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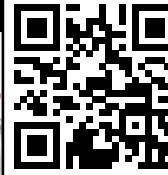
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Tourism circuits on govt agenda

National Conference of State Tourism Ministers in Himachal's Dharamshala sets the tone for India's upcoming G20 Presidency. Discussions pave the way for a better tourism policy and ways to develop sector in the country.



Nisha Verma

In the run-up to India assuming G20 Presidency, Ministry of Tourism organised a three-day National Conference of State Tourism Ministers in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The aim behind the conference, mentioned **G. Kishan Reddy**, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, is to bring together the varied viewpoints and perspectives from all the States and Union Territories of India on tourism development and to create a direct dialogue with the states on schemes, policies and steps being taken at a national level for overall tourism improvement in India. "With this conference we want to bring forth the best practices, successful projects, and



G Kishan Reddy
Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER

opportunities from various states. The National Conference also aims to build a common vision for tourism and its growth as we move towards India @2047," he said.

Speaking at a press conference one day before the event, he high-

lighted the slogan of 'Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi' given by the Prime Minister and said that after vast process of consultations and deliberations, the National Tourism Policy will be brought out before the Budget session. Also, he shared, "Various tourist circuits are being promoted across India and a new 'Ambedkar Circuit' shall soon be launched. The Himalayan Circuit will also be promoted under the action plan for development of tourist circuits."

Reddy also underlined that the Dharamshala Conference will set the tone for India's G20 Presidency. "G-20 will be used as a platform to showcase India's tourism potential to the world. The tourism sector generated ₹16.91 lakh crore (\$240 billion)

or 9.2 per cent of India's GDP in 2018 and has supported around 42.67 million jobs or 8.1 per cent of total employment," he said.

Other dignitaries present at the conference included **Ajay Bhatt**, Minister of State for Tourism and Defence; **Shripad Naik**, Minister of State for Tourism and Ports, Shipping, and Waterways; **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism; **Rakesh Kumar Verma**, Additional Secretary (Tourism) and **G. Kamala Vardhana Rao**, Director General (Tourism).

Jai Ram Thakur, Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh, also attended the conference and on the

Contd on page 16 ▶

Centre, states should be on same page

Arvind Singh, Secretary, MOT, says Centre and States have to work in tandem to achieve the country's goals.



Nisha Verma

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, speaking at the three-day National Conference of State Tourism Ministers, said that the tourism sector was badly hit in the last two years because of COVID-19. "The G-20 Presidency offers a unique opportunity for India to boost its tourism sector, and the revival of tourism sector will generate employment opportunities in India," he said.

Conference

Saying that the purpose behind the conference was to get together for the first time after two years of the pandemic, Singh



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

shared, "We wanted to discuss strategies and how we can take tourism to the next level and how to revitalise it. We have reports of good activities happening in the domestic sector and thus the

Contd on page 16 ▶

IATO meet in Lucknow

IATO will be having its 37th Annual Convention in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, from 16-19 December 2022 and will be inaugurated by the state Chief Minister, says **Rajiv Mehra**, President, IATO.



TT Bureau

Rajiv Mehra, President, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), said that the 37th IATO Annual Convention will be held in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The inauguration will be done by **Yogi Adityanath**, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, at **Indira Gandhi Pratishthan**, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow on 16th December.



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

The sessions and programmes for the next two days will be held at The Centrum, Lucknow. The post tours will start from 19th December. "Uttar Pradesh is changing for the better and is being developed like never before. With new destinations, especially Ram Mandir in Ayodhya

coming up in a few years, it will be a huge attraction for tourists. Just like we promoted Amritsar and Varanasi internationally, we will promote Ayodhya and UP as well," Mehra said. "We are coming back to Lucknow after a gap of 26 years and it will be

an excellent opportunity for our members to see the improved and developed infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh. The last IATO Convention in Lucknow was held in 1996 and so many new hotels have come up in Lucknow and other cities, which will give insight of the facilities and development of infrastructure to the tour operators promoting the state among foreign and domestic travellers," he added.

He shared that the success of previous convention has raised the expectations of the members and sponsors. "More than 900 delegates are expected for the three-day event and the IATO convention is eagerly awaited by all," he said. ▶

TAFI Convention raises hopes

The Federation expects to double the number of tourists reaching Sarawak after its convention in Malaysia saw more than 500 members interact with key sellers from the host country.



TT Bureau

The Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) Convention 2022 was organised in Kuching (Malaysia) from September 20-23 in collaboration with Tourism Malaysia, Sarawak Tourism Board (STB), and Business Events (BE) Sarawak. About 700 delegates from India attended the convention. This was the third time Malaysia hosted the TAFI convention. The first TAFI convention was held in the country in 1999, followed by the second one in 2007.

Commenting on this year's convention, **Ajay Prakash**, President, TAFI, said, "This was a landmark convention, not only



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

for TAFI but also for Sarawak. It has been a relatively unexplored destinations for Indians. By bringing in more than 500 travel professionals into Sarawak for this convention, we hope to remedy the situation. Pre-Covid, Sarawak had 4.6 million tourists and

I think by next year or two, the Indian market will be able to double these figures. When people meet other people is when really business begins to happen."

Sharing his focus areas, **Dato' Sri Dr Anil Jeet Singh Sandhu**, Deputy Chairman, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, said, "Hopefully, whatever target my minister has set, will be met after this convention. For the first time, I saw so many Indian travellers flying domestic in Malaysia, and it was a happy sight. Now, we want Indian travellers to explore Borneo. The Sarawak Tourism Board has started tapping the India market and they have spent lots of efforts and money for this.

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'Be a specialist to be on top'

Zubin Karkaria, Founder & CEO, VFS Global, suggests that one should always choose a space where they are a market leader, where their core competency lies and where they can add more value. Find your niche, he advises the travel trade!



When the time came for Zubin Karkaria, Founder & CEO, VFS Global, to choose a path at Kuoni Travel, he chose visas and decided to lead VFS Global. Speaking about exploring alternative revenue options, he is of the opinion that one should always stick to what one does best. "People are looking for specialists. If you do everything for everyone, you will remain average. If you focus on one thing and do it well, that will work. Choose where you are the market leader and where your core competency lies and where you can add more value. It is difficult to let go of large operations, but if you have the courage to do, let go and find your niche. You will serve your customer and your business well," he says.

To emphasise his point, Zakaria adds, "The travel agents' role will continue to be important. While booking travel online will con-

tinue to be popular as well, there will always be some segments such as families who will rely on the travel agent to book and feel



Zubin Karkaria
Founder & CEO
VFS Global

secure about their holiday. I still go to a specialist while booking a holiday. They will inform clients whether a particular hotel is good for children, or how far it is from the airport, or are there nice restaurants around the hotel."

Post-pandemic trend

People are ready to go the extra mile today and travel, says Karkaria. "Having said that, I feel

there is not one type of Indian traveller. There are so many different kinds of travellers. But I do see the trend that they have started booking their journeys slightly in advance. Families need to overlap their holidays based on school holidays. This is mostly to destinations where they feel they may face a capacity crunch or they will be paying more if they book later. For instance, Kenya is facing a huge capacity crunch this year, and you will not find a single camp available. Travellers in India have started booking much in advance today. We also see this trend in terms of applying for visas," he explains.

Visa challenges

Touching a hot topic – visa applications – Karkaria is open about the issue. "The visa challenges that we witness is a factor of demand and supply. The demand suddenly surged and there was a lag between things opening up and visa issuance. And that should be sorted out soon," he says.

Trained manpower is also a problem that the industry at large is facing right now. "There is definitely a shortage of skilled staff. When people were let go during the pandemic, they found opportunities in other segments like hospitality industry or airlines.

People are looking for specialists. If you do everything for everyone, you will remain average

Over the two years when numbers were down, we did over 200-300 programmes for our staff for skill development. We wanted to keep them occupied. Not only in customer service or

skill improvement, but also things like soft skills or cooking or even mental health. Over 2,000-3,000 VFS staff would sign up for these online training," Karkaria says.

