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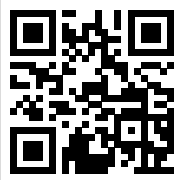
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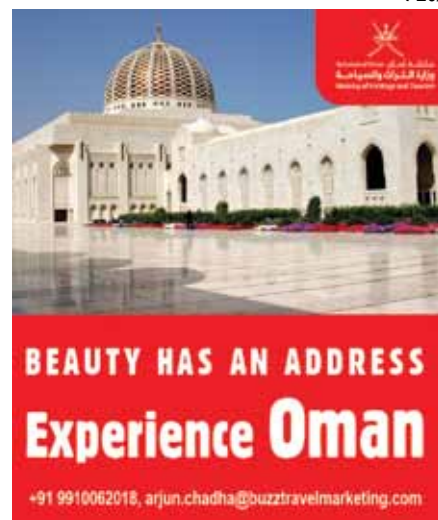
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## 'Travel for LiFE' program kicks off

The Union Ministry of Tourism launches 'Travel for LiFE' program, a part of the Prime Minister's desired 'Mission LiFE', at a function organised in New Delhi on World Tourism Day 2023. The function was attended by senior officials from the Union Ministry of Tourism, as well as senior industry members from India and abroad.



Nisha Verma

The Union Ministry of Tourism (MOT) celebrated the World Tourism Day 2023 with the Global Launch of 'Travel for LiFE', at the recently opened Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Travel for LiFE is a sectoral program under Mission LiFE, targeted towards the tourism sector, which the MOT has unveiled in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

A booklet on Travel for LiFE was also launched with its digital inauguration by **Ajay Bhatt**, Minister of State of Tourism and Defence, Government of India. He said, "The recent G20 Leaders' Summit has demonstrated India's commitment to forging global unity and collaboration, and the deliberations echoed the collective aspirations of nations for a sustainable future. Every traveller, every business, and every citizen to adopt this program and pledge to travel responsibly, to respect our environment, and to understand and appreciate the diverse cultures that make our world so beautifully complex. The Travel



Ajay Bhatt, Minister of State of Tourism and Defence, Govt, flanked by Leena Nandan, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt and V Vidyavathi, Secretary, Tourism, Govt, releases the booklet on 'Travel for LiFE'

for LiFE program, which is a part of Mission LiFE, sets out the path to a sustainable planet Earth." Commenting on the venue of the event, he said, "Bharat Manda-

pam and recently inaugurated IICC in Dwarka are two world class facilities for MICE. They are ready to host conferences from all parts of the world."

**V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, Tourism, Government of India, also spoke at the event and said, "This shows our commitment towards a sustainable resilient

and inclusive tourism sector. This program will encourage tourists to take simple actions that result in conservation of the environment, biodiversity, improvement in the local economy and preservation of the socio-cultural integrity of the local communities. It aims to create mindful and deliberate utilization of resources by the stakeholders in the tourism value chain." Also present on the occasion were **Leena Nandan**, Secretary Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and **Rakesh Kumar Verma**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism.

## Big fat weddings are back

The big, fat Indian wedding is back and how. Planners and hotels alike are excited about this comeback and share upcoming trends they espy in the Indian market.



**Kishan Reddy**  
Union Minister for Culture  
Tourism and DoNER

"Incredible India's wedding tourism campaign aims to establish India as the foremost choice for couples seeking an extraordinary wedding experience while bolstering the growth of the wedding industry and overall tourism in India. Through this endeavour, Incredible India seeks to create timeless memories and celebrate the beauty of love against the backdrop of India's rich tapestry of traditions and treasures. With the launch of this campaign, I invite couples from around the world to explore the enchanting dream wedding destinations across our incredible nation."

"100 historic forts and havelis spread around Uttar Pradesh are being considered as possible venues for destination weddings. The first-ever Wedding Conclave in Agra is a start in the right direction, as we have identified at least 100 historic forts and havelis to be renovated for destination weddings in UP. Due to improved district connectivity, UP receives more than 32 crore visitors each year. The rural areas of Agra and Mathura districts are attracting attention as potential wedding locations. 18 of the 24 Jain religious Teerthankars have locations in Uttar Pradesh."

Contd. on page 8 ▶



**Mukesh Meshram**  
Director General, UP Tourism and  
Secretary, Tourism and Culture, UP

## Recognising industry experts

Arabian Travel Awards are set to be held in Dubai on 25 October 2023, and will once again recognise the players making outstanding contribution to the industry's growth in the Middle East.



TT Bureau

Arabian Travel Awards is a platform for the Middle East market to appreciate the efforts of the travel, tourism and hospitality specialists, who have contributed to the booming travel, tourism and hospitality industry. It is an invitation only event to be held at the Sofitel Downtown Dubai on 25 October 2023. The aim is to encourage them to continue promoting travel, tourism and hospitality in the region.

The Arabian Travel Awards are fair and unbiased, following a systematic method of internet-based voting. These awards are supported by **Tourismbreakingnews.ae**, **TravelTVMiddleeast.news** and **TravelTalkIndia.com**, who are premier media partners for the



**Sanjeet**  
Mentor  
Arabian Travel Awards

event's coverage. The awards will be divided into four categories: Personal Awards, Business Awards, Trending Awards and Partner Awards. They will include awards for Best Business Hotel, Best Family Friendly Hotel, Best City Hotel, Best Green Hotel, Best Leisure Hotel,

Best Destination Management Company, Best Hotel Apartments, Best B2B Travel Portal, and Best Luxury Hotel to name a few.

**Sanjeet**, Mentor, Arabian Travel Awards shares, "Our awards have been evolving over the years to recognize the untiring efforts of the industry experts. This year will be the first time that we can finally say that we are back on track, especially with the UAE recording numbers higher than the pre-pandemic era. In today's travel, tourism and hospitality landscape there are many changes and new trends that have emerged. As UAE declared this year as the year of sustainability and carrying forward their legacy to become the host nation

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# Kenya to host OTOAI convention

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of OTOAI will be organised at Sarova Stanley, Nairobi, Kenya from 24-27 November 2023. About 200 delegates are expected to attend the flagship event. OTOAI officials said that the destination was chosen with an objective to build a strong bond with Kenya and tap the unexplored market.

 Suhani Sood

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), in a press conference organized recently at Hyatt Regency in New Delhi, announced that its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention will be organized at Sarova Stanley, Nairobi, Kenya from 24-27 November 2023. The venue has been chosen with an objective to build a strong relationship with Kenya and tap the Kenyan market. OTOAI members were excited, as it was first time ever that a association convention is taking place in such an unexplored yet beautiful destination, Kenya. The association is expecting 200 delegates to attend the conference. **Riaz Munshi**, President, OTOAI, addressing the press conference, said, "This is a much-awaited convention, as it is taking place after a hiatus of three years and in a destination like Kenya, which is still undiscovered by many in India. Sarova Hotels & Resorts is OTOAI's official partner for the convention."



Officials of OTOAI and Sarova Hotels & Resorts sign MoU for their convention in Kenya

Welcoming delegates, he said, "Due to its uniqueness and wait of three years, I am quite confident that this is going to be a successful convention and I invite everyone to come and be a part of it."

Highlighting a deal with airline partners Kenya Airways & Air India, Munshi said, "OTOAI has curated special packages for OTOAI members in Mumbai (₹79,999 + GST) and Delhi (₹82,999 + GST).

**Shravan Bhalla**, Vice President & Convention Chairman, OTOAI, said that this year the convention's focus will be on showcasing wild-life of Kenya, along with hospitality and tourism offerings

**Mita Vohra**, Director, Sarova Hotels & Resorts, expressed excitement over signing of the contract between OTOAI and Sarova Hotels & Resorts. "One of the most exciting things was when we were ap-

proached by OTOAI, which initially happened at the Annual General Meeting. After some calls and discussions, there was no looking back," she said.

## India market

Highlighting the value of Indian market, Vohra said, "For last few years, Indian numbers to Kenya have been rising exponentially. This year, it has nearly doubled from last year. To cater to Indi-


ans, all our properties have Indian chefs, which is exceptional."


