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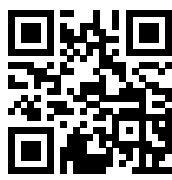
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Develop 50 world-class destinations: PM

In the Post-Budget webinar on 'Developing Tourism in Mission Mode', organised recently by the Union Ministry of Tourism, PM Narendra Modi highlighted achievements in the sector and pushed for public private partnerships, while also seeking suggestions from the industry on the way forward.



Nisha Verma

Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that such webinars are meant to act as a catalyst for achieving the targets set in the Union Budget. "To reach new heights in the tourism sector in India, we must think out of the box and do long-term planning. To

develop a tourist destination, it's important to look at the potential, infrastructural need for ease of travel and fulfil them, while adopting other innovative methods to promote it. This will help plan the future roadmap," he claimed.

High potential of tourism

PM stressed that the potential of

tourism in the country is "very high". "In this year's budget, with the competitive spirit in the country, it has been said to select some tourist destinations of the country for development through the challenge route, which will inspire every stakeholder to make concerted efforts. The budget has also focused on the holistic development

of tourist destinations. For this, there should be a detailed discussion on engaging different stakeholders," he claimed. He insisted that tourism is not just a fancy word and does not just represent people from high income group. "In the context of India, the scope of tourism is very wide and old. Yatras have been happening here

for centuries, on which the entire economy of many big cities and districts depended. Despite this age-old tradition, it is unfortunate that no attention has been paid to these places to enhance facilities suited to the times," he said.

Developing 50 destinations

He suggested that India should

**Narendra Modi**

Prime Minister of India

develop 50 destinations that must be known around the world. "We

Contd on page 12 ▶

India makes a mark at ITB

A delegation of the Ministry of Tourism (MOT), GoI, led by Tourism Secretary Arvind Singh, showcased rich and diversified tourism potential of the country at the 2023 edition of ITB Berlin.



TT Bureau

The Ministry of Tourism showcased India's rich and diversified tourism potential under its Incredible India brand once again at the ITB Berlin. The Indian delegation was led by **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Tourism, who unveiled the India Pavilion alongside H.E. **Parvathaneni Harish**, Ambassador of India in Germany and other Indian officials from the State Government of Kerala, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Kar-



nataka, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh and Union Territories of Ladakh and Puducherry. The Indian delegation consisted of 60 participants from India, which

included travel agents, tour operators, airlines, hotels, the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology, and Indian

Contd on page 9 ▶

Delhi to host PATA Mart

The 2023 edition of the prestigious PATA Travel Mart, to be organised in New Delhi from 4 October to 6 October this year, will see delegates from across the region.



TT Bureau

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is set to host the PATA Travel Mart 2023 from 4 October 2023 to 6 October 2023 in New Delhi. The news was shared recently by **Arvind Singh**, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, at India Night during ITB Berlin. "After a hiatus of three years due to the pandemic, we are extremely delighted to be organising PATA Travel Mart 2023 in person in India, particularly since the country will

**Arvind Singh**

Secretary, MoT, Government of India

be hosting the G20 Summit later this year. India is proving to be an important market in the re-

covery of travel and tourism within the Asia Pacific region and with its many initiatives in sustainable and inclusive tourism activities, it has the potential to be a preferred tourism destination, loved by both global and domestic tourists," said **Peter Semone**, Chair, PATA, adding that "With its rich culture and beautiful natural landscapes, it is the perfect setting for people to access decision makers, meet new clients, expand their networks, establish new relationships and consolidate existing business partnerships." ▶

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Winning big

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has another feather in its cap by winning the bid for the PATA Travel Mart, to be held in Delhi in October this year. Travel industry professionals from around the world gather at the mart to network and conduct business, and India will get a chance to showcase its products and services. It is time for the industry to come together and work towards the success of this mart. While the government will do its part, it's also the responsibility of each tourism professional to showcase the country in its full glory.

