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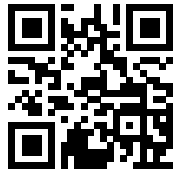
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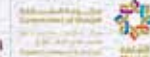
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WTM Award to GRNConnect

GRNConnect has won the prestigious TRAVTALK-WTM World Travel Leaders Award for having a positive impact on the tourism and hospitality industry in India. **Deepak Narula**, Managing Director, GRNConnect, shares details about the company's future readiness during such unprecedented times.

Nisha Verma

GRNConnect bagged the TRAVTALK - WTM World Travel Leaders Award at a virtual ceremony during WTM Virtual. An exhilarated **Deepak Narula** said, "Our business ground to a halt at the peak of the pandemic and we quickly started to rebuild our business for the future by identifying areas where we could make a difference to our suppliers and partners."



Deepak Narula
Managing Director, GRNConnect

Talking about challenges the industry is facing today and how they coped with the situation, Narula said, "We took



some initiatives to be future-ready. We started focusing on technology and products, whether it was on the supply side; or UI, UX etc.; or optimisation—we started working on it and the team supported a lot. One particular decision that went in our favour was that instead of suspending the entire sales team, we shifted

their focus on international markets. We identified around 100 markets globally and started focusing on those. We appointed exclusive partners in most of these markets, and are still in the process of appointing more agents. Out of these 100, we have exclusive partners in about 70-80 countries."

Sharing that the future of travel agents is bright, he said, "Retail travel and the

future of retail travel agents is very promising in India. All they have to do is to embrace technology. Also, they have to make it a one-stop shop." Narula also believes in giving back to society. "We continuously fund and support underprivileged girls from Delhi to work with us for a short period and get them jobs as well," informed Narula.

Talking about the future, he said that he is positive about 2021. 🐦

We shifted focus on international markets; we identified 100 markets globally

How credible is giving credit?

The travel & tourism industry has been surviving on credit for ages. However, the pandemic shook the sector and the way of doing business so much that the cash-strapped industry is now re-looking at its credit policies. Is this a long-term solution that is here to stay, or a short-term measure to tide over the crisis?

Nisha Verma

From the smallest of agents, niche tour operators and domestic players to B2B giants, everyone has been following a credit chain. Credit has been second nature to the industry but today, it is what has dented business most.

Why credit?

For many in the business, credit was a tool to get business, says **KD Singh**, Founder

& President, TravelBullz. "Credit has been the tool to acquire business for a lot of companies and often it was misused as a USP by some who have now suffered a lot due to the piling of bad debts. We haven't seen the industry learning from its experiences in the past and I don't see that changing too much, especially where a seller doesn't have any solid proposition or price discounting, and credit is the only tool for them to promote their products."



KD Singh
Founder & President, TravelBullz

Even **Pankaj Nagpal**, Managing Director, Travstarz Global Group, agrees, say-

ing, "Credit was a very important factor in the travel trade, especially in the corporate sector as well as the B2B segment."

Sharing that 90 per cent of business earlier happened on credit, **PP Khanna**, Director, Diplomatic Travel Point and President, ADTOI, says, "Mostly, corporates and embassy business happened on credit. Even if clients went for FIT trips, they used corporate accounts to get credit."



Pankaj Nagpal
MD, Travstarz Global Group

Where does credit stand today? Sharing that the lockdown caught everybody by surprise,

Deepak Narula, Managing Director, GRNConnect, says, "Credit also got stuck at different levels with airlines, hotels, aggregators and sub-agents. Everybody was holding onto money, and many might not even have money since everybody was stretching when good things were happening."

He shares that they had their own troubles as well. "However, we had good support

Contd on page 11 ▶



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‘No IATA for Jet Airways instantly’

Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, feels that getting the government to agree on RT-PCR testing is one of their biggest achievements. She also feels that Jet Airways should not be given IATA membership right away and seeks an update on pending refunds.

Nisha Verma

“One thing we have recently achieved is RT-PCR testing, which the government has now adopted,” reveals **Jyoti Mayal**, adding, “I think TAAI was the



only one pushing for it, since it was important to start tourism. Also, now they have agreed for no quarantine of any kind, which would also help. However, tourist visa has not opened, which when done, would boost tour-

ism further.” She says that they have also written to the government requesting them to make RTPCR testing free of cost. “It is very important to stimulate demand for tourism,” she believes.

Incentives for domestic tourism
With travellers being extremely cautious these days, Mayal suggests it is the time to push for family tourism and Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism, where people can be a bit confident to travel.

“However, to start tourism, government needs to incentivise right now. We need a format where we tell the world that they will get certain rebates to go to a place and that it is safe. Till now, the right message has not been passed to the public about the situation and it needs to be done,” she advises.

On Jet Airways...
After Jet Airways’ grounding, agents were supposed to only get eight per cent of their due amounts to the

We have asked IATA on how they have paid our members since not all have got 8% refund

airline from IATA. However, now the airline is coming back with new owners, and Mayal feels that they shouldn’t be immediately enrolled into IATA.

“We had an APJC meeting recently where we addressed this topic. We know

that it has now gone into insolvency and our money might not come back, as insolvency laws protect stakeholders more than the consumers. We have also asked IATA on how they have paid our members since not all of them have got eight per cent refund, but have it under different calculations. Hence, we have asked for a clarification from IATA. We have also written to MoCA and IATA, as we wanted to get this on record that in case of default by an agent, he is not allowed to become an IATA member again for a couple of years. Now the airline has gone for insolvency and we haven’t got our money back. Hence, Jet Airways should not be taken as an IATA carrier till the time we don’t know how they are working, what is their plan, and how it should be moving forward,” she asserts.



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TRAVTALK

VIEWPOINT

Time will stop for no one

From seeking financial aid to cope with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to appealing to the government to open borders and relax rules of travel, the past few months remind one of a tennis rally - the continuous shots between players on both sides. To meet the many demands and requests, the government and respective ministries have, time and again, formulated policies, opened borders, promoted new avenues of tourism, and allowed the re-opening of hotels and other accommodations, all the while encouraging people to travel, even if only domestically for the time being.

But, to truly hope for recovery of the sector and to facilitate the generation of revenue, it is important that even the travel trade play its part in supporting the government's efforts. How can it do this? By promoting the message of safety and hygiene, strictly following set protocols, and ensuring that it adheres to set norms. Governance is not just a function of policies and plans, but also one of adherence. It is vital that the trade be a contributor to the government's initiatives, providing its expertise and helping the government make decisions that are in line with the ground reality.

To turn the tide in their favour, the travel and tourism sector and its stakeholders must collaborate in areas that can truly uplift the sector. They must be a united voice not just in making their representations to the government, but also in working alongside the government for the revival of a sector that has much at stake. An altered relationship, one that is defined more by a partnership between the government and tourism sector, is the need of the hour. The industry must strategize and work in a way that shows it has put in every effort it could to survive the pandemic. Merely complaining, cutting losses and starting from scratch in a different field will not do the trick. Why start all over again when the government has provided every opportunity it could to the sector?

Not just that, people, too, are willing to travel and have shared this desire time and again. Humans must travel! It's an intrinsic need that will not cease to exist. Tourism may be the hardest hit by the pandemic, but it has the makings of an unmatched recovery.

Vistara & IndiGo tagged 'Safe'

While Air China leads on the Safe Travel Score for the Asia Pacific region by Safe Travel Barometer, India's Vistara and IndiGo airlines are also among the top 10 safest carriers in the region.



Hazel Jain

Safe Travel Barometer has announced an update (October 2020) to its Safe Travel Score for more than 230 airlines worldwide. The Safe Travel Score is an industry-first COVID-19 rating initiative created in the wake of recovery from the pandemic. For airlines, the Safe Travel Score is based on an independent audit of 26 traveller health and safety measures, along with



airlines, emerged as the leading airline in the region with a Safe Travel Score of 4.1 out of 5, having carried out various traveller health and safety initiatives. Air China was among the first carriers globally to resume domestic services after the COVID-19 outbreak grounded its

4.0 or above – the highest ratio worldwide. All carriers on the APAC leader board had a rating of 4.0 and above, including China Southern Airlines, Singapore Airlines and India's Vistara (4.1 each); Asiana, Cathay Pacific, EVA Air, Garuda Indonesia, Korean Air and Australia's



Virendra Jain
Co-Founder and CEO
Safe Travel Barometer

lers from choosing one airline over another."



While markets are steadily resuming domestic operations, capacity is far from reaching pre-COVID levels

traveller convenience initiatives, service excellence and overall traveller experience announced by airlines, regulatory and government authorities to alleviate traveller anxiety and boost confidence.

Air China, among Asia Pacific's (APAC) largest



fleet earlier in 2020. While the airline had basics covered such as mandatory face masks and sanitisers for passengers on their journeys, it also initiated fogging of the aircraft before or after every flight.

Initiatives of 72 airlines were evaluated across APAC, out of which 11 airlines (15 per cent) scored a Safe Travel Score of

Qantas Airways (4.0). Only one low-cost carrier made it to the APAC leaderboard – India's IndiGo (4.0). Each airline is undertaking major operational reviews to adjust to the new market realities.

Virendra Jain, Co-Founder and CEO, Safe Travel Barometer, says, "APAC is still battling the effects of COVID-19. While markets are steadily resuming domestic operations, few have also initiated international travel bubbles to facilitate repatriation and business travel. Yet, the capacity is far from catching up to the pre-COVID levels. A number of APAC airlines are matching their safety initiatives with the global best, but we also see some degree of normalisation returning to the airlines cancellations and rebooking policies, which could still deter travel-

Safe Travel Score – Global

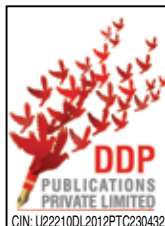
Airline	Safe Travel Score
Emirates	4.4
Ethiad Airways	4.3
Qatar Airways	4.2
Air China	4.1
Air France	4.1

Methodology

The Safe Travel Score methodology has evolved since it was first announced in August 2020. The process now assigns variable weights to all the initiatives, depending on their importance. These initiatives are assigned to one of the three sub-categories which in turn have differential weights assigned to them, basis upon their gravity in the traveller's decision-making and actual journey. The aggregated weights by sub-categories are rolled-up to arrive at the final Safe Travel Score. 🐦

Safe Travel Score - APAC

Airline	Country	Safe Travel Score
Air China	China	4.1
China Southern Airlines	China	4.1
Singapore Airlines	Singapore	4.1
Vistara	India	4.1
Asiana Airlines	South Korea	4.0
Cathay Pacific	Hong Kong	4.0
EVA Air	Taiwan	4.0
Garuda Indonesia	Indonesia	4.0
IndiGo	India	4.0
Korean Air	South Korea	4.0



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'Ensure that you don't perish'

On the to-do list for companies right now should be to focus on what needs immediate attention and ensure that they survive when they come out on the other side of the tunnel, says **Deep Kalra**, Founder and Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip.

Hazel Jain

Our earnings call for April-May-June 2020 showed that we went down 95 per cent. So, to all our investors I said, this is not an earnings call, it is the lack of earnings call!" said **Deep Kalra**, Founder and Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip, during his address at ITB Asia.