## Important requirements

The registration for the convention opened on 27 September. Around 200 delegates are expected to take part in the convention. Sharing the requirements for entering Kenya, Bhalla said, "15 days prior, Indians travelling to Kenya must get a mandatory Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificate & obtain Polio Drops

Vaccination." Giving information about visa procedures, he said, "Kenya gives electronic visa to Indians; one just needs to pay \$50."

OTOAI officials said that keeping in view the growing economy

  
**Due to wait of three years, I am quite confident that this is going to be a successful convention and I invite everyone to be a part of it**

of India, no country can ignore it at this point of time, as it has a strong market base, and people are actually interested in travelling. "Kenya is ready to welcome Indians with open arms," an OTOAI official said. 

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## Is India M!CE ready?

The transformation of Pragati Maidan into the much-revered Bharat Mandapam has proven that India can create state of the art infrastructure when it's needed. The recently unveiled IICC (India International Convention & Expo Centre) in Dwarka is another testimony for the same. While these convention centres have changed the face of events in the NCR region, the question arises if we are ready for M!CE or not. During India's G20 Presidency, the hotel rates skyrocketed. Although the venues hold promise internationally, holding a M!CE event in India might not be the most economically viable option, whether it's for corporate or associations. Thus, there is a need to make product India a financially sustainable option as well. All this has to start before any corporate or company representative lands in India. MOT needs to lure big conferences to the country through incentives, which other destinations are already doing. Right from airport transfers to hotel reception and to the conference hall, the journey has to reflect India, like it did during G20, which shouldn't be the only example of India's M!CE prowess.

## Global visibility is key

India is set to host the upcoming PATA Travel Mart 2023 in New Delhi, at Bharat Mandapam. With Secretary Tourism as Chairman of PATA India Chapter, the MOT will be actively involved in the event, which will give a huge international exposure to India. MOT's latest initiative 'Travel for LiFE' was also launched recently, which would be promoted worldwide as well. Still, the inbound industry is requesting the government to boost its overseas campaign. After appointing tourism officers at embassies in various international markets, there has not been much activity in terms of overseas promotions. While new initiatives are welcome to create some buzz in the market, traditional methods of marketing shouldn't be disregarded altogether. The industry still wants presence of Incredible India in international travel marts, as well as promotional activities and interactions about India at potential source markets.

# Travel insurance gets priority

A total of 92% want to purchase travel insurance for their next international trip, reveals ICICI Lombard research on Indians' International Travel behaviour. About 73 per cent of respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the importance of travel insurance.

TT Bureau

About 76 per cent Indians purchased travel insurance for their most recent trip and their intent to purchase the same for the next trip reached a whopping 92 per cent, reveals a recent report by ICICI Lombard General Insurance.

The findings also revealed that 73 per cent of respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the importance of travel insurance, underscoring the growing consciousness of safeguarding travel experiences. Furthermore, the study uncovered that awareness of travel insurance increases with the progress of the family stage, as married couples with kids emerged as the highest travel insurance purchasing class at 78 per cent, followed by married couples with no kids (67 per cent) and singles (66 per cent).

**Sheena Kapoor**, Head Marketing, Corporate Communications & CSR, ICICI Lombard, said, "These statistics underline a growing consciousness among travellers to safeguard their travel experiences and protect themselves against unforeseen events. It is indeed encouraging to see that travel insurance is no longer an afterthought but a proactive choice for most respondents. Additionally, the correlation between family stages and travel insurance awareness is a noteworthy discovery, demonstrating that individuals are increasingly recognizing the importance of securing their travel plans, particularly as they progress through various life stages. At ICICI Lombard, we are committed to providing comprehensive and tailored travel insurance solutions that cater to the diverse needs of our customers. We believe these findings will serve as valuable insights to help us further enhance our offerings and continue to be a trusted partner for travellers, ensuring peace of mind during their journeys."



**Married couples with kids emerged as highest travel insurance purchasing class at 78%, followed by married couples with no kids (67%) & singles (66%)**

The survey also confirms that ICICI Lombard is one of the top three purchased brands in travel insurance

### I. On overall travel behaviour

❖ The survey also confirms that ICICI Lombard is one of the top three purchased brands in travel insurance.

❖ Comparing age groups, 61 per cent in the middle age group tend to take two or more trips in a year, which reduces to 1 in 3 in the 45+ age group

❖ Respondents travelling once a year tend to have slightly longer duration trips—average 13-14 days, while those taking two or more trips average at 11-12 days on their latest trip

❖ Single travellers tend to take one trip a year

❖ Two in five have faced an issue while planning their latest international travel

❖ Customers married without kids seemed to have faced the most issues with their planning

❖ While applying for visas and finalizing booking are the biggest issues faced by the younger age group, the middle age group struggles with airline booking and arranging logistics between

cities. Travel insurance issues are lowest among both age groups.

❖ Logistics between cities is a highly faced issue irrespective of the booking medium used

### II. On travel insurance behaviour

❖ Awareness of travel insurance

❖ Awareness of travel insurance increases with the family stage—single (66 per cent), married without kids (67 per cent) and married with kids (78 per cent)

❖ Customers booking through someone tend to have the lowest awareness (mostly aware + complete awareness) on travel insurance

❖ Among people who have awareness, the travel insurance purchase increases to 82 per cent, which drops to 18 per cent among customers with no awareness

❖ For international trips: three out of four respondents purchased travel Insurance for their latest international trip

❖ Having financial protection (28 per cent), coverage and claim limits (18 per cent) and travel destination (16 per cent) are the top three factors that motivate people to purchase travel insurance

❖ Maximum difficulty in purchasing travel insurance is faced when the insurance booking is done by someone else (80 per cent).

## 67% respondents would be travelling for leisure/ holiday while 22% for business

	Pre Pandemic	Pre Pandemic	Future trips
Education	9	5	10
Holiday - Tourism/ Visit Friends & Family / Celebration	64	64	67
Business / Work	25	30	22
Medical reasons	2	4	2
Base	115	671	798



# 50 years of excellence

STIC Travel Group celebrated 50 years of its journey in the industry in New Delhi recently. Dr Karan Singh, Former Minister of Civil Aviation & Tourism, members of the group companies, and industry stalwarts graced the celebration.



Suhani Sood

STIC Travel Group commemorated five decades of excellence in travel at ITC Maurya, New Delhi on 14 September 2023. The golden jubilee celebrations witnessed the presence of **Dr Karan Singh**, Former Minister of Civil Aviation & Tourism, as chief



guest, members of the STIC Travel Group, and influential people of the travel and tourism industry.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Dr Karan Singh said, "What a joy it is to see that the seed that was planted five de-



Subhash Goyal, Chairman, STIC Travel Group, along with Dr Karan Singh, Former Minister of Civil Aviation & Tourism, unveil the coffee table book

## Man behind the success

**Subhash Goyal**, Chairman, STIC Travel Group, expressed heartfelt gratitude to all the attendees for their contributions to the company's success. "50 years is a really long period in an individual's life but very short duration in the

learning, and unforgettable experiences. I have got the opportunity to travel extensively and see all five continents."

## Industry applauds STIC

On behalf of IATO, its association president, **Rajiv Mehra**,

dia needs to be proud of such an excellent group. Having closely worked with Mr. Goyal, I know he is extremely hardworking, which has paid off eventually. I am happy to see Isha Goyal (daughter of Subhash Goyal) taking the legacy forward."



acades ago, has emerged out as a strong tree. I had inaugurated STIC Travel Group on 14 September 1973, when it started as two-room company, but now it has transformed into one of the biggest travel agencies in India." Congratulating STIC Travel Group, Dr Singh said, "I am extremely

history of organisation. Not even in my wildest dreams, I thought that I would make travel and tourism my profession, and by God's grace it has been successful. I am very emotional because it has been a journey of love. People have come from all over the world is very heart warming. I feel a little sense

**Not even in my wildest dreams, I thought that I would make travel and tourism my profession, and by God's grace it has been successful**

congratulated STIC Travel Group. "It is such an honor for us to be here celebrating 50 illustrious years of STIC," he said. He commended Goyal for his hard work and dedication. "I have known Subhash Goyal from 1999, and the kind of hard work he does, nobody can achieve that kind of level," he said. "Goyal has also made significant contribution to IATO by giving the association its vision, mission and objectives. IATO would not have been able to achieve if he hadn't been our guiding light," he added.