VFS Global, he says, spent a lot of money encouraging travellers to go online as it speeds up things. "We invested in technology – where VFS staff can process visas at the clients' homes or offices. Today, we are at the same capacity as we were pre-pandemic, in terms of infrastructure and human resources. We could not reduce our infrastructure, so we are still capable of processing 32 million applications even today as we did in 2019. We are still at 60 per cent of 2019 numbers," he shares.

VFA Global is also focused on ESG (environmental, social, and governance) – especially in terms of women diversity. It has signed a pledge for higher women ratio – today it has over 58 per cent women in VFS Global.

In Numbers

200-300 programmes VFS organised for its staff to develop skills

2K-3K VFS employees would sign up for the online training

32 million applications VFS capable of processing at present

60% of 2019 numbers VFS is at present

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States get ready for G20

It was a no-brainer that the recent National Conference of State Tourism Ministers was to prepare everyone for India's upcoming G20 Presidency, for which events will begin starting 2023. While such a conference used to be an annual feature in Ministry of Tourism's (MOT's) calendar pre-COVID, but now it has been held on a bigger scale with everyone descending to Dharamshala for three days. Team MOT was full of vigour and was assisted by Niti Aayog to put the event together, which was organised at the behest of the Prime Minister himself—another sign that India needs to pull up its socks for G20.

Many state tourism ministers showed up at the event and did both open-door and closed-door meetings with Union Minister of Tourism & Culture, G Kishan Reddy and other MOT officials. Even Secretaries and Directors of Tourism from various states turned up. All of them made their presentations with full fervour and showcased both their assets and challenges. The highlight was the fact that all these states know how to present themselves, not only at a local platform, but also internationally. However, is India using this content to its optimum? Some of the stakeholders pointed this out too.

With 215 meetings at 55 destinations across India, G20 Presidency will be the litmus test for India's MICE and destination potential. If a country pushes to reach a new height with a global event, the effect lasts long. Delhi's facelift during Commonwealth Games is an example of how infrastructure creation makes the lives of locals and tourists easy. Although there is always scope for more.

The thrust, as the minister pointed out, should be on infrastructure development and creating the right buzz about the state, with the products making sure that the tourists or delegates are not disappointed. As Amitabh Kant puts it, every state needs to find its own niche and play accordingly. The underline message was for everyone to work together. May be it was the first step in that direction.

We, while watching from the sidelines, only support the initiative and hope that India becomes that tourism superpower, which was intended through the conference and is a treat for international as well as domestic tourists.

Indians look forward to festive season

The festive season (September to November) has become one of the most eagerly awaited in recent years. After the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, tourism activity is picking up again, as travellers' desire for new destinations and experiences increases.



At the head of the festival season, tourism activity is picking up again, as travellers' desire for new destinations and new experiences increases once again.

This is suggested by search data from KAYAK.co.in, the world's leading travel search engine, which has analysed flight searches for the 2022 festive season travel period. The data shows flight searches from airports in India have increased by about 118 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels. International flight searches have increased by about 143 per cent and domestic flight searches have increased by about 91 per cent. Indian travellers do not appear to be deterred by higher flight prices either, which compared to 2019 have increased by about 38 per cent for international flights and by about 39 per cent for domestic flights. The average cost

co.in. In addition to flight interest surpassing pre-pandemic levels, we have also seen searches for hotels surpass that of 2019," said **Tarun Tahliani**, India Country Manager, KAYAK.

The data analysis reveals the travel trends for Indians to enjoy this festive season period, including how their travel habits and where they are heading this year, as well as the inbound tourism trends shaping the festive season 2022.

Search insights over the festive travel period:

❖ **Hotel searches up:** Hotel searches by Indian travellers have increased by about 34 per cent compared to 2019, with domestic hotel searches increased about 98 per cent.

❖ **Hotel prices up slightly:** International prices for one night in

Search insights for top destinations for Indian travellers

Dubai remains the most searched destination for festive season travel, while Bangkok, London and Singapore also feature high on the list. Goa was the most searched domestic destination followed by New Delhi and Mumbai.

10 most searched flight destinations on KAYAK.co.in for the festive season	Average % increase in international flight searches during the festive travel period compared to same period in 2019	Average price for return international economy flight in the travel period	Average % price increase for return economy flight for the travel period compared to same period in 2019
Dubai, United Arab Emirates	765%	₹26,019	33%
Bangkok, Thailand	164%	₹23,798	38%
Goa, India	191%	₹10,709	41%
New Delhi, India	85%	₹10,586	32%
London, United Kingdom	180%	₹80,679	57%
Singapore	167%	₹25,414	18%
Bali, Indonesia	113%	₹39,808	38%
Malé, the Maldives	334%	₹24,887	37%
New York, United States	157%	₹105,661	54%
Mumbai, India	92%	₹8,252	24%

There is significant interest in Indian travellers visiting domestic locations with six out of the top 10 most searched hotel destinations in India.

❖ **Longer domestic trips:** The average trip duration, according to flight search data, is about 6 days in 2022 (increasing by a day compared to 2019).

Search insights on inbound travel to India over the festive season:

The United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Qatar, New Zealand, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia are the top nations that support inbound tourism to India according to flight searches.

Inbound travellers have shown a preference for major Indian cities, with the most searched hotels being New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad.

Inbound tourists can expect about a 31 per cent increase in return economy flight costs to India compared to the same period in 2019, and to find hotels in India for about 10 per cent more per night in a double room in a 3-4 star hotel during the travel period.



of a return economy domestic flight during the festive period is about ₹8,585, and about ₹56,332 for a return international economy flight.

"The stars are aligned for Indians to take that much-awaited trip as restrictions worldwide are eased or removed entirely, just in time for the country's festive period to set in. It appears that Indian travellers are making up for lost time and are more willing to travel than before the pandemic, according to the number of searches carried out on KAYAK.

a double room in 3-4 star hotel international hotel rooms have increased by about 22 per cent compared to 2019 for Indian users, and for domestic hotel rooms by about 25 per cent.

❖ **Shorter international trips:** Although searches indicate Indian travellers will be travelling more this festive season, the duration of their vacations looks to be shorter than in 2019 for international travel at 24 days (decreasing about 13 per cent on 2019), based on flight search data.

Key highlights

- ❖ Flight searches for this festive season increased about 118 per cent compared to those made in 2019, despite flight prices increasing about 62 per cent
- ❖ Goa leads the ranking of the most sought-after domestic destination for flight searches this festive season, whilst Dubai, Bangkok and London are the most popular international cities to visit
- ❖ Americans, Brits, Canadians and Aussies lead searches for inbound travel to India



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Gearing up for G20 opportunities

With a Global MICE Conference scheduled during India's G20 Presidency next year, the idea is to use the opportunity to position India's tourism offerings, and MICE is one segment where India needs to do a lot, opines Rakesh Verma Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

TT Bureau

The National Conference of State Tourism Ministers used to be an annual event. However, after 2019, because of the pandemic, this was disrupted. "The National Conference of State Tourism Ministers held recently in Dharamshala was the first physical meeting after the pandemic and the key agenda was to look at the future of tourism, what policies need to be pursued and how do we create a shared vision for 2047 for tourism sector," shares **Rakesh Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

"The three days of deliberations, which were across various themes, will help us understand what the challenges are, how states have taken initiatives and met those challenges, and how do we build a national level policy framework, which can help tourism sector to grow and develop,"

he said, speaking on the sidelines of the conference.

Strong tourism policy

He said that the summary of the conference will be incorporated into the National Tourism Policy. "Each session was structured around a particular theme, which is relevant for tourism. Thus, whatever points and recommendations come as part of these sessions, will be used to draw policies, initiatives and ensure if there are any corrections required in the existing scheme. These deliberations will be useful, and they will be fully utilised for us to chalk out the plans, and to build new schemes," he informed.

Nidhi 2.0

Sharing the update on Nidhi scheme, he said, "We now have Nidhi 2.0, where we have expanded our platform beyond hotels and we will include tour operators, other tourism

service providers, various quality certifications, feedback from the users about their experiences with tourism service providers and general feedback. The platform is now maturing. We have now tested it with almost all state



Rakesh Verma
Additional Secretary
Ministry of Tourism

governments and about 20 state governments have now been brought on that platform."