"You've cut a lot of variable costs since the pandemic hit and all you have are all the fixed costs. You have fundamentally made your P&L much lighter on the cost side, which is more in line with a lack of revenue. At a time like this, it's important to keep your team motivated. And secondly, how do you



Deep Kalra
Founder and Group Executive
Chairman, MakeMyTrip

keep them gainfully employed? The two are in fact very closely connected," Kalra said.

Sharing his own experience in doing that, he added that the company used the lockdown opportunity to address all the technology projects. "We focused on all those

projects that we call 'big, hairy, audacious projects' which were typically always pushed back because work came in the way – they kept getting pushed month on month and quarter on quarter. So everyone was now re-engineered and repurposed towards those projects. Our tech unification – the complete unification post the Goibibo transaction – had not been unified at the backend. This usually takes years, but we managed to complete that in a quarter and a half during the lockdown," he claimed.

Stay alive

Kalra advised all entrepreneurs, "You've got to learn very quickly how this is go-

ing to impact your business and how it is going to impact your people and your customers. You then need to figure out a plan which needs immediate action like cost cuts, what you need to do mid-term, where you will be in the long term, and

If we go back to our old ways, then we didn't learn much

therefore what you need to do for that. So, priority number one is, irrespective of knowing how long this crisis will last – because

this is like any other crisis – the first thing you have to do is stay alive when you come out on the other side. As a company, you have to ensure that you don't perish." This, he said, could be the biggest gift if we learn from the crisis. "The non-obvious one is how quickly you can get things done. How much can you focus on the very essential? I have to confess, it's been eye-opening for me to be able to focus on the most important things. It doesn't matter where your people are, just focus on getting the big stuff done, because that is what will make the real difference. If we go back to our old ways, then we didn't learn much," Kalra said.

Breaking News

- Kerala Tourism launches micro forest project in 22 spots
- Assam's Rupsi Airport ready for commercial flights: AAI
- 'Government must offer soft loan with low interest rate'
- 34% Indians say no to travel until vaccine is out
- Aloke Singh takes charge as new CEO of Air India Express
- Occupancy improved by 26% in Sept 2020: HVS ANAROCK
- IRCTC announces tour packages for Tejas Express
- Air India to operate additional flights to UK and France

Insurance for destination appeal

In COVID times, a travel insurance can be the hero when it comes to a destination's appeal. It is widely believed that it's a good idea for countries to offer insurance to travellers visiting them, and India should also take note of similar strategies when starting promotions in the international market.



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

"Insurance should be mandatory for international and domestic travel. I would recommend governments to have free insurance built in to promote tourism to their countries, inculcating confidence in the traveller and increasing footfalls. Travel consultants should guide their clients to take into consideration insurance cost when planning a trip. TAAI has been in dialogue with MoCA and MOT to make insurance compulsory, and let MOT be the primary policyholder."

"Many destinations have tied up with insurance companies to offer travel insurance to their visitors. However, the first challenge is to alleviate the fears in the minds of people and put them at ease with regard to hygiene measures being followed. That said, an insurance offered by the destination could be an added attraction, though that alone may not suffice. If India has to offer it, it has to assess cost incurred and possible income."



EM Najeeb
Senior VP, IATO



Mahendra Vakharia
MD, Pathfinders Holidays

"I am sure it will be a practical and critical service to offer by any destination, but only if the insurance cover is covering any expenditure incurred by the client at the destination if he/she has to quarantine, visit a doctor, undergo a COVID test, etc. Many insurance companies are still not clear on how and what will be covered in the existing policy for a client if affected by COVID. So, having a blanket cover will be a big inducer and influencer to consider the destination."

"A few destinations are offering insurance, and that's a good gesture. At the same time, it's a confidence-building exercise, sending across the message that the country is safe from COVID. This would give travellers the confidence that there is nothing wrong in the country and so these countries are coming forward and offering this. Hence, I think quite a few countries can do this. Passengers also have to be careful."



Riaz Munshi
MD, N Chirag Travels



Sandeep Dwivedi
COO, ITQ

"A travel insurance could explicitly add a level of security and comfort to the journey, even more when it comes from the destination of travel. Knowing that the destination you are travelling to is covering most of these uncertainties for a small premium should boost travellers' confidence. The insurance can cover travellers from any unexpected changes in policy or for any contingency. Such an insurance will be widely accepted."

Inputs by Nisha Verma

Intrepid is India rep for BTEA

The Bahrain Tourism and Exhibition Authority (BTEA) has assigned Intrepid Marketing & Communications to undertake all its trade, marketing, and communication initiatives across the country to establish Bahrain as Indian travellers' go-to short-haul destination.

Sunil Mathapati, Director, Intrepid Marketing and Communications, said, "The team is elated to work with BTEA and explore the 'new normal' of international travel. As travel restrictions are changed and lessened, we are working on expanding Bahrain's presence, stirring conversations around experiential travel and 'dream itineraries' around Bahrain. The Indian travel market remains promising as always; we want to position Bahrain as one of the most hype-worthy travel destinations."

A solid proposition for the trade

Thomas Cook India has a solid proposition for the travel trade in the form of new and innovative product offerings designed especially for these current times by their experts. Some exclusive products include Ramayana Trails, Krishna Trails, Hidden Gems of India, exclusive experiential holidays and air-inclusive deals.



Hazel Jain

More than 700 members of the travel trade across India logged in for the Thomas Cook India webinar aptly titled 'Making Money with Thomas Cook Assured' to learn about their new business opportunities with the 'Assured' programme, special domestic packages across the country designed by its experts as well as its



Mahesh Iyer
Executive Director & CEO, Thomas Cook (India)

Dubai and Maldives packages. The team at Thomas Cook India has worked tirelessly the last four to five

months to put together a solid proposition for its trade partners. Some exclusive products include Ramayana Trails, Krishna Trails, Hidden Gems of India, exclusive experiential holidays and air-inclusive deals. The webinar showcased a bouquet of offerings such as the Thomas

Cook 'Assured' programme – a unique initiative along with Apollo Clinics to provide the highest level of health safety to all customers who travel through Thomas Cook India.

Mahesh Iyer, Executive Director & CEO, Thomas Cook (India), said, "We have put together a holistic three-pronged approach – Assured, Insured, Secured."

Iyer added that as part of the Secured aspect, they offer flexible date changes and cancellations, and guaranteed accelerated refunds.



Romil Pant
Senior VP – Holidays, Thomas Cook (India)

"We have curated a wide range of domestic and short-haul holiday products with a very attractive commission structure for agents," he said. All those who attended the webinar session till the end were eligible for

₹2,000 worth of gift vouchers from Thomas Cook India. The session concluded with an exciting e-auction of a holiday package to Goa.

Romil Pant, Senior Vice President – Holidays, Thomas Cook (India), said, "Our Assured Travel Program is unique and we are the only ones in India who are offering something like this. We assure complete customer data confidentiality. We do not directly target any customer that has been sourced through a channel partner." 🐦

10-city roadshow

Thomas Cook India, in association with Accor and Marriott, organised India's first physical holiday roadshow since the lockdown across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Pune, Kochi, Jaipur and Baroda, on November 8, 2020. Holiday experts guided customers on elements including health and safety protocols, etc.

We have curated a range of domestic and short-haul holiday products with attractive commission

—Mahesh Iyer

IATA has announced that passenger demand in September remained highly depressed, as international passenger demand plunged 88.8% compared to September 2019, basically unchanged from the 88.5% decline recorded in August.

Regional carriers replacing capacity?

Varun Kumar, Team Leader – Consulting & Research at CAPA India, shares his views on whether the architecture of the airline model in India is poised for a change in light of the recent initiation of regional airlines into the market, and what would help bring about this segue.



Hazel Jain

Us the aviation model in India changing with more non-IATA/smaller/regional airlines coming up?

In India, regional aviation has always been a great business proposition on paper. However, in reality, it is extremely difficult to create a long-term sustainable business model for regional aviation in our country. In the past decade, carriers such as Air Mantra, Air Pegasus, Air Costa and Air Carnival ceased operations within a span of few years, with some not lasting beyond a year.

What would help the success of regional aviation?

The key fundamentals of re-



Varun Kumar
Team Leader – Consulting & Research
CAPA India

gional aviation model remain unchanged. The viability of a stand-alone regional airline stays challenging, unless it has sufficient funding and a strong leadership team with an understanding of regional aircraft and consumers. In addition, it is critical to have large-scale operations and a long-term strategy. Incentivisation in the form of funds under VGF (Viability Gap

Funding) and steps such as reduction in fuel tax and waiver of landing and parking charges at small airports may bring cost of operations down but revenue-side challenge remains.

Will subsidies help?

Most of the time, subsidies do not cover the entire cost and fare stimulation is difficult on such routes. The economies of scale are critical as they keep operating costs under control. Economies of scale can typically be achieved when an operator has 50-60 aircraft in five years. Therefore, it is important for a small regional player to be well-capitalised when starting operations. It should ideally have an equity capital of ₹150-200

crore. In addition, regional carriers must choose the right hub for viable regional operations to target markets with sustainable traffic and keep aircraft utilisation high.

Do you expect the aviation structure in India to change, and if yes, how?

The purpose of the regional aviation policy in India will

have to move beyond establishing connectivity between unserved and underserved markets. There must be an integrated ecosystem supported by local governments, tourism boards, the AAI and the hospitality industry. Full-scale success can only be achieved by integrating the transport and tourism policies. Air cargo could be the third priority area.

How does 2021 look for regional carriers?

Route Dispersal Guidelines are up for revision in 2021. There could be changes in the guidelines to give more flexibility to mainline carriers, thus allowing regional carriers to replace some capacity. 🐦

Full-scale success can only be achieved by integrating the transport and tourism policies

