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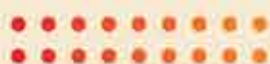
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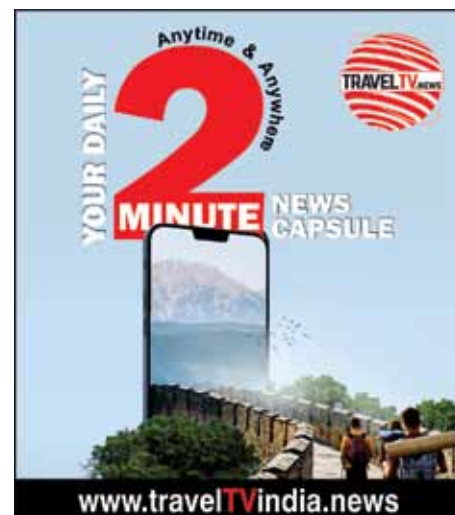
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National Tourism Board on anvil

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India, has announced that a National Tourism Board will be set up soon to plan the Ministry's overseas promotions, while the National Tourism Policy is under consultation and will soon come into existence.



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MOT)
Government of India

the global economic growth of 2.3 per cent. "They expected the
Contd on page 12 ▶



Nisha Verma

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India, said that a National Tourism Board will be set up "soon" for the Ministry's overseas promotion. "We have proposed the National Tourism Advisory Board, which will be

chaired by Union Minister of Tourism, with all the tourism ministers of the states, representatives of the ministries and industry stakeholders. This board will review the implementation of the policy, and implementation unit will provide the secretarial support to this board," said Singh, while addressing a Hospitality and Tourism

Conclave, organised recently by the Services Export Promotions Council (SEPC).

Singh spoke on various subjects at the programme with focus on the upcoming tourism policy. "A separate National Tourism Board will be set up, which will be looking at the promotion activities. It

will be manned by CEOs and will be funded by the public, but we will have industry stakeholders who would advise us. This board will coordinate with the international missions. Till the board is operational, we will be doing business as usual, but this board should start functioning very soon," he shared.

Green shoots

Earlier, he started his address by citing the prediction by World Travel and Trade Council, which said that the travel trade industry would normalise to pre-COVID levels by March 2023 and between 2023 and 2030, the travel economy would grow at a rate of 5.2 per cent globally against

Tourism needs rethinking

As we approach the World Tourism Day 2022, the travel and tourism industry looks forward to waves of change, which come across beautifully with this year's theme 'Rethinking Tourism'.



Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary General, UNWTO

opportunities to ensure even more people get to benefit from tourism's restart. We have a shared responsibility to make sure it is fully realised."

"Rethinking one of the world's major economic sectors will not be easy. But we are already well on the way. Crisis has inspired and catalyzed creativity. And the pandemic accelerated the transformation of work, bringing both challenges as well as

"In last two years, we all have had our share of rethinking in trying and making our customers' experiences better. ITQ with its innovative travel solutions completely re-defined the travel selling and provided trainings to our customers to prepare them for the normal times. I would say we had already begun rethinking tourism two years ago."



Sandeep Dwivedi
COO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient

Contd on page 14 ▶

Rupee dip bittersweet for travel

While outbound travel gets costlier and inbound becomes cheaper with the depreciating value of Indian rupee, stakeholders of the travel industry evoke mixed reactions.



Nisha Verma

The last few months have seen the Indian rupee (INR) depreciating, owing to foreign capital outflows. This is resulting in imports getting costlier and rising inflation in the country, besides reduced returns on investments and costlier international travel. While many say that with other currencies also falling against the US dollar (USD), it will not affect those planning to travel



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

abroad for study or tour, but overall view is that while international

travel will get costlier, inbound on the other hand will get cheaper, which is a bittersweet situation for the industry.

Since January 2022, INR has depreciated by about 7.5 per cent against the USD. This is because of the outflow of foreign investments, tight monetary policy by the US Federal Reserve, surging crude oil prices and general dollar strength. However, it has heightened owing to global

Contd on page 16 ▶

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Focus on non-metro cities: Scindia

With passenger capacity projected to be doubled from existing 200 million to 400 million in next seven to 10 years in India, there is huge growth opportunity for airlines, says Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation and Steel. Government is also doing its bit by putting in place new policies and removing impediments, he adds.

Janice Alyosius

Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister for Civil Aviation & Steel, addressing ASSOCHAM CEOs Roundtable: The Roadmap for Robust Growth Over Next Decade', recently said, "Interactive forums like these help the central government in effectively playing its role as a facilitator. Growth opportunities for airlines are tremendous as traveller volumes will double from an estimated 200 million currently



to 400 million in the next seven to 10 years."

Stating that future growth will come from non-metro cities, Scindia said that the government is continuously working to put in place new policies and removing impediments to enable its faster growth. "It is an area where we are trying to focus on with the small aircraft programme, which I started almost four or five months ago," he said. The non-metro growth rate, which was 10.8 per cent from 2010 to 2015, grew rap-

idly to 31 per cent, he said, adding that the growth rate in metro cities was 7.8 per cent from 2010 to 2015 and grew to roughly 8-9 per cent in the past six to seven years.

Elaborating, Scindia said, "From an estimated 400 aircraft in 2013-2014, the fleet of aircraft has grown to about 700 now and we are adding a delta of almost 15 per cent per annum, which means the fleet size will grow up to 1,200 in the next five years. While we had 74 airports in

2013-2014, we added 67 airports in the past eight years."

He explained, "From a strategic perspective, every industry follows an evolutionary curve, which is an "S-shaped" growth curve. The infancy stage is the lower half of the curve, which the civil aviation sector has surpassed. We are now in the growth phase—the middle part of the curve—where growth begins to flatten out again. So, it is time for us to aim for our potential." He said, "Civil aviation is competing with the Indian Railways,

In the next five to 10 years, civil aviation will carry the bulwark of civil transportation in this limited section

especially in the air-conditioned segment. While the airlines carried 144 million domestic travellers before COVID struck the globe, the Railways carried 125 million passengers in 1st and 2nd AC compartments." He added, "In the next five to 10 years, civil aviation will carry the bulwark of civil transportation in this limited section. While the civil aviation is growing at 10.3 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), the railways is growing at 5.6 per cent (CAGR)."

In Numbers

8-9% is the estimated growth rate of aviation in metro cities

31% is the non-metro growth rate

60 million international passengers in India at present

144 million domestic passengers in the country

It (air services in non-metro cities) is an area where we are trying to focus on with the small aircraft programme



EXPERIENCE A WORLD BEYOND



Where are employees?

Many a time I have written this editorial asking questions regarding tourists. Where are the foreign tourists? When are they coming? But now, we must talk about another burning issue that is impacting all of us – where are the employees?

Most teams are short-staffed. There is a massive crunch of skilled employees, and no one seems to be able to find the right balance.

Recently, a travel company co-founder on social media highlighted the hiring issue. He went out and discussed that candidates accept job offers and eventually don't show up on the joining date. While this is a huge waste of time and resources, there is no way of controlling or preventing it. His tweet opened a Pandora's box of stories and experiences. While most employers agreed to the problem, the employees had interesting arguments to make.

Why is this happening? The tourism and hospitality industry saw massive job losses in the last two years with job security being extremely compromised. A lot of employees chose to explore other well-paying industries and don't want to come back now. There was no time spent on skill development in the sector since the pandemic and the industry lost out on some great talent.

The tourism industry across Asia was largely an informal employment sector with limited benefits for employees. Moving into a different industry has created a sense of security and as an industry, we will need to recreate this in the tourism ecosystem again.

On the international front, in 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, representing a drop of 18.6 per cent leaving just 271 million employed across the sector globally, compared to 333 million in 2019. 18.2 million jobs were recovered in 2021, representing an increase of 6.7 per cent year-on-year. This year, while the recovery numbers are expected to be higher, it's going to be a few years before tourism can recover to the pre-pandemic levels.

While the opportunities to excel in tourism are coming back, let's hope employees also continue to maintain integrity and only look for job opportunities when they are ready to make the move.

After COVID, travel insurance up 76%

A recent survey by ICICI Lombard has shown that an increased proportion of customers depend on digital channels to buy travel insurance, even as 94 per cent will purchase travel insurance for their trip abroad soon.



TT Bureau

In a bid to understand customer perceptions towards travel insurance, ICICI Lombard conducted a survey to understand Indian travellers' purchasing behaviours. The survey brings to light many aspects, including the difference in perception between leisure and business travel, willingness to purchase insurance and the importance of travel insurance in current sce-

Important Trends

Awareness

Awareness on availing travel insurance policy on international trip pre-pandemic was **76%** and post-pandemic increased to **90%**

Actual Purchase

While during pre pandemic **50%** availed travel insurance during international trips, there is a rise in availing travel insurance to **76%** after the pandemic breakout

Future Intent

Of those who are planning to travel abroad in future, **94%** will be taking a travel insurance for their trip

narios as well as awareness on COVID-related coverage. Apart from that, it highlights that international travel in the aftermath of the pandemic is more purpose-driven, i.e., for business/ work and medical reasons.

Travel insurance rises

Sanjeev Mantri, Executive Director, ICICI Lombard said, "Our research indicates that the outbreak (of COVID) has raised awareness on the importance of travel insurance. Before the pandemic, only 50 per cent of international travellers purchased travel insurance, but after the pandemic that number has risen to 76 per cent. Customers are increasingly cautious and seek



adequate medical cover, including COVID-19 cover for overseas trips. The bulk of travel purchases always took place digitally, with the numbers now only increasing. Once perceived to be not so important, travel insurance is now a necessity. With 'revenge travel' now back in vogue, we see a huge opportunity and are delighted to note that one-third of respondents chose ICICI Lombard as the preferred partner of choice."

