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India needs aggressive marketing drive

Do you think the Union Ministry of Tourism is doing enough to make India a global tourist destination? Key decision-makers and stakeholders of the travel and tourism industry share their views with **TRAUTALK** and offer suggestions on what more can be done so that India has top-of-mind recall among foreign tourists.

“We started with WTM London and then went on to participate in FITUR in Madrid and ITB Berlin. We are now slowly scaling it up because as domestic tourism is getting back on the track to pre-COVID levels, we need to attract more tourists from abroad and that is why we will be participating in international events. Also, the G20 Presidency will give a big boost to India's image or cultural heritage destinations. The 55 places where the meetings are will get showcased throughout the world when these meetings take place just as they did at Udaipur and Mumbai when the meetings have taken place now. And also, I expect the revival of inbound travel to happen in 2023 to pre-COVID levels because international flights are not still at the same numbers.”



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Tourism, Government of India

“As we are recovering after pandemic, we have seen our domestic sector has already grown and we have really achieved record footfall at many destinations. And after opening up of the international travel, I think now our focus is to ensure that the inbound also recovers to pre-pandemic level. I think there is already significant recovery, and we hope by 2023 we should be able to recover inbound traffic to pre-pandemic level. That is where we are working with industry and with other state governments. I think in 2023 our first target is to come out completely from the pandemic, achieve pre-pandemic level and then take India tourism to the next level. Also, the ministry has participated in WTL London and FITUR as well as ITB Berlin, in both the events we will participate with the industry.”



Rakesh Kumar Verma
Additional Secretary, Tourism, GoI

Contd on page 12 ▶

India Tourism on a roll

KSA keen on biz with India

G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, GoI, launches initiatives that aim to showcase investible projects and opportunities in tourism and hospitality sectors to investors.

Janice Alyosius

G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Government of India (GoI), recently launched several initiatives to promote tourism in India. These included the Best Tourism Village Competition Portal and Rural Tourism Portal, as well as the Global Tourism Investor Summit 2023 Portal. The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) will be organizing the first Global Tourism Investors' Summit this year from May 17 to May 19 to showcase invest-



G Kishan Reddy
Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, GoI

ible projects and opportunities in tourism and hospitality sectors to domestic and international invest-

tors. Reddy also introduced the “Visit India Year 2023” campaign, which invites tourists to explore India during 2023, India's G20 presidency year, and India@75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations.

Earlier, addressing people at another event Reddy spoke about the achievements of Civil Aviation in the country and how it is helping tourism. “The synergy between tourism and civil aviation in propagating India's tourism potential besides cultural and spiritual heritage is a well-known fact,” he said.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offers diverse experiences for different segments of Indian market. Good connectivity between the two nations and the kingdom's stopover program adds to the visitors' conveniences.

Janice Alyosius

India is a country with a rich history and culture that has had long-standing ties with Saudi Arabia for hundreds of years. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has seen an increase in visitors from India with over 1 million visiting the kingdom in last one year. These include those visiting the country to meet family and friends, for leisure, business, and religious purposes. “The kingdom's goal is to double the number of Indian visitors by the end of 2023 and further reach the 12 million mark by 2030, which



Alhasan Aldabbagh
President - APAC Markets, Saudi Tourism Authority

will place India as the number one source market for Saudi Arabia, shared **Alhasan Aldabbagh**,


President - APAC Markets, Saudi Tourism Authority.

Experiences

Saudi Arabia is home to Arabian culture, rich heritage, pristine nature, and diversified landscapes. This diversity allows the kingdom to target different segments of the Indian market. “We are targeting different segments based on the feedback that we get from our trade partners. So, we are creating the experiences and packages for the culture and heritage seekers. For those seeking culture and

Contd on page 9 ▶






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'Integrating tourism & aviation'

Jyotiraditya M Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, says that civil aviation and tourism are the two sides of the same coin and UDAN scheme aims to broaden the perspective of civil aviation in the country as well as deepen its reach.

 Nisha Verma

Jyotiraditya M Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, said that tourism and aviation go together as industry because without tourism aviation loses a lot of its shine and vice versa for civil aviation. "One cannot bring forth the potentiality of tourism in any country in the world. I think they are conjoined twins in terms of seeing the development of each other. It's also been a great area of importance for Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he claimed.

UDAN scheme for tourism

He claimed that the UDAN scheme has been put in place to both broaden the perspective of civil aviation in the country as well as



Jyotiraditya M Scindia
Union Minister of Civil Aviation

to domestic route as well as on the domestic to domestic route from tier I cities to tier-I and tier-II cities," he updated.

international UDAN, Agartala -Chittagong-Agartala and Imphal-Mandalay-Imphal."

Inclusion of tourism

Scindia shared that it is with UDAN 3 they look at the inclusion of tourism and the synergy between the two sectors. "We have included tourism routes. We have awarded 61 routes under the tourism UDAN scheme, of which 43 routes are operational. It's been a huge success and another eight new routes will be operationalized by March 2023. Thus, there has been a great deal of connectivity through tourism UDAN as well. Places like Agra to Bhopal; Bengaluru to Mysore; Dibrugarh to Dimapur; Agartala to Aizawl, have been operationalised. On the west

A total of 26 routes have been awarded under Buddhist circuit, of which two are active and 12 new routes will be operational in this summer

tance for the Buddhist circuit, which would be connected in the summer schedule to four cities, mainly Kanpur, Prayagraj, Varanasi and Lucknow. Thus, there is a great deal of importance that we attach to the synergies between tourism and civil



deepen its reach and penetration. "In the last five years, since UDAN took off, we have around 457 routes operationalised. We also have a ₹4,500cr capex plan for airports underneath the scheme through which 71, including airports, heliports and water dromes, have been operationalised. Our target for routes is roughly about 1,000 and our target for airports is about 100. Thus, in the last five years, we have almost crossed 50 per cent of our target on operationalisation of routes and almost above 71 per cent of our target on airports. We aim to reach the target of 1,000 routes and 100 airports by 2024-25. Almost 1.1 crore people have benefited from this, many of whom have possibly never travelled by air in their lives before. Close to 2,15,000 flights have been operated through the UDAN scheme and as far as new concepts to the UDAN scheme we have brought about in the last year and a half, we have made sure that we look at last mile connectivity. Therefore, there is great connectivity into India on the international

In the last five years, since UDAN took off, we have around 457 routes operationalised. We also have a ₹4,500cr capex plan for airports

However, he shared, "The last mile connectivity is the piece of the puzzle that we are trying to put together. Thus, under UDAN, we have brought about a small aircraft scheme. In the latest round, i.e. UDAN 4.2, we have awarded 184 routes, of which 16 are for helicopters, 50 for planes and 118 for fixed wing small aircrafts. Under UDAN 4.3, we have also awarded 10 tourism routes, of which eight are operational. We also look at international UDAN with our Act East Policy. Two routes have been awarded under

coast is Ahmedabad to Udaipur, Amritsar to Jaipur, and Bhopal to Udaipur. On the east coast, we have got many northeast routes as well as Rajahmundry to Visakhapatnam. In Uttar Pradesh, Gorakhpur to Varanasi and Delhi to Khajuraho has been started, which is a route in great demand. South India to North India; on the east coast Bhubaneswar to Varanasi. Deoghar is a symbol of great importance from religious perspective and Kolkata to Deoghar connectivity has been given. There have been tremendous movement on the UDAN routes," he claimed.

Buddhist circuit

He said that they have been concentrating on Buddhist circuit as well. "A total of 26 routes have been awarded there, of which two are active and 12 new routes will be operational in this summer schedule. Today, under the Buddhist route Kushinagar and Indore are connected. However, soon, we will be connecting Bareilly and Saharanpur to Kushinagar as well. Also, Shravasti is of great impor-

aviation, and the UDAN scheme is playing a very, very important role in being able to achieve that twin objective," he said.

Integrated approach

Scindia informed that tourism regional connectivity scheme is one of the areas of tremendous synergy under which both ministries are working together to grow both tourism and culture in the country. "Also, there is an emphasis given under the PM's directive to the Northeast as a growth engine for the country. In 2014, we had only nine airports operational in the Northeast and today we have increased that to 16 airports. Two states in the Northeast—Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim—did not have a single airport. In the last eight years, Arunachal has three airports and Sikkim has one. Assam had four airports, which has been increased to seven. In terms of volume and aircraft, in 2014, we had a total of 1,014 total aircraft movements per week in the Northeast, which has gone up to 1,911 aircraft movements in January this year," he said.



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Repackaging travel

The Ministry of Tourism is gearing up to organize its 1st Global Tourism Investors' Summit this year between 17 and 19 May to showcase investible projects and opportunities in tourism and hospitality sector in India to domestic and international investors. This is being organised in the backdrop of India's G20 Presidency this year. The main objective of the summit is to promote the Indian travel and tourism industry as an 'Investment Destination' and provide a common platform for the Centre/State governments and the investors to discuss investment possibilities in the sector.

Along with this, India is also observing 2023 as the Visit India Year and aims to develop tourism in mission mode and accelerate India's rise towards world leadership in tourism sector. It is a unique, collective movement that invites the world to explore India in 2023 - a historical year of India's G20 Presidency as well as grand celebrations of India@75 Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

While 2023 seems like a golden year for India tourism, and the government initiatives are not going unnoticed, we analysed some of the travel trends since the pandemic. These trends have emerged as the go-to themes for most travel products, and destinations are packaging them to attract more tourists.

