52%)
	3. (PVG) Shanghai Pudong International Airport (91.04%)
Large Airports	1. (SVO) Sheremetyevo International Airport (95.01%)
	2. (PTY) Tocumen International Airport (93.41%)
	3. (CAN) Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport (92.52%)
Medium Airports	1. (KHH) Kaohsiung International Airport (93.32%)
	2. (BMA) Bromma Airport (91.73%)
	3. (TSA) Taipei Songshan Airport (89.49%)
Small Airports	1. (USM) Koh Samui Airport (95.08%)
	2. (LIH) Lihue Airport (91.28%)
	3. (NGS) Nagasaki Airport (90.70%)

The future of OTP

While innovations such as Artificial Intelligence or biometrics screening are improving passenger movement, opportunities available for airlines and air traffic control to more efficiently manage aircraft flow into airports through real-time arrival management and advance coordination with ground traffic control

“In 2020, we believe there will be renewed interest in the way OTP is measured and how airlines and airports are categorised. It is time to have a debate on how to improve these measures. If we are able to create an equalised basis of measurement, the results may surprise everyone”

Mike Malik

is also a huge advantage. The biggest improvement to OTP and efficiency in the short term would be to use data from all parts of the operation in one presentation layer. This allows airlines to make better decisions even if they’re not ready for advanced decision support solutions.

2 new hotels in Bengaluru

Twenty14 Holdings, the hospitality investment arm of LuLu Group International, is developing two properties in Bengaluru that will open in 2020 and 2021, respectively.



Hazel Jain

As its name suggests, Twenty14 Holdings was established in 2014 and aims to become a billion-dollar investment company by 2025. It is an asset-heavy hospitality investment arm of LuLu Group International and already has a few properties operating in different parts of the world. It is now planning to expand further in India



Adeeb Ahamed
Managing Director
Twenty14 Holdings

The two Bengaluru properties are at a combined investment of up to ₹800 crore, Ahamed reveals, while the one in Kochi was at an investment of ₹52 crore. "We are looking to expand in India and are in final stages of negotiations for other projects across the country. We are looking at one resort property and one hill station property, but we haven't finalised yet. We are also looking at Dharamshala and Hyderabad," he shares.

The company takes up Greenfield, brownfield, as well as ready-asset projects. Its retail arm owns the Lulu Convention Centre next to Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty. "We soon want to be a billion-dollar investment company. We hope to have 50 per cent of our assets allocated in Europe and the rest will be spread across the Middle East and India," Ahamed adds.

"We are looking to expand in India and are in final stages of negotiations for other projects across the country"

and is looking for appropriate hospitality partners. Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, Twenty14 Holdings, says, "We currently have three projects in India, one of which is already operational – the first Tribute Collection by

Marriott called Port Muziris in Kochi. The other two are brownfield projects under development in Bengaluru – one is near the airport and the other is in Electronic City. One of them will be ready by 2020 and the other by Q1 2021."

More routes & capacity

Air Seychelles will not only increase its Mumbai service to daily during the peak summer months, but also add capacity with a new A320neo and may also add Delhi to its network.



Hazel Jain

"The India market has been performing very well," says Remco Althuis, Chief Executive Officer, Air Seychelles, who was in Mumbai recently to celebrate the airline's fifth anniversary of the route launch between Seychelles and Mumbai, with its travel trade partners. It was also the one-year anniversary of its codeshare



Remco Althuis
Chief Executive Officer
Air Seychelles

"We are studying the Delhi route as the A320neo does allow two hours of additional flying time"

with Air India. Jetair is their GSA in India.


He also announced additional route and capacity upgrade on this route. "In 2020, Air Seychelles will increase its services to India from six

flights per week to daily flights during the peak summer months to cater to increased traffic. We will also get our second A320neo by the end of March 2020, so all flights will use new aircraft," Althuis adds. The national airline of

the Republic of Seychelles received its first Airbus A320neo in August 2018, which increased capacity by 32 seats.



Not just this, the airline is also looking at other routes. Althuis shares, "We are studying the Delhi route as the A320neo does allow two hours of additional flying time and our codeshare partner Air India does have more network at Delhi airport. But, we need to look at demand and the average fares need to compensate the extra two hours of flying. We are looking at what is possible there. We also see a lot of labour and diaspora traffic from Chennai."


The Mumbai-Seychelles service is being operated on the new Airbus A320neo aircraft consisting of 12 Business Class and 156 Economy Class seats.