It was observed that 94 percent of those planning to travel overseas will subsequently purchase travel insurance for their trip.

High digital adoption

The survey recorded that almost one-third of customers looking for travel insurance visit the insurance company websites to purchase the travel insurance, while the other 30 per cent purchase from online aggregators and online travel platforms.

More than a commodity

The survey indicates the impetus of pandemic driving travel insurance from being just a commodity to a necessity as post-pandemic, awareness and adoption of travel insurance increased significantly. COVID coverage is the key benefit travellers seek while looking for travel insurance, not just medical coverage as more than 1/4th of customers bought travel insurance policies due to a COVID medical cover. 📌

Future trend for those travelling more frequently

Medical expenses for COVID-19 will continue to remain a larger reason (moves from 29% to 72%) for taking travel insurance in future besides covering emergency hotel extensions (52%).

Insurance segments	All Total	Response from 4 Indian zones				Metro/Non metro	
		South	North	East	West	Metro Tier I	Non Metro
Medical expenses including COVID-19 cover	72	66	74	79	66	67	75
Emergency hotel extension in case the trip is delayed due to natural calamities, act of terrorism or medical emergencies (COVID included)	52	51	51	59	48	53	52
Payment of travelling and lodging of insurer's family in case of more than 5-day hospitalisation	50	52	44	53	53	51	49
Trip Cancellation & Interruption due to medical problems, act of terrorism or natural disasters including COVID-19	48	50	39	51	51	47	48
Travel related accidents	47	46	42	55	44	45	49
Daily allowance in case of hospitalisation	46	43	42	51	47	47	45
Covers loss of baggage	41	41	37	46	38	40	41
Emergency hotel extension	35	35	34	40	32	34	36
Emergency cash advance	34	26	30	44	34	32	35
Interruption or delays in flights or delayed arrival of baggage	32	32	28	39	30	29	35

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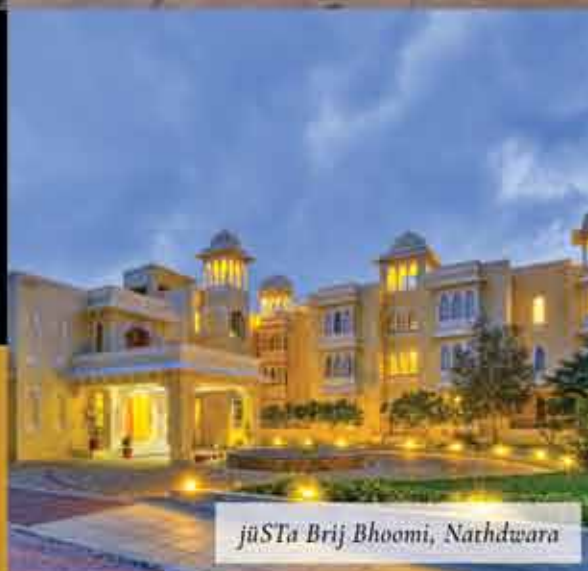
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Panaji to get 5,000 pax convention & expo centre on outskirts & 1,400 pax MICE venue in Panaji: Nikhil Desai

Indian foreign trade policy to offer incentives for hotel tourism industry

India's domestic RPKs rose 97.8 per cent in July, exceeding 81 per cent of 2019 levels

India ranked sixth by WTTC for Travel & Tourism's GDP contribution

National Green Tourism Mission is making sustainability the premises of the tourism mandate: G Kishan Reddy

Visit Iceland and Embassy of Iceland New Delhi organise Iceland Tourism Road Show

Flipkart launches hotel-booking service, company to provide bookings at 3 lakh hotels

India's airlines will lead global air traffic growth by 2040, states Boeing

'India to become country of choice'

Rupinder Brar, former Additional Director General, Tourism, GoI, says tourism is a game changer for India, both in terms of showcasing to the world the culture and heritage that it possesses, and thereby creating tremendous job and entrepreneurial opportunities.

TT Bureau

Rupinder Brar's tenure as the Additional Director General of Tourism in the Union Ministry of Tourism had been remarkable. Her understanding of Indian tourism and diligent work for the industry holds her in high esteem. She believes in the potential of Indian tourism and proactively contributed to its growth, especially with the 'Dekho Apna Dosh' series.

When asked to pinpoint three key takeaways from her journey in the industry, she said, "It's very hard to put incredible India's takeaways into three points. But I would say it encompasses the social, cultural, and economic factors. Tourism is truly a game changer. And for me, I think that has been the biggest takeaway from my tenure here because tourism, the way India can be showcased, is truly incredible. And I think that has been the biggest learning."



Rupinder Brar
Former Additional Director General,
Tourism, GoI

She said she has always known that India is diverse, but in the last three years, the exposure she got of witnessing India in the many layers that it possesses, has been an "amazing personal journey". "I think tourism is truly a game changer for India, both in terms of showcasing to the world the culture and the varied heritage that we have, thereby also creating tremendous job opportunities. The entrepreneurial opportunities that exist in tourism are just mind-blowing. So, it can be a huge game changer for the economy in India in terms of creating employ-

ment and in adding to the GDP for the country. And in terms of the social, I think the way you can showcase your country and the way that it brings people together is again something that is amazing in the whole ecosystem of tourism," she said.

COVID allowed us to do things differently, even though financially it has taken a huge toll on the industry

She said, "COVID allowed us to do things differently, even though financially it has taken a huge toll on the industry. But somewhere we are enriched by the fact that the disruption is so great that we all have to do things as usual, which is not possible and there are new

ways of doing things. I am sure going forward, with the resilience that people have shown across the industry, both individually and collectively, there is no reason why Incredible India should not shine and be number one country of choice for travel, both for Indians themselves and for people from outside the world."

She added, "I highly recommend everyone, given the increasing connectivity in India in recent years, both by air, road, inland, waterways, and railway, that we should take advantage of. Along with the digital connection that is coming to our country, I really encourage the entire trade to start exploring the various splendors of India and start taking the travellers and tourists, both domestic as well as the inbound, to hitherto lesser-known areas. So, that has been my tagline and I continue to maintain that *Dekhiye aur dikhaye apna sundar atulaye Bharat* (see and make others see our beautiful incredible India)!"

In Numbers

93

'Dekho Apna Dosh' webinars Rupinder Brar participated in during her tenure

03

years she served in the Ministry of Tourism as Additional Director General

54%

women make up the tourism workforce of the country

St. Petersburg connects with India

St. Petersburg holds roadshows in New Delhi and Mumbai to maintain and renew ties with the Indian tourism industry. The destination is now open to Indian tourists with direct flights to Russia and payment mechanisms. It has now plans to open direct flights to St. Petersburg.

TT Bureau

St. Petersburg held a two-city roadshow in Mumbai and New Delhi titled 'Welcome to St. Petersburg!', which was attended by a delegation from St. Petersburg. The delegation included representatives of leading tour operators of the city, hotels, as well as the tourist infrastructure of the city. The participants presented the possibilities of the multifaceted St. Petersburg for receiving Indian tourists.

The aim of these roadshows was to maintain and renew ties with the tourism industry in Delhi and Mumbai. St. Petersburg is now open to Indian tourists, and there are direct flights to Russia and payment mechanisms. It also plans to open direct flights to St. Petersburg.

In addition to tour operators from St. Petersburg, representatives of the Embassy and Consular department of the Russian Fed-

(Advertorial)



Representatives of leading tour operators of the city and hotels formed part of the delegation from St. Petersburg

eration in India were also present. The cycle of events of the



Committee for Tourism Development of St. Petersburg in September-November this year includes the promotion of the city as a tourist destination in the markets of India, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The roadshow in India were organised by the Committee for Tourism Development of Saint Petersburg and the St. Petersburg state budgetary institution City Tourist Information Bureau.

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Tourism is a service export

Senthil Nathan S, Director, EP (Services), Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, shared that the foreign trade policy will be released by the government by the end of this month and also emphasised on the importance of tourism and hospitality as service exports.



TT Bureau

Speaking at the Hospitality and Tourism Conclave, organised by the Services and Export Promotion Council (SEPC), **Senthil Nathan S**, Director, EP (Services), Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, agreed that the tourism industry has come out of a very challenging couple of years.

"All of us have heard for time immemorial that we are going to expand as an economy. We are already fifth in the world in terms of exports itself and we have set ambitious targets of \$1 trillion each in merchandise and services by end of this decade or earlier than that. However, when we talk of services, which I often see as often neglected cousin to merchandise exports, contributes significantly around two-third of our economy and other such parameters. We need to focus more on that and even the Commerce Secretary was

underlining this, at the brainstorming session in last week of August," he said. He added, "Within services exports too, when we talk of services, invariably the mind goes to IT services as that has been seen as the mainstay and focus



Senthil Nathan S
Director, EP (Services),
Ministry of Commerce, India

strength area of Indian exports. To that extent, other services have not been given as much attention as they should have been. Tourism and hospitality contribute almost \$29 billion. It has always been an important strength area, if not the most

strong area within services of this country, not just in the recent years or decades, but from ancient India when we were living by the ethos of Atithi Devo Bhava and we had visitors coming from across the world, either from the Far East or from the Middle East or even further up. This means that tourism and hospitality industry is one of our core strength areas and going forward I would not be surprised if set ourselves a target to even outmarch the exports of IT – ITR services."