Sustainable Travel: With increasing awareness of climate change, travellers want to opt for more eco-friendly and sustainable travel options; **Personalized Travel:** As technology continues to advance, travellers may expect more personalized travel experiences; **Wellness Travel:** The trend of wellness travel is likely to continue in 2023, with travellers seeking out destinations that prioritize mental and physical wellbeing; **Bleisure Travel:** With remote work becoming increasingly common, the trend of combining business travel with leisure travel, or bleisure travel, is likely to continue; **Authentic Travel:** As travellers seek out more unique and authentic travel experiences, they may be drawn to destinations and experiences that allow them to connect with local cultures and communities.

With these, we hope that travel suppliers and the private sector also evolve their offerings in 2023.

India's domestic air traffic up 50%

According to the latest statistics released by International Air Transport Association (IATA), the recovery in air travel continued in December 2022 and for the full year. India's full year domestic traffic rose 48.8 per cent versus 2021, reaching 85.7 per cent of the 2019 level.



TT Bureau

IATA has announced that the total traffic in 2022 (measured in revenue passenger kilometers or RPKs) rose 64.4 per cent compared to 2021. Globally, full year 2022 traffic was at 68.5 per cent of pre-pandemic (2019) levels. December 2022 total traffic rose 39.7 per cent compared to December 2021 and reached 76.9 per cent of the December 2019 level. India's full year domestic traffic rose 48.8 per cent versus 2021, reaching 85.7 per cent of the 2019 level.

International traffic in 2022 climbed 152.7 per cent versus 2021 and reached 62.2 per cent of 2019 levels. December 2022 international traffic climbed 80.2 per cent over December 2021, reaching 75.1 per cent of the level in December 2019.



December 2022 international air traffic climbed 80.2 per cent over December 2021, reaching 75.1 per cent of the level in December 2019

Domestic traffic for 2022 rose 10.9 per cent compared to the prior year. 2022 domestic traffic was at 79.6 per cent of the full year 2019 level. December 2022 domestic traffic was up 2.6 per cent over the year earlier period and was at 79.9 per cent of December 2019 traffic.

Willie Walsh, Director General, IATA, said, "The industry left 2022 in far stronger shape than it entered, as most governments lifted COVID-19 travel restrictions during the year and people took advantage of the restoration of their freedom to travel. This momentum is expected to continue in the New Year, despite some governments' over-reactions to China's re-opening."

International Passenger Markets Asia-Pacific airlines posted a 363.3 per cent rise in interna-



tional traffic in 2022 compared to 2021, maintaining the strongest year-over-year rate among the regions. Capacity rose 129.9 per cent and the load factor climbed 37.3 percentage points to 74.0 per cent. December 2022 traffic rose 302.7 per cent compared to December 2021.

European carriers' full year traffic climbed 132.2 per cent versus 2021. Capacity increased 84.0 per cent, and load factor rose 16.7 percentage points to 80.6 per cent. For December, demand climbed 46.5 per cent compared to the same month in 2021.

Middle Eastern airlines saw a 157.4 per cent traffic rise in 2022 compared to 2021. Capacity increased 73.8 per cent and load factor climbed 24.6 percentage points to 75.8 per cent. December demand climbed 69.8 per cent compared to the same month in 2021.

North American carriers reported a 130.2 per cent annual traffic rise in 2022 compared to 2021. Capacity increased 71.3 per cent, and load factor climbed 20.7 percentage points to 80.8 per cent. December 2022 traffic rose 61.3 per cent compared to the year-ago period.

Domestic Passenger Market

2022 (% YoY)	World Share ¹	RPK	ASK	PLF (LEVEL) ²	PLF (%-PT) ³
Domestic	42.0%	10.9%	4.3%	78.9%	4.7%
Australia	1.0%	111.7%	63.1%	79.7%	18.3%
Brazil	1.5%	29.9%	31.8%	79.2%	-1.2%
China P.R.	6.5%	-39.8%	-35.2%	65.3%	-5.0%
India	2.0%	48.8%	30.1%	81.4%	10.2%
Japan	1.2%	75.9%	43.4%	61.8%	11.4%
USA	19.2%	23.7%	14.0%	84.7%	6.7%

Travel on Recovery Path

2022 (% YoY)	World Share ¹	RPK	ASK	PLF (LEVEL) ²	PLF (%-PT) ³
Total Market	100%	64.4%	39.8%	78.7%	11.8%
Africa	2.1%	84.9%	51.8%	72.3%	12.9%
Asia Pacific	22.4%	34.0%	16.8%	71.8%	9.2%
Europe	30.4%	100.2%	66.8%	81.2%	13.5%
Latin America	6.4%	62.7%	54.6%	81.3%	4.0%
Middle East	9.8%	144.4%	67.0%	75.4%	23.9%
North America	28.8%	45.5%	28.5%	83.5%	9.8%

(1) % of Industry RPKs in 2022; (2) YoY change in load factor (3) Load Factor Level

Latin American airlines posted a 119.2 per cent traffic rise in 2022 over full year 2021. Annual capacity climbed 93.3 per cent and load factor increased 9.7 percentage points to 82.2 per cent, the highest among the regions. December demand climbed 37.0 per cent compared to December 2021.

African airlines' annual traffic rose 89.2 per cent in 2022 versus the prior year. Full year 2022 capacity was up 51.0 per cent and load factor climbed 14.5 percentage points to 71.7 per cent, the lowest among regions. December 2022 traffic for African airlines rose 118.8 per cent over the year-earlier period. Japan's domestic RPKs rose 75.9 per cent in 2022 and were at

74.1 per cent of the 2019 level. He added, "Let us hope that 2022 becomes known as the year in which governments locked away forever the regulatory shackles that kept their citizens earthbound for so long. It is vital that governments learn the lesson that travel restrictions and border closures have little positive impact in terms of slowing the spread of infectious diseases in our globally inter-con-



Asia-Pacific airlines posted a 363.3 per cent rise in global traffic in 2022 compared to 2021, maintaining strongest YoY rate among the regions

nected world. However, they have an enormous negative impact on people's lives and livelihoods, as well as on the global economy that depends on the unfettered movement of people and goods." ➡

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'Next tourism working group meeting to draw roadmap for deliberations on 5 key priorities': Arvind Singh

India's outbound market is set to reach US\$42 billion by end of 2024

Nok Air has launched maiden direct thrice weekly flight from Hyderabad to Bangkok

53 per cent millennials prefer to book last-minute trips, older generations prefer to plan ahead

1st Global Tourism Investment Summit to be held in May 17-19, 2023 instead of April

India built tourism infrastructure worth ₹7,000 crore in last 8 years: GK Reddy

US company to invest US \$500 million in Manipur's tourism: CM Biren Singh

Indian airports not able to realise opportunity despite geographical advantage: CAPA India

Tech, training & innovation key

Claiming that 2023 is the year of travel and tourism industry, Sunil Kumar, President, United Federation of Travel Agents Associations (UFTAA), says that it's time when people need to get ready for a complete revamp of their organisations, get online and be visible globally.

Nisha Verma

Sunil Kumar, President, United Federation of Travel Agents Associations (UFTAA), shared that the airfares are all lopsided because you don't know what fair shoots up to what levels, both in domestic travel and even international travel. "In my 36 years in the industry, I have not seen such volatility in prices, which shocks me. What surprises me is that people are still willing to buy at this prices because the urge to travel is very high. I can say that 2024 would also be a very big year for the travel industry. Even now, break-evens are not a challenge. People are making money and 2023 is a transition year," he claimed.

Higher pricing

It is important to be relevant today, he claimed. "If I head a travel and tourism organisation, I want to be relevant to the market. This means that I need to evolve with the pace of change outside my organization. People were unfortunately



Sunil Kumar
President, UFTAA

not paying to travel agents as we demanded, but today they are not raising voice when airlines are charging more money. The issues remain that the airlines are going direct and IATA is not able to stop the airlines from doing that. Now a new trend is that we don't have access to the last seat availability or lower RBDs, and even access to making bookings on certain airlines. There are some airlines which don't even give you the

connectivity on your GDS. In such a scenario, agents are getting cornered every time. If such is the game outside, then I also need to evolve in that direction. Otherwise I would become irrelevant. We try to use 2023 as a transition point to address the challenges we would encounter in 2024 because the market size undoubtedly is going to be very big. You can't stop it from growing and multiplying," informed Kumar.

UFTAA updates

He informed that UFTAA gets an opportunity along with the European association ECTAA and our colleagues at WTAAA to be invited almost every year three times, to spend a lot of time deliberating on governance of the industry on agencies. "We get an opportunity to interact with the airlines, and IATA keeps talking to us about the changes that are coming in. On the other hand, we also discuss the challenges our agencies are facing. We take them up and we make it a point to have our associations prepare a document and

then we submit those documents and debate on the same. We involve those association whenever they are confronted with a challenge to sit across with IATA and help resolve the problem. So, agents, airlines and IATA get to-

What surprises me is that people are still willing to buy (air tickets) at this (higher than expected) prices because the urge to travel is very high

gether to discuss the issues that rock the industry and need to be addressed," he informed.