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Trade lets its hair down

Creating Synergy amongst Travel Fraternity (CSTF) and Yaar Beli recently organised a bash for the travel trade in New Delhi, where the who's who of the industry gathered to network and enjoy as a community, as they relished delectable food, the choicest of drinks, and some soulful music.



'Complete' sites for Buddhism

Ministry of Tourism is focused on promoting the Buddhist circuit in India, a segment that holds immense potential. The Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (ABTO) and participants at the International Buddhist Travel Mart in Bodh Gaya provide insights on this potential and challenges of Buddhist tourism.



JP Shaw
President
ABTO

“We want sensitisation and awareness created among the people of this destination, and other stakeholders, on the importance of tourism in the Buddhist sector. Participation from numerous countries like Nepal, Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Taiwan, among others, will go a long way.”



Kaulesh Kumar
Secretary General
(Founder), ABTO

“While there is huge potential in Buddhist tourism, we just need to intensify our efforts to promote it. There is a need to generate new markets to promote Buddhist tourism. We want to share with the world about the Diamond Triangle of Udayagiri, Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri, which can be a life-line for tourists and Buddhists of different countries.”



Ravindra Panth
Senior Advisor
ABTO

“Only the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya is a living heritage site, while others come under the purview of ASI. If the sites are converted into living heritage sites, people will be able to carry on their rituals and meditation without restrictions and tourism will definitely grow.”



Vinod Zutshi
Former Secy, Department
of Tourism, GOI

“Buddhist tourism can be promoted under four relevant segments that include pilgrimage; educational tours; heritage tourism for those who'd like to understand Buddhist culture some more; and spiritual tourism for those seeking it within India. These are the four segments that need to be marketed.”



Ravi Bankar
Founder
Genesis Leisure Consulting

“The Buddhist circuit is essentially characterised by 'package tourism', where anywhere between 80-90 per cent of the tourists come on group packages. Since itineraries are controlled by tour operators, elements like tour guides, ground handlers or local transporters, and local travel agents do not benefit when they need to.”



Lama Lopzang
Founder, International
Buddhist Confederation

“The maximum number of people coming here from all over the world is for pilgrimage, while tourists come to seek and gain knowledge. We want more people to come here to see the heritage site of Buddha and seek blessings. Bodh Gaya, Rajgiri, Varanasi, Kushinagar, and Lumbini are some important places.”



Bikram Pandey Kaaji
Goodwill Ambassador
Nepal

“What I am trying to work for is cross-border tourism, with an innovative package called 'Great Renunciation'. Gautama Buddha left behind his luxurious life, on a white horse – Kanthaka – in search of truth. We could have a tour where all tourists ride a horse from the palace in Kapilavastu, near Lumbini, and begin the circuit tour.”



Kiran Lama
Secretary, Daijokyo Buddhist
(Japanese) Temple

“We have an 80-foot Buddha statue here, adjacent to the temple. Pilgrims from all over Southeast Asia, Europe, America, and Russia also visit in large numbers during the pilgrim season. Tourism also plays an important role and so, interesting packages should be made so that people come to these sacred places through tourism.”



VDK Dhammarantana
Chief High Priest, Ti-Ratana
Welfare Society

“For Buddhism and Buddhists alike, four places are extremely important – the birthplace of Lord Buddha, where he attained enlightenment, where he gave his first sermon, and the place he passed away at. Buddhists, at least once in their lifetime, must visit these four places and pay their respects.”



Shih Lien Hai Master
President, Worldwide
Buddhist Dev. Association

“Lord Buddha is the main teacher for all the different sects of Buddhism all over the world, and that is why we all come here to Bodh Gaya. In my opinion, the Indian government should play a bigger role in encouraging them and people from all over the world to come here. Infrastructure, connectivity, and other facilities need to be developed.”



Manvir Singh Thakur
General Manager
Oaks Bodh Gaya

“In order to encourage more people to visit Bodh Gaya, we need good connectivity and transport facilities. It's important to encourage hygiene and cleanliness and develop places. We are a part of the Minor group of hotels, an international chain, and have more than 552 properties around the world. This is our first project in India.”



Menik R Wakkumbura
Lecturer – Faculty of Arts,
University of Colombo

“Over a period of time, Sri Lankans have increasingly become keen to visit Bodh Gaya because of its religious significance. The main challenge, however, to get to the destination is lack of good air connectivity. If connectivity is improved and travel is made comfortable, a lot more tourists would want to visit.”