**KB Kachru**, Chairman, Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia at Radisson Hotel Group, said, "In-

**Richard Nuttall**, CEO, SriLankan Airlines, said, "We were the first foreign airline having 100 flights a week to India, it is all because of efforts and partnership with STIC Group for over 45 years now. What we are today, it is due to value STIC brought to us."

**Raj Bajaj**, President, Perfect Travels & Tours, also congratulated STIC Travel Group. "Kudos to entire team for an incredible journey! The passion and dedication both Subhash and Isha Goyal have put in is huge, which is why they deserve every bit of love," he said.

## Taking legacy forward

**Isha Goyal**, Chief Executive Officer, STIC Travel Group, said, "50 years, what an incredibly amazing journey, and what a legacy to follow. We are humbled by the story of STIC." She further emphasized the company's commitment to innovation, sustainability, adaptability, and staying at the forefront of industry trends.

"STIC will continue to follow the legacy of bringing new opportunities to India for travel fraternity. It has completed 50 years, but many more to come," she said.

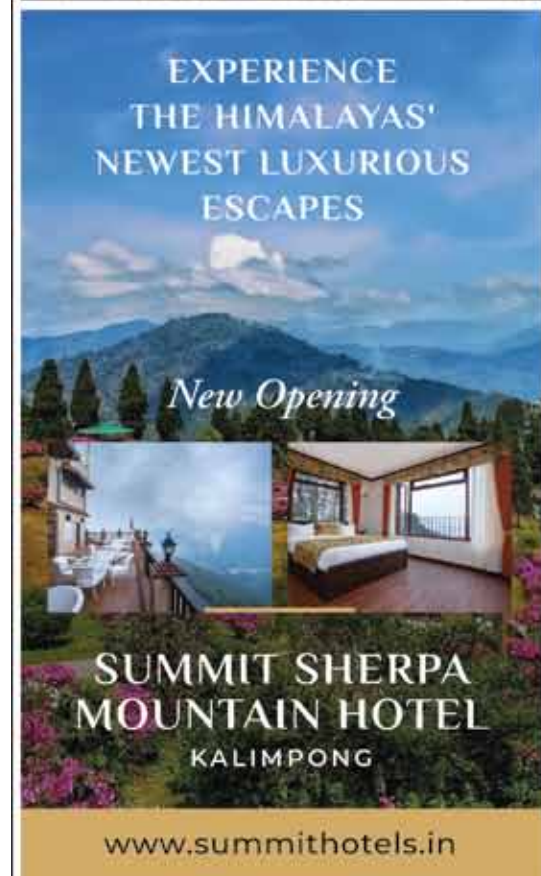


happy to be here. Congratulations to STIC Travel Group and its members. I wish them many more years of success!"

To solidify its position as the industry leader, STIC Travel Group signed deals with 12 international airlines, four cruise liners, and three rental car brands.

of achievement that started from scratch," he said.

Sharing some golden moments from the past, Goyal said, "It has become a pivotal chapter of my life. I believe that if you do something with passion and commitment, you enjoy it. My journey has been full of fun,



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# NTOs eye lucrative weddings

► Contd. from page 3

“We appeal to the MOT to start giving heritage monuments for weddings. Why they have not allowed this is beyond my understanding. We want them to allow weddings at India Gate, Purana Qila, and Hyderabad’s Charminar. This way, weddings will become more experiential and more sought



**Rajeev Jain**  
Founder & Director  
Rashi Entertainment

after. To make MOT’s campaign successful, India also needs to start special visa counters for wedding groups.”



**Chin Sak Hin**  
Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Financial Officer, Sentosa Development Corporation

“While we have just started marketing weddings in Sentosa, we have seen Indian weddings take place in the past, but that happened organically. We have now appointed an Indian wedding planner in India, so hopefully we will start to see more weddings take place at Sentosa. We also recently participated in a wedding roadshow along with Singapore Tourism Board and have engaged with many planners and organised fam trips for some of them.”

“The recent trend highlights the popularity of cruises among MICE groups and events like weddings, anniversaries and birthdays. The inclination towards cruising over land options or even combining both showcases the changing dynamics of an Indian cruise traveller, shaping the future of cruising experiences.



**Dipti Adhia**  
Director, Discover the World - India (for Carnival Cruise Line & Celestyal Cruises)

International cruising has made a return, and is flourishing in Asia Pacific, Middle Eastern and European waters.”



**Rashmi Ahuja**  
Divisional Manager, India  
MSC Cruises

“Weddings is yet another segment that has grown from India and cruise has been a popular choice for such movements considering it is an ‘affordable luxury’ and offers an array of inclusions at attractive price. Singapore and Middle Eastern (ex-Dubai) cruises are accessible destinations, which make it popular among Indians. MSC Cruises has exciting winter sailings from Dubai with two beautiful ships: MSC Virtuosa and MSC Opera.”

“Weddings is a huge focus for Malaysia right now. We want to promote Malaysia as a top wedding destination. Towards this, we participated in the Wedding Travel Show in Udaipur. We are ready to accept weddings, as we now understand all the requirements that they need. In the past, incentive groups would



**Noriah Jaafar**  
Director  
Tourism Malaysia

spend around three to four nights, which has gone up to four to five nights in Malaysia.”



**GB Srithar**  
Regional Director - India, Middle East, South Asia & Africa, Singapore Tourism Board

“For the wedding space STB is trying to position Singapore as a destination of choice. We have made some headway into this. It’s good to know that a lot of the tourism stakeholders are interested in going after this segment, including Sentosa Development Corporation. Along with them, we are trying to engage the wedding planners in India. We are close to bringing a wedding group to Singapore. Singapore is now actively pursuing the young Indian traveller.”

“Another area where France is seeing robust growth is weddings. We were always working towards this, and I think the pandemic kickstarted a new trend where France has become one of the most sought after wedding destinations from India. We saw one of our biggest weddings in 2021 with



**Sheetal Munshaw**  
Director  
Atout France India

over 900 pax during the time when we still did not have commercial flights. This was all through the air bubble arrangement and charter flights.”



**Pradipta Biswas**  
VP Operations  
Ananta Hotels & Resorts

“Destinations like Pushkar, Jaipur, parts of South India like Mahabaleshwar, Chennai, and Lonawala are working wonders for weddings. The entire city of Udaipur is dedicated to weddings. Jaipur is completely booked from November to January, which shows destination weddings, royal weddings and theme based weddings are here to stay for a long duration of time. A newly added wedding destination is Pushkar.”

“The wedding Industry is no more just a streamline business in India but has now become a billion dollar giant magnet that has caught the attention of not just international hotel pioneers but also the travel and tourism departments of various countries and cities. There was a time when



**Sharon Immanuel**  
Business Head & Wedding Planner  
BMP Weddings

the Indian wedding industry was exploring the overseas destinations, but now it’s the exotic destinations approaching the Indian Market.”



**Sahil Sachdeva**  
Co-Founder  
The Event Designer

“Indian weddings have always been a blend of rich tradition and modern innovation. But as we look towards 2023 and beyond, there have been some upcoming trends like blending of traditional and western elements leading to fusion weddings are increasingly popular. Gone are the days of organising multiple functions attended by 1,000-1,500 guests. Couples are opting for smaller, more intimate gatherings, often taking the form of domestic destination weddings.”

“Over a few years, wedding trends have transformed a lot. The style, trend, place, décor of the wedding is completely unique and different from what it used to be earlier. It has actually become a trend in India to show off spending capacity and how fancy/ royal the



**Kuldeep Chandel**  
Resort Manager,  
The Dagshai Manor

wedding could be. Instead of open areas and parks, there is a transformation to have weddings in banquets, resorts/hotels, and palaces.”



**Digvijay Singh**  
Director of Sales & Marketing  
Alila Fort Bishangarh

“One of the major shifts in wedding industry is inclination towards intimate and micro weddings; smaller, more intimate weddings are expected to remain popular in 2024. Couples may opt for guest lists with close family and friends, allowing for more personalized experiences. Non-traditional wedding venues, like art galleries, urban rooftops, and private estates, are expected to be sought after.”