However, he said that nothing changes in IATA overnight. "The process is that it must be debated again and again. Once the

PAPGJC council does the get-together, we discuss the resolutions that have to be tabled before the Passenger Agency (PA) conference and they get to be either approved or disapproved. However, currently, it continues to be one sided because at the PAPGJC conference the agents don't have a voice. And when there's a challenge in a country and that comes up to us from an association, then we intervene and we Liaison between the association and IATA if required at a global level. Apart from that we need to be updated about what's happening around the world. Some airlines have declared that they've already planned their exit out of GDS. NDC is going to be the new norm for them," shared Kumar.

Future of outbound

Kumar said that outbound travel will happen. "Currently, the trend is in favour of domestic tourism. Now, people are transitioning towards going out of comfort level. I see this summer being a big summer for outbound," he said.

Fun-filled day at IATO carnival

The Botanix Nature Resort in Damdama Village, Sohna, Gurgaon, recently hosted the IATO Annual Carnival 2023, which featured a range of exciting activities such as tambola and tug of war. The activities, organised from 9 am to 5 pm, aimed to offer an opportunity for members, travel agents, and partners to escape their ordinary routine and have a fun-filled day.



KSA to lure more visitors from India

► Contd from page 3

heritage, Saudi Arabia offers over 10,000 archaeological sites, six UNESCO World Heritage sites, the historical town of Jeddah Al Ballet, and At-Turaif in Diriyah, Riyadh. For those seeking nature and adventure, Saudi Arabia offers the Red Sea for diving, the mountains of Sarawat for hiking, and sand dunes in the desert for great adventure experiences. Additionally, packages are available for luxury travellers, MICE, and religious travellers doing Umrah," said Aldabbagh.

Connectivity

There is good connectivity between Saudi Arabia and India, with eight direct air carriers and 10 indirect carriers. Weekly, there is a seat capacity of 72,000 and Saudi Arabia is working on increasing this through bilateral agreements and by increasing the number of slots for carriers in Saudi Arabia. "We have recently introduced a stopover program in

There is good connectivity between Saudi Arabia and India, with eight direct air carriers and 10 indirect carriers

Saudi Arabia, which is open to travellers from all countries and for any travel purpose, including leisure, business, visiting family and friends, and Umrah. By purchasing through Saudi Airlines or Flynas, travellers can obtain a free 96-hour visa online within minutes. Additionally, they will receive a complimentary one-night hotel stay as part of the package," he said.

Offerings

Aldabbagh highlighted that fact that there is a lot happening in Saudi Arabia, with something new happening every month. "There is a calendar of events that takes place throughout the year, with the Riyadh season in the winter and the Jeddah season in the summer being the most prominent. These festivals include the fusion of art, culture, and entertainment activities. There are also marquee events like the Formula One, Formula E, the largest tech concert in the Middle East, the Red Sea Film Festival, and art exhibitions in Saudi Arabia. In Diriyah, Riyadh, the Bugiri district has recently opened with many different brands and restaurants, including four Michelin star restaurants. There are also upcom-

ing hotels such as the Saint Regis Hotel and Ritz Carlton Reserve and more," he said.

India-Saudi Arabia relations

Aldabbagh highlighted that Saudi Arabia is keen on doing business with India. "Saudi Arabia is working closely with major platforms in India to launch large campaigns in the markets. Additionally, KSA has connected with all the key trade partners in India and is hosting roadshows and Fam trips to help grow businesses and promote Saudi Arabia. With these efforts, KSA hopes to achieve its target



of having India as its number one source market," he said.

Saudi Arabia has made significant strides in developing its tourism industry in recent years, with a focus on promoting cultural and natural attractions to international visitors. Some of the most popular tourist destinations include the historical site of Mada'in Saleh, and the Red Sea coast with its stunning coral reefs. The country has also implemented visa reforms to make it easier for tourists to visit, and plans to invest heavily in tourism infrastructure in the coming years.



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All eyes now on China opening

As China gets ready to travel again, the forecast is that it will reach 2019 numbers of outbound travellers by 2024. How does that pan out for India needs to be seen, both in terms of attracting a huge chunk of Chinese travellers and making sure that India's outbound potential is on a high too.



Nisha Verma

In December 2022, when China announced that inbound travel to the country will start from 8 January 2023 without a need to quarantine. The news was received in India with both happiness and fear, especially with China going through a nationwide wave of infections.

Big news

Sharing his views on the situation, **Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt**, CEO, China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI) and CEO, Meaningful Tourism Center, said, "While this announcement was huge, the fact that soon Chinese people will also be allowed to travel outbound again was big too. Already, from 8 January, 60,000 Chinese per day are allowed to travel to Hong Kong, which will be 1.8 million Chinese per month."

What it means

He added, "That does not mean that next week there will be 10 million Chinese coming to Delhi. Firstly, they will have to get passports because China did not issue any passport in the last 1.5 years and many people don't have a valid passport anymore. Also, most countries have reduced staff in their consulates in China. Apart from that, we only have a few air connections, and tickets are very expensive. Airlines will also take around two months to get ready with the summer time-table and bring more connections. Then the prices will go down again."

Forecast

Prof. Arlt revealed, "Our forecast is that in the next three months, i.e. Q1 of 2023, you will see non-leisure travellers—business people, family reunions, students, or people going for health reasons—people who have urgent needs to travel. Then, in the second quarter when passports, visa and air connections are back to normal, huge number of Chinese will start travelling again. Thus, we forecast that for 2023, around 110-150 million border crossings will happen in total. That is about two-thirds of 2019 numbers. It will be more in second half of the year than in the first half. By 2024, if no unforeseen things happen, we will reach 2019 level and again China will become the biggest tourism source market in the world."

Testing

While the numbers are promising, there are restrictions on travel



Dr. Wolfgang Georg Arlt
CEO, China Outbound Tourism
Research Institute (COTRI) and CEO,
Meaningful Tourism Center

across the world on people travelling from China. Commenting on the same, Prof. Arlt said, "If it's only about doing a test before departure or after arrival, it won't be a problem. If it's a precaution, it is understandable. This won't stop Chinese or people from Singapore from travelling. There is a difference between people travelling from China and Chinese travellers. A German, an Indian or an American, coming from Shanghai, can bring the virus as much as any Chinese person. Thus, if everyone is tested without any racial discrimination, it won't be a big problem. According to trends on Chinese social media, Chinese people would get tested anyway for their own safety and peace of mind. Also, they understand that other countries must take some precautions. I believe that by April, when more tourists are travelling, especially leisure tourists, the big wave of COVID-19 in China will be over. Thus, latest by this summer testing will also stop."

tain themselves financially post-COVID, to have enough money to travel to India, or to Europe, or any far-away places, is a completely different matter. The rich people in China might be a bit less rich than before, especially because of low real estate market prices. However, they still have some thousand euros or dollars to spend on a trip to India, for example. Those who are moving socially upwards might have to wait a bit longer."

When it comes to India, he shared, "For most Chinese, it's not the first-time outbound destination. Most of them travel to India for business or other reasons. Those who travel for leisure and sightseeing are probably not first-time visitors. Thus, Chinese would still be able to afford international travel, but will be a bit more

In the second quarter when passports, visa and air connections are back to normal, huge number of Chinese will start travelling again

careful with their money. However, for a trip to India, for example, there is still enough money."

China's loss, India's gain?

While China was closed, the entire world was looking at India



tion paid again to the Chinese market. However, we have learnt that it is dangerous to put all your eggs in one basket, as a lot of countries have relied heavily on Chinese visitors, like Thailand or Vietnam. Thus, it is a good idea to have more options. India is as big as China in terms of population, and hence it will not stop people to pay more attention to India."

Challenges for China

Wolfgang also shared that the biggest challenge currently is for destinations, because they need to learn that the Chinese have changed. "The pandemic has changed the demand and expectations of the Chinese travellers. All the services sold at for future Chinese outbound tourists will not come in big package tours, but smaller groups or family groups. The interest in shopping is still there, but not so important anymore. Interest in culture, nature, outdoor activities, sustainability and green issues has increased. Also,

pandemic from China, claimed Wolfgang. "The biggest challenge for the tourism industry in India is to come up with good products. Only sightseeing is not enough and we did a survey for the Indian Tourism Ministry in 2019, which revealed that many Chinese tourists are not sure about the safety of travelling in India. However, many people are interested in art and music. One must develop products based on the knowledge about the market. Hence, music, art, dance, health (Ayurveda), are great segments for India. Unlike Western tourists, who stay in India for months, Chinese would want a clear program in advance for 5-7 days and every day should have many activities. There are good opportunities, but you have to do something for it. It's not coming automatically," he said.

What India should do?

He claimed that China will reach its 2019-level of tourists next year, and to attract a fair share, India must do something to attract Chinese visitors. "It's not enough to say Incredible India and ask tourists to visit the country. MOT-India must be more specific and convince people why should they come. If you can create programs for people interested in specific topics, like religion, architecture and cuisine, then there will be more people coming. How many travellers India would receive from China in future depends not only on what the Chinese people want, as currently India is not very high on the list of destinations they want to go to. On the other hand, India has many different things to offer and there's something for everybody in China. Thus, it also depends on how well India prepares and focuses on developing products suitable for different segments of the Chinese source market. India has advantages like the proxim-

ity to China and English-speaking population. The food is easy for the Chinese to accept. However, India must do something for it and it needs knowledge. We will be happy to support our colleagues in India," he added.

Potential segment

He also added that one market, which might be interesting for Chinese to visit India is education.