Promotion of destinations: PATA Travel Mart provides a platform for destinations to showcase their attractions and services to a global audience of travel industry professionals. This is a huge opportunity for India as PATA will be held right after the G20 Heads of State and Government Summit in September. This can help promote Indian Tourism.

Business opportunities: The event can lead to increased travel bookings, investment in tourism infrastructure, and other opportunities that can benefit the tourism industry. But industry players need to put their best foot forward and help make the event a success.

Education and training: Educational sessions and workshops will also be organised at the event to help industry professionals know the latest trends and technologies in tourism. This can help to improve the quality of tourism products and services and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Economic impact: The event itself can have a significant economic impact on the host destination, as it attracts thousands of delegates who will require accommodation, transportation, and other services during their stay. This can generate revenue for local businesses and create jobs.

Overall, PATA Travel Mart plays an important role in supporting and promoting the tourism industry in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. By bringing together travel industry professionals from around the world, it helps to facilitate business partnerships, promote destinations, and improve the overall quality of tourism products and services. Let's hope India makes the most of this opportunity.

IVAs portray a rosy picture

In its latest forecast, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has predicted strong annual increases in international visitor arrival (IVA) numbers into and across Asia Pacific for 2023, continuing each year to 2025, which shall see the numbers reaching 2019 levels.



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The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has predicted a strong annual increase in inbound visitor numbers for Asia Pacific under each of the mild, medium, and severe scenarios in 2023. The growth rates range from 71 per cent under the severe scenario to as much as 104 per cent under the mild scenario, states a report released by the association.

As per the report, the annual increase in the absolute number of international visitor arrivals (IVAs) in 2023 is predicted to range from 158.7 million to 437.5 million under the severe and mild scenarios respectively, lifting the total volume of arrivals between 382.9 million and 712.7 million, under the same scenarios.

Also, substantial annual increases in IVA numbers have also been predicted for 2024 and 2025, under all three scenarios, although the volume of these gains will slowly reduce over the years as the absolute volume base of foreign arrivals increases.

PATA states that the impact of these increases is such that under the mild scenario, a return to better than the benchmark number of IVAs in 2019 is predicted to occur in 2023, while under the medium scenario that position is projected for 2024. Under the severe scenario, however, even by 2025, the volume of international



visitors into and across Asia Pacific is forecast to still fall short of the 2019 benchmark by around 12 per cent.

The mix of source regions has been forecast to remain dominated by flows from Asia Pacific markets into Asia Pacific destinations, with 2025 expected to return to roughly similar proportions as that of 2019, under all three scenarios.

In addition, the research reveals that these intra-regional proportionate flows differ for each Asia Pacific destination region. The Americas, as a source region for example, accounted for 55.4 per cent of visitor numbers for the Americas in 2019, and this is predicted to gradually increase to between 56 per cent and 57 per cent in 2025, depending on the

scenario that plays out at that time. The Asia-to-Asia flows accounted for 80.4 per cent of total IVAs for that region in 2019, and this has been predicted to reach between 80 per cent and 82 per cent by the end of 2025.

On the other hand, the Pacific as a destination region within Asia Pacific is somewhat different, since its source regions in 2019 were dominated by Asia, which had a slim margin over the Americas. Those positions have been predicted to change over the years to 2025, at which time both source regions under the mild scenario are predicted to generate roughly equal proportionate shares of IVAs into the Pacific. Under the medium and severe scenarios, however, the Americas is projected to have a slight relative share dominance in delivering IVAs into the Pacific by the end of 2025.

As IVA growth builds between 2023 and 2025, it is worth noting that the source markets of Asia collectively generate the bulk of the additional annual increases in absolute numbers of arrivals across Asia Pacific each year. Under the mild scenario, for example, the annual increase in IVAs from Asia in 2023 are forecast to number 330.7 million and account for three-quarters of the net increase in total IVAs between 2022 and 2023.