"It will act as a prototype for our national digital tourism mission,

which is going to be a much bigger vision, to create this kind of digital ecosystem for tourism sectors in the country. It is now evolving and helping us conceptualise the much bigger national digital tourism mission," he added.

Global MICE Conference

"There is a lot of potential, but we have not got our market share. This global conference that we are planning with particular focus on G20 countries, will be putting the best foot forward by telling what all is always available in the country in terms of MICE infrastructure, MICE specialties, and MICE ecosystem. A lot of new things are happening and the Ministry has recently unveiled a strategy for MICE tourism and a National MICE Board has been set up. It is an inter-ministerial board to help us coordinate policies, take decisions and help us support the MICE. It was a very

important conference and we look forward to it to position India as a serious MICE destination," he said

Incentivising MICE

When asked if India would follow suit with countries offering MICE

for MICE specifically to attract that business to India."

Also, he added that the idea is not only to look at business events but also look at social events. "It goes without saying that when you are building destinations for MICE, we are also including social events and keeping that in mind. We will help in positioning our destinations for wedding and social events," he said.

Overseas promotions

He shared that they are now setting up the National Tourism Promotion Board. "It will execute these promotional schemes. Soon, that scheme in its new form will be put in place, which will help us in re-energising and relaunching our overseas promotional campaign. As part of our strategy, we are targeting different markets for different products in the context of India's overseas and inbound traffic," he said.

The Ministry of Tourism has recently unveiled a strategy for MICE tourism, and a National MICE Board has been set up

incentives, Verma said, "As part of our overseas marketing promotion scheme that we are restructuring, we will have support

Long weekends are trending again

Bookings for long weekends were on the rise before the pandemic, but not all leisure hotels were sold out. However, after the two-year of hiatus, now long weekend phenomenon is enabling the market to skyrocket. Hoteliers discuss how most hotels are sold out on long weekend days.

TT Bureau

The onset of the pandemic brought to light the hidden gems of domestic tourism, and the concept of staycations saw an exponential increase in popularity. "Travellers are now more eager than ever to embark on a journey away from the hustle and bustle of daily city life. There is a strong inclination among travellers to book getaways at luxurious properties at drivable distances, where they can immerse themselves in the utmost rejuvenation through unparalleled hospitality and services," says **Rajiv Kapoor**, General Manager Fairmont Jaipur.

"After being couped up inside homes for nearly two years, the demand for travel is soaring, and people are incredibly willing to spend on getaways. The feeling of making the most of the present has been reinforced by the various lockdowns, and the tourism and hospitality industries are seeing numbers



Rajiv Kapoor
General Manager
Fairmont Jaipur

After being couped up inside homes for nearly two years due to COVID, the demand for travel is soaring

higher than ever. This puts hotels in an impeccable spot to cater to an influx of travellers and go above and beyond with their innovations and offerings," Kapoor adds.



Paritosh Ladhani
Executive Director
Sincere Developers.

Owing to the pandemic's two years of hiatus, long weekends are when everyone ventures out

All-Encompassing Experience Paritosh Ladhani, Executive Director, Sincere Developers, says "Due to the pandemic's two years of hiatus, long weekends

are when everyone ventures out. The Taj Hotel & Convention Centre Agra has sold out all long weekends in the new normal. We are



Sharad K Upadhyay
General Manager
Crowne Plaza Greater Noida

Business travellers are mixing leisure and business together, which was sparked by the easing of norms

seeing high ARRs in addition to high occupancies. Even on weekdays, the higher room rates have seen a spillover effect."



Shaariq Akhtar
General Manager
ITC Kohenuur

Blurring the lines between business and leisure travel has given impetus to what hoteliers call 'bleisure'

Making most of long weekends Sharad K Upadhyay, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, says, "We are observing strong leisure demand for the holiday weekends. Business travellers are increasingly mixing leisure and business together, which was sparked by the easing of travel restrictions. People want to make the most of these long weekends and are continuously looking for a quick and short respite from their monotonous lives."

Long weekend travel is here stay Shaariq Akhtar, General Manager, ITC Kohenuur, says, "Indefinite remote work has changed the travel landscape forever. We have noticed an influx in long weekend travel across the globe. Blurring the lines between business and leisure travel has given impetus to what hoteliers call 'bleisure'. Further, remote workers are now opting to take longer trips during festive periods owing to location flexibility."

Cordelia Cruises celebrates 1 year

As Cordelia Cruises completes one year of sailing, it celebrates the occasion with all its trade partners who have been a part of this incredible journey. 'It is a proud feeling to have been a part of this milestone,' says Oneel Verma, COO, Cordelia Cruises, who shares more with **TRAVELTALK**.

TT Bureau

What are your thoughts on the one-year success story of Cordelia Cruises in India?

It is a proud feeling to have been a part of this milestone. Our goal for the Indian market was to carve a niche for domestic cruising and educate our guests and travel partners on domestic sailing and also the fact that it was time we had our very own Indian cruising experience. The response we have received from the West coast and East coast has been truly encouraging. With 100+ sailings and 100,000+ guests in the past one year, we are now more determined than ever to keep marching forward, and keep improving.

Tell us a little about the upcoming festive sailings.

Cordelia Cruises is Indian at heart and what can be more special than recommencing our Mumbai sailings with the auspicious

Navratri celebrations. We are thrilled to share everything that we have lined up for our guests for the festive season. We commence the festivities with Navratri celebrations, which will then be followed



Oneel Verma
COO, Cordelia Cruises

by Diwali, special screenings for the T20 World Cup, FIFA World Cup and wrapping 2022 with our Christmas Carnival!

With Cordelia Cruises, we are constantly working towards grander celebrations, which are unique. We hope to present a

wholesome cruising experience to guests and without a doubt, keeping intact the soul and flavour of India. Everything from the shows, food, infrastructure and everything at Cordelia Cruises is deeply rooted in India.

Are there any special offers that your travel partners can look forward to?

Travel partners are an integral part of the journey ever since our inauguration. We are constantly working towards expressing our gratitude towards our travel partners in the form of special offers, value additions, sharing learnings and much more. The ultimate goal is to work in sync with travel partners and arrive at a juncture that is educating more and more people on cruising and helping them experience an international level cruising with the homegrown flavour intact. To achieve this, we are working in close conjunction with our partners.



Tell us about the First Meet with the first business meet with the travel partners that happened last month.

As Cordelia Cruises completes one year of sailing, with a grateful heart, we wanted to celebrate this moment with everyone who has been a part of this incredible journey.

Travel partners being a vital part of this journey, we wanted to celebrate this milestone with them.

The event made it possible for us to share a better understanding of the product with our travel partners and to understand their perspectives better. We had a session where all the members from Cordelia Cruises and the Travel partners came together and discussed the journey so far, challenges from both ends and our plans. For the travel partners this event has been like a learning experience to get a better understanding of the business and func-

tionality of the ship. The idea here is to figure out the best way to collectively promote domestic cruising in India. One of the key highlights was how Cordelia Cruises has brought in Domestic cruising in India and how it is so different from international cruising experi-

At the celebratory programme, members from Cordelia Cruises and travel partners discussed the journey so far

ence. The two-day event ended with a small award ceremony wherein the travel partners were felicitated by Cordelia Cruises for their support.

OTOAI members meet in Delhi

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), in association with Mauritius Tourism and Expedia, organised a meeting for its members at Aerocity in Delhi on 17 September 2022. Rupinder Brar, former Additional Director General (ADG) – Tourism, was the Special Chief Guest at the event. Air Vistara and Accor also joined the event as partners.



Experience Jal Mahotsav

to give yourself an adrenaline rush

One of the largest water carnivals in India 'Jal Mahotsav' is all set to host you to experience adventure activities and beautiful tent city of Hanuwantiya in Madhya Pradesh



If you are planning an adventure-packed vacation with full of fun then Hanuwantiya Island in Khandwa District of Madhya Pradesh is the place that you should add in your bucket list this time. One of India's longest Watercation presented by Madhya Pradesh Tourism, 'Jal Mahotsav' is a combination of food, art, nature, culture and adventure where you can experience clear skies, sparkling blue water and the thrill of scuba diving, bumper boats and much more.