It's not enough to say Incredible India and ask tourists to visit the country. MOT-India must convince people why should they visit the country

"Thus, summer camps for Chinese kids or Chinese teenagers can be organised, as many parents in China are looking for other forms of education. Chinese government has reduced the number of English lessons in the school, and parents want for their kids to learn English. That could be a market. I don't think anybody in India has been thinking of this direction," he claimed.

India outbound

While India is big on outbound today, Wolfgang added, "I think the world is still waiting for the big wave of Indian outbound travellers. We will also have the same challenge to give good products to Indian people, and we will have to make sure that the specific needs in terms of, for instance food, depending on the different religious groups, is taken good care of."



Affordability

When asked how financially strong the Chinese people would be to travel now, he explained. "When we talk about Chinese outbound travel, we must realise that it's the top 10 per cent of the society. Thus, despite being able to sus-

for outbound and all NTOs have been wooing Indians. Now, with China reopening, would the situation change? Prof. Arlt answered, "NTOs have already started sending messages on Chinese social media, welcoming back Chinese travellers. There will be more atten-

Chinese who have been travelling in the past want to find new destinations to go to," he added.

Opportunity for India

It will be a huge opportunity for India, which has not seen that many leisure travellers before the

Visit Gandhi Sagar

The pinnacle of offbeat destinations in
'Heart of Incredible India'

Nature and Adventure lovers can now summon themselves in the Mandsaur District to embrace Asia's first floating festival and explore the unique Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.

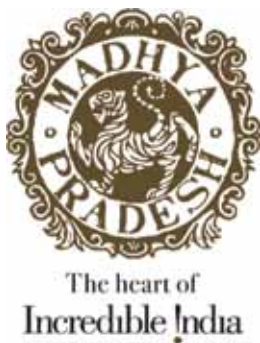
Madhya Pradesh; The 'Heart of Incredible India' is a state of immense untapped tourism potential. The Gandhi Sagar Dam is one of the four major dams that have been built around the famous Chambal River, which passes through one of the most undiscovered wildlife sanctuaries of Central India, the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary. In addition to that, the Gandhi Sagar Dam also hosts the newly emerged, and Asia's first floating festival, and the Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival.

Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival

For the lovers of adventure, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has introduced Asia's first ever floating festival in Mandsaur. A unique and first of its kind floating festival, which will have land, air and water-based adventure activities.

The floating festival is a great opportunity for nature lovers and adventurers, allowing them to get away from all the noise of cities. The festival includes a floating stage, floating market, boat spa, boat safari and live music. Apart from these, many exciting adventure activities are organized alongside the Gandhi Sagar reservoir.

- ❖ The festival was organized for five days from 1 February to 5 February this year.



Gandhi Sagar Dam is one of the four dams built around the Chambal River, which passes through Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

- ❖ The tent city for tourists will continue till 30 April 2023.
- ❖ Adventure activities will continue till 30 July 2023.

Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Gandhi Sagar has a wildlife sanctuary situated on the northern boundary of Mandsaur and Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh. The wildlife sanctuary is spread over an area of more than 300 square kilometres adjoining Rajasthan. The Chambal River passes through the sanctuary dividing it into two parts; The western



Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

part, which is in the Neemuch district and eastern part is in the Mandsaur district.

The sanctuary is open to visit throughout the year except monsoon months, and offers a varied terrain of wooded hills – the forest being dry, mixed and deciduous and flat grasslands around Gandhi Sagar Dam submergence, it offers abundant opportunities of sighting a variety of wildlife. The range of tree species found in the sanctuary are Salai, Kardhai, Dhawda, Tendu, Khair and Palash.

The predominant species of animals which inhabit the sanctuary are the deer, of which the most easily sighted are the Chinkara or Indian Gazelle, Nilgai and Sambar. In addition, the Indian Leopard, Langur, Indian Wild Dog, Peacock, Otter, and Mugger Crocodile are omni present in the forests of central India.

Places of Interest

Gandhi Sagar has many places of historical, archaeological and

religious importance including Chaurasigarh, Chaturbhujnath temple, Bhadkaji rock paintings, Narsinghgarh, Hinglajgarh Fort and Taxakeshwar temple.

- ❖ Chaturbhujnath temple, which is dedicated to Lord Vishnu, is situated around 8 km from Gandhi Sagar Dam site.

- ❖ Hinglajgarh or Hinglaj Fort is an ancient fort situated near Nivali village of Bhanpura tehsil in

the Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh. It is a symbol of Paramara period and it was established in the 18th century AD.

- ❖ Taxakeshwar temple or Takhaji is a place of significant religious and historical importance in Mandsaur.

- ❖ Bhanpura Museum is located in Bhanpura, about 30 km from Gandhi Sagar Dam and around 120 kms from Mandsaur in north

east direction. The museum depicts the popular art forms of Mandsaur.

- ❖ Dharmrajeshwar is an ancient Buddhist and Hindu cave temple site of Mandsaur which was established in the 4th-5th Century. Dharmrajeshwar Temple signifies brilliant example of Indian rock-cut architecture.

Connectivity

Roadways: Regular buses run to Mandsaur from all the major cities, including Neemuch, Ratlam, Ujjain, Indore and Bhopal.

Railways: One can reach Mandsaur very easily as the town has a railway station (Ajmer-Ratlam line and Bhawani Mandi) States like Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Gujrat are also very well connected by train.

Airways: The nearest airports to Mandsaur are in Indore and Udaipur.

For more details, visit:
<https://www.gandhisagarfest.com/>



Dharmrajeshwar Temple



Gandhi Sagar Floating Festival

A more strategic approach needed



Prashant Ranjan
Director – IDIP, Swadesh Darshan, Niche Tourism and Administration, Ministry of Tourism

“Under the aegis of India’s G20 Presidency, the Ministry of Tourism will organise the country’s first Global Tourism Summit in New Delhi from 10-12 April, 2023, where all G-20 member countries will be invited to participate. The Summit will be organised to showcase the opportunities of investment and trade to the local players as well as global investors alike. We will be not just focusing on hotels and accommodation, but also cruise tourism, amusement parks and adventure tourism. We have a vision of creating 140 million jobs in tourism, which will lead to inclusive growth – not just of niche tourism but also of women, youth and the local communities. Swadeshi Darshan 2.0 has come up this year, which will focus on developing 55 destinations across India.”

“The government is discussing the development of an online application portal to facilitate investment opportunities in the tourism industry in Maharashtra. They have identified various opportunities such as land for amusement parks, aqua tourism, cruise tourism, ecotourism and many other projects. They are also focusing on private investment and partnerships. GoM has identified specific locations and projects such as a mangrove park, an aquarium project etc. Opportunities in MICE tourism and responsible tourism are also being explored. Maharashtra has reduced the no of licenses to 10 for the benefit of the investors. Maharashtra targets to attract investments to the tune of ₹40,000 crore and generate an additional 1 million jobs in tourism sector.”



Saurabh Vijay
Principal Secretary, Tourism Government of Maharashtra

Associations



Ajay Prakash
President, TAFI

“I have always been a huge proponent of India. While the association did hold its annual convention in Malaysia, its first choice was India. Unfortunately, a lack of support from states forced it to hold its annual event outside India. The only segment that hasn’t really picked up yet is the inbound. I’d say we are no more than 35 per cent at best of where we were pre-pandemic. Even the reopening of e-visas for British nationals came at a time when we had already lost half the season. Today, when everything is electronic, I fail to understand the rationale behind not allowing e-visas to so many of our biggest source markets. Over the last two and half years, India has done almost zero promotion overseas.”

“The National Tourism Board has been announced by the Ministry of Tourism and will be implemented at the earliest as India gears up in 2023 for Visit India Year. At the same time India is gearing up with new products by way of enabling policies in due consultation with the relevant stakeholders and trade bodies; tourism tie-up and synergy with other states; health hygiene and safety of tourists to be of prime concern; investment in Tourism Infrastructure—Airplanes, Airports, Last mile Connectivity, hotel rooms, heliports, cruise terminals. Also, there is marketing and promotion with road shows abroad, FAM trips to India for foreign tour operators, media, bloggers and influencers and participation in international travel marts. The Stakeholders need to be duly consulted here to cater to effectiveness.”



Rajiv Mehra
President, IATO



Ravi Gosain
Vice President, IATO and MD, Erco Travels

“Setting up of National Tourism Board by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is a much-awaited step in right direction for promoting tourism to India. However, it is important that implementation should be in true spirits in a way it is planned and formed. With appropriate participation of stakeholders at board and properly structured timely promotions will surely increase inbound numbers to India. I hope this board should be operational soon to match the pace with competitive tourism destinations worldwide. I am glad this year Indian government has put tourism on a mission mode with lots of thrust on infrastructure development and enhancement of tourism sites, but we must have a thorough studied promotional campaign on long term basis.”

“We hope the National Tourism Board should be operational as soon as possible. MOT, Gol, is closing all overseas offices (remaining few) by 31 March 2023. Hopefully they have plans to make this board work from 1st April 2023. It all depends who is going to head this board, how many members will be there from stakeholders side, and what would they have in the board. Many boards set up by other countries are doing wonders. Let us hope that our National Tourism Board is going to help us in promotions and aggressive marketing in overseas and get us more inbound tourists. At the same time, India is gearing up in many fields like we are now having world class airports in all our metros and more domestic airlines flying in the country.”