Inputs by Kanchan Nath



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Mumbai's send-off to 2019

This New Year party was off the charts as the travel trade fraternity in Mumbai converged at London Taxi, Khar, to bid 2019 goodbye and welcome 2020. Organised by **Ajay Chhabria, Vinayakk Laud, Rishabh Shah, Vikram Kajaria** and **Jyot Jhaveri**, the event also gave away prizes to the best-dressed male and female.



Stable govt good for tourism

Can a stable government promote tourist traffic into India? This, many feel, is the key to India tourism's troubles. The industry largely believes that recent policy amendments and strengthening of relations with other countries have actually helped boost numbers to India. Inder Raj Ahluwalia finds more...



Subhash Goyal
Chairman
STIC Travel Group

“The Prime Minister is aware of tourism's multiplier earning effect and gains, and has initiated good measures. The GST levied on five-star hotels has been reduced, visa fee has been reduced, and relations with neighbouring countries have also improved. That said, India's heightened image in the international arena also helps boost tourism to the country.”



Capt Swadesh Kumar
President
ATOAI

“A stable government at the helm of affairs will provide a boost to the Indian tourism industry. The needs of the hour are to promote our natural heritage, which comprises mountains, forests, rivers, etc., and also to facilitate ease of doing business. A stable government will enable both these key issues to get more attention now, and this will have a positive effect.”



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President
IATO

“A stable government will provide eco-political equilibrium, label India as a preferred destination, offer a boost to long-term planning, and build confidence among stakeholders of tourism, thereby ushering in augmented flow of tourist traffic. Decision-making will become more prompt and strategic, which will augur well for tourism.”



Vijay Thakur
President
India Vision Tours & Travels

“The return of a stable government makes its role more responsible in terms of building good road and communications infrastructure, curbing corruption, and creating a safer destination. The government must adopt aggressive tourism marketing strategies aimed at overall promotion of the destination. It must also look into lowering taxes on tourism.”



Lajpat Rai
Chairman & Managing Director,
Lotus Trans Travels

“I am very optimistic about the current scenario and feel that the perception of India as a destination will change. With the country's image improving, so will its status as a tourist destination. Tourist traffic into the country will increase steadily. Indications suggest that the growth of tourism into India will be more from the ASEAN and BIMSTEC regions.”



Homa Mistry
Chief Executive Officer
Trail Blazer Tours

“A stable government is beneficial to the industry. The world's tallest statue has started attracting many domestic and international tourists. The largest convention centre in the world, near Dwarka, will bring in some of the biggest conferences and conventions to India. Airports at smaller cities are connecting new destinations.”

More interline signings

Having restarted its non-stop Mumbai-New York JFK service from December 24, 2019, Delta Air Lines is looking at signing more interline agreements with Indian airlines.



Hazel Jain

Delta Air Lines recently made news by restarting its first non-stop flight from Mumbai to New York on December 24, 2019, making it India's only non-stop 16-hour flight between the two hubs.

Jimmy Eichelgruen, Director Sales for Africa, Middle East and Indian Subcontinent, Delta Air Lines, was in Mumbai recently to announce



Jimmy Eichelgruen
Director Sales for Africa, Middle East and Indian Subcontinent, Delta Air Lines

agreement with Vistara in December 2019. Eichelgruen said, “We are looking at other Indian airlines for interline agreements. As far as codeshare is concerned, we will first develop and establish our interline agreements with Indian airlines and once they progress and are stabilised, we will explore codeshare with them which allows airlines to share flight codes. But, of course, it has to work for us at various stages.”

In fact, Delta, through its transatlantic partners Air France-KLM and Virgin Atlantic, had deep commercial ties with Jet Airways which stopped flying since April. Delta also owns 49 per cent stake in Virgin Atlantic. Delta Air Lines has also recently completed its purchase of a 20 per cent stake in LATAM for \$2 billion. Moreover, Delta Air Lines and Korean Air have a joint venture partnership on transpacific routes that was signed in May 2018. 🇮🇳

“We will first develop and establish our interline agreements with Indian airlines and then explore codeshare with them”

this. These are 14 flights per week. The airline used to fly daily non-stop flights to India between 2006 and 2009 and changed it to a one-stop flight via Amsterdam until 2015. Eichelgruen said the airline would review the New York-Mumbai flight before adding more. It completes

25 years of catering to the India market.