This picturesque destination awaits your presence for 'Jal Mahotsav', the festival which will commence in the last week of November 2022 and will go on till the last week of January 2023. A watercation to Jal Mahotsav has all the elements to give a boost to your body, mind, and spirit.

It offers an array of adventure activities organised at nature's

paradise Hanuwantiya. Located on the banks of Indira Sagar Dam (India's largest reservoir), this is a perfect holiday destination for spending an exciting vacation with your loved ones.

At Jal Mahotsav, you can start your day with the golden rays of the rising sun lighting up the tent city, followed by a delicious breakfast and beautiful Mediterranean blue water views to admire.



The heart of
Incredible India

What to see and do

At Jal Mahotsav, visitors can enjoy adventure activities based on land, air, or water.

Air and water activities: The major attraction of this festival are air and water activities, which include windsurfing, water parasailing, water zorbing, jet-skiing, speed boat ride, cruise boat ride, paramotoring, banana boat ride, hot air balloon ride, zip line and more.

Land-based activities: Yoga camp, wellness and spa, cycling, volleyball, archery, tug of war, climbing, kite-flying, bull carting and other activities in adventure



zone. One can also go for nature walks, cycle around the island, and visit the local villages. Food zone, craft bazaar, stargazing, island camping and experiencing melody of folk, classical and pop music and dance will keep you going throughout the festival.

Other attractions

Apart from these amazing activities, Khandwa District has several other tourist attractions as well, which include Nagchun dam, Ghantaghar, Omkareshwar

At Jal Mahotsav, you can start your day with the golden rays of the rising sun lighting up the tent city, followed by a hearty breakfast

Jyotirlinga, Tulija Bhavani temple, Indira Sagar Dam and Sailani Island. Also, it is a must-visit place for nature enthusiasts, as they can

indulge in bird watching, trekking, and night camping.

Way to Hanuwantiya

If you are already making plans and wondering how to get here, the nearest airport is Indore, around 3 hours away from the Madhya Dweep islands where Hanuwantiya is located. If you are travelling by rail, you need to get off at Khandwa, 50 km away. And if you prefer the road, then Hanuwantiya is well connected to Indore, Bhopal and Khandwa.

For booking visit:
www.jalmahotsav.com

Sudesh Poddar re-elected as President of Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India

Physical roadshows in foreign countries by MOT is the need of the hour: Rajiv Mehra

Global Panorama Showcase announces its 9th edition for 2022-23 across 10 cities

'We need effective PPPs in tourism for inclusive recovery': UNWTO Secretary-General

Skill management programme should be conducted for locals without charges: PP Khanna

Outbound Asian tourists to reach pre-pandemic levels by 2024, predicts Agoda

Gol mulling pilot project for GST refund to foreign tourists, says Arvind Singh

Clarks Hotels & Resorts opens in Sri Lanka

UDAN 5.0 to connect 54 new places, wildlife sanctuaries and spiritual spots

'Landmark convention for Sarawak'

▶ Contd from page 3

Regarding the visa issue that is always flagged to us, we are pushing for multi-entry visas as well as visa on arrival directly from India." Currently, VoA is available only for passengers coming from a third country.

B2B session

Tourism Malaysia also conducted a B2B between Indian buyers and Malaysian sellers. About 108 sellers from all over Malaysia took part in wooing the potential new clientele among more than 450 buyers from India representing more than 240 companies. The Malaysian sellers consisted of 33 travel agents, 17 product owners, 37 hotels and resorts, one airline, seven hospitality-related associations, 6 state representatives among others.

With the tagline 'Build Back Better', the convention discussed sustainability, advanced greening efforts, conservation and responsible tourism during its sessions. Several key speakers shared their insights and experiences with the audience on steering into the new post-pandemic world. "Malaysia has

everything for everyone, be it an outdoor adventure, a luxurious retreat, or a shopping spree of our finest arts and crafts. We also share a lot of similarities with India in terms of culture, tradition, and cuisine, which is why Malaysia is among the favourite



destinations for Indian tourists," said Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia.

Bringing forth a series of pre and post tours, Dato' Sri Nancy also expressed her appreciation to the participating tourism associations and products, including the Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA), Batik Air, TTA Johor Tourism, Desaru Coast, Holiday Inn Johor Bharu City Center, Trinidad Suite Puteri Harbour, Ibis Hotel Kuala Lumpur, Resort World Genting, Tourism Selangor, Sunway Lagoon, Sunway Resort Kuala Lumpur, Penang Global Tourism (PGT), Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), Tropical Charters

Langkawi, Lexis Hibiscus, Sabah Tourism Board, and WebBeds.

In 2019, the Indian market contributed 735,309 arrivals (22 per cent of total arrivals) to the country. Sharing her views on the convention, **Yin May Lau**, Group Chief Marketing & Customer Experience Officer- Malaysia Airlines, said, "Since its inception, TAFI has shown true commitment towards creating a more evolved and stable environment for the travel industry. We are delighted to be the official carrier for TAFI Convention 2022. Our travel agents play a key role in supporting the recovery of the sector, and we truly appreciate the great lengths they have taken, especially as travel demands continue to soar. We look forward to continue offering our support and strengthening these partnerships for many more years to come. We are happy to fly travel agents across India to our home country, Malaysia, for the TAFI Convention. India has always been an impor-



Dato' Sri Dr Anil Jeet Singh Sandhu
Deputy Chairman, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board



Yin May Lau
Group Chief Marketing & Customer Experience Officer - Malaysia Airlines

For the first time, I saw so many Indian travellers flying domestic in Malaysia, and it was a happy sight

TAFI has shown true commitment towards creating a more evolved and stable environment for the travel industry

tant market for Malaysia Airlines and we are hopeful that through this association and convention, our agent partners would be encouraged to promote Malay-

sia Airlines to their customers and help create more leisure demand for Kuching, Sarawak, and other Malaysia destinations in the near future."

The domestic aviation industry continues to witness recovery with passenger traffic for August 2022 estimated at 102 lakh, 5 per cent higher compared to 97 lakh in July 2022 and 52 per cent higher in comparison to the domestic passenger traffic in August 2021.

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Overseas marketing a must

With tourism industry recovering fast worldwide, it is time state tourism authorities in India focus on overseas marketing strategies to help inbound players get more tourists, suggest industry experts.

“As far as the state governments are concerned, many of them have declared industry status for the tourism industry, so that is one of the important steps. Secondly, we have been requesting state governments to also participate in the international fairs, at least take the players in that state with them to educate them about the product. We have also requested that the state governments should take 10 to 20 per cent of main tour operators from other states, especially from Delhi or Mumbai, with them to help them understand the offerings of other states. Roadshows within India and abroad is a must.”



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO



Ravi Gosain
Vice President, IATO

“State tourism is an integral part of industry, I can say because most of our members and tour operators are selling their state tourism to them. They should work more closely with IATO and other national associations that have their members in each and every state. So, when they are going on international platforms for marketing and promotions, they should also take in cognizance of IATO and its members. I hope they will take this action. We have been in touch with many state tourism departments and they are working towards building product knowledge. They are doing lots of product study tours for our members, which, I believe, is very important after two years of shutdown.”

“We have been requesting Ministry of Tourism on a lot of issues lately. Number one is overseas physical roadshows, so that people after a gap of more than two and a half years can go to the tourism generating markets and new markets as well. This way we can talk to the operators there, create a buzz in the media, and get the people to India. Currently, we are doing virtual roadshows, which are not giving the desired results. So, this is one of the most important things that we are pushing the government to do it for us at the Ministry of Tourism. The other concern is TCS that has been almost resolved.”



Rajnish Kaistha
Honorary Secretary, IATO

Compiled by Janice Alyosius

Mediterranean as a City - Valencia

Continuing with its series of webinars to help the travel trade discover Spain, the Tourism Office of Spain – Mumbai, along with Valencia Tourism, recently conducted a webinar titled ‘Know Valencia’.