S Mahalingaiah
Chairman – IATO Karnataka Chapter



Rajnish Kaistha
Hony. Secretary, IATO

“National Tourism Board is in happening stages and should take off some time this year, but no specific dates have been announced as yet for its commencement. The idea is good to get various ministries and functionaries together under one roof so that policies related to tourism, civil aviation, hotels, tour operators are formulated in sync so that they complement each other. Generally right hand does not know what left is doing, but with this board all decision makers should be able to make the policies more practical and doable. It should help both the domestic tourism and of course ease of doing inbound foreign tourist business, be it leisure, adventure, MICE, cruise, pilgrimage and medical, as few to name amongst many verticals.”

“The National Adventure Tourism Board has been operational since August 2022, marking a positive step by the MoT to boost inbound tourism. Adventure tourism has been recognised as a niche tourism product, and the board is working to ensure safety guidelines and safe business practices are followed. The involvement of the private sector is being encouraged to develop and promote new destinations, with marketing and promotions being planned. The importance of inbound tourism cannot be undermined as it contributes exponentially towards the economic growth of any country. Our focus is on promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices that are safe for the environment.”



Arshdeep Anand
Chairperson, ATOAI Women’s Collective and Director, Holiday Moods Adventure



Namgyal P. Sherpa
IATO Co-Chairman (Sikkim) and Owner of Namgyal Treks & Tours

“After the lockdowns of COVID-19, the region of Sikkim continues to have problems regarding movement of tourists and connectivity. There are multiple issues starting with the non-functioning of surface immigration checkpoint at Raniganj, West Bengal and Kakarvitta, Jhapa in Nepal. To resolve the issues of increasing inbound foreign clients it is very necessary to reopen or rather re-establish the surface immigration checkpoint at Raniganj, Darjeeling District, West Bengal and Kakarvitta, Jhapa District in Nepal. We have approached the Sikkim Government to take up matters with the Ministries of External Affairs & Home Affairs urgently. Moreover, agents in Sikkim and the foreign clients find it irritating and time-consuming the process of obtaining permits.”

“India’s G20 Presidency is a golden opportunity for the tourism and hospitality industry. At this time, the government should strategize and focus on activities to promote tourism. We urge the Government to intensify promotional initiatives under Incredible India to attract as many foreign tourists as possible during the year. The Ministry of Tourism has proposed to launch a global ‘Visit India 2023’ campaign to draw more international tourists to position India as a preferred tourist destination in Asia. The goal of Visit India is to unite all industry players to achieve a common goal of full recovery of Inbound Tourism by the end of 2023 and attract as many tourists as possible from all over the globe. The hospitality industry is all ready to welcome tourists.”



Pradeep Shetty
President, HRAVI



Rajeev Jainapurkar
Chairman, IAAP

“Some of the many notable initiatives taken by MOT include e-visa facility, e-visas, e-business visas, e-medical visa and e-conference visas. Also, more than ₹5,500 crores worth of tourism infrastructure projects have been sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan scheme. But the Ministry of Tourism can take some more actions that will help India. MoT should release the New National Tourism Policy at the earliest. The New draft policy guidelines will usher India Tourism to greater heights. Moreover, its annual budget (that was ₹2,400 crores last year) is not sufficient to take care of huge infrastructure requirements. A lot of funds are required to build last mile connectivity, core infrastructure and social infrastructure.”

“We believe the indications shared by senior officials of Ministry of Tourism and National Tourism Board may become operational in next five-six months. We are keeping our fingers crossed. As far as tourism products are concerned, there is no dearth, especially post-COVID, as we have great wellness products available across India. Also, we could always have some nature stay included in our regular cultural and heritage itineraries. We as an industry are getting prepared to deal with the new requirements, which tourists are looking to select the destinations like hygiene, developing new products, training teams and impressing upon government to immediately start marketing of India destination.”



Deepak Bhatnagar
Member, Executive Committee, IATO & MD, Aamartaran Travel Company

Leverage the G20 Summit

Trade

“We come under the segment of niche tourism. The good news is that the Ministry of Tourism has certain policies for type of tourism promotion. These policies are great and helpful on paper. But the problem lies in its implementation. We regularly exhibit at Asian and European Golf conventions with support from MOT. But there have been instances when we wanted to exhibit at the International Golf Travel Market in Europe, the approval came in a little too late, due to which the money spent on it did not achieve a great return.”



Arun Iyer
Founder & MD, My Golf Tours



Elina Satapathy
Partner, Seven Sisters Holidays

“The MOT is trying its best to promote India as a global destination. But as you know India is a country of diverse culture traditions and customs, it's really challenging for them. I would suggest instead of promoting India as one destination they can promote circuits including destinations having similarities. It needs to improve connectivity and infrastructures in lesser-known destinations. Not just that, India needs to involve local travel fraternity members in creating itineraries for FTOs and promoting in various international platforms.”

“The New Year brings with it new hopes, aspirations and benchmarks. India taking over the G20's Precedency for the year certainly offers a great opportunity for domestic and inbound tourism to showcase and position India as a major tourist destination in the world. Whilst we will continue to support and simultaneously hold faith in our government to help the industry emerge from the ramifications faced during COVID-19, it is time the government recognises the significance of domestic and inbound tourism, both of which are equally important for a country like ours.”



Pranav Kapadia
Founder & Director Global Destinations



Amit Parkar
Business Head - MICE, Tripjack

“Corporates in India are always looking for unique experiences at unique destinations but within their budget limitations. India makes up for a good playground for inbound MICE business. I think we are getting there. With the strong infrastructure push-ups, we are now witnessing things like the upgrade of the railways, record-breaking speedy work to boost road connectivity, port developments under the Sagarmala project, etc. We should be able to dish out world-class experiences for our inbound MICE travelers in the times to come.”

“The financial allocation to the tourism sector needs to be increased substantially. Infrastructure in terms of transportation, connectivity, wayside amenities need to be upgraded to international standards. We also need skilled manpower. Instability of jobs, long working hours, low salaries are attracting youngsters to other industries. Most importantly, tourists need to be assured of safety and security. It needs to be improved at tourist destinations and monuments. Taxes imposed by the government need to be lowered for airlines, hotels, and tour operators for them to be competitive.”



Burjis Mehta
CEO, Skyworld Tours & Travels

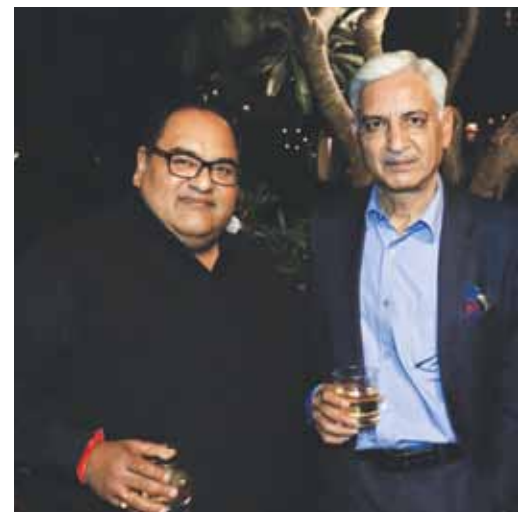


Anant Kumar
Co-Founder, Brij Hotels

“With international borders now opening up extensively, we are anticipating an increase in inbound tourism from many countries. However, the looming recession could cause a slight delay in this! All in all, I expect a good demand this year as people are now opting for more immersive travel experiences and luxury stays. We have some exciting plans this year for our brand with several launches in line across various destinations in India. We recently launched Brij Gaj Kesri in Bikaner and our other interesting projects are underway.”

Hyatt Regency bullish on business

Hyatt Regency Delhi recently hosted a networking event for the travel trade in the city. The event provided an opportunity for the participants to exchange greetings and discuss business prospects. The brand is gearing up for an expansion in India, with plans to open hotels in tier-II and tier-III markets this year. The hotel group is all set to open eight more hotels.



Time to cash in on changing trends

Sumit Prakash, Country Director, India and South Asia, Collinson, discusses how the emerging travel trends are influencing customer expectations and brand preferences, and what actions brands can take to better engage with their customers, aligned with the return of travel.



Hazel Jain

What are some of the key 2023 trends in (air) travel and how are these trends influencing customer expectations?

Travel is returning at speed. Collinson's recent Global Traveller Sentiment Survey revealed that travellers globally plan to make 80 per cent of the trips that they did pre-pandemic and nearly 62 per cent of travellers are willing to cut back on non-essential retail purchases or forego their content streaming subscriptions and gym memberships to fund their travel. Fuelled by the pandemic and the digital acceleration that came with it, consumers' expectations towards travel experiences have also evolved. Today, the modern traveller seeks out more sophisticated experiences; experiences that are seamless and integrated, personalised, adds value and en-



Sumit Prakash
Country Director
India and South Asia, Collinson

hances their status. As per our research, travellers are willing to pay for premium travel experiences that will enhance their journey – 47 per cent of respondents said they will pay for access to lounges, 43 per cent for an upgraded seat and 39 per cent, a direct flight.

Travellers in India have also revealed in a past survey that they feel safer at the airport if they are able to access the lounge and lounge access also enables them to feel valued as a customer. Other travel experiences, such as dining discounts, lifestyle and wellness benefits such as sleep pods and having access to a wellbeing and fitness app are also the experiences they value. This shift in traveller expectations brings new opportunities for businesses to re-engage and deepen their relationships with their customers and build life-long loyalty, especially through travel loyalty benefits such as airport lounge access through Priority Pass.

How can brands better engage with customers?