He also shared that the Commerce Secretary was also saying that today the profile of exports is merchandise contributing almost 60 per cent of our exports or more than that and services contributing to almost 37-40 per cent. "However, going forward, within the next decade by mid-2030s or so, services, given their momentum of growth and their inherent potential, are going to outstrip the exports of mer-

chandise. It would also outlast in terms of their growth rate, we are seeing so far. Given that kind of a vision, which supported by data where we are headed to, we are going to see the services exports doing exceedingly well and within

We are going to see the services exports doing exceedingly well and within that tourism & hospitality

that sectors like tourism and hospitality are going to do so well because of their potential."

Given the diversity of India, he said, "I don't see why we should not be able to attract tourists from within the country, to destinations across the country as well as

foreign tourists across the entire year because right from adventure sports, flora-fauna, every kind of topography, or any interest that tourists might have, India has many things to offer."

Nathan S claimed that we should be able to attract tourists from across the world throughout the year. "I am sure, the MOT, along with the Department of Commerce and multiple other stakeholder industries and the stakeholder ministries, is working on those plans. I am aware of multiple initiatives that are already underway to pave the path to ensure that the tourism industry grows in the way that is not just ambitious, it can outstrip every other sector that contributes to service exports. Some of these are already mentioned, either it is the MICE or medical value tourism or education. I am sure that there are also steps that have been taken and will be taken shortly in terms of how we brand ourselves," he insisted.

In Numbers

\$1
trillion target has been set each in merchandise and services by 2030

\$29
billion Tourism and Hospitality contribute

60%
Merchandise contributes

37-40%
billion Tourism and Hospitality contribute

'India key market for Visit Iceland'

With an aim to tap the burgeoning Indian outbound market, Visit Iceland, in association with the Embassy of Iceland New Delhi, hosted a roadshow, press meet and networking evening in New Delhi and Mumbai in September. Being held under the aegis of Iceland's new Ambassador to New Delhi H.E. **Gudni Bragason**, Visit Iceland roadshow was by Representation World in organising its events across Mumbai and New Delhi.

H.E. **Gudni Bragason** says, "As India is the first major Asian market to open after COVID, it is most important for us to tap its potential. Travel had almost stopped during the pandemic, but now we are hoping for a swift revival. Iceland has a lot to offer for Indians as our nature is strikingly different from anything you can experience in India. There are breath-taking Glaciers, Northern Lights, Clean Air and Geothermal heated pools. Besides, Icelandic food is known for its freshness."



TT Bureau

ITA Airways will launch non-stop services between India and Italy w.e.f. 4 December 2022. The new flight will be operated with Airbus A330 with three weekly frequencies every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. The flights will depart from Indira Gandhi International airport in New Delhi at 3.50am and arrive at Rome Fiumicino at 8.10am, local time. The flight from Rome Fiumicino will depart at 14.10 and land in New Delhi at 2.00am, local time. The new route launch will provide the most convenient connections from New Delhi to Rome and beyond to key destinations within Italy, Europe, North America and South America.

DEX GROUP, one of the leading General Sales Agent (GSA) Groups in India, will represent ITA Airways as their GSA in India. "We are confident that DEX



Fabio Bigotti
Country Manager for India
ITA Airways

The departure from New Delhi will be at 3.50am and arrival at Rome Fiumicino will be at 8.10am, local time

Group will support ITA Airways to establish a strong sales and marketing network across In-



dia to achieve our commercial goals from the Indian market" said Fabio Bigotti, the recently appointed ITA Airways Country Manager for India.

Flights will be entered into ITA Airways systems with the note 'Subject to Government

Approval'. ITA Airways is a company totally owned by the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance for the exercise of business in the air transport sector. The airlines aims at creating an efficient and innovative air carrier that will become a reference point in providing Italy

with quality connectivity both in terms of international destinations, thus boosting tourism and foreign trade, and within the country, also taking advantage of the train-air integrated mobility. ITA Airways is a member of SkyTeam alliance as of October 2021.

Domestic traffic for June 2022 was up 5.2 per cent compared to June 2021. Total June 2022 domestic traffic was at 81.4% of the June 2019 level, thanks to strong improvements in most markets, combined with the easing of restrictions in the Chinese market..

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Kiwi Link eyes Indian travellers

Tourism New Zealand welcomed 15 buyers from India at the first in-person trade event after two years – Kiwi Link Asia 2022. The event was held in Singapore from 29 to 31 August 2022. It supported Tourism New Zealand's integrated strategy in Asia on trade events.



TT Bureau

After two-year hiatus, Tourism New Zealand's iconic trade event, Kiwi Link returned this year to reconnect travel trade partners from Asia with New Zealand tourism businesses. The trade event, Kiwi Link Asia 2022 was held in Singapore from 29 to 31 August 2022.

The event provided a unique opportunity for representatives

of the New Zealand tourism industry to educate and establish business relationships with key travel partners from India, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and South Korea. From one-on-one appointments with product managers to networking opportunities at official events, Kiwi Link Asia 2022 was the one-stop destination for all things travel related to New Zealand.

Fifteen buyers from India attended the event, which included



Thomas Cook India, MakeMy-Trip, Kulin Kumar Holidays, Kesar Tours, Veena World, FCM

Travels and Pathfinders Holidays. The event saw Indian buyers engaging with 55 industry operators

across New Zealand including Air New Zealand, Hobbiton Movie Set, Scenic Hotel Group, giving a holistic understanding of the product offerings and building deeper connections.

key Indian buyers to reconnect with New Zealand and its wide range of offerings, thus enabling them to promote the destination better and support conversions. We are ecstatic to see the turnout this year and we are looking forward to Summer 22/ 23 and beyond as we welcome back visitors. India is one of the priority emerging markets for Tourism New Zealand and Kiwi Link Asia provided a great opportunity to strengthen our partnership with our travel trade partners in India. Through the course of three days, Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand industry engaged with travel sellers.

Elaborating on the event, **Gregg Wafelbakker**, General Manager – Asia, Tourism New Zealand, said, "With the New Zealand borders having opened to the rest of the world on 1 August 2022, this was the perfect time to reconnect with the Indian travel trade fraternity to showcase destination New Zealand and the ever-growing Kiwi hospitality. Kiwi Link Asia was a splendid platform that enabled

Indian buyers speak their mind

“One of the key reasons for me to attend Kiwi Link Asia was to meet old and new suppliers, get product updates and to re-establish the partnerships we have had in the past. It was one of the finest Kiwi Link, of the many that Kulin Kumar Holidays has participated in.”

Pratik Shah
COO - Kulin Kumar Holidays

“One of the key reasons for me to attend Kiwi Link Asia was to meet old and new suppliers, get product updates and to re-establish the partnerships we have had in the past. It was one of the finest Kiwi Link, of the many that Kulin Kumar Holidays has participated in. Great platform to connect!”

Mansi Bhalaria
CEO, Travellies

“Professionally and personally Kiwi Link Asia 2022 was like coming home. Everything New Zealand offers and stands for was experienced in these three days. The event was well curated with precision, warmth and connection. Tourism New Zealand always hits the right notes.”

Khushnooma Das
General Manager, FCM Travels

“New Zealand or Aotearoa, as the locals call it, is one of the most popular destinations for Indian travellers. The main objective for me to attend Kiwi Link Asia 2022 was to meet the suppliers, partners and stakeholders of the New Zealand tourism industry.”

Maitreyee Patel
Director, Pathfinders Holidays

Pre-COVID levels for industry by Mar '23

Contd from page 3

growth of the travel economy to be almost double that of the global economic growth. Also, they predicted that one in three new jobs that will be created globally, will be created in the travel sector. We are seeing signs of revival in both domestic tourism, hospitality, and weddings,” he said.

National tourism policy

The MOT has gone ahead with formulating the National Tourism Policy, which has been in the limbo for almost two decades, Singh said. “We have a vision that in 2047, tourism should be a \$1 trillion sector in the country. There is a need for a new policy, as 20 years have elapsed and the country is at a different stage. We need to have a relook at our strategies on how we project India as a major tourist destination, if we are growing as an economy.”

He shared that the policy has been drafted and is at consultation stage. “We are consulting with other ministries and have taken the recommendations from

Niti Aayog; global best practices from organisations such as UN-WTO and carried out a detailed situational analysis, including impact due to COVID-19, future projections for tourism sector with a vision for India in 2047; multiple rounds of consultations and feedback from central Ministries, state governments and industry stakeholders. The draft policy was also published on MOT website for comments from the public, which is still there.”

Singh shared that they have inputs on the draft policy from all the stakeholders, central ministry, states and have received very positive feedback. “We hope to incorporate all the suggestions and we will send this draft to the Union Cabinet for its approval shortly. Thus, the new policy and the Commerce Ministry's trade policy, which is expected by the end of the month, will bring some happy tidings to all the sectors,” he said.

Policy aims

Singh highlighted that the policy aims at improving the framework conditions for tourism develop-



Arvind Singh, secretary, Ministry of Tourism, India, speaks at the SEPC programme.

ment in the country, supporting tourism industries, strengthening tourism support functions and developing the sub-sectors. “It is architected around six guiding principles, five national tourism missions and eight strategic pillars supported by an elaborate institutional and governance framework. The key strategic objectives of the policy are to enhance the contribution of tourism in the Indian economy by increasing the visitation, stay and

spend, and making India a year-round destination, to create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities in the tourism sector and ensure the supply of skilled workforce. We know that in areas where manufacturing or agriculture cannot reach, tourism will be the main employing force. For instance, in far-flung regions of the country, remote areas, border areas, to enhance the competitiveness of tourism sector and attract private sector investment, we must make

it attractive, remove the compliance burdens and remove the taxation issues to preserve and enhance the cultural and natural resources of the country. This is what India is in a unique position to offer,” he claimed.