The airline has an existing interline agreement—one in which a passenger on the itinerary of one airline can travel on its partner airline's flight—with Air India and has just established an interline

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NYC & Co Sales Mission	Mumbai	13-15
ONYX Hospitality Sales Mission	Delhi	17-18
Aviation Festival Asia	Singapore	18-19
ONYX Hospitality Sales Mission	Kolkata	19
ONYX Hospitality Sales Mission	Mumbai	20
IITM	Kolkata	21-23
Reunion Island Destination Training	Chennai	24
Reunion Island Destination Training	Bengaluru	26
Reunion Island Destination Training	Mumbai	28

MARCH 2020

ITB	Berlin	4-8
OTOAI Convention	Antalya, Turkey	15-18
MITT	Moscow	17-19
Global Aerospace Summit	Abu Dhabi	17-1
Global Hospitality and Tourism Conference on Experiential Management and Marketing	Shillong	18-20
Rendez Vous En France- Atout France	Nantes, France	19-29
IITE	Bhubaneswar	20-22
IT&CM China	Shanghai	24-26
UITT 2020	Kyiv, Ukraine	25-27
WTM Latin America	Sao Paulo	31-April 2
PATA Annual Summit 2020	Ras Al Khaimah	31-April 3

APRIL 2020

COTTM	Beijing	1-3
WTM Africa	Cape Town	6-8
Kazakhstan International Exhibition	Almaty	14-16
ITB India	Mumbai	15-17
GITB	Jaipur	19-21
Arabian Travel Market (ATM)	Dubai	19-22
Digital Travel Summit APAC 2020	Sentosa	20-22
International Conference on Sustainable Tourism	Kolkata	24-25
International Conference on Rural Tourism	Dehradun	24-27

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

HRANI hotels now on IRCTC

Hotel & Restaurant Association of Northern India and IRCTC have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which HRANI's hotel members would list their room rate and inventory on IRCTC's portal.



Nisha Verma

The aim of the MoU signed between HRANI and IRCTC is to promote domestic tourism and reduce the customer acquisition cost. The MoU was signed in the presence of MP Mall, Chairman & Managing Director, IRCTC; Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, HRANI and Vice President, FHRAI; Amarvir Singh, Hony. Secretary, HRANI; Garish Oberoi, Treasurer, HRANI and Renu Thapliyal, Secretary General, HRANI, as well as leading hoteliers.

Speaking about the MoU, Jaiswal said, "With this MoU, we can pass the maximum benefit and better destinations to tourists, allowing them to get a clear picture." Mall echoed the sentiment and added,



"We are going for the lowest commission in the industry and at the same time, keeping ourselves viable and sustainable." Under the partnership, IRCTC will facilitate the hotel members of HRANI for the listing of their room rate and inventory on IRCTC booking engine portal, promoting domestic tourism and reducing the customer acquisition cost. IRCTC will offer 10 per cent commission from

"With this MoU, we can pass the maximum benefit and better destinations to tourists, allowing them to get a clear picture"

Surendra Kumar Jaiswal

the member unit of HRANI and its members will also get 50 per cent discount on a one-time integration charge of ₹ 20,000 (plus taxes). Individual mem-

bers need to pay an amount of ₹ 10,000 (plus taxes) for integration on the booking portal of IRCTC. Six to eight hotels are already onboard.

ADTOI convention in Bhopal

The Association of Domestic Tour Operators of India (ADTOI) will host its 10th convention in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, in the first week of April. The new year continues to look promising for them.



Nisha Verma

ADTOI has announced that its 10th convention will take place in Bhopal in April 2020, with the support of Madhya Pradesh Tourism. Chetan Gupta, Hony. General Secretary, ADTOI, said, "The final dates of the convention have not been decided, but it will be held in the first week of April. The venue of the convention will be Minto Hall, Bhopal, and other details regarding the same will follow soon."



Chetan Gupta
Hony. General Secretary
ADTOI

"The venue of the convention will be Minto Hall and other details will follow soon"

He added that 2019 was a great year for ADTOI. "We have done many things for members of the association, as well as for the industry. Year 2020 is also looking very promising," he said.

Talking about other plans, he shared, "We are planning to host

an only-women Fam tour, which our EC member Ekta Watts is looking after. Apart from this, we are also planning to host a family day, which would be held in February or March. We are eagerly waiting to organise new events for members and also take initiatives for the members' benefit."