As travel goes from strength to strength after such a long and drawn-out period of uncertainty, financial services organisations have a significant opportunity to

ensure a rich and relevant offering of rewards for their cardholders. The return of travel means big benefits are on the horizon

By enhancing your travel-related proposition, such as offering Priority Pass as a payment card benefit, you can stand out from the competition

for those that are ready to seize them. By enhancing your travel-related proposition, such as offering Priority Pass as a payment card benefit, you can stand out from the competition and acquire

new customers, while at the same time, retain your loyal customer base and increase top-of-wallet and cross-border spend.

Additionally, by working collaboratively with brands in the travel ecosystem, financial services organisations can leverage the rich behavioural data to deliver hyper-personalised travel experiences to their customers. By using these insights, brands can then market to their customers as though they are a 'segment of one' (for example, as a parent, traveller, and business leader), rather than just another contact in a customer database. By curating experiences and touch points unique to every customer, brands can further deepen their relationships with their customers and, in turn, build life-long loyalty.

How important is it to have alternative revenue streams in these times?

There are opportunities for brands in the travel industry to open new revenue streams and pursue alternative ones, especially considering how travellers' expectations are evolving. With travellers' placing greater emphasis on the journey and the experience that comes along with it (as compared to just the final destination), it opens more touchpoints for brands to engage with travellers. However, for brands to be successful in delivering personalised, seamless and integrated interactions, they cannot do it alone. By adopting a collaborative eco-system, brands will be able to identify mutual customers, share anonymised data points and demonstrate a better understanding of their customers' want and desire. This will enable brands to enrich their customers' experience, build deeper relationships and forge life-long loyalty and, in turn, generate new and alternative revenue streams.

U&I brings Bali closer to India

Continuing with its efforts to make Bali an even more popular destination in India, U&I Holidays once again organised its annual roadshow this year in four cities, including New Delhi and Mumbai. With the possibility of direct flights starting soon between the two countries, Bali seems closer than ever before for Indian travellers.



An experience called Printemps

Romain Bernard, Deputy Director (Business Development), Printemps Paris, who was in Mumbai recently to meet important members of the travel trade, highlights why shopping at Printemps Paris, one of the most iconic department stores in the heart of Paris, is not just an activity, but an experience!



Hazel Jain

It is one of the most iconic department stores in the heart of Paris and houses more than 3,000 luxurious brands spread across 27,000 sq. mt. Printemps Paris also has 27 concept stores, one of which houses the first collection of the 'Designers of Tomorrow'. Its Deputy Director (Business Development), Romain Bernard, was in Mumbai recently to meet some key trade partners. He says, "We were present in the Indian market in the past, but the world changed after the pandemic and so did the clients. So, I am here in India to say hello to key trade partners. We have a lot of interesting services to offer shoppers. Indians know about the international luxurious brands, so what is important for us is to offer them a unique experience. We try to transform a simple shopping activity into an immersive experi-



Romain Bernard
Deputy Director
(Business Development), Printemps Paris

ence, and for them to be a Parisian for a day. We know that when Indian visitors come to Paris, they come for shopping first! Indian travellers love Paris, especially now with the 'Emily in Paris' show. They also love to visit Printemps shop, Indians are among the top 10 nationalities to visit us. When

they visit Paris, they want to buy the latest trends in fashion and we are able to offer them this."

Personal shoppers who speak Hindi!

Bernard highlights some interesting features that his store offers. "We offer different kind of services like personalised welcome and access to the VIP lounge, where customers will have a personal assistant to help them in shopping. They will also have access to a personal shopper – some of them speak Hindi and the majority speak in English! Everything is completely free. The main idea is for the shoppers to enjoy their time at Printemps," he shares.

The story of Printemps started in 1865, so it is also a historical place of Paris with amazing views of the city, including the Eiffel Tour. "We have an office of our founder, which can be used for corporate



meetings for up to 20 people. We also have an amazing venue that can accommodate up to 450 people for special cocktail evenings or events. So, corporates can book these venues and we also offer them a private invitation to be able to have this experience," he adds.

Speaking about food, which is equally important for shoppers, Bernard says, "At the Printemps store we have 17 different restaurants spread in the three buildings, and some of them serve vegetarian and vegan food since it is popular in Paris. Moreover, we

are focussed on our international clients, so if we know that vegetarian food is important for Indian visitors, we will have vegetarian options. We are also happy to offer shoppers a discount of 5 per cent as well as tax refund directly inside the shops. Their personal shoppers and assistants will take care of this."

About Printemps

- ❖ A free exclusive service with no purchase minimum is available in-store and online
- ❖ It offers a shipping service in-store
- ❖ It has specialist in the repair and restoration of watches, clocks, and jewelry by major brands
- ❖ Shoppers can personalize their leather goods from Printemps Paris



raises a toast with trade

SriLankan Airlines, on completion of 75 years of Sri Lanka's independence, has been organising the 'Dil Full of Sri Lanka' campaign. The airlines recently invited the travel trade to a networking event in New Delhi to create awareness about the destination's cultural vibrancy, ecological beauty and their latest range of holiday packages.



Experience luxury on wheels

The Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train, Golden Chariot, and Maharajas' Express, operated by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, offer unique and enriching journeys to their guests, with exquisite onboard facilities, including spacious cabins, fine dining, and exclusive upholstery.



TT Bureau

The Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train covers important destinations associated with the life of Lord Buddha, the Golden Chariot showcases the architecture, culture, and history of the southern part of India, while the Maharajas' Express provides guests with a luxurious and cultural experience while visiting prominent places of interest. These trains, which provide most prestigious travel options in India, have won numerous awards.

Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a travel, tourism, and hospitality PSU under the Ministry of Railways, is resuming the operation of its Buddhist Circuit Tourist Train after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. The seven-night, eight-day train tour covers important des-

tinations associated with the life of Lord Buddha, such as Bodh-gaya, Nalanda, Varanasi, Lumbini, Kushinagar, Sravasti, and ends with a visit to the Taj Mahal. The fully air-conditioned deluxe tourist train consists of 12 state of the art LHB coaches with the option of traveling on specially designed AC-I or AC-II coaches, costing Rs 90,240 per person. The train also offers in-room amenities, spacious dining cars, a fully equipped kitchen car, and local and international cuisines. IRCTC is the largest mass rail tourism operator in India and has established a place in the religious tourism market by operating tourist train packages for tourists of different faiths.

Golden Chariot

The Golden Chariot Luxury Train is a luxury tourist train operated by the IRCTC, marketed and owned by Karnataka Tourism. It operates in the southern part of India,



showcasing the architecture, culture, and history of the region. The guest carriages are named after the dynasties that ruled south India and have four deluxe cabins with a mix of twins and doubles. The train boasts two restaurants, a bar, a spa, and fitness centre.

After being in operation for a decade, the train was taken over by the IRCTC, which refurbished the train and added new features such as renovated rooms and

bathrooms, smart TVs, and safety measures. The train offers three carefully selected itineraries, including Pride of Karnataka, Jewels of South, Majestic Karnataka, and Sojourn of India, covering various destinations in South India.

The Golden Chariot aims to connect the dots of South India's rich history and culture through its destinations, showcasing the legacy of the dynasties and their patronage of arts and crafts. The train also

offers an array of delicious meals from across the world, selected house wines and beers included in the cost, and spa therapies.

Maharajas' Express

The Maharajas' Express luxury train is a prestigious train owned and operated by the IRCTC. It offers a unique and enriching journey experience with its exquisite facilities onboard. The train has four different types of accommodation, all with ensuite bathrooms, adequate wardrobe space, and luggage holds. The carriages are named after semi-precious and precious gemstones and have been tastefully planned with unique upholstery. The train also boasts of providing the most spacious cabins among all luxury tourist trains. The train has two restaurants, each with a seating capacity of 42 guests, and two bar cum lounges, offering house pours and select international

wines and spirits. The train has won numerous awards, including the Seven Stars Awards for the category "Luxury Hospitality and Lifestyle Awards" in 2015

The Golden Chariot Luxury Train is a luxury tourist train operated by the IRCTC, marketed and owned by Karnataka Tourism

and 2016 and "Best Luxury Train" in 2022. The train has also been awarded the World Travel Award in the category of "World leading Luxury Train" for six consecutive years from 2012 to 2017.

A notch above the rest

One Above Destination Management Services, a global DMC pairing the passion for social events and business or a MICE Operator facilitating specialized tours for corporates, recently hosted a grand evening party for the travel trade in Mumbai. Besides announcing the company's foray into multiple new ventures, the event was also for the attendees to network and just have fun.



'Marketing experiences imperative'

Having been in the field of travel education for the last 19 years and driving sales & marketing for international brands, offering vocational training in tourism was a natural progression for Smeeta Gulvady, Director, AdhVaani Knowledge Hub. She discusses the gap in the industry when it comes to training and why upskilling has become an integral element to success.



Hazel Jain

What was the idea behind starting AdhVaani?

After having started and managed academies such as Kuoni Academy, Thomas Cook Center of Learning & BCD School, it was during COVID that the idea of setting up AdhVaani occurred to me. The evolving Indian traveller is looking for exciting new experiences and destinations, especially after the pandemic. Creating awareness, educating agents, tour operators, trade about the new experiences is imperative for destination marketing. Well trained, armed with product knowledge, skilled professionals are far better equipped to curate experiences to satisfy needs of customers.