TT Bureau

A place full of contrasts awaits the visitor with a charming old town next to futuristic buildings. This is Valencia, one of Spain's most welcoming cities. Beyond the cultural effervescence of its cities, a stroll is always a good idea,

or bathing at its Mediterranean beaches. Of course, you must try the star dish, paella (true authenticity!) and other delicacies such as clams or tiger nut milk.

Valencia is located on Spain's eastern coast, on the shores of the Mediterranean – a stretch of water which has gradually forged

the city's character over the centuries. Valencia's location makes it an excellent operational base from which to explore the rest of Spain. At just an hour and a half from Madrid by train, three hours from Barcelona by car, and with daily departures to the Balearic Islands, the capital of the Mediterranean is well worth

a visit. Bask in the city's pleasant climate, stroll along its wide sandy beaches, just 15 minutes from the centre of Valencia, catch a glimpse of its past, sample the local cuisine and discover the richness of its culture.

Any time is a good time to visit Valencia, although if there is one

day that is even more special than the rest, it's 19th March, when they celebrate the famous Fallas by burning gigantic 'card-board sculptures'. Its Mediterranean light, mild climate and the bewitching fire make this a city you'll want to stay in.

WINNERS SPEAK

Congratulations to the two Winners of Spain Specialist Program (SSP) - Know Valencia Quiz held on September 6, 2022. They take away a five-day trip to Valencia (inclusive of international airfare) in November 2022.



Dorothy Albuquerque
Travco Holidays

“It is rightly said hard earned joys are the sweetest. I have been selling and promoting Spain for little over 20 years but a first time to enroll for the Spain Specialist Programme (SSP) to know in-depth about Spain, post which I have actually won a trip to Spain, how exciting! A programme worth enrolling to enhance your skills and improve your selling efficiency. SSP is a well-curated programme, which is simple, engaging and exciting, giving you in-depth knowledge about Spain, its regions and topography. The SSP programme enforces the rich regional culture, the magnificent monuments, museums, churches, architectures, efficient transportation, traditional festivities, and many more exciting topics about Spain, making you fall in love with the country.”



Mekhla Chandra
Away&Co

“The webinar held on 6th September 2022 for Valencia region of Spain was informative and covered all that one needs to know before travelling. The question and answer session was very interactive and it gave the audience a chance to clarify their doubts. There is so much more to Valencia than I knew before this webinar. Moreover, the frequent reminders by the DDP team that organised the webinar were helpful and I did not miss it. The Spain Specialist Program (SSP) is excellent. It has everything that one needs to know about Spain – right from gastronomy, history, geographical locations, sports, events and festivals – of Spain. It is very comprehensive, user friendly and fun with all the quiz questions. It is one of the best tools for any travel agent selling Spain.”

(Advertorial)



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Showcasing a tourist-friendly Korea

KTO India organised a week-long Grand FAM Trip for the outbound travel agencies to Seoul in Korea. More than a dozen travel agencies participated in the trip, in which B2B meetings were held with nine DMCs and the travel trade was informed that South Korea was fully open for the tourists. Asiana Airlines was the airlines partner for the trip.



Connectivity next step in travel world

Next Cellular, a division of South African multinational cellular operator Next360, has tied up with Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) to distribute its services through B2B channels across India, offering agents to earn through ancillary services by providing SIM cards to the clients.

TT Bureau

Sharing details about Next Cellular, **Jignesh Dave**, Founder & CEO, Next Cellular, said, "We have a global presence in 35 countries. From our global travel perspective, we are using India as a distribution hub. At Next Cellular, our vision is to make it simple for global travellers by providing them seamless connectivity and the product should be available at their arms reach. In India, we go through a three-tier distribution, wherein Tier I would be the primary distribution, where we have partnered with Global Panorama Showcase (GPS), which will be our regional business partner going forward exclusively for the India market. Then under GPS, we will be creating a distribution network where we will have channel partners, who would be the B2B travel agents, destination manager, or those B2B travel agents who have a pool of B2C travel agents under them."

All about convenience

He said that the company wants basic connectivity to be free for a global traveller. "From a thought leadership perspective, we would like to add connectivity to the bouquet of products for travel agents in the industry where they get another avenue for revenue. Thus, it's another weapon in their arsenal to take the business further and that is where our partnership with GPS comes in. We have confidence in each other's partnership, where we will bring the market fit product," he added.

Harmandeep Singh Anand, MD, GPS, shared more details about the partnership and the distribution system. "It's a three-tier partnership and GPS would be right at the top. We are planning to appoint close to 150 channel partners across all the 29 States and 7 Union Territories of India. Below each of the channel partners we are expecting about 50 authorised resellers. Thus, it will be a completely B2B solution that



Jignesh Dave
Founder & CEO
NextCellular, a division of Next360



Harmandeep Singh Anand
Managing Director
GPS

Our vision is to make it simple for global travellers by providing them seamless connectivity

we bring to the market. The aim is to have everyone within the loop. If a consumer goes on the Next Cellular site and wants a product, they will get the list of all autho-

It will be a completely B2B solution. The aim is to have everyone within the loop

rised resellers nearby and decide from where to get the service. Thus, instead of going directly, when the consumer approaches the website or our team directly,

we will get them to the closest reseller to their location," he said.

Talking about product in terms of the consumer, Dave said, "For a traveller, we are almost 60 per cent cheaper than current roaming rates in India, which is a pre-arrival market. We are a local network in the destination market, which means we are a competitive product as compared to any other local network that one can find in the destination country. We are focusing on convenience, because before you travel, you have got the SIM card connected and we now have launched E-SIM technology as well, where one does not even need a plastic SIM card. A SIM card can be delivered via WhatsApp and one doesn't even need to wait for a courier or a plastic SIM card to pick up. We will use E-SIM is to disrupt this market and democratise travel industry using telecommunications. Connectivity is not just a leisure while travelling. It's an essential."

In Numbers

150 channel partners
GPS is planning to appoint across 29 States and 7 Union Territories of India

35 countries Next Cellular has presence

60% cheaper Next Cellular roaming rates will for travellers than roaming current rates in India

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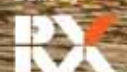
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Oman's Mumbai event bang on target

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman, conducted in a five-city roadshow in India from 22 to 29 August 2022 to showcase Oman as a destination with unique experiences for tourists. Apart from New Delhi and Ahmedabad, the roadshow conducted in Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru also evoked good response.



B'luru roadshow sees good response



Tourism revival to generate jobs: Singh

▶ Contd from page 3

discussions at the conference will form recommendations that, in turn, will form policy actions by the state governments as well as the national government, which will revitalise the sector further. Secondly, it would result in a healthy competition among states to adopt similar policies to attract tourism. Thirdly, we wanted to sensitise the states because of the ensuing G20 Presidency of India starting next year, which will see 55 destinations hosting 215 meetings. We want the states to be sensitised about the expectations and how do we give a unique Indian experience to the delegates who come to all these sessions and the G20 meetings from January 2023.”

He added, “We all want tourism to be a national priority and the central and state governments should work in tandem as one team to deliver this focus. For that, we want to come out with strategies after our deliberations, which will determine the future of the tourism sector in the country. We need to work on the same page and think



Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, at the National Conference of Tourism Ministers.

along the same lines. This is important given that we are in the process of revival of tourism after the devastating impact of the pandemic.”

When states meet each other, there is a sharing of experiences. “What is being done in Kashmir may not be relevant for Mizoram, but there is a lot to learn. The best practices of one state can be seen by other states for emulation and for improvement. I am sure the ideas shared in the conference have ignited the minds of state representatives, which they can go back and implement in their states,” he said.

Taking inspiration for G20

He claimed that we should use the G20 Presidency to project the strong cases of our nation and showcase the country to the global leaders, who come here from the G20 economies, which control the major part of world GDP. “If we are successful in doing that, I am sure it would transform our tourism sector to the next level. The state government representatives are aware about most of the meetings and are working with MEA to decide the venues in terms of logistics, connectivity, availability of convention space, and other such facilities in the state,” said Singh

Strong tourism policy

He claimed that the conference gave an opportunity to take stock and move in one direction. “It gave an idea of the priorities,

Discussions will form recommendations that, in turn, will form policy actions by the national and state governments

reflection of which will also be seen in the National Tourism Policy, which will be shortly unveiled. It will go to the cabinet before that. I think all the states are now on the same page as the central government, which was one of the main themes because we had not had any discussions physically in the last two years, thanks to the pandemic, as most of our discussions were online,” he opined.