Missions of policy

“We have identified five important tourism missions, which lay down the priorities of what the tourism sector should be in the next decade in the country. The first is a National Green Tourism Mission, with an objective to mainstream sustainability in the tourism sector, to encourage climate action in the tourism sector, to promote responsible tourism and align tourism development with the sustainable development goals of 2030. Second is the National Digital Tourism Mission, which will work in leveraging cross domain development of tourism domain data, development of a unified tourism interface and support to MSMEs for digitalisation and enabling smart tourism destinations and IT applications in the centre. The third is the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skill Mis-

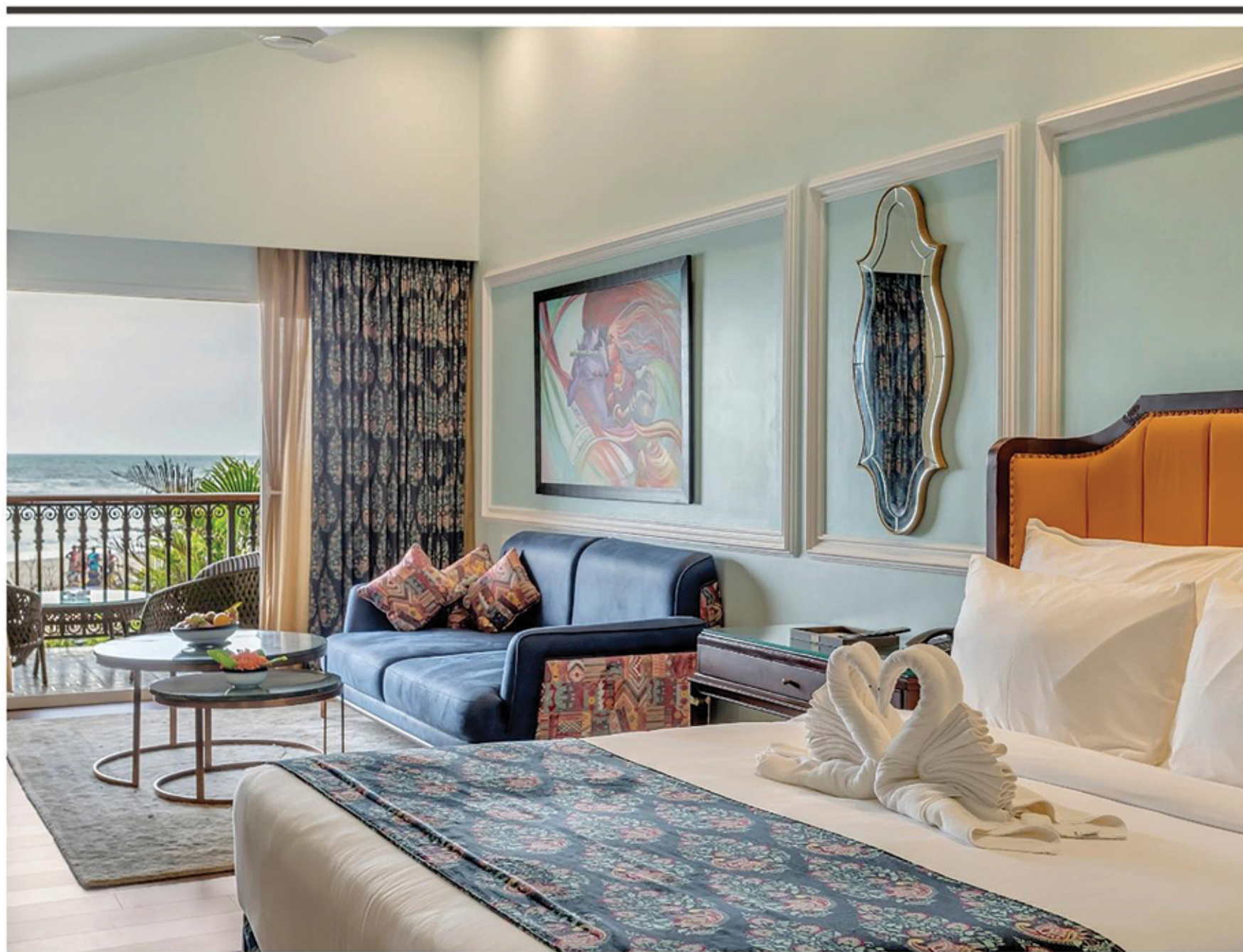
sion, which will work towards providing quality trained manpower to the sector. The fourth mission is the National Mission on Destination Management Organisation. Fifth is the National Mission on Tourism MSMEs,” Singh added.

G20 Presidency for India

He mentioned that with India assuming the presidency of G20, tourism to the country will ben-

We need to have a relook at our strategies on how we project India as a tourist destination, if we are growing as an economy

efit. “India becomes the president of G20 in December and there will be a series of meetings at 55 locations, which the G20 Secretariat has identified.”



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Industry looks forward to change

“The theme ‘Rethinking Tourism’ chosen by the UNWTO is the most appropriate, especially for the post-COVID period. The entire travel business is going through big changes as people have started to travel after 2-3 years. They have understood that they have to live with COVID. However, the way industry works has changed quite a lot in India, and somehow the different segments of the industry are losing faith in each other since the time travel business started picking up. Most transactions these days are taking place on a prepayment basis, which is not a healthy sign for the industry. At the same time, Rethinking Tourism conveys that some travellers will be looking forward to travelling in a more responsible, sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.”



Jatinder Taneja
Vice-Chairman
PATA India Chapter



Deepak Narula
Managing Director
GRNConnect

“‘Rethinking Tourism’ is an apt theme for this year’s World Tourism Day by UNWTO, given the way people and travel have evolved after the pandemic, and the selection of destination and choice of accommodation have changed. Therefore, accordingly this theme is relevant to the current times and scenario. It is important for the industry to evolve with the times, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic. The whole thought process of a traveller has changed today. Hence, this theme is appropriate. We at GRNConnect, believe in evolving with the times, especially now we have embraced technology more than ever before, and we keep helping our members with the new relevant products, which helps them grow with the time. This is the way forward to revival and rethinking is key to the same.”

“Rethinking Tourism should be about re-strategising our marketing abilities and strategies. We need to change the traditional methods of marketing and adopt digital marketing and social media marketing apart from face-to-face meetings and roadshows, which too are important. We need to be aggressive now. With China still not open, Europe not fully open, and Sri Lanka going through an economic crisis, it’s the best time for India and other countries in South East Asia to market themselves. Thus, if we are changing the strategy of how we look at tourism, then it’s a good theme, but there is no point in having a theme if we are not implementing it. India’s inbound numbers are still low. There are some countries where inbound numbers have exceeded 2019 figures.”



Subhash Goyal
Founder Chairman
STIC Travel & Air Charter Group



P P Khanna
President, ADTOI

“We are on the road to recovery. Both Centre/ state governments, stakeholders of the Industry are all up in their best form to reach out to all nook and corner to bring a momentum to tourism growth in the country. We have succeeded to a great extent. Pilgrim segment is back to near normal and all pilgrim centres in the country are witnessing good flow of pilgrims. Similarly, other tourism segments such as leisure, adventure, MICE, wedding, rural and heritage are growing rapidly. Festival season is on. State Tourism Boards are keen on promoting destinations and our members extend full support to their needs. The revival of all travel marts/ expositions/ conclaves in physical form is an indicator to the transformation and the whole industry will be celebrating the World Tourism Day with its theme ‘Rethinking Tourism’ with much enthusiasm and fervour.”

“The travelling choices of modern travellers have greatly evolved, especially after COVID-19. Be it the exponential rise in workations or a sharp shift towards experiential tourism, the travel preferences worldwide are gradually metamorphosing. In this changing scenario, it is crucial for the industry players to re-evaluate their strategies at each level. I now see more consideration into embracing slow and sustainable travel, and curating itineraries that are impactful, purposeful and responsible. Also, involving more local players can help in tailoring a more authentic experience and give the travellers a taste of native life. Not to mention, it would also be a great tool to push the economy and gradually revive the tourism industry, which still is not fully over the harsh blow of the pandemic. Better strategies should be adopted.”



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO

“While Rethinking Tourism is a good theme, we can only do that once we start with our advertising and roadshows abroad, which have still not started. There are many people who are removing India from their promotions or even for selling. It’s a serious matter. Also, there is still no e-tourist visa for UK and Canada. We had written to concerned authorities also, seeking help on this and focusing on promotions, so that we can get some business. I only pray that on this World Tourism Day, the government announces these measures, especially international publicity, roadshows and opening up of e-TV for Canada, UK, and some other countries. I feel, for redefining tourism, health and security need to be relooked, as COVID is still not gone. In the rethinking process, we need to think how to control price as we are overpricing ourselves.”

“The pandemic has definitely accelerated the future and has provided deeper perspective. It has forced us to evolve, to alter old methods, to upskill and reskill, to change the way we interact with people and the planet. But above all, it has caused us to rethink the way we approach and sell tourism, making this year’s theme extremely relevant! At South African Tourism, we have become extremely digitized, while also managing to maintain the warmth of human interaction and intervention. We are taking conscious efforts towards promoting sustainable and rural tourism, to give back to the local communities, local economy and to preserve the resources we have been blessed with. We have also diversified the way we sell South Africa to appeal to the core passions of Indian travellers. With highly customized and personalised itineraries, we are looking at mobilising niche communities.”



Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head – MEISEA
South African Tourism



Vaibhav Kala
Officiating President, ATOAI

“The pandemic was biblical in its impact, consequences and in the long-term changes it has brought about. It also taught the travel business a lot, including the need to be robust, build a model that is sustainable through any similar events into the future, diversify product portfolios to encompass varying demographics. It also taught companies to encourage multiple skills in its team base, train, retrain and reskill, to make the business more efficient. Also, most importantly, the need for businesses to be more relevant, to its customers, employees and to the destination. As the theme of this year’s World Tourism Day says, ‘Rethinking Tourism’, it is the time now to begin this transformation of the industry and celebrate World Tourism Day as the global tourism slowly recovers from the devastating effects of the pandemic.”

“Every crisis brings an opportunity, we have been sensitised by the pandemic that we need to rethink tourism and revitalise the world. This can be attained by focussing on environmentally responsible, attractive and affordable tourism, which is also sustainable and regenerative. This effort must come from all the parties involved, government, private sector, stakeholders, as well as the travellers/ tourists. The entire infrastructure is moving towards Green tourism that has the lowest environmental impact possible. We must do our bit by getting actively involved in cleaning beaches and forests, trekking trails and mountains. As a society, we all are becoming increasingly aware that we need to take care of the planet. The same sentiment has to be in the mind while enjoying a holiday as well and restart tourism mindfully!”



Arshdeep Anand
Chairperson, ATOAI Women's Collective
and Director, Holiday Moods Adventures



Vachirachai Sirisumpan
Director, Tourism Authority of
Thailand (TAT), New Delhi Office

“As global tourism slowly recovers, we can see the importance of reducing carbon footprint of travellers and moving towards a more sustainable approach of travelling. As emphasised by this year’s World Tourism Day theme, ‘Rethinking Tourism’, I believe this is the right way forward and the time has come to begin this transformation. As a part of the travel & tourism industry, we must lead by example and encourage travellers across the world to promote, practice and appreciate responsible tourism. COVID-19 highlighted the critical need to transform the way of travel & tourism industry. Focus on health and wellness is now a priority for many travellers. Local tourism experiences and green tourism have gained popularity. In this regard Tourism Authority of Thailand has been carrying out various initiatives to promote sustainable and responsible tourism.”

“Travel and tourism are core pillars of growth and development. They are leading the employment narrative in the service industry world-wide, providing opportunities for skill development as well as personal and professional growth - most notably for women, youth, and now in the rural communities too. Hence this year’s theme ‘Rethinking Tourism’ is topical to the world we live in – providing ‘sustainable tourism’ to all its respective communities and stakeholders. COVID-era lessons have taught us well, that the industry needs to become more self-sustainable, resilient, and future-ready. Our dependency on a particular market and doing things within our comfort zones had made us vulnerable. Sustainability became central, and travel and tourism must now keep up with the shifting attitudes of guests.”



Abinash Manghani
CEO, WelcomHeritage



Prabuddha Sen
Chief Operating Officer - South Asia
VFS Global

“The pandemic has presented a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rethink tourism and realign the sector. To achieve this, sustainability will play a critical role. Individuals and organisations have already started making conscientious efforts towards integrating solutions into key issues challenging tourism, including climate change, industry resilience, and health and safety. Every tourism destination relies on a well-functional society, a healthy environment, and a stable economy, and the private sector has a critical role to play in achieving the same. At VFS Global, we continue to be committed to being a good corporate citizen and strive towards enhancing systems and processes to contribute to the overall agenda of ‘Accessible Tourism For All’ of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).”

Compiled by Nisha Verma

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Rupee fall: no effect on study trips

► Contd from page 3

uncertainties arising out of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Benefit for inbound

Rajiv Mehra, President, IATO, said that if the INR is depreciating for inbound, the product is getting cheaper. "Outbound is becoming expensive as the USD is ₹80. In India, what we were selling at ₹70-80, we can give 10 per cent additional benefit to the clients. However, the

that depreciating INR has nothing to do with the tourism volume. "Usually, USD remains between ₹75 and ₹80 range. It is more because of inflation that the things are getting expensive, which will make a big difference. Since India is a self-sufficient country and we have many things which we do not import, I do not think it will have a major impact over tourism, and for inbound it is good as whoever comes to India gets more rupees. However, for outbound it is difficult because

see the destination. So, instead of staying in a five-star hotel, they stay in a 4-star hotel. Whatever the budget is, they will adjust their travel needs according to that. The travel bug has now caught the Indian traveller and he wants to travel despite the visas getting difficult. However, families or couples who would usually go abroad, and if they did not have a Schengen visa or UK visa, they have chosen luxury destinations in India and domestic tourism to Kashmir and to many other places was booming just because of the need or an instinct of the person to travel," he said.

Blessing in disguise

Tejbir Singh Anand, MD, Holiday Moods and EC Member, ATOAI, also believes that it is a benefit, when it comes to regulating mass tourism. "As outbound travel starts getting expensive, mass tourism is getting hit, whereas niche tourism or tourism to places that are far-flung or for people who have a different thought process, would not bother much. Since we do not promote mass tourism and are not willing to send people to a country, which already has many people going in. Thus, the depreciating rupee and outbound getting expensive does not affect us much. Our clients do not think much about it because they are all from the niche travel segment and mostly business travellers. Even if they are economy travellers, they are going to do something extraordinary to bring them back in their memory book. For them, it does not make a difference if the trip gets expensive by another ₹5,000-15,000, and I agree with them, if the priority is to do something extraordinary," he said.

A temporary phase

Shravan Bhalla, General Secretary, OTOAI, also agrees that the increase or decrease of rupee plays a big role when it comes to holiday travellers, MICE, destina-

tion weddings, and social event travellers as the currency used is not INR but their local currency. "Rupee value declining certainly affects their budgets. Currently, we see a lot of international student travel and business travel happening. However, this will not affect their travel, as they have a purpose or specific date to travel irrespective of rupee value. While we have not seen a major side of cancellation as clients are now well prepared, but clients with flexibility with dates do consider the time period when the costing goes slightly cheaper than the preferred dates. We believe it is a temporary phase and rupee should get stronger soon enabling agents to offer much more lucrative travel offers to their customers," he said.

Disruptions due to COVID

Valmiki Harikishan, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions and Chairman, Tourism Committee, FTCCI Tourism Committee, said, "We are suffering from COVID disruptions with high rate of 40-50 per cent hike in hotel and flight



Valmiki Harikishan
Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions and
Chairman, Tourism Committee, FTCCI



Manish Kriplani
Managing Director
Baywatch Travels

With the rupee going down, it is pinching the pocket of a customer and hence outbound is getting affected

Rupee drop has not made a direct impact on number of travellers, as all are on the edge of the seat and want to take off



Ravi Gosain
Vice President
IATO



Subhash Goyal
Founder Chairman
STIC Travel & Air Charter Group

I do not think it (the drop in value of Indian rupee) will have a major impact over tourism, and for inbound it is good

People will travel for sure, but instead of spending 10 days at a destination, they will spend five or six days

problem is that we have not been able to benefit out of it, because of very high air fares from Europe, UK, USA to India and no e-visa for UK and Canada. This is hampering things. Once that is removed, then this depreciation will help the inbound because the clients are getting more value, more Indian rupees for their dollar. At the same time, it is bad for outbound travel as well as for imports into the country. But for inbound, it is fine."

On the other hand, **Ravi Gosain**, Vice President, IATO, believes

you will get less dollars to travel outside," he claimed.

People will travel

Subhash Goyal, Founder Chairman STIC Travel & Air Charter Group, claims that after more than two years of pandemic, people are willing to travel. "Falling value of rupee is good for inbound, and for outbound things are becoming expensive. However, people who have a bucket list to travel, will travel for sure, but instead of spending 10 days at a destination, they will spend five or six days, as they would like to



Tejbir Singh Anand
MD, Holiday Moods
and EC Member, ATOAI



Shravan Bhalla
General Secretary
OTOAI

Our clients do not think much about it as they are all from the niche travel segment and business travellers

However, this will not affect their (students) travel, as they have a purpose or specific date to travel

penalties are huge because the conversion rate is so high, and Indians have the habit of calculating dollars or euros into INR. At the same time, there is no disruption in student traffic, which is recession free industry. However, when it comes to tourism or leisure travel, they are willing to postpone, especially to avoid penalties in case of not getting visa on time, which is getting delayed a lot these days. Overall, depreciating rupee is not at all a good sign for outbound travel," he said.

No impact on luxury travel

Manish Kriplani, MD, Baywatch Travels, who caters to super luxury travellers, claims that packages are getting expensive. "Even a rupee up or down makes a huge difference. However, frankly it has not made a direct impact on the number of travellers, as all are on the edge of the seat and want to take off. They would reduce the number of days, or the level of services required. Overall, it has stopped people from travelling, but yes it has impacted the cost of the package, which they complain about. Since most of our clients are very high-end, they may not cancel, but would reduce a day or two, just to find a balance. The airfare sky-rocketing and declining value of rupee has made travel expensive, which is nothing close to pre-COVID, but still the number of travellers is 130 per cent of pre-COVID level. Thus, it seems travellers have accepted this and understand that there is no choice. I feel this will go on for another one year as there are many factors affecting the entire scenario and pushing the rates higher than usual, like limited flights, crude oil price and geopolitical issues like war," he said.

tariffs. On top of that, with the dollar going high and rupee going down, it is further pinching the pocket of a customer and hence outbound travel is getting badly affected. When compared with domestic travel, the latter is on a rise. Earlier even middle class or lower middle class could afford a trip to Sri Lanka at least, but now with the way rupee value is being depreciated, along with post pandemic disruption, hotel rates have gone up, which is killing the planning direction of travel. On top of that, there are other challenges. We travel agents or tour operators have been waiting for business to start. When

in the dollar component. Thus, when I want to pay package cost in dollars, I end up paying huge INR conversion. While people are still prepared to travel, it is really disturbing for both agent and customer," he claimed.