Compiled by TT Bureau





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Travel & Tourism responsible for 8.1 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, reveals WTTC report

Vistara launches new global routes from Mumbai, special focus on ME: Vinod Kannan

J&K's Warwan to be developed into tourism hub; get 100 homestays: Rasheed

India's inbound tourism to witness 23 per cent year on year rise till November 2023 vis a vis same period in 2022: RateGain

VFS Global sets new benchmarks in its sustainability journey

Four out of five Indians save for future travel, reduce spending on gadgets and OTT: Kayak

# Punjab woos tourism investors

The first ever Punjab Travel & Tourism Mart, organised recently in Mohali, aimed to attract investments in the tourism sector and put the state on world tourism map. Bhagwant Mann, Chief Minister, Punjab, was among the dignitaries who attended the inaugural ceremony.



Suhani Sood

The Punjab Travel & Tourism Mart, organised at Amity University, Mohali, from 11-13 September, aimed to attract investments in the tourism sector of Punjab and put the state on world tourism map. **Bhagwant Mann**, Chief Minister, Punjab; **Anmol Gagan Maan**, Tourism Minister, Punjab, and **Rakhee Gupta Bhandari**, Principal Secretary, Tourism & Cultural Affairs, Punjab, were among the several dignitaries attending the inauguration ceremony and a cultural event on the opening day. A large travel mart and Fam trips were organized on 12 and 13 September. Addressing the gathering at the inaugural ceremony, Bhagwant Mann said, "Through Rangla Punjab, we want to showcase all niches of tourism, be it eco-tourism, weddings, MICE, sports, or adventure."

He said that Punjab is in a "sweet geographical spot", as tourists



Dignitaries at the Punjab Travel & Tourism Mart, organised at Amity University in Mohali

cross Punjab to reach many destinations. "We want to make Punjab a prime tourist destination rather than just a cross-over destination," he added.

In her keynote address, Anmol Gagan Maan said, "We are aggressively promoting tourism to increase domestic and international footfall, which will, in turn, provide employment opportunities." She also shared insights

into border tourism, spiritual tourism, and wellness tourism.

## Rangla Punjab: Not just dream but vision

Bhandari pointed out that the government is dedicated to promote tourism, and create employment and investment opportunities in the state. "Rangla Punjab is not only a dream but also a vision," she said, adding that, "We unveil colours of tourism and hospitality, promising

an unforgettable and sustainable experience, as the world has only seen colours of sacrifice, and freedom." Bhandari said that Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala have already captured attention of foreign tourists. "Punjab tourism department envisions in developing Punjab as a forefront and prime destination by 2030," she said.

**Anurag Verma**, Chief Secretary, Punjab, explained how Punjab is

known for hospitality. "Yet when it comes to the hospitality industry, we are not one of the top rankers," he said.

Valmiki Hari Kishan, Chairman, FTCCI, was there as a trade partner. **Alka Kapoor**, Senior Marketing Manager, Punjab Tourism, was happy with the success of the event. "I personally got amazing responses from the buyers and exhibitors," she said.



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# 'India our No. 1 source market'

Radhey Tawar, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, says they are all set woo corporate and leisure travellers with their diverse portfolio in Sri Lanka and eyeing MICE & wedding business.

TT Bureau

It has been only a month into his new role as the Chief Commercial Officer of Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, but **Radhey Tawar** knows where he must be at present to drive his business strategies in India, the number one source market for Sri Lanka.

"The number of tourist arrivals from India add to around 17 to 18 per cent of the total market share of all the tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka. As Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts being the largest hospitality operator in the country with almost 2,000 rooms of the 11 properties, our share is anywhere between 14 to 20 per cent of the Indian travellers that come to the country," he says.



**Radhey Tawar**  
Chief Commercial Officer  
Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts

**The number of tourist arrivals from India add to around 17 to 18 per cent of the total market share of all the tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka**

For a country that went through one of the worst economic crises in its history last year, the tourism sector is showing a remarkable recovery. "By the first quarter of 2024, the tourism numbers will surpass the best years' numbers," he says.

Indian travellers and their ever-growing appetite, as well as pockets for immersive experiences, are the locus of his action plan for promoting the brand's most ambitious and luxurious project till date in Sri Lanka - Cinnamon Life Integrated Resort. Set to open in Au-

gust 2024, it will be home to two hotels featuring 800 guestrooms and suites, 15 restaurants and bars with live entertainment in the evenings, two wellness centres, a kids' club, and 80,000 sq.ft. of events and meetings space.

"It has an office complex where eight floors have already been taken by HCL, which is an Indian company. Indian corporate

houses like Tatas and Adani are also doing different projects there. And right now, our teams, which are already in place, have started to sell their properties in different parts of the market. We have global sales offices here in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, along with one in Chennai opening soon," he says. "Another resort in Kandy, Sri Lanka, is also scheduled for opening next year," he adds.

In the coming months, he plans to work closely with the brand's trade partners in India to promote Sri Lanka as the top wedding & MICE destination. The strategy involves conducting roadshows in tier II and tier III Indian cities to enter the new markets. This year, the brand has already hosted six Indian weddings across its properties in Sri Lanka. "Indians living in different parts of the world pick



Sri Lanka due to its proximity to India and the ease of travel," Tawar says. He believes the diversity of the destination sets it apart from

others. "In Sri Lanka, the weather changes every two hours. The country offers varied and unparalleled experiences, he says.

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# Agents to airlines: Have discount parity

With airlines offering discounts on their direct booking channels, travel agents are now asking the airlines for discount parity and not just rate parity. Ankit Bajaj, Founder, Chiky Travels, based in Ahmedabad, speaks out after losing a large chunk of clients because of direct discounts offered by airlines.



Hazel Jain

Ahmedabad-based **Ankit Bajaj**, Founder, Chiky Travels, highlights a deepening issue: airlines offering discounts on their direct booking channels, which includes their mobile application and website. He says agents are losing a large chunk of clients because of the direct discounts offered by airlines.

"If the airlines can offer such discounts to the end-users, why can't they offer good commission to the registered travel agencies," he asks.

Bajaj says, "Lately, Indigo and Akasa Air have been broadcasting their advertisement encouraging end-users to book their tickets through the airline's mobile application. These discounts will not be applicable if they book their tickets with any travel agency."

He explains that the airlines have the mobile numbers of passengers,



**Ankit Bajaj**  
Founder  
Chiky Travels

many of whom are booking air tickets through a travel agency and as per the mandate, the agency has to enter the passengers' mobile number. Such advertisement is snatching the travel agency's business. "If this continues, our businesses will have a huge negative impact. If they can offer such discounts to the end-users through their websites

and/ or their mobile apps, why can't they offer good commission to the registered travel agencies. But just to increase their business through apps, they cannot kill another distribution channel. Ultimately, they are snatching my clients. This discount has to be offered via the travel agencies too. We have an option to keep quiet and accept whatever is happening or to represent the issue with these airlines and discuss a mutually beneficial solution," Bajaj says, adding, "There should be rate parity, as well as discount parity."

## What's the solution

The consequence of such promotions is that the travel agency will lose business due to parity issues in discounts. Ticketing is the base of many agencies. If this is affected, the business will not sustain resulting in huge unemployment among the trade.

"Everyone in the tourism industry has to represent this issue to all such airlines and ask them to maintain

discount parity. All tourism industry associations must represent the issue with a strong follow up, else the existence of all associations is useless or limited to a few things only

**If they can offer such discounts to the end-users through websites and mobile apps, why can't they offer commission to the registered travel agencies**

- FAMs, get-togethers, no agenda meetings, and bank guarantee. The choice is yours. Either speak and follow up with these airlines, or wait to see your business die a slow death. The airline sales team will equally suffer with unemployment with such

## What TAFI says

This is one of the issues we need to seriously tackle. This issue of airlines offering promotions directly to clients is bothering our members. We have had a conversation with two of such airlines. And both realised that the agents are contributing almost 70-75 per cent to their business while their apps are bringing them less than 1 per cent business. We explained the issue and they understood that it is counterproductive to alienate the agent fraternity when 80 per cent of business is coming from them. They have assured us that when they do offer such discounts, it will be short lived - 2-3 days. They accept the fact that agents are the best distribution channel. We do want to initiate a system whereby all the non-IATA airlines or LCCs should have an agreement with agents. I would recommend our members to have a formal legal agreement with the airline they are doing business with.