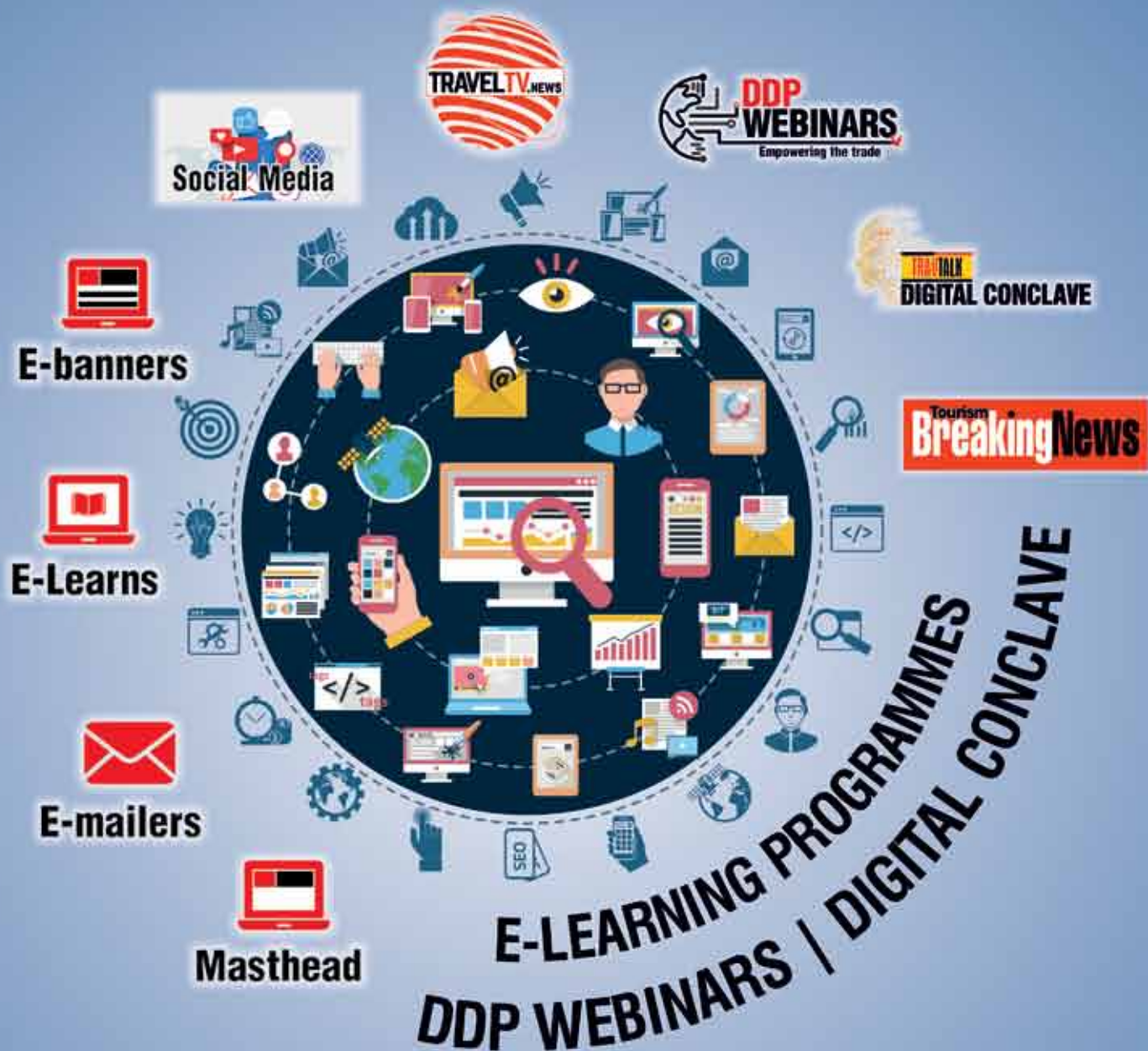
New regional airlines

A new regional airline, **flybig** plans to use a fleet of ATR 72s to connect remote parts of the country under the UDAN scheme. Its base would be Indore, from where it will connect Bhopal and Raipur, and later expand into markets such as Ahmedabad.

Another new regional airline, **Star Air**, started operations in January 2019 and is based at Kempegowda Airport. It operates in nine cities - Ahmedabad, Ajmer (Kishangarh), Belagavi, Bengaluru, Delhi (Hindon), Indore, Hubballi, Kalaburagi and Mumbai. It will commence direct flights between Kalaburagi and Delhi from November 18.



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Messages of inspiration from NZ

Tourism New Zealand's campaign 'Messages from New Zealand' shares a message to start a dialogue and create a connection with its international whānau (family), says **Steven Dixon**, Regional Trade Marketing Manager, Asia, Tourism New Zealand.



Hazel Jain

How do you plan to engage the trade in India?

With widespread travel restrictions and popular destinations closed, travel agents are now faced with extraordinary challenges. From this scenario, a different sort of marketing campaign has evolved from within our trade marketing department. 'Messages from New Zealand' presents the voices of New Zealand's tourism industry – a community experiencing similar trials – with messages of inspiration. With borders closed, we aim to keep New Zealand alive and fresh for travel agents and then, as we get closer to reopening, to help



Steven Dixon
Regional Trade Marketing Manager,
Asia, Tourism New Zealand

them convert their clients' desire to travel. 'Messages from New Zealand' are themed video vignettes from tourism operators in New Zealand speaking directly to travel agents.

We also hold monthly Virtual Road Trip webinars to keep agents updated on new products and regional news to build trade engagement

and increase our New Zealand specialists. We recently conducted Virtual Road Trip webinars for Christchurch and Canterbury and West Coast. This month we will be highlighting the stunning natural landscapes, inspiring arts, and delectable artisan produce at Nelson Tasman.

New Zealand has 'ambassadors' in India as well. How will that help keep the inspiration alive?

We have identified 'ambassadors' in each of our markets and have worked on the travel agents ambassador video series in India as well. The purpose is to build selling capability by having them share their tips and perspectives on why New Zealand is a great des-

ination in relation to each theme: Great Outdoors, Adventure and Adrenaline, Cultural Journeys, Taste New Zealand, Relaxation and Romance, Wildlife and Nature. We appointed three ambassadors for this videos series, Sunila Patil (Veena World), Rajeev Kale, (Thomas Cook India) and Deepti Mehta (MakeMyTrip India).



**100% PURE
NEW ZEALAND**

How can the travel agent benefit from being part of the TNZ specialist programme?

The '100% Pure New Zealand Specialist' programme is a free online training programme that has been designed to help travel agents increase their destination knowledge. Each new level of achievement will upgrade their status to Bronze, Silver or Gold where they can unlock a range of great benefits. Currently, we have a database of 2,032 agents in the NZSP programme of which 1,000 are in progress. Through Explore New Zealand Discount

Programme, New Zealand tourism businesses offer discounts to international travel agents visiting New Zealand independently. There are currently over 1,000 New Zealand offers. However, applications for this are not being accepted until further notice while the New Zealand border is closed. Once agents create an account (i.e. complete 10 online modules and are Bronze Specialists), they get an opportunity to create a listing on newzealand.com that can help grow their business by connecting with people considering a visit. 🐦

We will be highlighting the natural landscapes and arts at Nelson Tasman

A breath of fresh air post lockdown

'My first international travel after months of being locked down was like a breath of fresh air, and it was as safely conducted by all stakeholders involved as was humanly possible,' says **Mehernosh Colombowalla**, Director of Mumbai-based Beyond Borders Travel Management Company.

The world is slowly opening up in stages, with Dubai being the first to welcome tourists from India. Understandably, there is still some fear psychosis among travellers, of not being '100% sure' on the safety measures. So to build confidence among clients, some of my fellow travel agents and I decided to undertake a trip ourselves. The objective was not just to showcase to our clients and the world how well-prepared aviation, hospitality and the tourism sectors are, but also to experience it personally, for us to be able to convince our clients of the same.

We followed the new norms and had a very safe flight.



Dubai airport is extremely organised and is offering free COVID tests on arrival. We sailed through that and were out within 30 minutes of arrival! Within 24 hours we received a message about our results on our phones. It was 'Not Detected' – which is the case almost always as you've done your COVID test just

before departure from India as well. The hotel check-in was swift, the rooms were well-sanitised, and the hotel welcome was heartwarming. A special thank you to The Oberoi Hotel, The Mandarin Oriental, The Four Seasons Jumeirah Beach, The JA Oasis Residence and The Palazzo Versace for

their warm hospitality extended to us.

Activity as usual

Shopping in malls is as usual, the eateries are buzzing (the food menu can be scanned on your mobile), and the attractions are well-managed. We even did a seaplane adventure thanks to Sea Wings

Dubai. We enjoyed great food and drinks at night lounges which again had excellent safety arrangements. We felt completely at ease and very safe throughout the journey.

On return, the hotels arrange for the RT-PCR test to be done in the convenience of your room. Results come within 24 hours and you carry it with you on your way back to India. Our clients who follow us on our social media platforms are convinced of the safety measures, and we already have three confirmed bookings to Dubai for this month and multiple queries from clients! A personal experience is the best influencer when it comes to travel. Honestly,

the only difference between pre-COVID times and now was those fabulous designer masks that people wore! Dubai has the spirit – they've made the mask into a fashion accessory and they wear it with style to match their outfits. They don't consider it a piece of cloth plastered on your face with fear written all over your eyes.



Mehernosh Colombowalla
Director, Beyond Borders Travel
Management Company

(Views expressed are the author's own.
The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)

A personal experience is the best influencer when it comes to travel

Rules will get more stringent now

► Contd from page 3

from suppliers and agents. But, things are going to be much tighter in future because suppliers have become stringent — their terms have come down drastically; credit

Majority of our business is through prepaid agents and would continue

— KD Singh

period as well as credit limits have come down. Hence, accordingly, we are passing the same to our retail agents. We have also tightened our payment terms because we also have to pay in time or rather in a shorter period of time. Hence, the cascading effect is going to show in the market."

Khanna also will continue to give credit since they have clients dating back to 25-30 years. "Even for the 10-15 per cent business that has started, and whatever packages we have made, we are giving credit. However, it has not been extended to everyone, as we will see how loyal our corporates have been regarding payments in the past, making sure that our money will not be stuck. If we trust the client, we are giving credit for 15-20 days. In fact, some of our clients are so understanding that they are calling and making upfront

payments on their own. For clients who were delaying payments by 2-3 months, we have stopped credit."

For Singh, being selective has been the key. "We have been extremely selective in extending credits and mostly only against bank guarantees and deposits. Hence, survival was easier during the pandemic. A handful of customers were extended goodwill credit in addition to the deposits they had made based on their payment history. Majority of our business is coming through pre-paid agents and would continue to be so. Credit would not be easily available. However, to facilitate, we have now



PP Khanna
Diplomatic Travel Point and President, ADTOI

Agencies will take a decision in the same way a civil rating does before giving credit to customers

— PP Khanna

come up with collections in INR, so agents are able to pay on time before vouchers are generated in local currency and save on remittances. Credit would probably be available to extremely select groups of agents who have promptly made payments during the pandemic," he shares.

Guldeep Singh Sahni, Managing Director, Weldon Tours & Travels, believes that even getting credit from service providers will be based on



Deepak Narula
Managing Director, GRINConnect

Things are going to be much tighter in future because suppliers have become stringent

— Deepak Narula

reputation. "Those in ticketing are giving credit. The good thing is that people with good credit line are getting it, just like us, since we are not misusing it and are very particular about giving the same as well. From the beginning, we have been very particular about credit. We don't deal much with people who want to deal only in credit, barring the processing time of 6-7 days with corporates. We believe that once your policies are firm, the market is good for everybody. However, if you bog down in business giving credits, that customer also won't be good for you since he is only looking for credit and is not interested in your services. He can shift the moment he gets better credit."

Post the pandemic

Khanna expects things to change. "Now people don't have money owing to the lockdown and hence they are not able to give credit for long. Even if they do, they will give it to those who have been regular and want to maintain the relationship. Agencies and tour operators will take a decision in the same way a civil rating or credit score does before giving credit to customers. For many in the industry, money is already stuck with

airlines and hotels. They are not able to give credit to even loyal customers. Hence, it depends on individual businesses to take a call."

Nagpal adds, "Going forward, things might get stringent with more checks in place, but I don't think we will witness a sea change in the way business is conducted."

Sahni claims that while credit will be part of the system, the limit and the time span for the same will reduce now. "The number of days for credit will reduce, in fact it has already reduced. Today, we are telling people to give cash on delivery."

Agreeing, Narula says, "Working without credit will



Guldeep Singh Sahni
Managing Director
Weldon Tours & Travels

The number of days for credit will reduce, in fact it has already

— Guldeep Singh Sahni

be challenging. It's not possible to work without any credit, as everybody needs some time to check bills and pay accordingly. Hence, a limited period of credit period as well as a credit limit will be there in the market, but it's going to be much tighter than it was pre-COVID."