Another point he made was that owing to these changes in rupee value, some customers are changing destinations and others are preferring to travel within India, where the difference will not affect much. "Domestic travel is increasing. In fact, international penalties must be paid in dollars, especially since the visas are not coming on time. Thus, on cancellation, the



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Oman's Delhi roadshow a success

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman, conducted in a five-city roadshow in New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru from 22 to 29 August 2022. The roadshow, comprising a delegation from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, tour operators, hotels and airlines, showcased Oman as a destination with unique experiences for tourists.



Ahmedabad evokes good response



'India can be our biggest market'

Destination New South Wales has bold aspirations for the India market – to make it one of its biggest international source markets. Steve Cox, CEO, Destination New South Wales, was in India recently to talk to the travel trade and the airlines to address challenges in terms of air connectivity and destination knowledge, and, of course, visa issue.



Hazel Jain

It was his first visit to India, but Steve Cox, CEO, Destination New South Wales (DNSW), seemed like he was among friends. "I met our trade partners in Mumbai and New Delhi before heading back to Sydney. We are looking to target segments across the board from VFR to MICE and leisure travellers," he says.

Cox was visiting India as a part of the recently-signed interim Free Trade Agreement between India and Australia, and the ongoing trade relations. The visit was followed by a tourism roundtable with airline partners and tourism trade partners.

Speaking about the roundtable, he says, "It was to talk about our aspirations, about growing our visitor economy between India and New South Wales. We have bold aspirations; we think there is enormous opportunity for operators on



NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet and Minister for Multiculturalism Mark Coure welcomed the lighting up of the iconic Sydney landmark in orange, white and green to commemorate India's milestone anniversary.

both sides. It also about listening to the challenges and the opportunities from our trade partners and airlines, so we can understand the things we need to do to ensure higher numbers."

The roundtable had 12-14 travel agents, along with a small repre-

sentation from the airlines. Some common issues came through. "Visas was one of them; the processing time has certainly improved in recent times, but more importantly the issues have been about long-term visas and to possibly offer Indian visitors a longer visa period. However, it is not a

state issue and a federal issue. But we will ensure this feedback is taken back to the federal government," Cox shares.

Another key discussion was around aviation – the number of flights, particularly direct flights, between India and NSW. "We are excited that there is a new flight from Qantas launching in September this year from Bengaluru to Sydney. We are talking to airlines, both here and Australia and encouraging them to get flights on ground," he reveals.

Sydney now has a brand-new international airport opening in December 2026. This, Cox believes, will be an absolute game-changer for the number of Indian passengers that could be processed at

Sydney airport. The second airport will be a 24-hour airport.

Here for the long haul

Cox says, "We are here for the long-haul. The numbers into NSW at the end of 2019 was 440 million AUD worth of visitor expenditure

In the long term, I have no doubt that India can be the largest market for us (DNSW), but it has a long way to go

from India. I expect at least a 20 per cent growth every year in the numbers from India to NSW for the next 10 years. That is our target. India is a high repeat visitation market for NSW. India's ranking as an international source market is currently in the top 10, but we are nowhere close to what is possible. I believe India can be the number one source destination for Australia over the years to come. We have a visitor economy strategy 2030 that sets a really clear vision – we want NSW to be the premier visitor economy of the Asia Pacific, and for that to happen we want to see India grow up to where it should be. It will be either number one or two. In the long term I have absolutely no doubt that India can be the largest market for us, but it has a long way to go."

Asia-Pacific airlines posted a 528.8 per cent rise in July traffic compared to July 2021, the strongest year-over-year rate among the regions. Capacity rose 159.9 per cent and the load factor was up 47.1 percentage points to 80.2 per cent, according to IATA.

Let's go to Legoland Dubai

Merlin Entertainments Group hosted select Travel Trade and Media to an enjoyable evening in Mumbai recently. Mazen Al Dgle, Head of Sales – LEGOLAND Dubai, was also present at the event, marking their commitment to the market and thanking the fraternity for all the invaluable support extended.



Talent crunch in Hospitality Sector

Whether it is education, training or employment, the hospitality industry in India needs to strengthen all three to make sure that there is no talent drain in the sector, which is already facing staff crunch as one of the consequences of the pandemic.

One of the oldest sectors, hospitality has endured and prospered while embracing the need to develop and adapt to the shifting tastes and preferences of its customers. A workforce that is acclimated to a culture of perpetual change and innovation is needed in these ever-evolving fields with various needs and changing rules. Ironically, not much has seriously changed regarding hiring practices, training procedures, and staff retention in the hospitality industry.

Hospitality students have shifted to fields including e-commerce, retail, real estate, consultancy, and health care as a result of the pandemic's widespread layoffs, increasing workload, long hours, relatively low earnings, and no major upskilling initiatives. It is even more serious because, according to a research by the National Skill Development Corporation of India, the industry requires a workforce of over 18 lakh, with more than 21 per cent of



vacancies being listed for entry-level roles. So, what is the main reason of such shortage and reservations to join the field? Feels that the disconnect between perception and reality is a major factor in this. Hotels are often associated with elegance, comfort, and friendliness, but for recent grads in the industry, things can appear different on the ground, especially in the wake of the epidemic. They are hesitant to enter this market because of problems, including increased labour hours, constantly changing visitor expectations and demands, and a lack of market parity in remuneration. Instead, they are drawn to fields

that value soft interpersonal skills, such as IT, retail, real estate, logistics, and the gig economy. Also, there is no denial of the fact that major upskilling is required by the system. For any organisation, it is important to grow their talent internally and externally. As, an industry we need to raise the bar and change the perception. Students are currently assessing if the employment roles they will hold after graduating are worth the time and money they put in the hospitality school. These are not modest sums of money.

After two years of irregular operations, the hospitality industry is

finally receiving the much-needed boost with the resumption of travel and reasonably sustained interest. The current labour shortage has hindered growth for the industry.

Hospitality students have shifted to various other fields as a result of the widespread layoffs during the pandemic

Additionally, hotel chains are growing in Tier II and Tier III cities where tourists have significantly increased. Because employees are now expected to multitask and manage the expanding digitisation of the workplace, traditional employ-

ment patterns and responsibilities need to change.

Hotels are currently taking a step back to reassess the impression of the industry as one with unjust hours and low compensation in order to address this significant human resource concern. Employers are placing a greater emphasis on workers' well-being, health, and safety as they roll out updated benefit schemes, provide more flexibility, and even change their workplace culture to be more hospitable. It makes a huge difference how hotels treat and care for students while they are through industrial training. They should have regular meetings with the executive committee and senior leadership one-on-one during the course of the training programme.

According to the Naukri JobSpeak Index, hiring in the hospitality sector, including hotels, restaurants and airlines, grew by 58 per cent in November 2021 as compared

to the year before. Hotel chains expanding to Tier II and Tier III cities also open up opportunities. The sector has a lot to offer, but we need to look back and revise the procedures to make better for people becoming the part of the industry. Hospitality leaders need to take on the responsibility to mentor the future leaders and I would argue for linking the accountability to their KPIs.



KB Kachru
Vice President, Hotel Association of India, Chairman, Emeritus & Principal Advisor South Asia Radisson Hotel Group

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

'Indian weddings' in South Africa

Sun International, an internationally renowned hotel brand with several hotels in South Africa, is excited to host Indian weddings and has made special arrangements for the Indian guests.

TT Bureau

Sun International, an internationally renowned hotel brand, has hotels in "all regions" of South Africa. The hotels of Sun International have amenities to host guests from all segments, be it MICE, leisure, FITs or weddings, shares **Shereen Allaman**, Vice President, International Sales and Marketing, Sun International.

"We are excited to inform all our partners within India and other regions that the Palace of the Lost City is undergoing a complete renovation. We started this during the lockdown, and it should be completed by October, which is precisely our Diwali period. We are ensuring that when our clients arrive at the Palace of the Lost City at Sun City, they see a new hotel and enjoy the new facilities," she says.

Outlook for Indian market

Allaman further shares, "The Indian market has always been important for Sun International



Shereen Allaman
Vice President, International Sales and Marketing, Sun International

over the years, and we continue to maintain this good relationship. We want to say that we are grateful to this market for the continued support we have received and that is why I took the time to visit the various regions within India to showcase what Sun International has to offer now and to ensure that we bring in that business and hold that relationship steady."

Eye on Indian weddings

Elaborating further on the India visit, she adds, "My mandate right now is to ensure that we bring in South Africa as a destination for weddings. We are

completely equipped to handle an Indian wedding in Sun City." She further adds, "For Indian travellers, gastronomy is of the utmost importance, so we en-

We are ensuring that when our clients arrive at the Palace of the Lost City, they see a new hotel and enjoy the new facilities

sure that we do have Indian executive chefs at our properties, making sure that we are including at least a minimum of two or three authentic Indian dishes within our breakfast offerings. It is important for us to offer Jain kitchen access because we want to ensure that when our Indian guests come through, they are comfortable."

'Good demand in tier III, IV cities'

Tekla Maira, Regional Director (Sales-India), Banyan Tree, who has championed untapped potential in tiered cities, talks about her focus areas and the hotels she is promoting in the Indian market.

Hazel Jain

Tekla Maira, Regional Director (Sales - India), Banyan Tree, has taken over the responsibility to promote five key hotels and resorts in Thailand, namely Banyan Tree Bangkok, Banyan Tree Phuket, Angsana Laguna Phuket, Cassia Phuket and Homm Bliss Southbeach Patong. While the new brand Cassia belongs to the extended stay category, a cross between hotel, serviced apartment and home, HOMM Bliss is one of five new brands within Banyan Tree Group's growing ecosystem of premium category brands.