**Ajay Prakash**  
President, TAFI

discounts, which have no parity. There has to be a strong representation on this issue from the trade fraternity. Keeping mum on this issue or accepting everything is not a solution. We will see sustainability and unemployment issues if this contin-

ues. My request to airlines is let the business flourish with a level playing forum. These days, even hotels are doing the same and encouraging direct bookings. Let us work together rather than cut out a valid distribution channel," Bajaj requests.



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# TAFI Western India meet up in Goa

The Western India chapter of TAFI successfully organised its inaugural meeting at the picturesque Azaya Beach Resort, Goa. It brought together 39 members, who collectively explored the theme 'Way Forward'. Jay Kantawala, Chairman, Western India Chapter, TAFI, welcomed the members and introduced new member Sunil Menon from Fiji Tourism.





# IHCL on expansion spree in Northeast

IHCL is actively expanding its hotel presence in India, with a focus on both new and existing markets. It has recently opened hotels in Jaipur, Jammu, Kolkata and Kerala, and have upcoming openings in Mumbai. The hotel chain has a strong pipeline of 80 hotels, with plans to enter new destinations and expand its brand portfolio.



TT Bureau

Keeping a tab on the demand for hotels across the country, IHCL is on an expansion spree and is tapping new markets as well as growing in existing ones. Sharing details on upcoming properties, **Parveen Chander Kumar**, Executive Vice President, Sales and Marketing, IHCL, said, "Unlocking the true potential of India's numerous destinations is reflected in IHCL's recent signings and openings of new hotels. Jaipur saw the addition of Sawai Man Mahal, a heritage-palace celebrating the best of Rajputana heritage and Taj Amer with a façade reminiscent of Amer Fort. From a stylish Vivanta in Jammu to SeleQtions-branded hotels—Baragarh Resort & Spa in Manali and Jaagir Manor at Dudhwa National Park and Norbu



**Parveen Chander Kumar**  
Executive VP  
Sales and Marketing, IHCL

The Montanna in Dharmshala—IHCL offers distinct experiences in North India. With glimpses of snow-topped Kanchenjunga at Guras Kutir, Gangtok, to Taal Kutir Convention Centre, IHCL

is expanding its footprint in the East of India.

## Tertiary markets in focus

When it comes to luxury brands expanding in tertiary markets, especially the Northeast, IHCL is the first mover. "IHCL's brand-scape lends itself to scaling in a heterogenous market such as India. With a strong pipeline of 80 hotels, we will enter new destinations and scale our brands. Our pipeline has a good representation of Tier II & III cities including a Taj planned in cities such as Patna, Puri, Dehradun and Raipur. IHCL SeleQtions in cities such as Bhubaneswar, Bekal, Tirupati, Kanpur, Rajkot and Munnar, among others, Vivanta in Haridwar, Tawang, Manipal, Jammu, Nashik and Lucknow, among others and Ginger in Srinagar, Nagpur, Coimbatore,

Agra and Durgapur, among others," Parveen averred.

Claiming that IHCL is committed to the Northeast of India, he informed, "IHCL has signed

**With a strong pipeline of 80 hotels, we will enter new destinations and scale our brands**

and is opening a slew of hotels in the region. The company has five hotels in Assam, including

three under development. We are present in Tripura, Agartala, with a Ginger-branded hotel. Vivanta Shillong in Meghalaya opened last year. In Sikkim, we launched Vivanta Pakyong and this will be followed by the opening of Taj Guras Kutir Resort & Spa and a Ginger in Gangtok this month."

## Weddings galore

According to Parveen, IHCL has worked a lot to boost up the wedding segment and that too for a long time. "Taj hotels across the country have been the preferred venues for weddings and celebrations. Timeless Weddings, the brand's unique wedding proposition has become the benchmark when it comes to memorable, luxurious wedding celebrations for over a century. Our hotels and resorts in unique locations offer themselves as perfect settings for

magical, magnificent moments; be it beach weddings, royal palace weddings, or grand weddings in cities. With our global presence, hospitality and attention to detail, we remain market leaders in hosting memorable weddings for generations of families," he claimed.

## Inbound priority

He mentions that India has witnessed a very strong recovery in travel, primarily on domestic demand. "The resumption of international flights and corporate travel is leading to healthy growth in inbound business," he added.

## B2B engagements

On engagement with the travel trade, he commented, "IHCL's dedicated team of professionals manage end-to-end requirements of travel partners in India and overseas."

# Empowering industry

World Travel Market London 2023 announces the agenda featuring over 60 sessions and introducing eight new tracks across three stages. The focus is on empowering the industry.

TT Bureau

World Travel Market London 2023 has unveiled its agenda, featuring prominent speakers and in-

stages over three days, taking place at ExCeL London from 6-8 November 2023. In a move away from previous years, the 2023 conference stages will be named Discover, Elevate



WTM will host three equally important stages across the event.

The eight conference tracks will be titled Sustainability, Technology, Geo-Economics, Emerging Markets, Consumer Trends, Marketing, Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) and Experience and aim to help the global travel community succeed and thrive, by informing, entertaining, and influencing their business decisions.

In another first, the Discover Stage will feature a new layout designed to support networking. Table-based seating, rather than traditional conference-style chairs, will promote networking between sessions, which will also include icebreakers, storytellers, and socialising during breaks.

and Innovate – a reflection of their goal.

Furthermore, in response to the demand in 2022 – which saw 9,102 visitors attend the WTM London conference sessions – stage sizes have been increased, and rather than one main stage,



sightful seminars. With over 60 conference sessions lined up, it aims to empower the worldwide travel industry, reminding them that they have the power to change travel.

The conference will introduce eight new tracks across three

# All set for Dubai awards

Contd. from page 3

for COP28, this is indeed a time when responsible travel, tourism and hospitality also steps in to make it a more conscious destination. Applications are still open to vote for those in the industry and who have been in the forefront of promoting and working to go over and beyond the general norms of the industry. Middle East has always been the most resilient region, especially the UAE and Dubai in particular set an example to all the destinations of the world on how to move forward and achieve in every possible way. The public and private partnership in the GCC region provided the industry with a much faster comeback ensuring their commitment to move forward.

Now, it is time to reward the industry experts and their establishments to advance ahead through all obstacles and challenges to a brand-new era in the making in the region."

If you are yet to vote for your team, this is the right time to

**Public and private tie-ups in the GCC region provided the industry with a much faster comeback ensuring their commitment to move forward**

do so. Check the website [www.arabiantravelawards.ae](http://www.arabiantravelawards.ae) and vote for your leader of the year. Make a difference in the industry and carry forward all the positive trends that have been witnessed. Travel is back on track; new trends emerge every

day and looking forward to a more sustainable future is the key in this new era that has all the focus. Once again tourism, travel and hospitality begin their major contribution towards not just the economy of the nation but securing employment and uplifting the standard of life especially in the region.





# Cozmo opens glitzy office in Mumbai

Cozmo Travel has further invested in the India market by opening a spacious office in Mumbai recently. Headed by Santosh Kanchan, Country Head – India, Cozmo Travel is excited about its new offerings to its travel partners such as its new holiday packages. Also part of the celebration was Deepa Rajesh, Director– Sales & BD, Cozmo Travel.





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3-5	Gujarat Travel Fair 2023	10:00 am
4	Spain Tourism Roadshow-New Delhi	10:00 am
4-6	PATA Travel Mart 2023- New Delhi	10:00 am
5	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
5	Spain Tourism Roadshow-Bengaluru	10:00 am
6	Spain Tourism Roadshow-Mumbai	10:00 am
6-8	Tourism Fair Varanasi 2023	1:00 pm
10-11	GPS-Kochi	10:00 am
12	Switzerland Webinar	3:00 pm
12-14	India International Travel Mart - Mumbai 2023	10:00 am
15	SITE Young Leaders' Conference 2023	9:00 am
24	Arabian Cargo Awards	7:00 pm
25	Arabian Travel Awards	7:00 pm
25-27	ITB Asia	6.30 am
27-28	GPS-Indore	10:00 am
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# Reimagining tourism in India

Evoke Experiences, with its tagline ‘Reimagining Destinations’, brings a plethora of wonderful experiences across its six properties in India. The brand is promoting its tourism and hospitality packages with immersive roadshows across the country.