PATA Chair **Peter Semone** said, "These current forecasts are easily the most positive since 2019 and while inbound numbers are

predicted to strongly increase each year to 2025, they will not do so evenly across the Asia Pacific destinations nor at the same rates. In addition, growth will not necessarily be by passive osmosis; work needs to be done for destinations to remain competitive and to deliver experiences to these visitors that consistently

The growth rates range from 71 per cent under the severe scenario to as much as 104 per cent under the mild scenario, states the PATA report

rate above and beyond their expectations. A blatant profit-grab at this time will resonate badly with visitors now and will work against destinations and operators in the future."

"Now more than ever before, destinations need to work with host communities, operators, and visitors to deliver results and experiences that bring the best of the travel and tourism sector to the fore, across all involved parties and in a responsible, equitable, meaningful, and thereby sustainable manner. Such an approach will also create a certain resilience to future shocks as and when they appear, and rest assured that they will," he added.

Key IVA indicators for Asia Pacific 2023 to 2025

Scenario	Metric	2023	2024	2025
MILD	IVAs, mns	712.708	892.030	962.168
	Annual Change, %	159.0	25.2	7.9
	Annual Change, mns	437.539	179.322	70.139
	Recovery Rate, %	104.4	130.7	140.9
MEDIUM	IVAs, mns	512.092	728.711	788.081
	Annual Change, %	103.9	42.3	8.1
	Annual Change, mns	260.982	216.619	59.370
	Recovery Rate, %	75.0	106.7	115.4
SEVERE	IVAs, mns	382.947	546.186	600.616
	Annual Change, %	70.7	42.6	10.0
	Annual Change, mns	158.688	163.240	54.429
	Recovery Rate, %	56.1	80.0	88.0

IVA= International visitor arrivals / mns = millions

'Promote tourism together'

G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, says that collective efforts for the promotion of tourism will make India the most sought-after destination both for domestic as well as foreign tourists.

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G. Kishan Reddy, Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER, Government of India, while giving the closing remarks at the webinar on "Developing Tourism in Mission Mode", thanked the Prime Minister on paving the way for India's tourism future through his words and initiatives. "Both the Ministry of Tourism and Culture are very happy to see the active participation and insightful observations from various fields of tourism. The industry now has to look at how we can overcome the challenges involved in the mission mode. For example, the method of selection of 50 destinations helps in tourism infrastructure planning in some way through convergence via Gati Shakti and how international coordination can be improved. We need to see how we can use the best example of PPP in tourism. We need to learn how to leverage innovation and digital medium to give priority to National Digital Tourism Mission. In the same way, we must know



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

how should the local tourism sector and local economy be promoted, how can we provide heritage for socio-economic inclusiveness through heritage tourism, and also provide development."

Echoing the PM's thoughts, he said that travel and tourism is one of the largest economic sectors in the world. "After agriculture and textile sector, tourism can be the most employment generating sector in India. Many countries in the world have proved today that their GDP, revenue and employment run

on tourism. Even in India, states like Goa and Kerala are working because of tourism. Now, we must promote tourism in all the provinces as well as the whole country. For this, Government of India, state governments, private stakeholders and civil societies must work together. To invest that much capital in such a big country, we must work shoulder to shoulder. This sector can provide more employment with minimum expenditure and we can tell about India's identity in the world through tourism."

Reddy insisted that with the PM's vision, India is becoming a major tourism destination of the world. "Today, using technology, we are connecting our pilgrimage sites and tourist places with world-class infrastructure. Our PM has realized the vision of theme-based tourism. Ramayana circuit, Shri Krishna circuit, Jagannath Yatra circuit, Buddhist circuit, upcoming Ambedkar circuit, and many such examples are being realised through Bharat Gaurav train today. It was his

dream that the common man with slippers should also travel by air. Today UDAAN – Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik scheme is working to fulfil that dream. We are committed to achieve the objectives of the Dekho Apna Desh campaign initiative. Gol has started a wonderful

States like Goa and Kerala are working because of tourism. Now, we must promote tourism in all the provinces, as well as the whole country

initiative like Youth Tourism Clubs," he said. Lauding the Ministry of Culture, he said that their mission is to protect, promote and disseminate our culture in all its forms.