Speaking about her transition to the new hotel brand, Maira says, "It is a great experience to be able to work across all the brands. I entered this role at the right time. Restrictions were just being lifted in Thailand and things were getting back to normal. People had had their fill of enjoying domestic travel. Now, Indian travellers are looking at travelling overseas. While the



Tekla Maira
Regional Director (Sales - India), Banyan Tree

summer had a lot of people going into Europe, now I see Thailand gaining popularity. It is four hours (journey) from Mumbai and New Delhi - there is Phuket, Bangkok - it is very easy due to the direct flights now. So, travellers are going there even for long weekends. I can see whether it is golf tours or MICE, or even weddings, I really see India becoming one of the largest source markets for Thailand."

Tiered cities have potential

She is happy that the Thailand hotels and the Tourism Authority of Thailand are focusing a lot on India. "We are also focusing on tier

II and III cities of India. Four years ago, I spoke primarily about the potential of tiered cities of India. Today, I would say, tier III and even tier IV cities are actually starved for information. They want to travel and they do not mind changing two or three flights to get there.

They (Tier III and Tier IV people) want to travel and they don't mind changing two or three flights to get there

They are excited to travel; they are adventurous. I have attended a couple of trade shows where I have had people from Surat who were so excited to hear about our hotels. So, yes I would definitely focus on tiered III, IV cities also," Maira says.

EVENT TALK		
Media Partners:		
 		
SEPTEMBER 2022		
Date	Event	Time
15-17	GSTC Asia-Pacific Sustainable Tourism Conference	9.00 am
16	Abu Dhabi Roadshow - Mumbai	10:00 am
17	Vancouver International Travel Expo	8:30 am
19	Attlys Webinar	3:00 pm
19-20	ILTM North America	05:00 pm
20-22	IFTM Top Resa	10:00 am
20	Inspiring Vacation Webinar	12:00 pm
20-23	TAFI convention	10:00 am
21	ITB china	9:00 am
22	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
22-25	Tourism Expo Japan	9:00 am
23	Cross Hotels Webinar	12:00 pm
23-25	Travel and Tourism Fair Pune	11:00 am
25	HHC Hospitality Bouncebank Run	5:45 am
27	World Tourism Day	9:00 am
27	Qatar Webinar	3:00 pm
28-29	Global Travel Show	11:00 am
For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com		

Madame Tussauds opens in Noida

Looking into the potential in the Indian market, Merlin Entertainments Group has opened a Madame Tussauds at DLF Mall of India in Uttar Pradesh’s Noida. The Group is working closely with the travel fraternity and tourism board to promote the museum.



Merlin Entertainments Group, the second largest attraction operator in the world after Disney, which operates about 140 attractions across 25 countries, has opened a new museum of Madame Tussauds at DLF Mall of India in Uttar Pradesh’s Noida. The new attraction, showcasing beautiful wax statues, caters to all age groups and across all categories.

“People from 3 to 70 years of age can experience our attractions. Visitors can visit Madame Tussauds at DLF Mall of India on 4th floor from 11:30 am to 8.00 pm and the attraction is open 365 days a year. The ticket prices are 960 for adult and 760 for children. We offer special discounts for online bookings,” said **Anshul Jain**, General Manager, Madame Tussauds India/ Merlin Entertainments.

The Group is working closely with the travel fraternity and tourism boards to promote its business



Anshul Jain
General Manager, Madame Tussauds India/ Merlin Entertainments

We have been working with the travel fraternity in India, the tourism boards play a critical role for us

in India. “We have been working with the travel fraternity in India, the tourism boards play a critical role for us. Also, apart from the travel fraternity, we have been participating with the tourism boards in their webinars, trying



Gaurav Seth
Head of Trade Sales - India Outbound, Merlin Entertainments

With two years of people not being able to travel, they are ready to spend for exclusive experiences

to educate our travel industry partners on all the things that are happening. We are working with the Singapore Tourism Board to do a roadshow in India. We have recently worked with Malaysian Tourism Board, Visit Britain, USA

and Tourism Australia. So, tourism boards and we are hand in hand,” he said.

Gaurav Seth, Head of Trade Sales - India Outbound, Merlin Entertainments Group, said, “With two years of people not being able to travel, I think there is a lot of savings, so people are ready to spend for exclusive experiences. The demand for travel has increased and the demand especially for exclusive experiences have really seen a big growth from the market in our perspective.”

Speaking of the efforts behind preparing the wax figures, Jain revealed, “Each figure is a piece of art, it involves more than 20 artists from different genres like painters, sculptures, hairstylist, and technicians. More than 20 people work on a single figure for about four to six months to get the final figure prepared. All the figures are made in London studios and the cost involved in each figure ranges from ₹1.5 crore to ₹6 crore depending upon the complexity of the figure.”

In Memoriam

Anil Rajput

Anil Rajput, Joint Secretary, Association of Domestic Tour Operators Association of India (ADTOAI) and Managing Director, Promark Travel Services Pvt. Ltd., left for the heavenly abode on 4 September 2022.

Paying tribute to Rajput, PP Khanna, President, ADTOAI, said, “He became a member of ADTOI in 2009. He has been instrumental in promoting lesser-known tourist destinations in the country. His untimely demise has created a void in the industry, which is difficult to fill. On behalf of ADTOI and its Management Team, we all pray almighty for his soul to rest in peace, and also to give strength to the bereaved family for the irreparable loss caused due to his untimely demise.”

‘Experiences help curate luxury’

Simran, Co-founder, OneLatitude, and an adventure travel operator, says her experience as a traveller helped her curate experiences for customers.



Simran, Co-founder, OneLatitude, said that she started the company with the idea of helping travellers experience things they hadn’t before. “It was a huge leap of faith and it’s been incredibly rewarding. OneLatitude is a luxury outdoor holiday company, and our forte is in curating unique, fun-filled and luxurious experiences for families and individuals. Whether it’s staying in authentic Kyrgyz yurts, picnicking with a personal chef in the Himalayas or hiking Kilimanjaro, we personally lead and curate every single experience. With just one year in operation, we have organised handpicked adventures for groups in more than 10 destinations around the world,” she said.

On how did she feel being a women adventure travel guide/ operator, she said, “I have been a solo traveller all my adult life and have spent days at end exploring and driving around the world by



myself. Honestly, I think my experience as a traveller has helped me curate experiences in advance for our travellers.”

She added, “I have met so many lovely women and men in this industry. While things may not always be easy as a woman in the outdoors, it’s been worth it and something I would not trade for anything.”

Travelling alone can be uncomfortable at times, especially if you are a woman. However, presence of other women on the trip helps. Asked if she, being a woman, has comforted other women on their trips, Simran replied, “I really hope so! Having another woman on a trip definitely adds as a layer of comfort for women travellers in our groups. Since, we host many family vacations, there is usually always a fair share of women on our trips. I hope

that with so many women operators now in the adventure tourism space, more women are encouraged to go out there to travel and discover their passions.”

Having another woman on a trip definitely adds as a layer of comfort for women travellers in our groups

Regarding the safety of women travellers, she said: “All our trips are guided, which means that either I or my business partner (sometimes both) participates in each of our trips, which certainly adds a huge layer of comfort for our guests. We personally ensure the safety and well-being of all our



Simran, Co-founder, OneLatitude, during an adventure trip.

guests, be it women or men.” “In addition, we only do small groups of no more than 14 adults. This ensures, we can give personal attention and care to each and every guest. It has also helped that we were able to build a credible support team around us and we have multiple checks in place even when we work with somebody new. We always say this to our guests and it resonates in everything we do “your safety is our top priority.”

When asked being in the travel business for nearly two years how do you plan to envisage growth for women entrepreneurs/ guides, she shared: “It is only a matter of time before women take their space in this world, I truly believe that. There are so many women doing amazing things in the adventure tourism space and the Collective offer a platform for them to showcase their work and to help build, grow and collaborate with other incredible women.”

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MOVEMENTS

SAROVAR HOTELS

New Delhi

Sarovar Hotels has appointed **ANKUSH SHARMA** as the new General Manager - Development. Ankush brings with him more than two decades of diverse experience in the hospitality industry, both in India and abroad. He has been associated with pre-openings as well as running hotels and has accomplished operational success in all spheres. His last assignment was as General Manager for The Gaurs Sarovar Portico, Greater Noida. In the past, he has worked with hospitality brands like Taj Group of Hotels and Intercontinental Hotels Group. He holds a Hotel Management degree from AMC College of Bangalore and an MBA degree from Amity University.



RENEST RIVER COUNTRY RESORT

Manali

WAIBHAV RAWAT joins as the General Manager of Renest River Country Resort Manali. He brings with him over a decade of experience. In his role at Renest Manali, he will spearhead property operations and implement growth strategies to achieve and sustain leadership in the market. His responsibilities include but are not limited to all phases of the hotel, including sales and marketing, human resources, food and beverage, budgeting/ forecasting, empowering associates to provide superior customer care to the guests, communication, and problem-solving among others. Waibhav has experience working with renowned brands like Lemon Tree and Fortune Hotels.



HYATT REGENCY

Dehradun

Hyatt Regency has appointed **KOVID UMMAT** as the Cluster Director of Marketing for two properties — Hyatt Regency Dehradun, the first 5-star hotel and the largest luxury hotel in the state of Uttarakhand and Hyatt Regency Jaipur Mansarovar, the first Hyatt Regency property in the city. Kovid, who brings to the brand a rich and diverse experience spanning nine years, will be orchestrating all marketing and communication strategies for both these hotels. While adept in ATL and BTL communication, he also has a good understanding of surrogate advertising. He will be responsible for generating market specific content to drive business growth and profitability.