B2B scenario

Jitesh Poojari, Vice President — Business, Akbar Online, asserts that credit would be reduced post the pandemic in the travel industry. The un-



Jitesh Poojari
Vice President — Business, Akbar Online

Cash & carry LCCs are dominating our market; this is also one of the reasons for reduction in credit facility

— Jitesh Poojari

certainty in the cancellation policy has pushed all OTAs to reduce the credit exposure to travel agents. "LCCs that are purely cash-and-carry are dominating our domestic market with approximately 85 per cent market share. This is also one of the major reasons for reduction in credit facility."

Echoing a similar thought, Singh says, "We do see an impact on the credit squeeze by a lot of B2B operators, especially to agents who have treated supplier partners unfairly during this pandemic. However, in the same breath, there have been shining examples of companies that have earned respect in the way they managed their outstanding payments and made sure their dues were paid."

Sahni points out that while there are many types of B2B players in the market, agents would, in the future, work with those who have held their reputation and paid up in time, and the same will be the case when B2B agents would extend credit for agents. "Past reputation would be key," he says.

No unity in industry

Sahni advises that unless

the market becomes one, joins hands and decides on a credit policy, it is never going to stop. "Right now, I would have expected that credit would stop and people will be going online and paying by credit cards. However, agents are still offering credit and to get business, people will do such things. Those who want to survive will do anything and everything to get business," he adds.

Towards non-credit

While many are still giving credit, there are some who have made their own rules.

Sriharan Balan, Deputy Managing Director, Madura Travel Service, reveals, "As a company, we had transformed to a cash-and-carry



Sriharan Balan
Deputy Managing Director
Madura Travel Service

Credit limit for B2B can be extended up to IATA limits and not more than that

— Sriharan Balan

concept a while back and that saved us during the pandemic. I strongly advise all agents to either work on cash-and-carry or pre-payment for B2C. If every single agent follows this without any parity, then we can save our industry. Credit limit for B2B can be extended upto IATA limits and not more than that," he suggests.

For Poojari, investing in technology did the trick. "We believe that an agent requires the best technology and top-class service," he says.

Things might get stringent, but I don't think we will witness a sea change in the way business is conducted

— Pankaj Nagpal



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Indian travellers are resilient

Once travel restrictions are eased, travellers will look for destinations that are not too crowded, and the island of Ireland fits the bill perfectly! With social distancing as the new normal, self-drive tours will get popular as they are one of the best ways to experience scenic Ireland.



Hazel Jain

Tourism Ireland has been keeping the interest in the destination alive through the pandemic with trade and



Huzan Fraser Motivala
India Representatives
Tourism Ireland

consumer activities on virtual and social media platforms. Tourism Ireland India has been engaging with the trade through online trainings

and webinars to keep them updated about the offerings in Ireland so they can sell the destination once demand picks up. Sharing details about this is **Huzan Fraser Motivala**, India Representatives, Tourism Ireland, who says, "We have also been sending out newsletters updating the trade on Irish products and services, safety and hygiene guidelines. Tourism Ireland is undertaking a range of PR activities to keep the destination alive in the minds of the Indian traveller. On the cards is a tie-up with an Indian Netflix star who is currently in Ireland to create exciting digital content that we can promote. We are also looking at PR initiatives with

Given the demography and geography of Ireland, Indian visitors here will definitely increase in 2021-2022

— Huzan Fraser Motivala

a television channel which will feature Ireland content." Ireland's annual workshop, Meitheal and Meet The Buyer (MTB) 2020 could not take place in March 2020. Hence, Tourism Ireland conducted Virtual Meitheal and MTB for its global travel partners. Over 12 Indian trade

partners participated in the workshops and had over 1,200 meetings with the Irish industry. Sharing the numbers from India in 2019 and her expectations for 2021-2022, Motivala says, "In 2018, Ireland welcomed 40,000 Indian visitors and we expect this number has gone up by 15-20 per cent in 2019. In the post-COVID travel era, travellers will look for less populated destinations and given the demography and geography of the island of Ireland, we believe Indian visitors will definitely increase in 2021-2022." She believes that when the restrictions are lifted, Indians will definitely travel.

Speaking about activities that she thinks will appeal to



Beena Menon
India Representatives
Tourism Ireland

Indians after the pandemic, **Beena Menon**, India Representatives, Tourism Ireland, says, "For travellers looking to make a quick trip to Ireland, a dual city break (Belfast and Dublin) is a great idea. The world's longest, clearly-defined coastal self-driving route, the Wild Atlantic Way, is in Ireland and stretches across 2,500 kms. It is a sensational journey of

soaring cliffs and buzzing towns and cities, of hidden beaches and epic bays. We

For travellers looking to make a quick trip to Ireland, a dual city break (Belfast and Dublin) is a great idea

— Beena Menon

will continue to focus on our key target segments of leisure, self-drive, MICE, weddings, screen tourism and golf tourism." 🐦

What kills the virus?

Boeing and University of Arizona, in their study and tests, have found that all disinfection methods being adopted by airlines are indeed effective in killing the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19.



Nisha Verma

Boeing and University of Arizona have joined hands to study the effectiveness of cleaning solutions on aircraft virus, especially the COVID-19 or coronavirus. According to recent tests carried out by them, it was

on an unoccupied Boeing airliner, as part of the US aerospace giant Boeing Confident Travel Initiative (CTI). For the tests, MS2 bacteriophage ('bacteria-eating') viruses, which were provided by the University of Arizona, were used at high-touch locations throughout the cabin, since these are harmless to people

These areas were then disinfected using different products and technologies such as chemical disinfectants, antimicrobial coatings and ultraviolet (UV) light. After analysing the tests, Arizona University's Department of Environmental Sciences correlated the results with SARS-CoV-2 in a secure laboratory. **Mike Delaney**, Head, Boeing CTI, shared, "It was critical for us to evaluate and confirm that the chemicals and techniques we recommend for our customers' use are effective and battle-tested."

It was revealed that despite having different levels of effectiveness with various disinfecting products and methods tested, they were all effective in killing the virus. Boeing and the University of Arizona are continuing tests. 🐦



revealed that the cleaning methods that airlines are employing today are effective and do kill the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus that causes the disease. These first-of-their-kind tests were carried out

and are more difficult to kill than SARS-CoV-2. The MS2 bacteriophage were put at various places, including arm rests, seat cushions, seat tray tables, stowage bins and in the galleys and lavatories.

IndiGo first LCC to offer BSP

Starting November 2020, travel agents in notified markets can use IATA's Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP) when making bookings on the IndiGo website and Travelport GDS.



Manas Dwivedi

With the objective of increasing distribution and making the sales process seamless, IndiGo has begun accepting IATA -Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP) in overseas points

IndiGo ✈️

available in eight more overseas markets. IndiGo will also be the first Indian airline to provide this facility using IATA Financial Gateway (IFG).



William Boulter
Chief Commercial Officer, IndiGo

of sale, making it the first low-cost carrier (LCC) to offer the facility. To begin with, this facility is being offered in points of sale in United Arab Emirates, Qatar and the United Kingdom, and will soon be

William Boulter, Chief Commercial Officer, IndiGo, says, "We are pleased to enable the acceptance of IATA Billing and Settlement Plan to provide an enhanced yet simplified business experience to our travel partners. This facility will also allow us to expand our distribution reach to travel agents across 11 participating markets, starting with UAE, Qatar and the UK in the first phase, and then expanding to other markets. With this facility, we will continue to provide a hassle-free experience to

We continue to provide a hassle-free experience to our customers and business partners

our customers and business partners, while making the process more efficient and seamless." Travel agents who are keen to use BSP for sale of IndiGo tickets can get in touch with IndiGo account manager or the GSA office in relevant markets. 🐦

Meet and build business at GTS

The Gulf Travel Show is a virtual event scheduled to be held for two days – November 23 and 24 – to connect 40 sellers from across the global market with buyers seeking good business opportunities. Over the two days, visitors can attend specific sessions that will focus on new businesses and strategies.



Shehara Rizly

This is a unique opportunity that will enable Middle East sellers to meet with new partners from across the globe in the comfort of their home or office. Over the two days, visitors can attend specific sessions that will focus

that will provide an opportunity to walk away with great prizes as a winner, while also building new connections or revisiting some of the earlier clients and rekindle existing relationships.

Gulf Travel Show (GTS), with its proprietary software, will help you recover, rebuild



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

GTS redefines the way we promote travel and tourism, providing a platform to showcase how we are building on what we achieved during the COVID-19 planning for a stronger future post COVID-19. Through innovative solutions, GTS connects exhibitors and buyers worldwide under one virtual show to present their unique brands. It also offers opportunity for direct access to target markets, including one-on-one video meetings. Sharjah is inviting all the visitors to witness our natural attractions set against the latest tourism and hospitality projects.

We are really pleased excited to be Platinum sponsors for the Gulf Travel Show. This virtual platform gives us the opportunity to showcase Ras Al Khaimah as one of the fastest growing tourism destinations in the region. We look forward to connecting with our partners and re-introducing to them why Ras Al Khaimah is the perfect destination in the new normal era of travel. Ras Al Khaimah was the first city globally that was verified by Bureau Veritas and WTTC for the Safe Travel programme. We also offer free PCR testing to all departing international travellers.



Raki Phillips
CEO, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTA)



Dhananjay Regmi
CEO
Nepal Tourism Board

Since Gulf Travel Show is making an exclusive travel and tourism exposition on a digital platform with focus on the Gulf region, Nepal is partnering with it to promote and showcase its rich tourism products and activities in the Middle East market. Therefore, we believe this can be a useful platform to participate in this show. Nepal has several opportunities and activities that will be ideal for the Middle East traveller. Gulf Travel Show will be a platform for us to showcase the best of Nepal in the right light. We are excited to be participating in this one-of-a-kind virtual show.

Gulf Travel Show gives us an opportunity to remain connected with the travel trade amidst these unprecedented times. The travel industry has always borne the brunt of calamity, disaster or pandemic, be it 9/11 or the banking crisis. We are optimistic that business will return to normal. Despite challenges, KTO had continued to promote the destination and remain connected with its audience. We will distribute e-brochures, trade presentations and educate the trade on Korea. Korea is nowhere in the list of the top 75 infected countries.



Hyunsun Hong
Regional Director, MENA
Korea Tourism Organization



on new businesses or speak about new strategies, whilst taking time to pre-book appointments with the team. For sellers, there will be a host of interesting features that will definitely enhance their business potential. For buyers there will be specialised incentivised programmes

and innovate relationships and products. This is a virtual event that will help grow brands and build long-term profitable business connections. At a time when costs are curtailed, finding the right partner in a specialised event will be the way forward to promote business.



Yamina Sofo
Director, Sales & Marketing
German National Tourist Office

We have a special participation at the Gulf Travel Show which takes place from November 23 to 24, 2020. We will be taking part in interesting panel discussions. You can watch our videos and receive many informative and valuable information about destination Germany. The National Tourist Office has been working internationally to promote Germany as a travel destination for more than 60 years.