Destination-centric approach is key

A number of suggestions and ideations for tourism promotion come out of the deliberations held at the webinar on 'Developing Tourism in Mission Mode', moderated by Tourism Secretary and other senior officials of the MOT.

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The webinar on 'Developing Tourism in Mission Mode', organised by the Ministry of Tourism as a part of the series of webinars being held after the presentation of the Union Budget, aimed to brainstorm ideas for effective implementation of the initiatives announced in the Budget.

The webinar had six breakout sessions, where the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, State tourism boards, industry associations, district administrations, local bodies, experts in the field of tourism and hospitality and Invest India deliberated on various themes namely 'Destination Centric Approach for Tourism Development, Convergence – The Power of Collaboration, Strengthening Public Private Participation in Tourism Sector, Driving Innovation and Digitalization in Tourism Sector, Impacting Lives at Grassroots Level Through Tourism and Cultural Heritage for Promotion of Tourism.



Arvind Singh
Secretary, Tourism, Govt. of India

Arvind Singh, Secretary, Tourism, underlined that this year's budget has given a new vision for tourism development and it focuses on promotion of tourism in mission mode, with active participation of states, convergence of government programs and public-private partnerships. He also said that the budget proposes facilitation of tourism infrastructure and amenities in border villages under the Vibrant Village Programme and

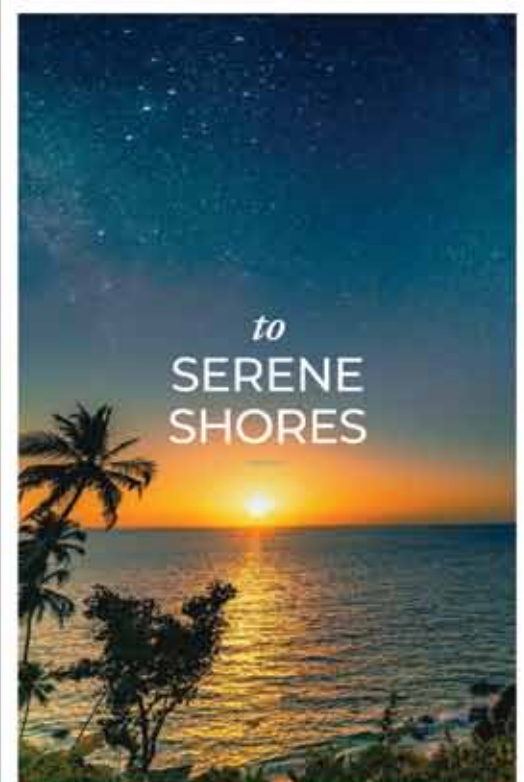
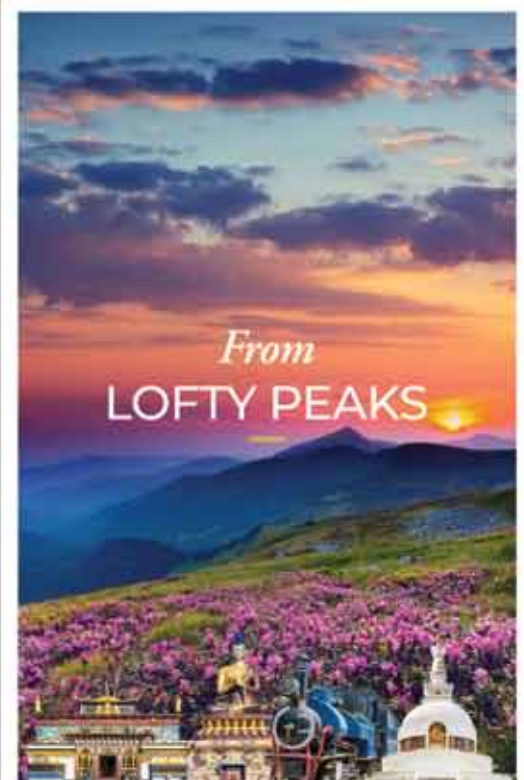
encourages setting up Unity Mall in the state capital or most prominent tourism centre or the financial capital for promotion and sale of their own ODOPs (One District, One Product), GI products and other handicraft products, and for providing space for such products of all other states. He also claimed that the budget advocates a shift from department centric and scheme centric approach to a destination centric approach for planning, development and management of tourism.