ITC NARMADA

Ahmedabad

ITC Hotels has appointed **ASHOK SRIRAM** as the Sales and Revenue Head for its newly launched premium luxury property, ITC Narmada, in Ahmedabad. He comes with at least 7 years of revenue management leadership experience. At ITC Narmada, he will be spearheading the entire revenue operations from planning to strategy to allocation. He will equally be responsible for setting long-term and short-term sales targets, devising a sound plan for the hotel's entry into the value-driven market of Ahmedabad and executing the sales plan. He will also be responsible for positioning the ITC Narmada brand across the twin cities of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar.



CROWNE PLAZA

Chennai Adyar Park

AYUSHI BHARDWAJ has been appointed as the Marketing and Communications Manager of Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park. Ayushi has an experience of more than seven years in the domain of marketing and would be in-charge of the hotel's marketing, public relations, and digital and social media initiatives. At Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Park, she would be responsible for elevating and maintaining the hotel's brand positioning, creating marketing campaigns aligned with the hotel's key goals and driving additional revenue through tactical campaigns.



FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON VASHI

Mumbai

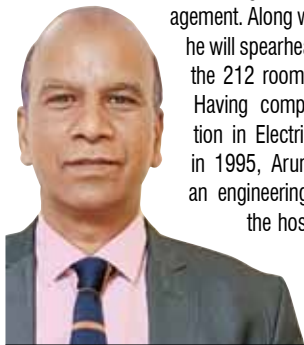
Four Points by Sheraton Vashi has appointed **KIRAN MUNIRAJ** as Director of Rooms. Kiran brings with him 16 years of rich experience in the hospitality space. Having worked with luxury, business and all suite properties with extensive training and development, succession planning, and team engagement, he is known for creating unique guest experiences in many cities across India and overseas. In his prior role, Kiran served as Rooms Division Manager with Marriott International in Hyderabad. Additionally, he has also worked with leading hospitality chains such as Hilton, Oakwood, Taj Hotels, The Park, and Oberoi Group.



GRAND MERCURE

Bengaluru Gopalan Mall

ARUNACHALAM V has joined as Chief Engineer at Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall. He brings along extensive knowledge and understanding in technical services and asset management. Along with the engineering department, he will spearhead the sustainability initiatives of the 212 rooms and multiple banquet facility. Having completed his Honours specialisation in Electrical and Electronic Engineering in 1995, Arunachalam began his career as an engineering supervisor. He ventured into the hospitality industry at Banyan Tree resorts in Mahe, Seychelles in 2005. He joined the Accor group in 2009.



Crowne Plaza Chennai Adyar Gate has announced the joining of **PROJJWAL GHOSH** as a new Director of Sales & Marketing. Projjwal brings with him a rich experience of more than 12 years in the hospitality industry. In his new role, he will be responsible for leading strategic sales, marketing and business operations and overlook all aspects of the sales and marketing department, besides working towards the reinforcement of the brand and its core ethos. He will also strive to create new and sustainable business streams for the hotel and drive the hotels revenue performance.



SANKASH

New Delhi

Travel Fintech startup SanKash has appointed **RIJUTA RICHI** as Head of Marketing and Customer experience. Rijuta will be spearheading overall marketing initiatives, including strategic partnerships, branding, marketing campaigns, and corporate communications, along with customer experiences. In a career expanding 12 years, Rijuta has worked with the leading organisations such as Publicis, WPP Consulting and Google overseeing some of their biggest clients (such as Nissan Motors, Nestle Sri Lanka, WeWork, HUL, P&G, Mondelez among others). Her stint at the agency side helped her to develop a deeper skillset in Digital Marketing & Tech space.



TALKing People

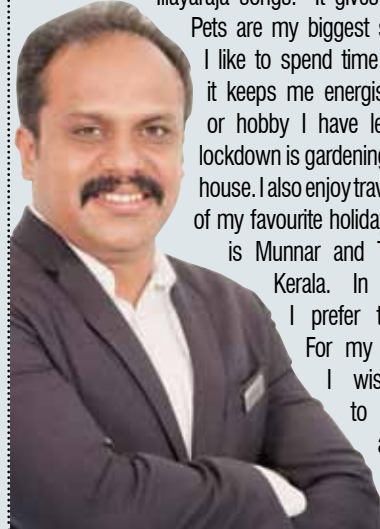
SEEMA TAJ, Director of Sales, Sheraton Grand Palace Indore, takes a break and listens to her favourite music because it allows her to be present in the moment by focusing on the music rather than the stressor. Taj says, "The key to managing stress while cooped up in the house is to take up a hobby. I have an eye for colour, creativity and detail, which led me to take up interior designing during the lockdown period." Speaking about her favourite holiday destination in India and internationally, she says, "I love Mussoorie for its scenic setting and some fun hiking adventures. Maldives for its beautiful beaches, water sports and amazing sunsets."



Jaipur is a favourite holiday destination in India for **SANDEEP ARORA**, India Head, Brightsun Travel. "It has many historical places and forts. It is one of the best tourist places to learn more about the Mughals and Rajputs. The state (Rajasthan) does have a lot of forts and other historical monuments. The festivals and fairs are a great way to get an idea of the state's rich history and culture. If I get a chance, I would love to visit Switzerland. Switzerland is not just all mountain tops, it's also home to some of Europe's largest and most beautiful lakes," she says.



MAYOORAKANTH SIVALINGAM, Cluster Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott Madurai & Trichy, de-stresses with a warm bath and listening to Ilayaraja songs. "It gives me a break. Pets are my biggest stressbusters. I like to spend time with pets as it keeps me energised. One skill or hobby I have learned during lockdown is gardening at my village house. I also enjoy travelling and one of my favourite holiday destinations is Munnar and Theykaddy in Kerala. In international, I prefer to visit Italy. For my next holiday, I wish to travel to Andaman and Nicobar Islands," he adds.



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India key source market for Oman

India is 'very important' source market for the Sultanate of Oman, says Asma Al-Hajri, Deputy Director General, Tourism Promotions, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman. She shares USPs of the destination that will surely inspire Indian tourists.



Janice Alyosius

With the tourist footfalls from foreign countries increasing, tourism in the Sultanate of Oman is recovering fast. To cater to the growing number of tourists and further promote the destination, Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism conducted a special promotional roadshow in five major source cities of India from 22 to 29 August 2022. The roadshow comprised a delegation from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, tour operators, hotels and airlines.

Speaking about the destination, **Asma Al-Hajri**, Deputy Director General, Tourism Promotions, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman, said that Oman is blessed with nature, culture and adventure, and that is the unique selling point of the destination. "We are optimistic about the number of tourist arrivals this year and targeting to reach the pre-pandemic levels," she said.

Oman received around 167,678 Indian travellers this year from January to July. Asma said that their focus is on providing quality experience to the visitors. "Oman is not a mass tourism destination. So, we are looking for the quality and responsible travellers to make sure that our country is preserved and respected, our culture and history is not destroyed," she said.

No restrictions

She underlined the fact that Oman is COVID-free and there are no travel restrictions at present. "Indian travellers can apply for a visa on arrival, for 14 days and must book a hotel room in advance. They must have health insurance and a local manager who can manage their visit," she said.

Asma said, "India is a very important market for us. We have seen a good growth before pandemic, and in the first seven months this

year, we have received around 167,000 Indian travellers already. There is a strong relationship between the two countries and there is similarity in cultures as well, which adds to the reason why Indians should visit Oman."

She said that during the roadshow in India she came to know that Indian tourists are evolving and so are their expectations. They seek to explore the destination more deeply. They are looking for experiences rather than classic tours, and that is what all of Oman has to offer. "It's an experiential destination,



**We are looking
for the quality
and responsible
travellers to
make sure that
our country is
preserved and
respected**

wherever you go in Oman, you will have different experiences. There is culture and history to explore, there is adventure to enjoy, there is everything, I would say, what Indian travellers are looking for."

She revealed that currently there are more than 600 3-star or higher ranked hotels in Oman and they expect close to 29,000 rooms in the country by 2023. "We are looking into the Indian travellers' five nights to six nights stay at present. Since Oman is blessed with geographical beauty, and is a vast destination, the overnight stay could be easily extended to 10 nights."

Wedding destination

She said, "We also seek to promote Oman as an attractive destination for weddings as this is one of the growing tourism segments,

especially for visitors from India. With its pristine nature, picturesque beaches and unique architecture, Oman has seen many Indian weddings."

Travellers' behaviour

Speaking about the pandemic induced changes, she said, "We have seen a shift in people's behaviour when it comes to travelling. Looking into the post-pandemic travellers' behaviour, I would say, they have become more independent. People love to travel on their own. They are choosing independent trips rather than the arranged groups trips. This is an advantage for Oman because Oman is an experiential destination. People come to Oman, they visit mountains, explore the local villages (souks), and enjoy the culture and other things that the destination offers. So, destination incentives are well-suited to the new trends. In addition, Oman is a safe country to travel, travellers feel at home."

She added, "I would like to re-emphasise on the importance of the Indian market in Oman."

Since there are similarities in the culture of India and Oman, Indian travellers would not feel uncomfortable in Oman. Wherever they go, they feel they are a part of the country. When it comes to food, the Indian food is very much available everywhere. The language can be easily understood. And the most important is the experiences. People these days are looking for experiences rather than arranged or traditional trips. So, experience is something that everyone these days is looking for, and that is what you will find in Oman."



Asma Al-Hajri
Deputy Director General, Tourism Promotions
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman

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