Overseas promotions

Speaking on physical promotional events in foreign markets, Singh shared, “Hopefully we should start shortly. We will start physical activities and we are hoping that the WTM London will be the first event where it would restart.”

Take away

According to Singh, the takeaway of the convention is that we work hard to take India tourism to pre-pandemic levels and we are already seeing a strong revival in

the domestic tourism sector. “We should take it up further, take it to pre-pandemic levels and hopefully do all that is required including promotion to attract more foreign tourists into India,” he suggested.

Dharamshala declaration

The conference ended with a document being released by the MOT, called the Dharamshala Declaration 2022, which set the tone of the goal the conference was set to achieve as a result of the discussions during the three days. ↵

Highlights of Dharamshala Declaration

- ❖ The National Tourism Policy has been drafted with a holistic vision and strategy to revive India’s Tourism and targets to achieve \$1 trillion by the sector by 2047.
- ❖ Ministry is also paving the way for developing responsible and sustainable tourism destinations.
- ❖ The Government of India will continue to support MSMEs in tourism and capitalise on the employment generation potential in the sector.
- ❖ India plans to position itself as a major tourism destination during its Presidency of G20 for 2023.
- ❖ India will strive to recover to pre-pandemic levels by mid-2024.

Jetting through COVID with ease

Charter industry is witnessing a new dawn after COVID struck the world. Right from panic travel, to medical transfers, to corporate travel coming back and now inbound queries increasing, the industry is catering to it all. Santosh Sharma shares details and stresses on why technology is the best way forward.

TT Bureau

Santosh Sharma, Co-founder & CEO - Foresee Aviation and Founder, BookMyJet, shared that as far as travel trade is concerned, they have a lot of queries coming in for inbound movements, not just from big travel agencies, but also from medium and small travel agencies. “There are confirmations coming for March to May 2023 as well. Thus, we are reconnecting with all the travel partners. We are talking to them, having informal and formal meetings, and trying to tell them what is happening, what are the new aircraft and updating them as a lot has changed in civil aviation in the last two years,” he added.

He also informed that as far as BookMyJet is concerned, they have completed one year successfully. “We are in the second year and now integrating more features on our app. We have our tech team in place and a



Santosh Sharma
Co-founder & CEO - Foresee Aviation
and Founder, BookMyJet

beautiful office. Thus, we are integrating new things in the app. In times to come, we will have a lot of international aircraft on the app too,” he said.

Sailing through COVID

Sharma said that the pandemic proved to be a boon to the aviation business. “On 25 May 2020, when the airports were opened for charters, there were many queries coming to office. Many people and corporate houses were travelling and majority of our client were first timers. Even today about 32 per

cent of them have remained and are still chartering. Around 60-68 per cent people have gone back to commercial. Out of the 32 per cent people who stuck around, there are many who are deliberating on buying their own private jet. We are already working on four deals right now. I have never seen something like this happening. Overall, while we lost a lot of things during COVID, as far as business is concerned, it came as a boom for our industry. We survived very strongly,” he informed.

Also, he informed, during COVID, most of the movement was for leisure, panic travel or medical travel. “However, post-COVID, the leisure movement has slightly gone down compared to business. So post-pandemic, all the travelling that has happened, 60 per cent is business and 30 per cent is more for leisure—people who have gone to Maldives, Goa, Dubai, Bahrain and Europe. 10 per cent of people

are ad hoc travellers. Also, many inbound tourists are coming to India now. They have started making bookings, which is good

There are confirmations for March to May 2023 as well. Thus, we are reconnecting with all the travel partners

news for the travel fraternity. Also, there are medical flights happening around the year,” added Sharma.

Domestic rise

Sharma said that when the international borders were closed, people started exploring India. “They wanted to take the family along, apart from business travel. There were people who never

chartered in the last 15 years, but during COVID they chartered a lot. People are travelling and do not shy away from taking bigger planes as well,” he said.

Inbound returning

For inbound, he revealed that they recognised the problem that FTOs wanted faster time to get details for their queries. “Hence, we trained over 68 travel agencies, gave them FAQs, and other details for charters to handle some basic questions, so that they could counter those questions. This increased our business. We were also continuously in touch with them and even suggested them regarding itineraries. Instead of a vendor, we work as a partner. Today, not just the Golden Triangle, people want to go to some smaller places. We have received many off-beat queries. Most importantly, the government has made many airports operational, which allows us to operate aircraft to all the small airports,” he said.

BookMyJet right in time

Saying that the world is moving towards technology, Sharma claimed, “Our industry still does not have working technology. Around 2018, we started working on this, especially the problems that our clients and operators are facing. The biggest problem with the operators is the under-utilisation of their fleet. Secondly, if the clients who are sitting in Tier II and Tier III cities, want to fly charter and there is no base. Thus, BookMyJet was created. Through this technology platform, you can see the helicopter and aircraft availability across India, on a real-time basis,” he explained.

Expansion on cards

BookMyJet and Foresee Aviation do not own any aircraft. “We do not intend to. However, we are signing a contract with an associate company, most likely in Delhi or Bengaluru to induct aircraft and run it on a lease basis. We do not have any aircraft, but have bought hours from many operators in India,” he said. ↵

Sri Lanka woos Indians with its charm

Sri Lankan Airlines and Red Apple Travel & Holidays Lanka organised a FAM trip for key Indian travel partners. The 23-member delegation, including pan India tour operators, had a chance to explore the beauty of Sri Lanka. The trip's main objective was to generate confidence, and showcase the country as safe and secure destination.



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



OCTOBER 2022

Date	Event	Time
29 Sep-01 Oct	Asian Tourism Fair	10:00am
30 Sep-02 Oct	Philippines Travel Mart	10:00am
1-2	MATTA Fair Negeri Sembilan	9:00 am
5-6	Ukraine International Travel Market	10:00 am
6-8	India International Travel Mart - Mumbai	10:00 am
7	Cross Hotels Webinar	12:00 pm
7-9	India Travel Mart - Amritsar	11:00 am
10-13	IMEX America	10:00 am
11	VFS Webinar	TBA
12	Turpal Webinar	TBA
14-16	Holiday Expo - Nagpur	9:00 am
18	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
19-21	ITB Asia	9:30 am
19-21	Travel Tech Asia	9:30 am
25	PATA Annual Summit 2022	8:00 am
28	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
28-30	International Tourism & Travel Show	11:00 am

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

Clarks Group expands in Sri Lanka

Hotel Group opens The Albatross Golf Resort in Kandy. With the Sri Lankan government pushing tourism, coming days will witness a further increase in tourism, says Rahul Deb Banerjee, Vice President, The Clarks Hotels & Resorts.



The Clarks Hotels & Resorts has strengthened its footprints in Sri Lanka with the opening of The Albatross Golf Resort in Kandy. The hotel group, aiming to promote the country to the Indian travellers, and take advantage of the growing Sri Lankan business and leisure travel market, is aggressively looking for expansion by opening properties in different key locations of the neighboring country.

The Albatross Golf Resort Digana, Kandy by The Clarks, is perched on top of "The Coconut Hill" and has a backdrop of Pidurutalagala Peak. The property is in the close proximity to a 18-hole golf course with breathtaking views of the hills and the Victoria reservoir. It is centrally located, and is in close proximity to temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy and the Pallekelle International Cricket Stadium. The resort is frequented by international golfers, celebrities, business tycoons, entrepreneurs, and international test cricketers.