Gulf Travel Show is considered one of the important business platforms, especially during the COVID-19, where quality buyers can meet Malaysia hotels and tour operators for future business cooperation and partnerships. Malaysia pavilion will have representatives from Tourism Malaysia (Dubai & Jeddah offices), representatives from Malaysian hotel chains and tour operators. Malaysian partners will be showcasing their product and service updates.



Shahrin Mokhtar
Director, Tourism Malaysia – Dubai



Christos Demetriou
Regional Office Director GCC and Middle East Cyprus Tourist Office – Dubai

Cyprus' participation in Gulf Travel Show will offer us the chance to reconnect with the travel and tourism sector and reignite the tourism engine for a promising future. We will be able to present our plans for the post-pandemic period and present our strategy goals for the future of the destination. It will be a great opportunity to meet with old and new stakeholders of the industry and present the islands best-kept secrets. We will be able to discuss what will change in the sector.

We are excited to participate at Gulf Travel Show and explore business opportunities with the best of the hospitality trade present here. Roseate Hotels and Resorts offers a portfolio of ultrachic luxury hotels and resorts, each with a distinct experience, to guests. As one of the fastest growing 'Indian' luxury brands in hospitality with an established presence across India and Europe, we are also evaluating other opportunities in the market.



Kush Kapoor
CEO
Roseate Hotels and Resorts



Paul Wilson
Executive Vice President – Commercial
Cross Hotels & Resorts

The Middle East region has the highest spending expats and local markets that we wish to welcome back into our astonishing destinations in Bali, Thailand and Vietnam. We will showcase our entrepreneurial energy, the focus of the business, and why you should do business with us. This is the first big virtual event that we are attending. We hope to make new relations and create a need for the buyers' expectations.

The Gulf Travel Show gives us an opportunity to strengthen our existing partnerships and look out for new opportunities that will come our way at this networking event. This show also allows to us to maintain our presence in the region by giving us a chance to showcase the latest developments in Singapore. We aim to share the key initiatives that Singapore has taken to make travelling safe once the borders are open for international visitors.



Beverly Au Yong
Area Director, Singapore Tourism Board, Middle East

Flexible bookings are a must

With flexible cancellation and amendment policies in bookings being projected as the top criteria for travellers to take the plunge and book their travels, airlines and hotel brands are making sure to play to the tune. Brands share their revised policies with us as they prepare to welcome guests.



Nisha Verma

While airlines and hotel brands work to build traveller confidence through safety measures, another aspect that they are striving to ensure is flexible booking and cancellation policies.

ETIHAD

Neerja Bhatia, VP, Indian sub-continent, Etihad, shares, "If guests are scheduled to fly before March 31,



Neerja Bhatia
President, Indian sub-continent, Etihad

If guests are scheduled to fly before March 31, 2021, they can change their flight for free

2021, they can change their flight for free. Tickets must have been issued before December 31, 2020, and Standard Fare Rules apply. If guests opt for Etihad Credit, we'll reward them with up to US \$400 and up to 5,000 Etihad Guest Miles, and they can travel any time before October 31, 2021," she shares.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC

For Virgin Atlantic, their flexible booking policy gives as much choice as possible to customers, shares **Alex McEwan**, Country Manager – India, Virgin Atlantic. He adds, "It allows passengers to rebook their flights until December 31, 2022, if their



Alex McEwan
Country Manager – India, Virgin Atlantic

We have allowed ease of refunding by allowing agents to directly cancel on their GDS

plans change and the fare difference is only applicable on amounts exceeding £60 in Economy, £120 in Premium and £350 in Upper Class. Customers may also change their origin or destination or make one free change to names on the booking or keeping the ticket open. We have allowed ease of refunding for the agents by allowing them to directly cancel bookings on their GDS."



Rohit Chopra
Regional Director – Sales & Distribution India & South Asia, Accor

With our campaign, guests can enjoy 30% discount and same-day free cancellation

ACCOR

Rohit Chopra, Regional Director – Sales & Distribution India & South Asia, Accor, says that since the beginning of the pandemic, they are doing everything possible to anticipate consumer needs.

"Requests like early check-in and late check-out are taken into consideration. With our ongoing campaign, 'For the love of Travel, for the love of Now', guests can enjoy 30 per cent discount on their booking, a ₹500 meal voucher and same-day free cancellation till 6 pm."



Sanjay Kumar
Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer, IndiGo

We launched Flex Pay wherein customers can pay only 10% of the total fare to secure booking

INDIGO

Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer, IndiGo, says that they understand that it is important to keep the processes of booking as well as cancellation hassle-free, especially in times like these. "Hence, we launched Flex Pay wherein customers can secure their bookings by paying only 10 per cent of the total fare amount and defer their payment on an IndiGo domestic flight for up to 15 days either from the date of booking or before the date of depar-



Delna Jasoomoney
Associate VP – Travel Industry Sales & Luxury Partnerships, IHCL

We have revised our cancellation policies for customers from 24 hrs to 72 hrs

ture. Flexi Fare Plus allows passengers with unlimited flexibility with zero change fee and nominal cancellation charges."



Sudeep Jain
Managing Director SWA, IHG

The Book Now, Pay Later offer for the rest of 2020 makes travel planning commitment-free

IHCL

Delna Jasoomoney, Associate VP – Travel Industry Sales & Luxury Partnerships, IHCL, says, "We have revised our cancellation policies from 24 hours to 72 hours depending on the hotel/destination."

IHG

At a time when customers are looking for flexibility and ease of booking for themselves, **Sudeep Jain**, MD, SWA, IHG, shares, "Our 'Book Now, Pay Later' offer makes travel planning commitment-free and cancellation possible up to three days before a stay for direct bookings through December 30, 2020."



Pushpendra Bansal
COO, Lords Hotels and Resorts

We have waived cancellation fee and are offering free date change

LORDS HOTELS

Pushpendra Bansal, COO, Lords Hotels and Resorts, says that they are very flexible in case of guest requests for cancellation or amendment. "We have waived cancellation fee and are offering free date change in case of any change in travel dates."

AMRITARA HOTELS

Sarvar Hans, National Sales Director, Amritara Hotels & Resorts, informs that there is no limitation on cancellation for any of their properties. "We allow changing of dates and cancellations till the last minute. We are offering this without any cost," he adds.

HYATT

Hyatt informs that with some limited exceptions, reservations booked from

July 1 for any future arrival date through July 31, 2021 can be cancelled at no charge up to 24 hours before scheduled arrival. "We want to help our guests and members book with confidence and



Sarvar Hans
National Sales Director Amritara Hotels & Resorts

We allow changing of dates and cancellations till the last minute

cannot wait to welcome them back soon," says



Mark Hoplamazian
President and Chief Executive Officer, Hyatt

We want to help our guests book with confidence and cannot wait to welcome them

Mark Hoplamazian, President and Chief Executive Officer, Hyatt.

“

With its skilled workforce, world-class facilities and commitment to safety, Singapore can lead the way in organising business events in the new normal.

— **Ms Katariina Rohrbach**
Managing Director
Hannover Fairs Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd



SINGAPORE: **FORGING A NEW STANDARD FOR BUSINESS EVENTS**

In these extraordinary times, Singapore continues to stand as a premier business events destination connecting the world to Asia. While COVID-19 has altered the events landscape, the fundamentals that have made Singapore successful – our vibrant business environment, outstanding infrastructure and future-ready workforce – remain unchanged.

Raising the bar for health and safety

As international business travel resumes, you can trust that Singapore will safeguard the well-being of visiting delegates and staff. We remain committed to upholding the highest standards of health and safety and to giving all our visitors peace of mind when they come to the Lion City.

Hotels, restaurants, exhibition halls and other establishments have adopted

new Safe Management Measures, such as social distancing and heightened cleaning of premises, to ensure reduced public health risk. Beyond these, the Singapore Government also launched SG Clean, a national mark of excellence for cleanliness, hygiene, and infection control.

Innovating for the future of business events

Singapore's events industry is also implementing unique solutions to meet the emerging demands of a new era of business travel. Local companies are reinventing themselves – from enhancing digital offerings to developing forward-looking concepts for hybrid and virtual events.

For example, in June, homegrown event organiser Web in Travel (WIT) engaged more than 750 tourism business leaders to discuss the future of the industry in a

global virtual summit. During the dinner break, WIT sent curated care packages to Singapore-based attendees and later even held a virtual dance party.

With this mindset of continuous innovation, it is no wonder that Singapore was recently named the world's most competitive economy for the second consecutive year (IMD World Competitiveness Ranking, 2020).

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Artisans are also part of industry

They provide an intrinsic flavour to a destination's local experience. But, the pandemic has rendered these daily wage earners without any means of support. Three experts share their views on the subject, while speaking about how they are playing a part in helping these artists survive during the ongoing pandemic.



Hazel Jain

It is an acceptable fact that they are an intrinsic part of the tourism industry. On the other hand, there are thousands of artists who directly as well as indirectly are dependent on the travel industry. They earn their income directly from international as well as domestic tourists. After the pandemic hit the world, the most affected were these artists as their livelihood was in shacks.

As an industry that needs revival, it becomes all the more imperative to offer support and uplift the artists economically. Similarly, initiatives need to be developed in their favour in which they are regularly involved and where they can offer their art knowledge and in turn earn from the same. Focusing on the traditional artists in Rajasthan, we speak to three experts from three different areas about how they are helping this community.

ASSOCIATION & AGENCY OWNER

As the Chairman for Western Region of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) as well as the CEO of Garha Tours & Travels which focuses completely on inbound tourism, **NS Rathor** under-



NS Rathor
Chairman
IATO - Western Region

stands the unique role that these local artists play in engaging tourists in Rajasthan. Sharing a slice of history, he says, "In the past, the local

We hope the ongoing wedding season will revive them in a small way

— NS Rathor

artists and craftsmen were patronised by the royal families. But after Independence, this community could not find many cheerleaders for themselves. However, since tourism started, the local artists have found favour in hotels of Rajasthan."

These hotels usually host them in the evenings to entertain their guests whether



in the form of dancers or puppet-masters who engross the guests with their story-telling skills. "Some of them are also on the hotel's payroll. Since COVID-19 though, the artist community has been struggling. But, we hope the ongoing wedding season will revive them in a small way; they



Kartik Gaggar
CEO and Founder
Rajasthan Studio

are an intricate part of tourism providing a local experience to tourists. It would be great if the state government can extend some financial

support to them or launch a pension scheme for them," Rathor adds.

EXPERIENCE PROVIDER

Rajasthan Studio was established so that it could connect the master artists of Rajasthan to the tourists and promote their artforms. In April, it voluntarily offered assistance to all associated artisans and maestros, and kept the artists involved in all art activities. In some cases, it also remitted money directly to the artist. **Kartik Gaggar**, CEO and Founder, Rajasthan Studio, says, "Our focus was on 'Vocal for Local' promoting our artisans and their work. As soon as virtual interactions became a way of life during lockdown,

we made most of it with our 'virtual-only' daily art experiences through our social media channels and connected with artists from all over the world."