We offer destination trainings to travel agents pan-India, consultancy, and management services in the tourism industry. We have a

deep understanding of the industry and hence the ability to connect at the local level. The travel agents at the end of the workshop have excellent product knowledge to sell the destination confidently.

What kind of trainings have you done so far?

AKH has conducted destination trainings on behalf of tourism boards in India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. We offer customised trainings based on requirements. We have also partnered with India Tourism. We teach behavioural and communication skills, which helps in understanding the international tourist.

We have also engaged the youth with quizzes. The objective is to make the youth aware of our heritage through interesting formats.

What is the importance of training and skill development in

these times when travellers demand hyper personalisation?

The tourism industry is people focused, and the quality of its



Smeeta Gulvady
Director
AdhVaani Knowledge Hub

people determine the value of the product. The soft skills include language, communication expertise, mindset and attitude quali-

ties. Post COVID, new consumer segments such as the health conscious and senior citizens are emerging. These groups are willing to pay a premium for alternative offerings. Employees need to be equipped with the appropriate skills and product knowledge to grab these opportunities.

Are there more women who opt for further training and skilling than men? If so, why?

Most of the workforce in tourism is made up of women. Data from UNWTO says that it represents 54 per cent of the total number of employers in the sector. T&T sector is labour intensive and creates more opportunities for small entrepreneurs. Many women are successful entrepreneurs in tourism.

Women also form a majority of students in formal tourism education, and they largely lack the high-level and soft skills training

needed to ensure their career progression. Yet women are the decision-makers in most cases when booking a holiday.

Do you see a gap in the kind of training being provided today?

In a consumer-centric sector,

In a consumer-centric sector, people skills like conflict resolution, self-control, assertiveness, and empathy are important traits

people skills are critical for success on the job. Conflict resolution, self-control, assertiveness,

empathy, positive attitude, adaptability, and critical thinking is key. The attrition rates are very high in the industry. Employee aspirations too are very high, and they are in a hurry to realise them. Organisations should invest in training & development and re-training to cater to the dynamic needs of the industry.

Destination knowledge expertise is an offering by AKH. Post COVID, there have been a sea change in behaviour trends. Staying relevant in the evolving times is key to success in any sphere, more so for travel where one of our biggest competitions is the internet. G20 is a huge opportunity for showcasing Incredible India. I would love to take up a challenge such as G20 and add value to the great work that they are already doing. Our trainings are in-person, focused, interactive and very well received.

Cruising with Costa Deliziosa

Costa Cruise recently invited a selected group of travel partners from Mumbai to experience its Costa Deliziosa ship that had docked at the Green Gate with passengers. The agents inspected the ship, which is currently on a 62-day cruise around the world, and they were also treated to an onboard lunch.



MVTS hosts partners in New Delhi

Maitri Visa and Travel Service (MVTS), one of India's premier agencies based in Delhi which offers a range of travel related services, hosted a Dinner & Cocktail Party for the trade partners at Radisson Blu Hotel in Greater Noida. The purpose of the gala event was to bring together leading travel agents and express gratitude for their support.



EVENT TALK

Media Partners:

MARCH 2023

Date	Event	Time
1	Accor Showcase 2023- Mumbai	10:00 am
2	Accor Showcase 2023- Delhi	10:00 am
1-2	International Hospitality, Travel and Event Conference	9:00 am
1-2	Australian Adventure Expo	9:00 am
3	Immerse India Webinar	11:00 am
3-5	India International Travel Mart-Kolkata	11:00 am
3-5	India Travel Mart-Goa	11:00 am
3-5	International Tourism and Leisure Fair	9:00 am
4-5	The Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show - Vancouver	10:00 am
5-7	Bengal Travel Mart	10:00 am
7	International Media Marketplace	9:00 am
7-9	ITB Berlin	9:00 am
9	Abu Dhabi Webinar	03:00 pm
12-16	World Indigenous Tourism Summit	9:00 am
16-17	CAPA India Airline Leader Summit 2023	6:00 pm
18-19	Travel MICE and Corporate Show	10:00 am
24-26	India Travel Mart	11:00 am

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

Connect with ‘Nexus’

Amit Aggarwal, Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer, TripFactory, believes that their Business to Business product ‘Nexus’ is at the forefront of leading an industry change within India, as he welcomes agents to join them in this change for growth.

Hazel Jain

How was 2022 for TripFactory and what are your expectations from 2023?

Year 2022 was good for us. We saw recovery in tourism with India bouncing back as a strong market both for domestic and outbound tourism. The demand for vacations and tourism continues to be strong and we expect 2023 to be another good year for tourism overall. TripFactory recently received funding and we will be looking to invest in strengthening our product, platform and teams within India and outside.

What is your vision for TripFactory?

We believe TripFactory is the new age tourism company which will enable travel advisors across the world to use our platform to sell vacations seamlessly. Our vision is to empower 0.5 million advisors to sell holidays in their source markets. TripFactory will evolve as a strong DMC platform worldwide and continue to enable agents to sell more than 100



Amit Aggarwal
Co-founder & COO, TripFactory

destinations to their customers within a few minutes and also help them grow their business.

What kind of B2B activities have you been doing of late?

Our main objective is to educate agents about Nexus and its capabilities, and what difference it can create in their overall day to day

sales and operations for holidays, and how it can help agents grow their holiday business. Nexus was envisioned in 2013 with a vision to become the platform of choice for tourism companies globally to do business. From the founders of Via.com and TripFactory, the team behind NEXUS is focused to deliver value to the industry globally.

What are some of the new features that you are offering?

We are offering agents the ability to instantly create any itinerary across the world, customise it with flights, hotels, transfers, save ad PDFs with their brand and logo, CRM on top of it to track the complete customer lifecycle process. Agents can also monitor on-ground delivery once the customer is traveling. Tourism is a sunshine industry in India and we believe Nexus is at the forefront of leading that industry change within India. We welcome all agents to join us.

What are some of the emerging travel trends of 2023 you expect?
Outbound tourism will show much stronger demand, especially for long haul destinations like UK, Eu-

Through our (TripFactory's) product, agents can also monitor on-ground delivery once their customer is traveling

rope, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and others. Business to these destinations should grow significantly over the next three years as markets are fully opened after COVID. 🇮🇳

Indians love shopping in foreign countries. Half the India travelers go abroad only for shopping. Almost 73 per cent buy branded duty-free goods. According to Reserve Bank of India, Indians spend over \$5.52 billion while traveling abroad.

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Day 2	1030 to 1800 hrs	B2B Event for Trade and Corporate Buyers

Exhibitor enquiries:

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email: harmandeep@gps-india.com, madhu@gps-india.com

Buyer enquiries:

call: +919890765617

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MOVEMENTS

INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

New Delhi

DR. SUBHASH GOYAL, former President of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), has been appointed as Chairman, Aviation, Travel & Tourism Committee, Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC). He takes over from Chander Mansharamani, outgoing Chairman and former Vice Chairman of the India Convention Promotion Bureau (ICPB). Dr. Goyal was unanimously elected as the IATO President for 6 years in a row (1995-2000). He has also been an honorary member of various government bodies including the Tourism Board of Government of India, U.P. Tourism Board and Haryana Tourism Board.



HAHN AIR

Dreieich, Germany

Hahn Air has appointed **ADRIANA C. CARRELLI** as Vice President Airline Business. The Canadian-Italian aviation professional brings extensive experience from former positions at Star Alliance and Air Canada, among others. In her role, Adriana oversees an international team of experts who are managing and optimising the commercial performance of Hahn Air's global partner portfolio of more than 350 airlines. She will also steer the acquisition and implementation of new partner carriers. Before joining Hahn Air, Adriana was Director Customer Experience at Star Alliance.



KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION

Gurugram

Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) appoints **MYONG-KIL YUN** as the new Director of its India office. Based in Gurugram, he will be spearheading promotion and marketing activities in India and its neighbouring countries for the next three years. Holding a Master's Degree in International Tourism Policy, Yun has been with KTO since 2004. This will be his second time working in the India market, with his first appointment being during 2013-2016. Speaking on the occasion, Yun said, "I am excited to be back in India and look forward to working closely with trade partners and media to further position South Korea as a premium overseas destination for Indian travellers."



BALAJI SAROVAR PREMIERE

Solapur

Sarovar Hotels appoints **BRIJESH SINGH** as the new General Manager of Balaji Sarovar Premiere, Solapur. A passionate hotelier with more than 20 years of experience in the industry, Brijesh brings with him a hands-on experience in food & beverage. He has worked with The Hilton Mumbai, Sahara Star, Accor, Grand Hyatt & Oberoi Hotels. His last assignment was with Hilton, Mumbai in the role of Director Food and Beverage. Brijesh is a Diploma holder in Hotel Management from Rizvi Collage of Hotel Management, Mumbai. Sarovar Hotels is a leading hotel management company and one of the fastest growing chains of hotels in India.



THE LEELA AMBIENCE GURUGRAM HOTEL & RESIDENCES

Gurugram

The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences has appointed **DEEPAK VERMA** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. Having led some of the finest hotels, Deepak joins the team with close to two decades of progressive experience. Having started his career with The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts as part of the regional sales team, he returns to home base to lead the sales operations at The Leela Ambience Gurugram. In his new role, his focus will be to increase market share and implement other revenue generation campaigns.