All the sessions came up with many suggestions and recommendations, which were communicated to G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER. It was suggested that planning of the destinations is crucial for the development of the destinations. The model on the lines of Ekta Nagar needs to be replicated. It was also recommended that destination management is important, which should be done considering the government agencies,

private partners and local communities. Also, the Minister was told that it is important to devise a mechanism which institutionalises an enabling framework for promoting public private partnership in the tourism and hospitality sector.

This year's Union Budget focuses on promotion of tourism in mission mode, with active participation of states & integration of govt programs

It was said that there is a need for expeditious role of national digital tourism mission, which can provide a similar tourism interface between tourism stakeholders and services to the tourists.



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'I see travel and tourism as the Guardians of Nature,' says WTTTC President & CEO

Global business travel spending expected to make full recovery by 2024: GBTA

India is on the verge of an international air travel revolution: Airbus CEO

Industry to suffer ₹110-130 billion loss in FY2023 due to ATF price hike and depreciation in Indian rupee

Still a long way to go in getting infrastructure status at the central level: Puneet Chhatwal

Destination's carrying capacity should be considered to allow tourists: Principal Secretary, Kerala Tourism

PM's push for states to focus on students and developing 50 destinations can be a gamechanger: Sunil Satyawakta

Tourism sector alone to get ₹20K crore investment at Global Investment Summit

Hong Kong has something for all

Hong Kong Tourism Board is welcoming visitors with programs tailored to leisure, business, and MICE travellers. Aiming to promote Hong Kong effectively, the Board has launched the 'Hello Hong Kong' campaign offering 500,000 free tickets, with a special allocation for India.



Janice Alyosius

Hong Kong is a unique destination that attracts visitors from around the world due to its blend of Eastern and Western cultures. It has become a popular destination for leisure, business, and MICE travellers alike, offering a range of attractions and programs tailored to each segment.

Puneet Kumar, Director, South Asia & Middle East, Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb), spoke about the board's efforts to welcome visitors to Hong Kong. "HKTb has launched separate programs for each segment, including the 'Hello Hong Kong' campaign for leisure travellers, which offers 500,000 free tickets, with an allocation specifically set aside for India. The Airport Authority and Cathay Pacific will work together to distribute these tickets, while the HKTb will promote the campaign and create trade partnerships. Additionally, visitors will be given access to digital Hong Kong goodies



Puneet Kumar
Director, South Asia & Middle East
Hong Kong Tourism Board

worth around \$100, which they can redeem upon arrival by scanning a QR code at participating outlets," he said.

Connectivity

Cathay Pacific operates flights to India with a focus on short-haul markets that have flight durations of three to four hours. Vistara recently announced plans to connect Hong Kong with Delhi, while other carriers are also planning

deployments in the second half of this year. Kumar said, "This will provide a sweet pricing opportunity, which can open up Hong Kong tourism to many segments who previously didn't consider it due to high airfare."