Singapore experience in Delhi



Singapore Tourism Board (STB) recently partnered with Zomato to bring the Singapore Food Experience to New Delhi as part of Zomaland Season 2, a multicity food and entertainment carnival across 10 cities. This association is an integral part of STB's efforts to engage with foodies through the showcasing of Singapore food and experiences.



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INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

Gurugram

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has appointed **Sudeep Jain** as Managing Director, South West Asia (SWA). In the new role, he will take on a broader leadership agenda to drive IHG's business in the region, covering both development and operations responsibilities across the existing portfolio of 39 hotels representing five brands: InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas. Jain will continue to be based in Gurugram and will report to Pascal Gauvin, MD, India, Middle East and Africa, IHG.



THE TRAVEL CORPORATION

Chennai

S Subramanian has been appointed as Director of Sales for The Travel Corporation for South India. In this role, he would be managing sales for various TTC brands like Trafalgar, Contiki, Insight Vacations, Uniworld, etc. He carries over 22 years of work experience in the hospitality and travel segments, and has previously been associated with renowned brands like The Residency group of hotels, MakeMyTrip, and Cox and Kings. His longest stint was with MakeMyTrip where he was spearheading retail and distribution for South India. Prior to joining The Travel Corporation, Subramanian was managing sales and operations for South India.



THE TRAVEL CORPORATION

Mumbai

Harshali Darpel has joined The Travel Corporation as Assistant Director of Sales for premium & luxury brands of Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold. She has a strong 15-year experience in the travel industry, having worked across its different segments such as airlines and cruises, including MSC Cruises and Cruise Professionals. Darpel has been a part of the cruise industry for about a decade, driving sales for experiential, luxury and adventure cruises around the world. Her extensive experience will be of great benefit to the new role.



DESTINATION WEAVERS

New Delhi

Pankaj Hingorani is the Director at Destination Weavers, a well-knitted DMC operating in the Indian subcontinent, specialising in travel not just to India, but to Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal and the Maldives as well. He began his career in the hospitality, meetings and events industry with a leading travel company at the time, and has an experience of 24 years in the industry. Before launching his own venture, Destination Weavers, Hingorani was part of the start-up team at Destinos.



MBD GROUP

Delhi-NCR

Parmeet Singh Nayar has been appointed as Vice President - Operations and General Manager Hospitality at MBD Group. In the new role, he will support the growth of MBD Hospitality in the Indian market, while overseeing the performance of the group's hotels in the region, including Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida and Radisson Blu Hotel MBD Ludhiana. Prior to joining MBD Group, Nayar held various managerial positions across international hotel chains including Shangri-La and Hilton.



AMRITARA SADKA

Amritsar

Gursharan Sandhu has been appointed as Hotel Manager at Amritara Sadka. With more than 16 years of experience in the industry, he has worked across several international destinations, including Dubai, Germany and Kuwait, specialising in the pre-opening of luxury properties such as Burj al Arab, Mina Al Salam, and Ramada by Wyndham. Sandhu will work towards boosting revenue and managing sales among other responsibilities, in the new role at Amritara Sadka, the group's first city-based hotel and located walking distance from Golden Temple.



SHRI VALLABH VILLAS LORDS PLAZA

Nathdwara, Rajasthan

Arun Singh Rathore has been appointed as General Manager at Shri Vallabh Villas Lords Plaza in Nathdwara, Rajasthan. While Rathore spent his initial days at Taj Hotels, Jaipur, as a Front Office Executive, prior to joining Lords, he was associated with St. Lauren Hotels, Ahmedabad, as General Manager. In the new role, he will be responsible for achieving new milestones and also overseeing all operational and commercial aspects of Shri Vallabh Villas Lords Plaza, which offers tastefully appointed accommodation and exquisite banquet facilities to its guests.



RADISSON BLU PLAZA HOTEL

Banjara Hills, Hyderabad

Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel Hyderabad Banjara Hills has appointed **Geetanjali Grover** as the new Marketing Head. She brings with her over 11 years of marketing communications experience with reputed hospitality brands like The Imperial New Delhi, SUJAN luxury hotels, and Jaypee hotels. She was the launch strategist for international hospitality clients like Whitbread UK's Premier Inn Goa - now Fairfield by Marriott, and Silver Heritage Hong Kong's Tiger Palace Resort Nepal. International exposure will help Grover spearhead marketing initiatives.