Sara Haque

Experiential tourism is gaining popularity as people nowadays look for something different. They want to do something experiential for their holidays, or events. Evoke Experiences offers unique properties around the footprints of India, which provide what people are looking for.

**Bhavik Seth**, COO, Evoke Experiences, says, “Evoke Dholavira is a heritage tourism experience, which is situated in the ancient city of Dholavira from the oldest civilization that we have, the Harappan civilization. For the G20, the government hosted a lunch for the state department at our property, with people coming in to visit from across the state. There is a 35km stretch of road with white sand on both sides, which is called Road to Heaven, a view best seen during the months of October to February. We also hosted two G20 meetings at our Rann of Kutch and The Statue of Unity properties.”



**Bhavik Seth**  
COO  
Evoke Experiences

Citing examples of their properties, **Anush Nireshwalia**, Director of Sales, Evoke Experiences, says, “Like the Rann Utsav, with 400 tents. It has some spectacular performances, along with recreational facilities, and adventure activities like motorsports, and stargazing. Or the Niraan Tent city in Varanasi, located along the sacred ghats of the Ganga, where we offer a heritage walk, city tours, and temple visits. The USP then is not just the room stay

at those destinations, but the entire experience of the location itself. We have developed tented accommodation that is so different from the usual hotel accommodation. The tents are luxury tents, full of opulence, and high-class amenities. All of this included becomes a wholesome package.”

### Unique destinations with different flavours

The range of experiences that the brand brings includes natural, cultural, heritage, spiritual, and wildlife tourism, among others. All their properties are ready to cater to MICE, weddings and leisure groups. Within the next financial year, Evoke Experiences is also planning to open 10 new destinations for both domestic and international tourists.

### Incentives and promotion of local destinations

Seth adds, “Without taking on board the travel agent fraternity, we will not be able to succeed. More than 10,000 travel agents registered with us for Rann Utsav. 80-85 per cent of our business

comes through them, and we count them as our main stakeholders. Because of the campaigns and roadshows such as this one, travel agents across the country have started coming on board with us.”

**People nowadays are looking for something different (in travel). They want to do something experiential for their holidays, or events**

**Digvijay Diwakar**, Director, Diverse Hotels, also adds, “We do a lot of Fam tours for photographers, and especially those people who can go and promote these destinations later. We also host lots of FTOs in India. More roadshows are coming to Kolkata and small pockets like Indore, and Raipur.”

## Mohanty gets honorary degree

JK Mohanty, CMD, Swosti Group & Chairman, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha, has been conferred with the Degree of Letters (Honoris Causa) by KIIT, a deemed to be university.



TT Bureau

**JK Mohanty**, CMD, Swosti Group & Chairman, Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha, was conferred with the Degree of Doctor of Letters (Honoris Causa), at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation of KIIT, a deemed to be university. His Excellency Governor of Odisha, **Sri Ganeshi Lal** presented the degree to Mohanty at a function organised on 19 August 2023.

Mohanty also holds the position of Chairman for the Eastern Region of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO). He has worked in close cooperation with the state government of Odisha, as well as the Government of India to develop and promote the tourism and hospitality sectors of Odisha for the past 42 years. The Swosti Group of Hotels, Resorts, Travels, Hospitality Education was established by Mohanty in 1981, and has turned out to be one of the leading brands, not only in the Eastern region but also across the country. Since



JK Mohanty (second from right) receives the degree at the KIIT convocation

1991, Mohanty has also been singlehandedly responsible for promoting Odisha as a tourist destination internationally, by conducting multiple roadshows across many European countries. The degree honours the sheer dedication and resolve of Mohanty to highlight the state of Odisha as a spot on the global tourism map.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohanty said, “I feel a great sense of fulfilment and gratitude to Lord Jagannath, blessings of my par-

ents, family members, friends and well-wishers and to Dr Achyuta Samanta for recognising my dedication and contribution in the field of tourism. This recognition not only boosts my motivation but also serves as a reminder of the responsibility I have to continue working towards the betterment of the Odisha tourism and towards all my employees who are responsible for my achievement.” The award is a recognition to his immeasurable contribution to the tourism and hospitality industries of the state.”

## Melia sees 15% rise from India

India is an important market for Melia Hotels International. With the outbound tourism from the country growing, Melia conducts a roadshow to further boost their business from the market.



Sara Haque

Melia Hotels International recently conducted a roadshow at The Hyatt Regency, Delhi, with an aim to boost the outbound business from India. **Mahmoud Abdelnaby**, Director of Business Development Middle East, Africa & APAC, Melia Hotels International, talked about their brand on the occasion and underlining the importance of Indian market for them.

### India's booming market

India has proved to be one of the fastest growing markets after the pandemic for Melia Hotels International. As a result, the average room rate of Melia properties has increased by 60 per cent since 2019. The total market share of travellers' count from India has also seen an increase of 10-15 per cent. “The aim of Melia roadshow is to thank our partners here in India for their support and efforts towards promoting all the Melia properties to the Indian tourists. We are very happy with the outcome,” he says.



**Mahmoud Abdelnaby**  
Director of Business Development  
Middle East, Africa & APAC  
Melia Hotels International

### MICE, FITs, & weddings

Speaking about the importance of Indian market for MICE, FITs, and weddings, Abdelnaby says, “Melia has got a flavour of everything. We get many MICE groups, with a large number of travellers who go to destinations out of India for attending international conferences and exhibitions. For weddings, we have families booking up to weeks for their personal, intimate wedding ceremonies. All these

three sectors, be it FITs, MICE, or weddings, are growing exponentially for us. India has 6.5 per cent of all outbound business to our hotels worldwide.”

### Promoting new destinations

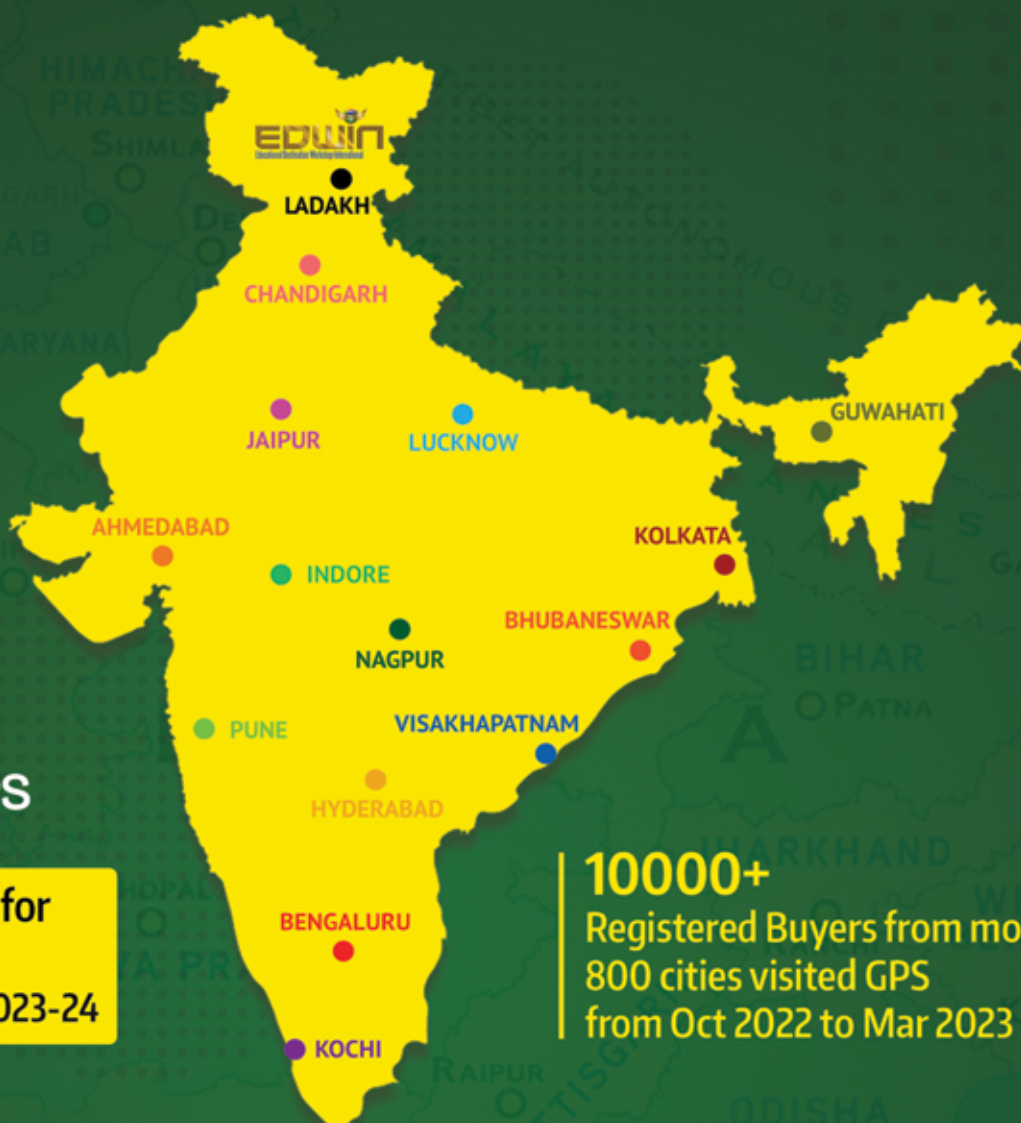
Melia has collaborations with tourism boards, along with other promotional events for destinations like Vietnam. “We are doing a lot of Fam tours from India to Vietnam,