Focus segments

The India market brings a diverse range of segments such as families, honeymooners, cruise travellers, MICE attendees, and exhibition delegates who participate in events such as the Gems and Jewellery Show and Toy Fair, shared Kumar. He expressed excitement about the India market and shared that the HKTb has been involved in the market for the past three years, primarily through virtual means with a few hybrid events. However, the recent campaign and the opening of Hong Kong presented a significant opportunity to engage with the India market more effectively. The HKTb conducted two city roadshows in Mumbai and Delhi, where 14 Hong Kong trade partners met with over 70 local travel

agents who specialise in MICE. They provided updates on products, destinations, and the latest happenings in Hong Kong, and the feedback was overwhelming.

HKTb has launched separate programs, including the 'Hello Hong Kong' campaign for leisure travellers, which offers 500,000 free tickets

ingly positive. "HKTb plans to prioritize certain regions for market outreach, with Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru being the top priority due to the availability of direct air capacity. The focus will be on the leisure and MICE segments, and once cruises resume out of Hong Kong, HKTb plans

to target the cruise segment," he shared.

Plans ahead

The HKTb's approach will be highly progressive, closely tied to the return of air capacity. "Currently, Cathay Pacific operates at 30 per cent of the pre-pandemic air capacity between India and Hong Kong, with plans to increase to 75 per cent by the end of the year. The next increase in frequency and flights is projected to take place around August. The HKTb has conducted a two-city roadshow to provide updates and announcements, and they plan to collaborate with leading tour operators and regional travel agents through joint co-ops. The HKTb will launch a MICE e-training program in the first week of April to provide corporate clients with in-depth knowledge about MICE developments, venues, hotels, new attractions, MICE itineraries, new themes, and team-building activities. This will allow corporate clients to refresh the way they sell and promote Hong Kong" shared Kumar. 📌

Sustainability at heart of Rail Europe

Green travel is one of the main trends emerging these days and it is at the heart of Rail Europe's product offering, says Bjorn Bender, CEO, Rail Europe. With rail journeys being the most efficient and sustainable way to travel within Europe, the company reveals that India has shown the strongest recovery yet besides the US market.



Hazel Jain

Bjorn Bender, CEO, Rail Europe, was in India recently to meet the team as well as trade partners in Mumbai and New Delhi, and understand the requirements of the Indian market. Rail Europe celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. Speaking on this milestone, Bender says, "We are now an independent company which is very important for us. We have a very clear plan for the future. We are very happy to have

been working with 15,000 partners from more than 70 countries and selling more than 100 brands of the European rail today. We sell one ticket every 12 seconds, which is also a result of the technology that we have developed."

Continuing in this vein, he adds, "Everything is linked to technology today and that is why our current focus is to ensure that all travel agents have access to our booking portal ERA – Easy Rail Access – so that they can easily make booking

for all the European train journeys. Travel agents can book through our GSAs, as most of them have integrated Rail Europe APIs in their booking platforms."

This is also why, Bender adds, Rail Europe's B2B platform is the technical heart of the company. "We are developing it currently because we are increasing offers month by month. We see demand for newer offers in terms of technology is increasing. We are integrating seat reservations for Eurail passes. This will be a huge step for us and the customers. We are also integrating the Austrian rail offers into ERA, and also integrating the panoramic trains mainly in Switzerland like Glacier Express and Bernina Express. These are high-demand products for the Indian market. And all this is related to technology. First, we need to integrate it from our partners because we see ourselves as a one-stop shop for European rails. On the other side, we need



Bjorn Bender
CEO, Rail Europe

to provide it through state-of-the-art API solutions to the trade," he says.

Recovery from India

The India market, as resilient as it is, has recovered pretty well for Rail Europe. Bender says, "We have recovered very well in terms of our goals that we had for 2022. I would like to point out that the strongest recovery besides the

US market has been from India. We are very happy to see Indian travellers coming back. Initially, it was mainly FIT segment. But the groups are also slowly increasing so 2023 will be a very strong year for India. We think we may almost achieve 100 per cent recovery this year. Thus far, we have a 60-70 per cent recovery from India as compared to 2019 figures. But it depends on the product. So for instance, for point-to-point products, the passes are very strong such as Eurail and Swiss Travel Passes but also TGV trains, which are increasing heavily." In terms of groups, it's a mix of both MICE and families. From MICE point of view, it's the incentive movement that has really taken off. He also shares that Rail Europe also saw a huge movement of around 400 pax recently on TGV Lyria or for connections between France and Switzerland.