RENAISSANCE CONVENTION CENTRE HOTEL & MARRIOTT APARTMENTS

Mumbai

Bjorn Fernandes has been appointed as Director of Sales and Marketing for Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel and Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments. In the new role, he will be responsible for driving core sales, creating relationships, promoting brand strategies, and creating the best experience for all guests. Prior to this, Fernandes was Market Director of Revenue Management - Mumbai Cluster for Marriott International.



Spot the difference

Can you identify the five differences between the two photos?



In the photo: The Great Reno Balloon Race, Nevada, USA. This is the world's largest free hot-air ballooning event. From its humble beginnings in 1982 with just 20 balloons, The Great Reno Balloon Race has taken flight with up to 100 balloons each year. It has an average of 120,000 spectators attending the event annually.

Ans: (Clockwise from left) 1. Multicoloured balloon 2. Black & white spotted balloon in background 3. River in bottom-right corner 4. Shadow of trees in centre bottom 5. White tent towards left corner

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Two million tourists for 2020

Visit Nepal 2020 is Nepal Tourism Board's latest campaign that aims to attract as many as 2 million visitors this year. Better infrastructure, international hotels, and a new airport are all efforts in the direction.



Vartik Sethi from Kathmandu

After the New Year's celebratory night, Kathmandu woke up to a new mission set by its tourism ministry. With Visit Nepal 2020, Nepal introduced its theme, Lifetime Experiences, to offer tourists with spiritual, religious, luxury, and cultural tourism. The launch of the campaign on January 1 took place at a glittering ceremony alongside Ministerial Conclave 2020. The event hosted cultural performances by skilled bagpipers, students, and dancers. It also honoured Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh communities that find their dwelling in Nepal. The country received global support as dignitaries from Indian, Jamaican, Chinese, and Bhutanese tourism ministries graced the inauguration of the campaign with their presence.

Designating 2020-2030 as the tourism decade, **Yogesh Bhattarai**, Minister of Culture,

us," exclaimed Bhattarai, speaking at the successful launch of the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign. He added, "We are going to open a new airport in Lumbini, which is very close to the birthplace of

of a very strong brand, Mount Everest," said the officiating CEO of Nepal Tourism Board, **Nandini Lahe Thapa**. Nepal wants to change its image to one where travellers could have unforgettable lifetime experiences. Thapa believes that Nepal has a lot more to

with the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign, which will help highlight the unexplored treasures it has to offer, including wildlife, culture, heritage, and festivals.

Deepak Raj Joshi, former CEO, Nepal Tourism Board,



Lord Buddha. We will start its operations in May 2020." The new airport is expected to be a gateway for Buddhist tourists to the region. Bhattarai, in his speech, impressed upon his aim to increase foreign tourist spend from

offer than just mountains, and that is what the board is trying to establish.

With India being the biggest source market for Nepal, the Nepalese tourism ministry is strongly inclined to partnering with the Indian government. Thapa added, "We are talking to the Indian government, as we want to sell the Buddhist circuit and the Hindu circuit in India and Nepal as a joint destination which travellers could cover together."

said, "We have market-specific strategies to target the Indian traveller. One can enjoy a variety of experiences in Nepal, as the country has beguiling, but lesser-known destinations such as Pokhara that reside right under the lap of the snow-capped Annapurna mountain range that offers breathtaking views." The former CEO also discussed the four segments in the Indian market – pilgrimage, leisure, weekend breaks, and MICE – that would make the bulk of the ministry's focus. While luxury and MICE are new developments in Nepal, hospitality chains like Marriott, Hyatt, and Hilton have introduced their brands to the Nepalese market. "Not only that, specialised boutique segment of hotels are also completing their projects in 2020," Joshi shared. 📌

“We are talking to the Indian government, as we want to sell the Buddhist circuit and the Hindu circuit in India and Nepal as a joint destination”

Nandini Lahe Thapa

Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal, shared his vision to increase Nepal's tourism contribution to GDP from the current three per cent to as much as 10 per cent in the new decade. "India and Nepal enjoy many similarities like language, culture and religion, which makes the former a very important market for

\$44 to \$80 (per person, per day) and bring in 3.5 million tourists every year by the 15th five-year plan.

An image makeover

Nepal, primarily known for its spiritual and religious tourism, is relentlessly working to develop various other offerings as well. "We are victims

Infrastructural support

In recent years, many international brands have set up their business in Nepal. "We request investors from India to look upon Nepal as a possibility," commented **Kedar Bahadur Adhikari**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Nepal. The country is hopeful to reinvent its image



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