**All three sectors, be it FITs, MICE, or weddings, are growing exponentially. India has 6.5 % of all outbound business to our hotels**

and expect to increase the number of flights to Vietnam. We also have our website, Melia PRO, which helps tour agents,” he adds.



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# MOVEMENTS

## PATA

Bangkok

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) appoints **NOOR AHMAD HAMID** as its new Chief Executive Officer. Hamid's appointment for a three-year term will usher in a new era for PATA as one of the world's most influential industry associations dedicated to promoting responsible travel and tourism within the Pacific Asia region. A Malaysian citizen, Noor, has had a distinguished 35-year career in Travel & Tourism, including the last 13 years specialising in the critical MICE sector. Noor's inaugural engagement as CEO will be at the PATA Travel Mart in New Delhi. He looks forward to connecting with host destination officials and members, and chapter leaders among others.



## FHRAI & HRAWI

Mumbai

**PRADEEP SHETTY**, Director, Maharaja Hotels, has been elected as the President of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). He will be assuming the charge on 1 January 2024. He has also been re-elected as the President of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI). Shetty brings a wealth of experience to his roles. He has spearheaded several legal campaigns at the behest of the hospitality industry and played a critical role in bringing together hoteliers. Under his leadership, in last one year HRAWI organised several campaigns covering various facets of the industry.



## LORDS HOTELS & RESORTS

Kankidham, West Bengal

Lords Hotels & Resorts appoints **SUBHAJIT SEN** as the General Manager of its property Kankidham Lords Inn, at Kankidham. A passionate hotelier, Sen brings over 22 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He has successfully managed operations and driven revenue in renowned hotels across India. His industry expertise will be valuable to the group in all aspects of hotel operations including guest service, sales and marketing and revenue management. "I am delighted to join Lords Group and looking forward to working closely with the team to enhance brand's presence and provide memorable experience to guests," he said.



## THE TAMARA

Coorg

The Tamara Coorg appoints **SASWATA BANERJEE** as its new General Manager. With 21 years of extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Banerjee brings a wealth of knowledge and a track record of success with Indian and international brands, making him a valuable addition to The Tamara family. Throughout his career, he has undertaken pivotal leadership roles with prestigious hospitality brands such as The Oberoi, Taj, Six Senses, and more, consistently demonstrating an unwavering commitment to excellence. His professional journey has taken him across diverse properties in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, including hotels at beach sides and hills.



## FORTUNE PARK HOTEL

Hubballi

Fortune Hotels appoints **PANKAJ YADAV** as the new General Manager of its property in Hubballi. Yadav brings over two decades of expertise in Food & Beverage, Hotel Revenue, and Operations. Starting as a mixologist at ITC Kakatiya Hyderabad, he quickly transitioned into F&B Operations and worked at renowned establishments like Green Park and Lemon Tree Hotels in India and Dubai. He played a key role in opening three major Lemon Tree Hotels. In his new role, he will oversee all aspects of the hotel, excelling in operations, guest services, team management, and stakeholder relations, driven by his innate ability to connect with people and build strong relationships.



## SHERATON GRAND BENGALURU WHITEFIELD HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER

Bengaluru

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center appoints **GAURAV D DESAI** as its new Director of Sales. He is an industry veteran with more than 12 years of experience across renowned hospitality brands in India. In his new role, Gaurav will be leading the hotel in achieving its key revenue budget, spearheading business growth activities, and will overlook all aspects of the sales and the marketing department. He will also work towards improving the exposure of the food & beverage staff and contribute to the hotel's marketing goals by working closely with them.



## ROYAL ORCHID HOTELS BENGALURU

Hotel Royal Orchid Bangalore appoints **CHANDAN CHOWDHURY** as the Director of Food and Beverage. Chowdhury has more than 17 years of experience in the hospitality industry. In his new role, he will strategize the F&B offerings, spearhead innovative culinary initiatives, supervise the food and beverage teams, ensure utmost guest satisfaction, and maintain operational efficiencies. An alumnus of the Institute of Hotel and Restaurant Management, Kolkata, he has been associated with marquee names such as the Jaypee Palace Hotel & International Convention Centre, Agra; InterContinental the Grand Resorts, Goa; and The Lalit Great Eastern, Kolkata.



## JW MARRIOTT

Kolkata

JW Marriott Kolkata has appointed **SAYAN CHATTERJEE** as the Director of Engineering. With more than a decade of experience, Chatterjee has an experience in mapping out courses of action through systematic organizing and planning to achieve desired end results. With a specialization in pre-opening hotels and resorts as a Project Chief Engineer, his expertise lies in preventive maintenance, project management, team leadership, and budget allocation. He has successfully led engineering departments, developed and implemented strategies, and managed budgets to maximize profitability and revenue. In his current role, he leads a department with a team of 50 members.



## CHALET HOTELS

Mumbai

Chalet Hotels has appointed **SHWETANK SINGH** as the Chief Growth and Strategy Officer. In the strategic role, Singh will lead the Chalet Hotels Project Development team and spearhead Business Development initiatives. He will be reporting directly to Sanjay Sethi, MD and CEO of the company. Singh will also play a crucial role in implementing strategic initiatives under the guidance of Sanjay Sethi. With an impressive academic background, including a B. Tech. degree from the IIT and an MBA in Finance and Marketing from the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), he brings with him nearly 25 years of diverse experience.



## TALKing People

**MEHUL SHARMA**, Founder & CEO, Signum Hotels & Resorts, loves travelling. "In India, Gurez is my all-time favourite destination. It is a valley located in the high Himalayas, about 86 kilometres from Bandipore and 123 km from Srinagar, to the north of the Kashmir valley. Internationally, I love travelling to New York. New York is well known for many things, but one of them is its artistic prowess and the talent it homes. It's also a great spot for some huge, fascinating museums, and if you're always up for some peaceful contemplation and beautiful sights, this is a top spot," he shares.



When it comes to holidaying, **SATYEN JAIN**, CEO, Pride Hotels Group, has a deep affection for Germany and Switzerland. "These countries hold a special place in my heart because they offer a delightful blend of rich history and culture, awe-inspiring natural beauty, and a plethora of activities to indulge in. Exploring historical sites, savoring local cuisine, and taking in breathtaking landscapes are all part of the charm. My next holiday is something I'm eagerly considering, and Kenya might be on the horizon. I couldn't be more excited about the possibility," he says.