This upscale property has eight modern rooms divided into three categories – The Royal Albatross Suite, The Tee off Suite and Deluxe Rooms – catering to guests from all over the globe. The Royal Albatross Suite provides a fascinating wide-span view of the famed Hunnasgiriya, Hanguranketha, Galaha and Pidurutalagala mountain ranges, with the Golf Course, Victoria Waterways and Dam. The magnificent suite boasts of a private balcony, jacuzzi, rain shower, butler service, and equipped with other modern amenities. They have an in-house bar serving strong and exotic mocktails and cocktails. The multi-cuisine res-

taurant located on the premises offers Indian, Sri Lankan and international cuisines.

Rahul Deb Banerjee, Vice President, The Clarks Hotels & Resorts, said, "As a part of corporate strategy we are expanding both nationally and internationally. We are present in almost all the states of India and we recently have also opened a unique property in Sri Lanka. We are price conscious and believe in providing value for money to our travellers. This is the best time to be in the tourism industry, with the Sri Lankan government pushing tourism, and the pandemic has changed

the attitude towards travelling, coming days will witness a further increase in tourism. We are also now promoting Sri Lanka and The Maldives as our new international destinations."

Gabriel Gunsekere – Head Development, Sri Lanka & the Maldives, said, "We are optimistic that

Albatross Golf Resort Digana is perched on top of 'The Coconut Hill' with Pidurutalagala Peak in the backdrop

The Clarks expansion has created a buzz in the Sri Lankan Market and will add more properties in the coming months. By 2023, the brand will comprise about 150 properties within its chain."

In Memoriam



Kunal Sampat

With profound grief, we announce the sad demise of **Kunal Sampat**, Country Head of Visa Lounge, who left for his heavenly abode on 13 September 2022. He was 45. Sampat's untimely demise was caused by a massive heart attack. He was also the Secretary of Skal International Bombay 144. He is survived by his wife and son. Prior to joining Visa Lounge, he was the Country Head of MSC Cruises in India. Sampat's loss will be felt by many who were touched by his kind spirit and affable nature. Paying tribute to him, Visa Lounge family stated, "No words can express the grief and pain at the loss that we feel. You left us way too early for your time, so much to do, so many dreams to achieve still. Life will never be the same without you. Rest in peace dear friend."

Federal way forward for tourism

▶ Contd from page 3

second day inaugurated it with state tourism ministers and officials. He said that he was happy that Himachal Pradesh got the opportunity to host the conference. "Post pandemic, the tourism industry is getting back on its feet. Our government has also started the "Nai Raahein Nai Manzilein" scheme to highlight some of our lesser-known tourist destinations. The state has undertaken multiple new projects to attract the tourists not only for a weekend but for longer stays too," he highlighted.

Reddy claimed that for any global tourist, India is not just a place to see and visit, but a destination to experience and be transformed for life. "If India needs to achieve its immediate goals of a 5 trillion economy and its long-term goals of a developed nation then tourism has an important role to play. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised on two aspects, First is Whole of Government Approach, where we breakdown silos and work together across Government Ministries. Second is we must work as Team India, where the Union Government

and the State Governments work together hand in hand for the benefit of the citizens. I sincerely feel that with all the government representatives, this is the perfect platform to put forth all perspectives and put in place a vision for the sector," he added.

Shripad Naik highlighted the ministry's initiatives and said that India must be promoted as a 365-day destination to attract tourists. "Ministers and officials from both centre and states sat like a family and discuss issues, challenges, and ideas to improve tourism. It can help us to create a roadmap for future," he said.

Ajay Bhatt advised that it is the need of the hour to bring out our hidden cultural and natural facets to attract more tourists. "We have tackled the difficult times of COVID-19 with the Dekho Apna Desh initiative. We are constantly moving forward under the able guidance of our Prime Minister. However, despite having one of the best natural beauties, India attracts less than 2 per cent of global tourists; and this only points to the potential that we can achieve," he said.



Jai Ram Thakur
Chief Minister
Himachal Pradesh



Shripad Naik
Minister of State for Tourism and
Ports, Shipping, and Waterways

Himachal has started 'Nai Raahein Nai Manzilein' scheme to highlight less popular tourist destinations

Speaking at the event, **Sambit Patra**, Chairman, ITDC, said, "This conference should make best use to project India at G20. I believe that as far as tourism is concerned it's more about targeting the mental space. The first mantra is to appeal to the mental space with the right advertisement about our Incredible India."

Ministers and officials discuss here issues to improve tourism. It can help us to create a roadmap for future

Reddy concluded by saying, "Because of COVID, India and the entire world went through a setback. India saw a surge in domestic tourism beyond our expectation. Today, we don't have rooms in hotels and it's a challenge for us to make sure that this tourism growth is sustainable, attracts foreign tourists,

increases the GDP contribution of tourism and boosts employment in the sector. India has a huge potential for tourism, which is beyond any other country in the world. India has immense cultural heritage and it's a challenge for us to protect it, brand it and do its marketing. Thus, after many years this conference of state tourism ministers is taking place. I think such meetings continuously would help us to come out with a strong tourism policy, which will be released soon. We will analyse the best practices in all the states and see if they can be applicable to other states as well. This brainstorming session will help us to formulate a roadmap for tourism in India and we will share the report of this meeting with the PM and take approvals from the central government to boost tourism."

At the valedictory session, he claimed that there is a need to encourage the private sector also in tourism. "For that also, we will try to get investment in the tourism sector. Hence, we are planning to organise a tourism investors' conclave in India," he said.

EXPERIENCE A WORLD BEYOND



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MOVEMENTS

BOOKING.COM

India

Booking.com has appointed **SANTOSH KUMAR** as Country Manager for India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia. With full responsibility for the leadership and development of Booking.com's business in the four countries, Santosh plays a critical role in driving growth, strategy and operations across one of the most dynamic and diverse regions in the Asia-Pacific region. Santosh is a seasoned leader, who brings over a decade of leadership experience from the travel and hospitality industry. Previously, Santosh was Managing Director of the Indian subcontinent at HRS Group. He has also worked at American Express Global Business Travel.



THE WESTIN MUMBAI POWAI LAKE & LAKESIDE CHALET, MUMBAI – MARRIOTT EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS

Mumbai

Marriott International appoints **HEMANT TENNETI** as Cluster General Manager for The Westin Mumbai Powai Lake & Lakeside Chalet, Mumbai – Marriott Executive Apartments. He has an eminent track record in spearheading hotel operations across South Asia. Hemant will oversee day-to-day operations, ensuring personalised, high-quality service to guests, and will continue to offer a home base for travellers to explore Mumbai.



NOVOTEL KOLKATA HOTEL AND RESIDENCES

Kolkata

Novotel Kolkata Hotel & Residences appoints **ARJUN KAGGALLU** as the new General Manager. With more than 17 years of industry experience across leading global hospitality brands across India, Europe and the USA, Arjun would be responsible for looking after the overall operations of 340-key Novotel Kolkata Hotel and Residences. His last assignment was with the Hyatt Centric Candolim Goa as a General Manager. He holds an E-Cornell Certification, along with a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Business School Chardonne, Mont Pelerin, Switzerland. He also has a Diploma in Hotel Management from Merit Swiss Asian School of Hotel management.



HOLIDAY INN

Agra

Holiday Inn Agra has appointed **MUKTA KHANNA** as the new General Manager. Mukta is a hospitality professional with an experience of 19 years across brands. She has held several leadership roles with some of the top brands in the country, including Radisson Blu Hotel New Delhi, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Rohini and Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport as her last assignment. She has spent 10 fulfilling years with IHG growing into the role of General Manager. In her current role, Mukta's business acumen and operational expertise will enhance all areas of the hotel management including exceptional service standards and achieving financial results.



THE WESTIN GOA

Goa

The Westin Goa has appointed **DEVIDYUTI GHOSH** as the Director of Operations. Devidyuti, an industry specialist and a perfectionist by nature, has 14 years of experience in the hospitality sector and translated strategic vision into quantifiable results at several hotels. She will be in charge of leading the hotel's operations and ensuring that high standards of customer satisfaction are always met. She will also be leading operations for Food & Beverage, Culinary, Engineering. Devidyuti was a part of the Asia-Pacific team responsible for integration of Legacy Starwood Hotel. She is a hospitality graduate from IHM, Kolkata.