Aathun is another initiative born during the lockdown. It connects the folk artists of Rajasthan to people from across the world, via live sessions on YouTube. "The artist-to-audience live stream sessions are designed to financially enable the folk artists of Rajasthan. Audience can pay the artists as they like through UPI, Paytm, or G-Pay directly. We have curated more than 12 sessions with 12 unique artists. Our role is only to help them reach a larger audi-

ence. The direct beneficiaries were, are and will always be the artists," Gaggar explains.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Four-year old Donatekart is an India-based platform that allows individuals to donate supplies needed to a charity instead of donating money. They have been actively helping the artist community all over India. Speaking specifically about Rajasthan, **Anil Kumar Reddy**, CEO and Co-founder, Donatekart, says, "We did two campaigns in support of the local folk artists of Rajasthan since COVID-19 hit us. I'm happy to say that we have



Anil Kumar Reddy
CEO and Co-founder, Donatekart

collectively raised ₹55 lakh till now for Rajasthan folk artists and our aim is to raise ₹1 crore worth of ration which will support 10,000 families for the next six months. As we are an in-kind donation

We have raised ₹55 lakh for folk artists and our aim is to raise ₹1 crore worth of ration

— Anil Kumar Reddy



Artist to audience live stream sessions are designed to financially enable the folk artists of Rajasthan

— Kartik Gaggar

Rajasthan government to set up artists database

The state government has decided to make a database of artists through crowd-sourcing across Rajasthan. It will be the first state in the country to take this initiative. **Mugdha Sinha**, Secretary, Art and Culture Department and Director General, Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur, said that her department had launched the 'Mukhyamantri Lok Kalakar Protsahan Yojana' (Chief Minister's Folk Artist Encouragement Scheme) in April 2020 to extend help to the artists. Details about the artists across the state will be collected through crowd-sourcing via Google Form. Genre of art form include performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, dyeing arts, wandering arts (ghoomantu), folk arts, tribal arts and others.

platform, people can only fulfil needs of the beneficiaries." The organisation has done similar campaigns for Tamil Nadu folk artists, the handloom weavers in Telangana and the Bunkar community in Varanasi.

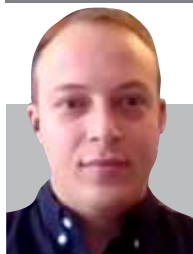
Health & hygiene are key to recovery

Virtual PATA Travel Mart 2020 saw experts from around the world coming together at PTM Forum. The topic of deliberation was 'The impact of health and hygiene on post COVID-19 destination competitiveness in Asia Pacific'. Here's what they had to say...

 Nisha Verma

Safety is priority, says Tripadvisor

While the world came to a halt when the pandemic struck in late February, Tripadvisor took it on them to understand the consumers and what they were thinking about travel. The key takeaway, according to **Fabrizio Orlando**, Global Industry Relations Associate Director, Tripadvisor, was that customers wanted to feel safe. "If we look at Asia Pacific, 70 per cent of consumers are concerned how destinations are handling COVID-19 cases for both infection and fatalities. Over 72 per cent of people told us that it's very important how destinations are creating a culture of social responsibility for preventing the virus. This is the most interesting shift. Less than 40 per cent of people are now saying price is the most important criteria," he revealed.




Fabrizio Orlando
Global Industry Relations Associate
Director, Tripadvisor

Apart from surveys, there were many changes that Tripadvisor has made. "We realised that the key issue for our owners was cash flow. Hence, the first decision we took was to freeze the membership fee for our owners. Secondly, we realised that they needed data, insights and information. We started running our surveys. Since the most important thing for people is safety, we launched an initiative called Travel

Safe. We saw that there was a 16 per cent higher click-through rate on proper-

 It is important to understand that currently, promoting transparency and good practices is key 

ties with Travel Safe measures on Tripadvisor. It's important to understand that currently, promoting transparency and good practices is key," he concluded. 

'Residents make them attractive'

While people are thinking of travelling and waiting for destinations to open borders and offer safe tourism options, there is a growing concern on what the residents of these destinations are thinking when it comes to receiving international tourists. **Olivier Henry-Biabaud**, Founder & CEO, TCI Research, sharing insights on the same, said, "Currently, 73 per cent residents across six iconic cities in Asia say that their city should continue promoting tourism, which is three points above the global average. Also, 77 per cent residents in Asia are saying that they are still proud to see tourists and visitors coming from far to their cities and communities, which is two points above the global average. Three out of 10 residents agree that tourism today



Olivier Henry-Biabaud
Founder & CEO
TCI Research

needs financial support to help the local economy recover, which is six points above the global average. In addition, 76 per cent residents believe that their city has proper sanitary rules to welcome visitors in good condition, which is 12 points above the global average."

He added that another good news is that tourism promoters in Asia today, among residents, are younger than

average than those in other regions of the world. "This is a good sign that the young people are also the future of tourism. There is less than four per cent of those who are rejecting tourism and say-

 Almost 70 per cent of the residents say they are happy with tourism and welcoming tourism back 

ing they have had enough. Almost 70 per cent of the residents say they are happy with tourism and welcoming tourism back," he said.

Competitiveness drives recovery


Maksim Soshkin, Research and Analysis Specialist, Aerospace, Aviation, Travel and Tourism, World Economic Forum, shared that the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) benchmarks the travel and tourism competitiveness of 140 economies and measures the set of factors that enable sustainable develop-



Maksim Soshkin
Research and Analysis Specialist
World Economic Forum

ment of the sector. "In the context of COVID-19, the TTCI can act as a tool to better understand what competitiveness factors might boost or challenge travel and tourism recovery within countries in forming recovery strategies. When they compared the health and hygiene scores of Asia Pacific economies, they found overall tropical and personal competitiveness to identify the readiness of coun-

tries to deal with the growing role of health, safety and travel decisions. We found that the region is generally competitive, especially with natural and cultural resources."

"We also found that on average, Asia Pacific economies lag similar competitive economies when it comes to health and hygiene infrastructure. As a result, if you look at the scenario where global travel resumes but health and safety is more important than ever, the region may face the challenge in competing with other tourist hotspots like Europe. Of course, this does not consider the impact of health policy decisions or other factors on how COVID has spread. Hence, it does not tell the whole story," he added. 

 The region is competitive, especially with natural and cultural resources 

'No country is prepared'


Jessica A Bell, Senior Program Officer- Global Biological Policy and Programs, Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), shared that the NTI and John Hopkins Centre for Health Security teamed up at the economics intelligence unit to produce the Global Health Security (GHS) index. "What we found is that no country, regardless of in-



Jessica A Bell
Program Officer - Global Biological Policy
and Programs, Nuclear Threat Initiative

come level, is fully prepared. In fact, most countries have major gaps across all categories assessed in the index. Overall, the GHS index found significant weaknesses in countries' ability to prevent, detect and respond to health emergencies and also found major gaps in the health systems and vulnerabilities to political, socio-economic and environmental risks that can often confound outbreak

preparedness and response," she shared.

She revealed that by clearly highlighting gaps in a country's health and security capabilities, their aim was to stimulate political will, create accountability and encourage leaders to prioritise host security. "The COVID-19 pandemic may have caught governments by surprise, but medical and public health communities have long warned of the potential for a high-consequence pandemic. And as we have seen with COVID, countries with robust capacities for preventing, detection and responding to outbreaks can avert many of the social political, economic and health system costs of such crises," she said. 

 The index found weakness in countries' ability to prevent, detect and respond 

A taskforce for a green corridor

Subhash Goyal, Secretary General, FAITH, has shared that the apex travel and hospitality association of the country will create a taskforce that will work towards making an on-ground green corridor for safe movement of tourists. Member associations have been asked to nominate a person each for the same.



Nisha Verma

Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) had recently organised a meet coordinated by **Subhash Goyal**, with domestic airlines, GMR and representatives of the 10 member associations. At the meeting it was decided that a taskforce comprising airlines, airports and FAITH will be formed, informed Goyal, adding, "The agenda of the taskforce will be to create a green corridor of-



Subhash Goyal
Secretary General, FAITH

fering a smooth, hygienic and safe experience to both domestic and international tourists, right from the airport to the destination and back. This way, we can create green corridors to Kerala,

Goa or any other city. FAITH is working on it and we are quite hopeful that we will soon be working with stakeholders that include not just travel agents and tourist guides, but also airports and airlines. Without them, no project can be successful."

He shared that all member associations have been asked to nominate one person on board for this taskforce for day-to-day issues. "Till now, we have received six nominations from six associations. While this task-



We need to project a positive image of India and that Indians are ready for business

force is not a permanent organisation, we can have different people representing their respective associations at different times. Similarly, we are also creating a taskforce called 'Friends of Tourism' in all the states, wherein member associations and chairpersons of respective state chapters can select one person to coordinate

for a specific time period or otherwise. This taskforce is of volunteers who are willing to work and create a synergy between airlines, airports, hotels, transporters, tour operators and tourist guides," he said.

ITM update

Throwing light on the probability of the next India Tourism Mart (ITM) announced by the Tourism Minister to be held as a hybrid event, Goyal said, "We had planned for the ITM to be held in November but, unfortunately, the Minister was not available owing to other commitments on those dates. Since we are already in November, I think we can now do it in end-December or beginning

of January 2021. We are in touch with Ministry of Tourism for the same and will get a date very soon."

Goyal also congratulated FHRAI for their efforts in getting an industry status for the hospitality sector in Maharashtra, and he is hoping that such a step shall be taken for the tourism sector as well, already a longstanding demand of FAITH. He also said that the government needs to start issuing e-tourist visa so that aviation can start in full swing, which in turn would trigger business. He concluded, "We need to project a positive image of India and that Indians are ready for business." 🐦



With restoring confidence a priority for the sector, tourists are to be given greater legal protection as consumers under new plans being advanced by UNWTO under the International Code for the Protection of Tourists with support of Member States.

TAT begins festivities with trade

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), along with Royal Thai Embassy and Radisson Blu Plaza Airport Hotel, recently organised one of the first physical events for the industry to celebrate the Thai festival of Loy Krathong. TAT has already been actively engaging with the trade through online events.



Nisha Verma

The Loy Krathong celebration by TAT in New Delhi saw in attendance around 100 guests, including diplomats, corporates, media and the who's who of the travel trade. Speaking at the event, **Vachirachai Sirisumpan**, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi, shared that the purpose behind having a physical event after so long was to celebrate the festival of Loy Krathong with the travel fraternity. "Since people cannot travel to Thailand right now, we brought Thailand to Delhi for them. We have done many online events, but this was the first physical event since things have started to open in Delhi," he said.

Talking about the situation in Thailand, he added, "Currently, the situation in Thailand is well in control and well-managed. There are still some new cases, and mostly it's coming from outside, but the number is very small. We get only about 5-13 people infected each day. However, it would still take some time before Thailand would open, and that too will happen gradually, step by step. We need to make sure that when we open for tourists, everyone will be safe and can enjoy themselves. Hence, it would take a little longer, but I am keeping my fingers crossed and hope that things get better in Thailand, India and globally as well. However, it's my personal speculation that maybe by begin-



Vachirachai Sirisumpan
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi

ning of next year, things would start getting easier, with easing of formalities for entering Thailand. I look forward to welcome our travel trade partners, as well as all the Indians to Thailand very soon."

In the meantime, Sirisumpan said, their priority has been to keep Thailand as the top-of-the-mind destination for all Indians.