NOVOTEL VISAKHAPATNAM VARUN BEACH

Visakhapatnam

The Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach hotel has appointed **MOHAMMAD IMRAN KHAN** as the Cluster Revenue Manager. Imran brings with more than a decade of knowledge in E-Commerce, Branding, Distribution Strategy, and Channel Marketing, among other things. As the Cluster Revenue Manager, he will be responsible for managing and optimizing revenue for Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Novotel Vijayawada Varun, and The Bheemili Resort managed by Accor within the hotel group, developing and implementing strategies to increase revenue, and providing guidance and support to the individual hotels in the cluster.



FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT

Kolkata

Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata has appointed **MANOJ JANGID** as the new Hotel Manager. With more than 20 years of industry experience, Manoj is a veteran and has an intrinsic understanding of hotel operations and guest aspirations. He would be responsible for looking after the strategic initiatives and overall operations of Fairfield by Marriott Kolkata with 182 keys and the banqueting facilities at Ozone Convention Centre. Manoj started his career in F&B operations and has experience both in curated fine dining spaces as well as large scale catering events. He has earned his reputation working across multiple hotel companies and varied roles at Taj Hotels, Hyatt, Accor Hotels and Marriott International.



DOUBLETREE HILTON GOA - PANAJI

Goa

DoubleTree Hilton Goa-Panaji appoints **TAPAJIT BHATTACHARJEE** as the new F&B Manager. In his new role, Tapajit brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise from his yesteryear experiences both in India and abroad. Having risen the ranks from being a restaurant server to leading a team, Tapajit has engaged with numerous hospitality brands in his rewarding career. In his last assignment, he was overseeing of a heritage property offering bespoke hospitality. Having worked in Goa in the past, he is well aware of market dynamics of this populace state, which is renowned for its concept restaurants and bars.



JW MARRIOTT

Kolkata

KARAN SINGH NAGRA, an insightful marketing professional with more than eight year of experience in designing and implementing brand, marketing strategies across retail, media and the hospitality industry, has been appointed as the Marketing and Communication Manager at JW Marriott Kolkata. Karan's key responsibilities include the creation and supervision of a result-oriented multi-platform communications strategy. The functions of the communication portfolio encompass guidance on marketing collaterals and materials in line with the brand direction, and leading the planning and execution of the overall initiatives and projects.



TALKing People

The daily schedule of **GAUTAM KHANNA**, Director Operations, Raffles Udaipur, is quite packed. "I usually wake up at 6.30 am and work out. For me going to the gym is important not only for health reasons but also to de-stress. In the evening, a glass of red wine, along with some soothing blues music, helps me to calm down. I am also an avid reader and love to read books in my free time. During the lockdown I learnt how to make my bed in a perfect way with the edges neatly trimmed and tucked properly. I just cannot stand a dirty bed or crumpled sheets. For me my place of sleep is my place of worship," he says.



SAKET VERMA, Director of Sales and Marketing, JW Marriott Kolkata, says, "Music helps me to de-stress at all times. One skill or hobby I have learned during the lockdown was watching thriller movies and engaging in creative content and documentaries." In his leisure time he loves traveling and he is fond of singing. He adds, "My favourite holiday destination in India is Kashmir. It's still so beautiful and scenic. When it comes to international destination, it's Sri Lanka. For my next holiday, I am planning to go to the North East as it is still a largely unexplored destination for me."



With over two decades in the industry, one of the key things that has helped **VOOTAPALLI RAMANAPRASAD**, Director of Talent & Culture, Novotel Kolkata, de-stress is the interest to read journals and watch sports that helps him keep his mind off from work. "Lockdown has helped a lot of us adopt more conscious effort towards our health and well-being. I have been glad to adopt the practice of yoga and meditation, which has helped me to relax and unwind. I have always had the fortune to explore different places. Out of that, my favourite holiday destination has been Goa and Macau," he says.



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Ebix plans MICE platform

Ebix plans to build on its past success by creating a global platform for MICE, promoting domestic tourism through 'Chalo Bharat Dekhe', and expanding into the cruise segment, shares Naveen Kundu, MD, EbixCash Travel Services.



Janice Alyosius

Ebix, a technology company with a focus on travel and insurance, had a successful year in 2022. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the company was able to reengineer its corporate and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) businesses. In the MICE business, Ebix organized 252 groups in 71 locations across 16 countries for over 50,000 people. "The company's performance in this segment was one of the best in India, and it reflects the resurgence of MICE business as the pandemic recedes," shared **Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, EbixCash Travel Services.

Kundu emphasized that their focus in 2022 was on business travel, which proved to be a successful year for the company in that area. "While the average recovery rate for businesses was 67 per cent, Ebix's business was up by 147 per cent compared to 2019. The company added 1.3 million additional airline segments in the LCC (Low Cost Carrier) space and GDS (Global Distribution System) space in 2020 and 2022. Ebix was profitable in 2022, while others were still recovering their losses. The company also did well in its inbound section, with a faster than expected recovery in inbound travel to India. All clients who used Ebix as a destination management company for India returned to the company, and the business picked up from September and October 2022," he said.

Luxury train segment

Ebix's luxury train business, which the company developed 5-6 years ago, continues to do well. "We have a dominant position in the luxury train segment with a market share of 56 per cent, which increases to 70-80 per cent in some departures for Palace on

Wheels and Maharajas' Express, the two trains we operate. Undoubtedly, we are the largest and leading managers of luxury trains in India, with no competition even remotely close to us. In addition to our B2B business and online platforms, we have also recovered to pre-COVID levels in the Philippines and Indonesia and are registering profits there. We have recently launched our destination management company in Dubai, in addition to our existing online travel platform. I'm delighted to



In the MICE business, Ebix organized 252 groups in 71 locations across 16 countries for more than 50,000 people

share that the company began operations in July and has already served more than 5,000 customers. Overall, it has been a good year, and we are optimistic about having a strong performance in 2023," said Kundu.

Global MICE platform

Focusing on the MICE segment, Kundu shared, "We are currently in the process of building our global MICE platform, following on from our achievements last year. As a company operating in the ASEAN region, we are putting together teams and a mechanism to expand our MICE services in Dubai, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. In addition, we plan to leverage our highly regarded business travel technology tool, Zillious, to offer our services to corporate clients and travel agencies in these

regions. As a technology company, we are confident that this tool will enable us to successfully expand our services throughout the ASEAN region."

New campaign

Speaking of their new campaign launch, Kundu shared, "We have launched the Chalo series to cater to the holiday segment, and I have been actively promoting India as a destination. Chalo Bharat Dekhe, our India holidays business, is being launched with a unique approach. We have contracted hotels in almost 407 pin codes across India, which will be exclusively available to Ebix clients. This offering will be pushed through our entire distribution channel, including B2B, B2C, and corporate channels. Our unique approach involves identifying pin locations, which aligns with the Prime Minister's vision of promoting domestic tourism under Dekho Apna Desh. This year, we will heavily promote Chalo Bharat Dekhe and expect it to be a successful venture."

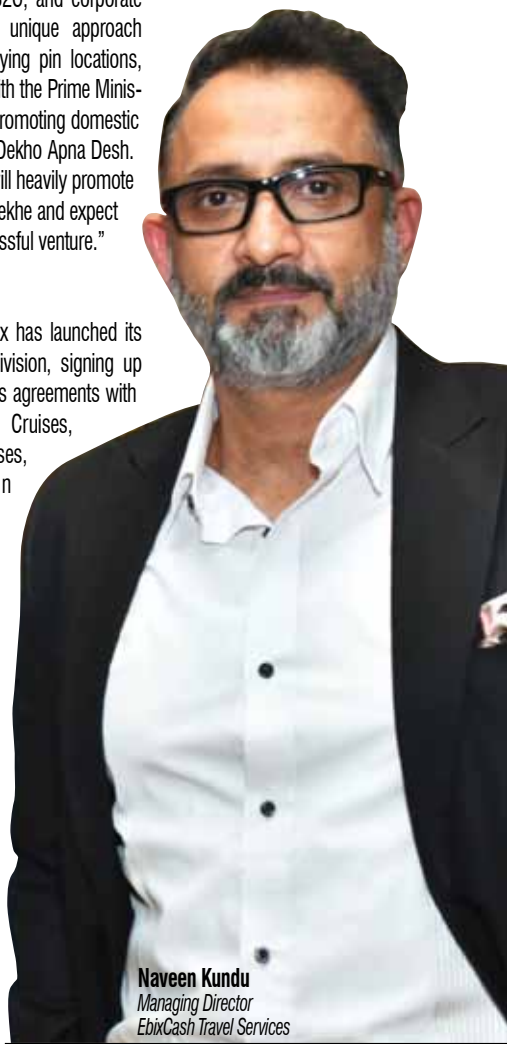
New product

In addition, Ebix has launched its entire cruise division, signing up passenger sales agreements with Resort World Cruises, Cordelia Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, AMA waterways, and Holland Line. The company is now the PSF (Preferred Sales Force) of five cruise liners. The company plans to focus on the cruise segment in the coming years. According to

him, while a 10-day holiday package in Europe would cost over 3,000 euros, the same experience on a cruise would only cost \$1,000. "I'm now promoting the idea of holding conferences or taking a holiday on a cruise," he said.

Government's initiative

Speaking about the Union government's recent budget decision to close all overseas tourism offices and promote India as a destination through their embassies, Kundu said, "The government's focus on partnering with local PR companies to enhance promotion efforts is also encouraging, as I have been advocating this for six years."



Naveen Kundu
Managing Director
EbixCash Travel Services

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