LOTUS AERO ENTERPRISES

Mumbai

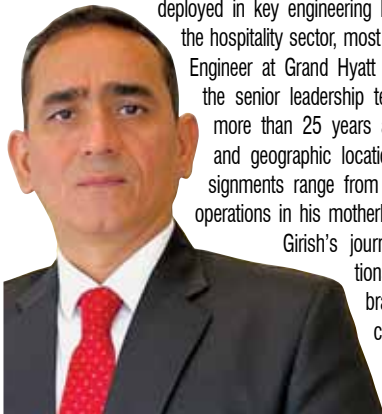
Lotus Aero Enterprises has appointed **SAURABH DESAI** as Head Sales – Western and South India. Saurabh has more than 20 years of experience in Sales and Marketing in Travel Industry and has knowledge in revenue accounting, customer service and sales in the airline and cruise industries. In his previous assignment with MSC Cruises, he held the role of Sales Manager - India for more than 7 years. Earlier, he has been in several capacities in his stint with Emirates Airlines covering over 14 years. He is passionate about travel and feels lucky to have flourished in a career in same industry.



HYATT REGENCY PUNE

Pune

Hyatt Regency Pune has appointed **GIRISH SINGH CHAUHAN** as Director of Engineering. Girish's technical and leadership expertise were deployed in key engineering leadership roles within the hospitality sector, most recently as Director of Engineer at Grand Hyatt Muscat. He brings to the senior leadership team an experience of more than 25 years across multiple hotels and geographic locations. His previous assignments range from large-scale hospitality operations in his motherland India and abroad. Girish's journey includes associations with other prominent brands like Hyatt Regency Ahmedabad, Hyatt Regency Kolkata, Westin.



INDORE MARRIOTT HOTEL

Indore

Indore Marriott Hotel has appointed **VIKRAM SINGH** as the Director of Sales and Marketing. With more than 21 years of experience, Vikram brings along a wealth of knowledge in the Food and Beverage and Sales and Marketing domain. An industry veteran with a rich experience across renowned hospitality brands like ITC Hotels and Hyatt Place, he will be responsible for driving commercial objectives and enhance the brand positioning for Indore Marriott Hotel. His Marriott career began in 2008 with Hyderabad Marriott & Convention Centre. Thereafter, he moved to JW Marriott Chandigarh and before joining Indore Marriott, he was associated with Fairfield by Marriott Lucknow as Director of Sales.



Lotus Aero Enterprises has also appointed **ANURAG DOBHAL** as Sales Manager – North India. He has more than 11 years of experience in Sales and Marketing in Travel Industry. Previously North India Sales Manager for Royal Arabian DMC for 3 years, Anurag has also worked as Channel Sales Manager in TATA AIG Travel vertical key Accounts for 2 years and as Assistant Manager in Riya 'The Travel Expert' for 6 years. He has done MBA in Travel and Leisure from Indian Institute of Travel and Tourism Management (IITTM) Pusa, New Delhi (2009-11). Lotus Aero Enterprises Private Limited is a non-government company incorporated on 21 February 2005. It's a private unlisted company and is classified as 'company limited by shares'.



TALKING People

SHIV KUMAR MEHAN, CEO, Brij Hotels, finds long walks relaxing. His favourite holiday destination in India is anywhere in the hills of Himachal Pradesh or Uttarakhand! "Beautiful mountain drives, remote locations, pleasant and fresh air! My favourite is enjoying a hot cup of coffee in the rains. Internationally, Sri Lanka tops my list! Geographically diverse, beautiful flora across the island country, pristine beaches, delectable food and friendly people. Indeed, a very welcoming and hospitable place for travellers. My next holiday is definitely going to be a trip to Italy. I want to soak in the sites of ancient city of Rome," he says.



His favourite holidays are with friends and family, says **DEEPAK NANGLA**, Managing Director, Brightsun Travel. "Having been so fortunate to have travelled so extensively, I will not name a single destination, as I have had fun in so many, from Oman to the USA but would say that the best holidays have been where I have been with friends and family. In India, I would say that Goa is still one of my favourite places. It has still not lost its appeal with its numerous beaches and great array of properties. My desire always is to travel to new places," he says.



SAPNEAL RAO, Director, SSR Travel Solutions, enjoys music. He says, "After a hard day's work, I like to unwind by listening to my kind of music. It de-stresses me and gives me a renewed energy to face another day." Rao also used the time during lockdown well and learned how to stretch well. "Give your body a good stretch – a full throttle – and you will realise that it will take you up for sure and help you stay positive," he says. His favourite holiday destination is Maldives.



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Abu Dhabi eyes India's MICE pie

Mubarak Al Shamisi, Director, Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau, says India being largest MICE source market for Abu Dhabi in 2022, they have been revamping their earlier initiatives and launched Advantage Abu Dhabi Meetings & Incentives 2.0 programme.

 Janice Alyosius

The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi participated at the India Roadshow in Delhi and Mumbai, promoting the emirate as a destination for MICE travel. Coinciding with the events, Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau, the agency representing the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi, unveiled its Advantage Abu Dhabi (AAD) Meetings & Incentives (M&I) 2.0 programme to stimulate MICE activities to the region and offer more "value-adds and additional benefits" to the stakeholders in order to become more competitive. Post-pandemic, the bureau has adapted its approach to MICE activities, revamping previous initiatives and creatively joining forces with partners to drive further growth.

AAD M&I 2.0 programme

AAD M&I 2.0 programme is an incentive scheme created by the Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau. "The scheme is created to help our partners, clients to push more business events toward the destination. The scheme itself has so many different verticals into it that focus on different elements of the MICE industry. India is one of the most important source markets that we are pushing from a MICE perspective to the destination. We made sure the incentive schemes of Abu Dhabi Convention Exhibition Bureau are tailor-made for the source markets," revealed Mubarak Al Shamisi, Director, Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau.

Tapping MICE segment in India

The bureau has conducted meetings in India that reflect the strong MICE demand coming from the country into the destination. The incentive programme

was made to strengthen the partnerships with clients in India, and to provide a tool to help them bring in more events to the destination. "The programme is tailor-made to the needs of our clients and how we can provide extra support to them to have a great value for their clients, who are coming to the destination, and at the same time supporting the agencies that bring clients to the destination," he said.

Outlook for Indian market

Emphasising on the outlook for Indian market, Shamisi said, "India is an important source market for Abu Dhabi; cooperate and incentive business from India is very strong. We have


AAD M&I 2.0 programme is created to help our partners, clients to push more business events toward the destination

started focusing on destination weddings also, which is also an important segment that we are looking into."

MICE trends

The trends have changed post-pandemic and there is a need for the industry to be flexible and adapt the changes. The Abu Dhabi bureau is working to understand the new trends. They are engaging with their clients and getting their feedback to understand how can they help them make business events earlier coming to the destination rebound strongly. "The negotiations with our clients in India and other source markets

resulted in the creation of the 2.0 incentive scheme of Abu Dhabi. The aim is to be very customised and cater to their requirements in the current situation. The industry has come back strongly, we have seen a lot of appeals, a lot of demand from the Indian market coming into the destination from the business events perspective, and this is something really positive for the destination. Now, we are working with our clients, we are here in India in the three major cities in India - New Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai - to focus on our clients, to see them face to face here," said Shamisi.

Incentivising trade

Speaking about the AAD M&I 2.0 programme, Shamisi said that the incentive programme is an umbrella of the incentive scheme. It provides different incentives for different clients. "When we say clients, we go directly to the groups who are coming and incentivising them. We are also incentivising the travel agencies that are working with us to strongly push Abu Dhabi. The mechanism and the way the incentive programme is being implemented makes sure that they get some benefits of driving the business towards t h e

destination. In Abu Dhabi, we recognise loyalty and value partnership," he said.

Tapping wedding segment

Shamisi said, "We are in the final stages of launching our wedding destination strategy, which we will announce soon. Destination wedding has been rewarding for Oman in the past years; we have seen a lot of weddings happening in the country to an extent that we need to recognise it, we need to work closely with clients, wedding planners and families to create an ecosystem that looks appealing for the destination weddings." 



Mubarak Al Shamisi
Director, Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau



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