"Therefore, we have been communicating both with our travel trade and all the Indian travellers that we continue to give them information on what's happening in Thailand and we have also done online promotions in the past and we still continue to do the same, going with the situation both in Thailand and India. We will continue to do more events and activities, both online and physical, and we are working with all our partners in the travel industry in India," he shared.

He also added, "We have worked with TRAVTALK on the Together Thailand campaign in August-September, where people were recalling good memories from Thailand. It was very suc-

cessful and received good response. In the same way, we will keep connecting with all our partners. We had even done e-learning to keep our partners and all



It's my speculation that maybe by beginning of next year, things would start getting easier

the frontline travel agents refreshed about Thailand. While this is what we are doing on the trade side, for consumers, we have a lot

of online and offline communication and get people to engage with Thailand."

Sharing that travel agents, too, are asking about when the destination would open, Sirisumpan said that his answer remains that Thailand will open gradually with precautions. "Some concern is there about the measures being taken in Thailand. Currently, whoever enters Thailand, whether Thai or an international visitor, has to go for a 14-day state quarantine, which is of concern for many agents, as they are looking for more flexibility in terms of formalities on arrival. However, I hope things will get better step by step," he informed. In terms of connectivity to India, only repatriation flights based on travel bubbles. 🐦



BE PART OF THE
FUN



TAAI MP&CG members meet in Indore

The TAAI Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh Chapter recently organised its annual members' meet for 45 members at Crescent Spa & Resort, Indore. Led by **Hemendra Singh Jadon**, the Chapter Chairman, the event was successfully conducted keeping all health protocols in mind. Presentations were also held on MSME benefits and StarAir airline.



'It's now time to be cope-able'

Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said, 'Change is the only constant.' The adage resonates till date, having stood the test of time. Such is also the belief of **Ahana Gurung**, Co-owner, PaliGhar Kalimpong, who adds, 'It is indeed time to bring out the big guns and reinvent.'

What a change 2020 has been! The pandemic has disrupted the global travel industry like no other and has quite literally brought it to its knees. For a country like India where the travel and tourism industry contributed \$194 billion to the economy in 2019, a report by Grant Thornton and FICCI states it is now looking at a revenue loss of about \$16.7 billion and up to 40 million job cuts in the next one year. However, in the past two months, domestic travel has been the first to resume and will be the fuel that will drive business for most service providers, with outbound leisure travel completely out of the equation. Simultaneously, traveller behaviour is

changing. Safety and precautions have become top priority for them and as they lean towards slightly remote destinations to stay away from crowds, the ability to work while away on a vacation



or a 'workcation' is another important factor in their decision-making process. Currently, PaliGhar's strengths lie in being a family-run property that has always taken great care to maintain good hygiene standards and has

adopted new sanitisation protocols. Additionally, a small room inventory only allows a limited number of guests at a time, while a working internet connection allows guests to work from the farmstay as the rural, yet accessible, setting allows them to disconnect from the rest of the world. Which leads us to observe another key trait in travellers. The pandemic has led people to introspect and reconnect with their old hobbies, and the prolonged isolation has sparked a yearning for the outdoors. Destinations like Kalimpong, known for its panoramic surroundings that is home to a number of hiking trails, offers an experience-based getaway which goes far beyond sightseeing. Be-

ing with nature in itself is therapeutic, and as homes cease to be a sanctuary for relaxation for many with the advent of 'work from home', what better way to unwind than with a view of the mighty Mount Kanchenjunga. Way-off villages in Kalimpong such as Echhey, Samthar and Lolegaon, to name a few, along with the Neora Valley National Park are some of the hidden treasures of the Himalayan town that have much to explore and to be experienced.

Kalimpong's history is an asset in itself. Once a key hub for Indo-Tibetan trade, the town was an important part of the Silk Route when goods were carried on mules



over the Jelep-La pass and into Kalimpong. The 10th Mile region in the town continues to be a major trade hub with some of the old wooden houses that sold wool still intact.

It is evident from this year's theme - tourism and rural development for World Tourism Day - that rural tourism

is touted as the next big thing. The pandemic has led people to live a greener life and there has been no better time for farmstays to earn the spotlight. The road to recovery is slow but not impossible, with disruption leading to new business models that get the engine roaring once again.



Ahana Gurung
Co-owner, PaliGhar Kalimpong

(Views expressed are the author's own.
The publication may or may not subscribe to them.)

Spanish roadshow in Dec

The Tourism Office of Spain – Mumbai will organise a two-day roadshow between December 2 and 3, 2020, with 20 Spanish suppliers who will be a mix of regional tourism boards, hotels and DMCs.

Hazel Jain

The Tourism Office of Spain - Mumbai will be organising a two-day roadshow with 20 Spanish suppliers on December 2-3, 2020. The Virtual Spanish Travel Show will be held from 14:00 to 19:00 IST on both days. The suppliers will have individual booths at the event and will be a mix of regional tourism boards, hotels and DMCs who will meet key travel agents and tour operators from important source markets of India, Nepal,

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. **Elisa Robles-Fraga**, Director, Tourism Office of Spain (Turespaña) in Mumbai, India, says, "One of our main objectives is to improve the value of the Spanish tour-



Elisa Robles-Fraga
Director, Tourism Office of Spain
(Turespaña) in Mumbai

It will prepare agents to take the lead as soon as travel restarts

meetings between buyers and sellers, live streaming of product presentations and videos in the auditorium, plus some interesting panel discussions and contests and quizzes with prizes to be won."

She adds, "The focus will be on restarting tourism into Spain from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. It will help prepare you to take the lead as soon as international travel restarts from your respective areas into Spain."

ist trade. To do so, an annual travel show or 'jornadas' is organised between buyers and sellers. In 2020, due to the pandemic, we are organising this virtually for the very first time. It will include private

Where to register

To attend the virtual event, you can register on www.virtualspanishtravelshow.com

Antigen tests for recovery

This first edition of Tourism Innovation Summit 2020 (TIS) will bring together the brightest minds on travel and tourism who will reveal key strategies and solutions to plan a path for tourism recovery in 2021.

TT Bureau

Tourism recovery is possible if countries start collaborating and developing systems to ensure a safe travel and experience through an-

by Abbott. TIS will become the pilot and a recovery guide for the tourism sector in 2021. During three days, Seville will bring together top brilliant tourism, technological and government key players to define new

competitiveness of the tourism sector, but now it will also be focused on its economic recovery. This is a congress created by and for the industry that will make Seville the world capital of technological innovation in the tourism sector,"



tigen tests or technology. Seville will prove this idea at the upcoming Tourism Innovation Summit to be held from November 25-27, 2020, where all participants will have access to a free COVID antigen fast test

measures and strategies to boost recovery and redirect the ups and downs of the pandemic on the following season. "Tourism Innovation Summit was born as an event focused on technology to boost the

explained **Albert Planas**, CEO, TIS.

TIS 2020 agenda will include extensive health prevention protocols to ensure maximum safety on travel.

Online exhibition for Russia

Russian Information Center in India and Profi.Travel have announced an online exhibition - Russian Expo Days (RED) - for travel professionals in India, to be held from December 7-10, 2020.

TT Bureau

The online exhibition will include live sessions with Russia's regional tourism departments, DMCs, tour operators and hoteliers. Within four days, the participants will learn everything they need to know to organise a trip to Russia.

During these challenging times, a lot of offline events remain unavailable. RED is an online event where visitors can browse virtual booths safely and get all the latest updates on the tourism opportunities of Russia safely from their laptop or mobile.

Confirmed exhibitors at RED include Saint-Petersburg, the Murmansk region and the Kamchatka region. The Indian professional audience will be introduced to various types of tourism in Russia, from excursions to fabulous palaces of St. Petersburg, to organising trips to Kamchatka volcanoes and the Northern Lights in the Murmansk region. Another



❖ The schedule promises to be busy and interesting. Live session on Russian e-visa rules and tax-free refund will be held with the participation of the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation.

❖ Round-table on industrial tourism in Russia with the Agency for Strategic Initiatives will introduce the audience to the regions of Russia where tourists can see unique production facilities.

❖ Russian Expo Days will also have online presentations from Russian regions with the participation of travel business representatives will let the participants easily discover the amazing regions of Russia and choose the best routes for their tourists.

important feature of the exhibition is an opportunity to gain new business contacts; more than 30 representatives of tour operators, hotels and DMCs will answer questions and share their contact information.

Where to register

Participation is free and registration is available right on russiadays.travel/i/r/n8YgGmg. All live sessions will be held in English.

Goa invites tourists with bike rally



Multiple travel trade associations in partnership with GTDC came together on October 31 to participate in a bike rally to show the country as well as the global markets that the state is now open for tourism. The rally saw a contingent of over 94 industry riders that commenced the ride from Taj Convention & Hotels, flagged off by Tourism Director Menino D'Souza.

Hilton opens another Goan resort



Hilton has announced the opening of Hilton Goa Resort, marking its third property in Goa. It is located atop the scenic terraced slopes of Saipem Hills in Candolim, offering 104 guest rooms with unparalleled views, four swimming pools, three eclectic dining options, suites with private plunge pools and signature curated experiences.

EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



NOVEMBER 2020

Date	Event	Time
18	IATO Annual General Meeting (Virtual)	11:30 am
18	Ireland Tourism Webinar for Middle East	04:30 pm
19	Ireland Tourism Webinar	03:30 pm
23-24	Gulf Travel Show	11:30 am
23-27	Kerala Travel Mart- Virtual	12:00 pm
24	CAPA India Webinar	04:00 pm
25-27	Tourism Investor Summit (TIS)	02:30 pm
27	IATO Interactive Members Meet	04:00 pm
27	IATO Motivational Workshop	11:30 am

DECEMBER 2020

1	IATO Workshop on Redesigning Itineraries	11:30 am
1-3	Asian Tourism Research Conference	09:00 am
2-3	Virtual Spanish Travel Show	02:00 pm
7	Ireland Tourism Webinar	03:00 pm
8-9	Digital Travel Virtual Summit	06:30 am

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

Meditation is an art

IATO and **TRAVTALK** organised a session on redesigning wellness itineraries and understanding the art of living. **Rajeev Nambiar**, Director, National Teachers Desk, The Art of Living, explains the importance of meditation.



Manas Dwivedi

Can controlling the mind be taught?

It is possible. Most people don't understand what the mind is. One day it tells you to do something and next day it might tell you to do the exact opposite. The mind is something which is not in our control. The only way to deal with mind is breath. When we understand breath, we know we can deal with the mind.

How do you convince young families to focus on meditation, especially for holidays?

Nowadays, there have been various studies suggesting that yoga and meditation impact the mind of young people, letting go of difficult habits and addictions.



Rajeev Nambiar
Director, National Teachers Desk
The Art of Living

Meditation can help them concentrate more. We have to educate them on creating small values in life.

How does technology impact your mind? Is switching off technology an option?

I would say we have no choice now. We have moved into a world too far ahead for us to reverse. So much of radiation impacts your mind. Technology will have

its impact, but it is important to ensure how we can minimise the impact on ourselves, how we can make ourselves more resilient.

How can entrepreneurs de-stress during such uncertain times?

The best thing to do in such a scenario would be to work judiciously, talk to people and tell them that it's a difficult time for the company. I think, if we are able to increase the sense of belonging with people and start communicating, things will get easier.