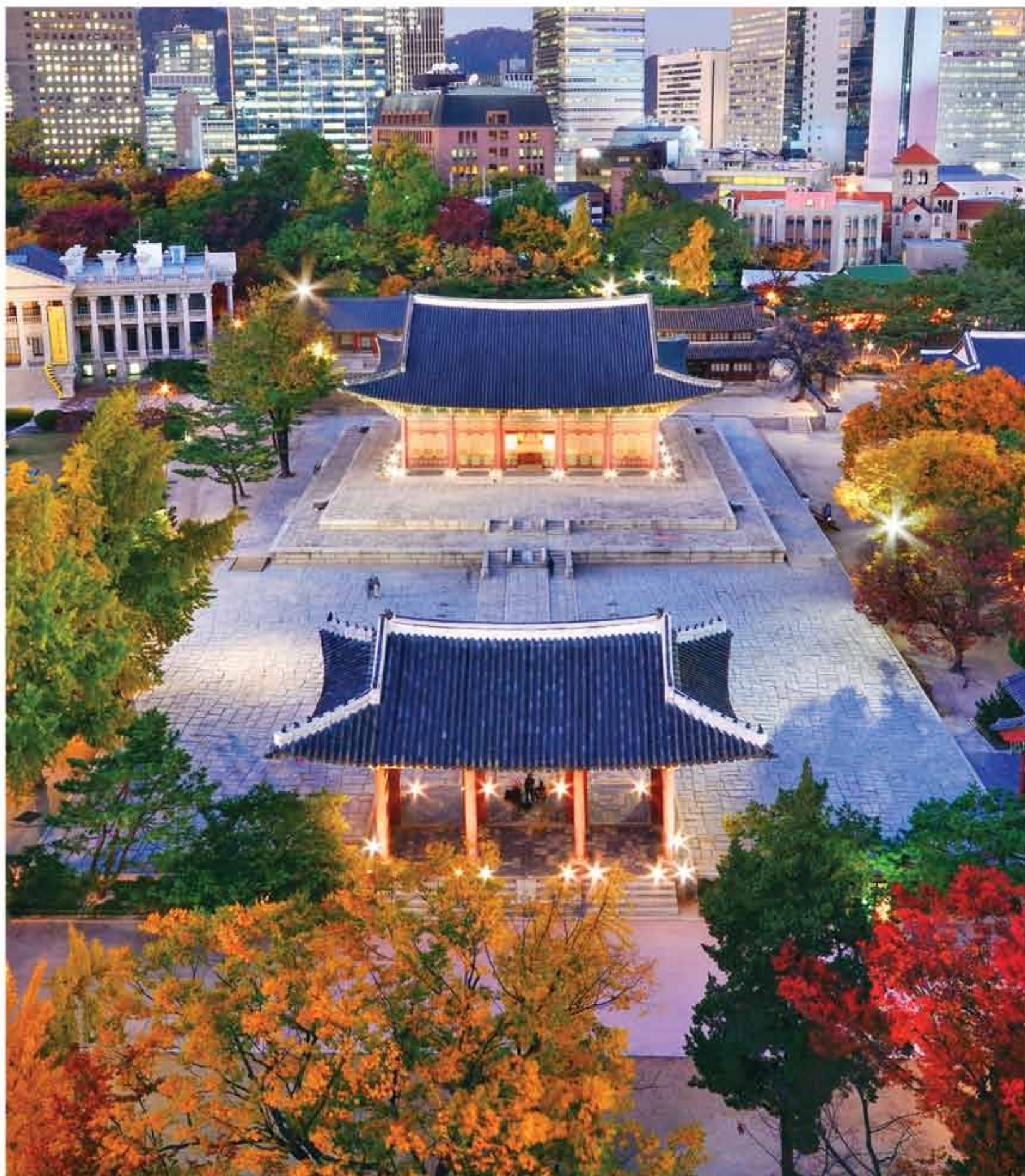


For **MAHENDRA PRATAP SINGH**, IATO Chairman, Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter, creating memorable and enjoyable tours, where every moment enhances the overall experience for his clients, is the ultimate way to unwind and find satisfaction. During the lockdown, he took up meditation and yoga as a means of destressing. These practices provided a valuable alternative, especially when workload was significantly reduced during that period. His favourite destination in India is Kerala, God's own country, and internationally it is Prague. But Australia is next on his travel list.





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# Malaysia eyes tier II, III cities

Malaysia's unwavering commitment to the Indian market paints a promising future for Indian tourists seeking to explore the vibrant and culturally rich nation, says Datuk Musa, Deputy Director General of Promotion for Malaysia.



Janice Alyosius

India, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse population, has always been a captivating market for the global tourism industry. For Malaysia, this allure is especially significant. **Datuk Musa**, Deputy Director General of Promotion for Malaysia, says, "India has been our priority market for so long, even prior to the pandemic. Tourism Malaysia is not only focusing on general tourists coming from this country but also focusing on niche products."

Elaborating on what Tourism Malaysia has done to attract Indian tourists, Musa says, "To cater to Indian travellers, Malaysia has adopted a multifaceted approach. While continuing to attract general tourists, the focus has expanded to niche products, including destination weddings, golfing, filming destinations, medical tourism, and education tourism."

This strategic diversification reflects Malaysia's belief in its ability to meet the specific demands of Indian tourists across various segments. It underscores Malaysia's dedication to offering a wide array of experiences to Indian visitors.

### Upcoming initiatives and target numbers

In August 2023, Tourism Malaysia concluded its second roadshow to India, targeting tier II and tier III cities. "Building upon the success of the first roadshow held in May 2023, this (the second roadshow) demonstrates Malaysia's commitment to aggressively promoting its offerings in India. Offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai play a pivotal role in these efforts," Musa says.

Tourism Malaysia has ambitious goals towards Indian tourist arrivals. "Malaysia welcomed nearly 750,000 Indian tourists before the pandemic. In 2022, around

325,000 Indian tourists visited Malaysia. We aim to double these numbers in 2023, driven by various campaigns and initiatives, including Malaysia Week campaigns that showcase the country's vibrant culture and culinary diversity," Musa shares.

### Focus on specific market segments

The Indian market is incredibly diverse, and Malaysia has adapted



**Tourism Malaysia is not only focusing on general tourists coming from this country (India) but also focusing on niche products**

its approach accordingly. Malaysia now places greater emphasis on destination weddings, golfing, filming locations, medical facilities, and educational institutions. According to Musa, these segments offer excellent value for money, making Malaysia an attractive choice for Indian travellers. "Malaysia's priority is ensuring Indian tourists enjoy their stay and share their experiences with others, further boosting arrivals," he says.

### Collaborations with Indian partners

Collaboration is key to Malaysia's strategy. "Tourism Malaysia has engaged in joint campaigns with Indian counterparts, including airlines, film producers, wedding planners, golf clubs, and travel agents. These partnerships aim to provide compelling reasons for Indian tourists to choose Malaysia as their destination, offering a wide range of experiences," he shares.

### Partnerships and incentive

Tourism Malaysia incentivises Indian travel trade professionals through joint promotion incentives. Musa says, "Collaborating with local Indian industry partners, promotional campaigns are organised in Malaysia, with Tourism Malaysia offsetting some costs. Additionally, incentives are offered to travel agents to organize charter flights from India to Malaysia, primarily targeting MICE segments. These efforts aim to attract more tourists, not only via commercial flights but also specially arranged charters."

### Key attractions and activities for Indian tourists

Malaysia boasts a plethora of attractions and activities catering to Indian tourists. Spiritual visits to Batu Caves, city life experiences, shopping extravaganzas, gastronomic adventures, and opportunities to explore medical and education facilities are all on offer. "For those seeking an authentic Malaysian experience, homestays and kampungs provide a glimpse into local life away from the hustle and bustle of cities. Malaysia's diverse range of activities and cuisine allows for tailor-made packages. Whether it's mountain climbing, jungle exploration, vibrant city life, golfing, or culinary adventures, Indian tourists can customize their experiences. Travel agents are instrumental in curating these personalized journeys," Musa says.

### Connectivity

Malaysia is well-connected to major Indian cities with close to 160 weekly flights and availability of approximately 31,000 seats. "Airlines are also

exploring new routes to enhance connectivity. After the pandemic-induced hiatus, flights are resuming, and new routes like Thiruvananthapuram, Amritsar, and Ahmadabad are being introduced," he shares.

### Plans ahead

Revealing further plans, Musa says, "Tourism Malaysia is dedicated to maintaining Malaysia as the preferred destination for Indian tourists. Special promotions, events, and campaigns are in the pipeline, with a focus on the upcoming Visit Malaysia campaign. Malaysia is also working to ensure that all its destinations are ready to provide Indian tourists with lasting memories of their holidays."



**Datuk Musa**  
Deputy Director General of  
Promotion for Malaysia



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