How long do foreigners need to spend in India to take a programme for meditation?

Not more than two weeks is enough. Even a week will be enough, but a two-week-

long itinerary will be ideal for a perfect programme. If you were to travel to Art of Living International Center in Bengaluru, there is

If we are able to increase the sense of belonging with people and start communicating, things will get easier

a week-long introductory programme and in two weeks, you can get more meditation programmes.

Stay motivated during a pandemic

As part of its skill development initiative, IATO in association with **TRAVTALK** organised a motivational session titled 'How is COVID-19 changing your personality?' focusing on motivation, mental well-being and behavioural adaptability. Happiness Coach **Sakshi Mandhyan**, Founder, Mandhyan Care, shared tips to deal with these issues.



Manas Dwivedi

How do you stay positive when you don't have a job? How to overcome life's difficult phases?

Skill to accept the situation can help. When you don't have money, you will worry. However, you should know that worrying is a healthy negative emotion, it is not an unhealthy negative emotion. The idea is to know it is a difficult time, but it does not mean that a good time will not come. Remind yourself that it is just a temporary situation that will pass. Try and avoid focusing on the prob-



Sakshi Mandhyan
Founder, Mandhyan Care

lem; instead, ask yourself for solutions. Embrace negative emotions. One more thing is, sit with yourself and create a routine. Focus upon creating a schedule for yourself and work on small things with each passing day. The key is to work towards a goal, results will

follow eventually. Hope is something which will help you sail through this time. Hope, Efficacy, Resilience and Optimism will make you HERO, literally!

How do you cope with work from home along with managing your family?

The first thing you do while creating a calendar for your work routine is create one for your personal routine as well for the next day before sleeping. Categorically create tangible, measurable goals. Then, following them consistently is the key to managing everything effortlessly. Also keep in

mind to stay focused with your thoughts.

How do you decipher bad habits of a person with good character?

Your character is defined by your actions. Your habit is your action. So, a bad habit will create an impact on a person's character. So, they are interrelated. Character is formed out of your actions and habits. Ensure that you have habits which work in your favour. Be mindful of what actions you are taking, it impacts character.

How do you divert your mind from negative thinking?

Firstly, there is no magic wand to make negative thinking disappear. It is a practice you do everyday. Sometimes, we tend to focus more on negative thoughts rather than the

positive ones. To get rid of it, you have to use the process of filtering. You have to consciously filter the positives and the negatives. Secondly, gratitude is important. Thirdly, try and stay inspired with your surrounding and nature.

How do you overcome anxiety and stress arising from a negative situation? How do you deal with expectations?

To deal with anxiety, the first thing is stop thinking about the future. Take one day at

a time. Secondly, decide to stay calm, no matter what. If you don't decide to stay calm, you will go all over the place with different emotions. As far as expectations are concerned, ensure that you see capability and potential as well. Judge things on the basis of capability, it will help you be calm.

Any tips to reduce paranoia and stress in depressing times?

Stress is very subjective; what stresses one might not stress the other. How you are speaking in your head is stressful or easy going, the choice is yours. To deal with paranoia, keep your language positive. Ensure that you are picking things that ease your mind and not disturb it. Label your emotions correctly. Lastly, distract yourself.

Create tangible, measurable goals; following them is key

UNWTO and International Maritime Organization have highlighted the importance of the cruise sector, which supports 1.2 million jobs and contributes US\$150 billion to the global economy every year.

**Is your
covid certificate
authenticated
by the
national board
of the country?**



THE LEELA PALACES, HOTELS AND RESORTS

Mumbai

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Vikram Choubal** as Senior Vice President, Design and Technical Services. Prior to joining The Leela, he was Vice President, Project Management at Marriott International for South Asia. In the new role, Choubal will provide technical support and oversee the design, planning and execution of all hotel projects within The Leela portfolio. With over three decades of experience in hotel project management, he has had a solid grounding in hospitality engineering, architecture, design and construction.



THE LEELA PALACE

Udaipur

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Nishant Agarwal** as the General Manager of The Leela Palace Udaipur. He is an accomplished hotelier and brings two decades of hospitality experience with him with a strong F&B background, having set up operations at various domestic and international hotel brands. Agarwal's multi-property operational experience, leadership skills and comprehensive understanding of the business are distinguishing facets of his career. His last assignment was with the Atmosphere Hotels in Maldives as General Manager.



EMPYREAN SKYVIEW PROJECTS

New Delhi

Empyrean Skyview Projects, focused on the development of mountain tourism and adventure activities, has appointed **Pankaj Mathur** as Chief Operating Officer for its Travel, Tourism & Hospitality business division. Mathur comes to the new role with almost three decades of experience across numerous brands and disciplines in the hospitality industry, including revenue management, HR solutions, training, global distribution and marketing, besides creating a high-value brand through personalisation and enhancement of the guest satisfaction index.



SAYAJI HOTEL

Indore

Sayaji Hotel Indore has appointed **Sudeep Mukherjee** as the new Market Director of Sales - Indore. A focused and analytical hospitality professional, Mukherjee brings with him over 12 years of rich and varied experience in sales and marketing. In this leadership role, he will be committed to encouraging the zeal of the young team while nurturing a healthy and cohesive work environment, employing his thorough knowledge of the hospitality market. Prior to this, he has worked with reputed brands such as Crowne Plaza, Grand Mercure, Marriott Hotels India and ITC.



RENAISSANCE RACE COURSE HOTEL

Bengaluru

Radhika Dewan has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel. Her core responsibilities at the hotel include planning and implementing of the hotel's sales and marketing strategy, maximising hotel's revenues, exploring business opportunities through events, setting annual budgets, forecasting, analysing revenue reports and strategy among others. The new appointment is preceded by Dewan's stint in Sri Lanka at Sheraton Colombo. She has over 13 years of experience.



CROWNE PLAZA ADYAR PARK

Chennai

Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park has appointed **Samson Mathews** as Director of Human Resources. Bringing with him 24 years of experience in the service industry, he takes on a leadership position to create a positive environment wherein the whole team is aligned with the goals of the hotel. In the new role, Mathews will implement his experience in people management, maintaining healthy employee relations and handling employee grievances. His professional journey began as an HR Executive at The Residency Coimbatore.



Places to visit for healing systems

Destinations that offer native therapeutic experiences might climb up the traveller priority list with more and more people thinking about their wellness amidst the danger of COVID-19 infections. Here are six destinations you can plan to visit for their indigenous healing systems.



Hazel Jain

CROATIA

Uošinj, often called Croatia's 'healing island', has excellent air quality, 2,600 hours of annual sunshine, and therapeutic aerosols from the sea air and high salt concentrations of the Adriatic Sea. The island, located in Kvarner Bay, has a long history of offering natural healing due to its unique location. The Učka mountain range protects the islands from cold northerly winds.

RUSSIA

For centuries, Russia's bath-houses or 'banya' have been a place to connect and heal. This wet-steam sauna is a traditional bathhouse experience. Temperatures near



90°C. It's believed that its soft beating process with a bundle of twigs aids in muscle and joint pain relief, cleanses the skin and stimulates blood flow and removes phlegm.

CHILE

The Rapa Nui people of Easter Island, a special territory of Chile, believe they were able to ward off coronavirus by harnessing the ancient practice of tapu – an ancient

Polynesian tradition. It is a self-care principle based on respect for the norms of nature, with spiritual restrictions and shared prohibitions at its core. Things that are tapu are to be

left alone, which restricts human movement.

ISRAEL

At 400 metres below sea level, the Dead Sea is famous for its amazing healing powers. Its mineral-rich water is therapeutic for many skin conditions. People seeking relief from chronic skin, respiratory and joint conditions benefit from the unique solar and mineral properties found only in the Dead Sea. The water actually pulls toxins from every organ.

NEW ZEALAND

Since New Zealand is located where two tectonic plates of the earth's crust meet, there is a large amount of geothermal activity, allowing warm water to bubble up through

the earth's crust to form hot pools. These pools often contain minerals dissolved from the rocks they seeped through. These wild hot pools are found throughout New Zealand and many believe that sitting in them is medicinal.

JAPAN

The Japanese practice of Shinrin Yoku, which means 'forest bathing', was developed during the 1980s. It's a preventative healthcare method based on the belief that there are health benefits from living in the forest.

The time spent in nature is said to encourage clearer intuition, increased flow of energy, deepening of friendships and overall increase in happiness. 🌸



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Asia has managed well

Mario Hardy, CEO, PATA, feels that Asian countries like China, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam have led in terms of domestic tourism – but Singapore has done well in terms of implementation of green corridors and safety protocols.



Hazel Jain

How are different countries responding to needs of their B2B tourism industry?

Some were quick to implement health and safety protocols and shift their focus on the only market they could – domestic travel. In some cases, this quick pivot may have saved some businesses. But, we all know that this is not sufficient if the goal is to bring travel back to the same level as before. It will take time, if not a few years, for travel and tourism to fully recover and travel businesses will need to brace themselves for a slow recovery.

What are PATA's views on quarantine?

Quarantines are only warranted for travellers that have tested positive. We are advocating for a safe re-opening of borders with testing, contact tracing and the use of a digital health certificate/ passport.

What is the importance of creativity and innovation, especially in these times?

During the course of this crisis, we have seen an acceleration of the development of technologies and innovation to support the safe restart of travel. In fact, PATA is launching a new event from February 8-11, 2021, titled PATA Beyond - Travel Recovery Solutions which will match solution providers and innovators-

with travel businesses in need of help to recover.

Which country according to you has managed to handle the pandemic the best and what lessons can other countries learn from them?

This question could be answered in different ways depending on which aspect of the recovery we look at. Asia, in general, has controlled the number of cases better than other parts of the world. In terms of the

domestic events and exhibitions with strict protocols. However, not many other destinations have. No country has really started cross-border events due to borders still being closed and the risk of spreading the virus. I believe we will see most events being conducted virtually in 2021 with some being hybrid where local participants come together at a physical venue.

What are some of the trends you feel will gain popularity going forward?

There will be a great desire for nature-based holidays away from crowds, and greater interest in destinations that have a good reputation for health, hygiene and safety. I do believe that consumers will demand that travel brands show their

green and sustainability credentials and practices.

Do you think countries will see their B2B channel shrink?

Most governments in Asia have provided some level of financial support to travel and tourism businesses. In some cases, governments could have made financial support more accessible for businesses or, in other cases, the support may not have been sufficient. The tough reality is that there are already thousands of businesses that have closed and that are unlikely to restart in a foreseeable future. However, our industry will eventually recover, and I have no doubt that some businesses will benefit from the resurgence of travel.

Where do you think the Indian tourism industry stands amidst all this?

I believe that in the short to medium term, India will be relying mostly on its vast domestic market as some other countries will. This is not a reflection on the quality of tourism products available in India which are vast; it is mostly in relation to a slow re-opening of safe corridors between countries. 🇮🇳

Governments could have made financial support more accessible for businesses

growth of domestic tourism, we could argue that China, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam have led in this aspect. In terms of the implementation of green corridors and safety protocols, I would have to say Singapore has done well.

Travel industries in a few countries, including India, have started having physical events. Have things come full circle, or the industry will still see some changes with a different events model altogether?

China has re-started full scale



Mario Hardy
CEO, PATA



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