Trends and sustainability

Sustainability is one of the main trends emerge these days and

it is at the heart of our product offering, says Bender. "We see rail as the most efficient but also more sustainable way to travel

Groups are also slowly increasing, so 2023 will be a very strong year for India. We may even achieve 100 per cent recovery in 2023

in Europe. Moreover, demand for sustainable travel has been rising, specially post Covid, and we see this from the Indian market as well. We are very happy to support the mobility transition from individual transport on roads to rail," he says. 📌



2-pronged strategy to enrich Sarovar

Sarovar Hotels and Resorts has partnered with Louvre Hotel Group to expand their business. 'We are taking our expansion to the next level by introducing the Louvre brands of Golden Tulip, Royal Tulip, Tulip Inn, and Campanile, in addition to our existing Sarovar brands,' says Ajay Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts.

Janice Alyosius

Ajay Bakaya, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, in partnership with Louvre Hotel Group, announced their expansion recently. "Sarovar is beyond Sarovar, and now we are part of a bigger picture. While we have over 100 hotels, Louvre has over 1,000 hotels. We are taking our expansion to the next level by introducing the Louvre brands of Golden Tulip, Royal Tulip, Tulip Inn, and Campanile, in addition to our existing Sarovar brands of Sarovar Premier, Sarovar Portico, and Homotel," he said.

Louvre Hotel Group offers a diverse range of options from 1-star to 5-star hotels. The group's portfolio boasts of many big brands such as Royal Tulip, Golden Tulip, Campanile, Tulip Residences, Kyriad, Kyriad Direct, Tulip Inn, and Première Classe. Additionally, Louvre

has five popular brands within the Sarovar network that operate exclusively in India, and also feature the Hôtels & Préférence Group and Tempting Places brand. The group has also established a distribution agreement with the esteemed Barrière group.

Expansion plans

Speaking about Sarovar's expansion plans, Bakaya said, "Our expansion will follow a two-pronged approach, and we are looking at adding around 10 hotels per year for the next five years. Our expansion plans are not limited to India but extend globally. Our plan includes the opening of two hotels in 2023, one in Kampala, Uganda, and the other in Hargeisa, Somaliland."

Focus on tier-II, III and IV markets

Bakaya claimed that they were the first to venture into tier-II, III and IV markets, which has given them an



Ajay Bakaya
Managing Director
Sarovar Hotels and Resorts

edge over their competitors. "We have been in these markets for a long time, and we believe that this is where the larger expansion lies," he said.

Take on Union Budget

Speaking of the Union Budget, Bakaya said, "Our response to the

budget is mixed, as we are grateful for the government's indirect benefits, such as the improved visa regime for foreign visitors and better infrastructure, including significantly improved roads, top-notch airports, and improving seaports. From an indirect infrastructure perspective, this is fantastic news. Additionally, the Finance Minister's announcement of 50 new destinations with all necessary infrastructure and linkages is a significant boost to the hotel and hospitality industry. However, we are disappointed that we did not receive infrastructure status."

Investment in technology

In recent years, the travel and hospitality sector has made significant investments in technology to improve operations and improve customer experiences.

On this, Bakaya said, "Over the past two to three years, we have

invested a significant amount of time and money into our technology to bring all our hotels under one system. This has resulted in a centralized reservation system, which is now live and seamless, as well as a global distribution centre that directly links to a mainframe in Paris to distribute our hotels worldwide. This has made it easier for travel agents to access and book our hotels, while also providing real-time updates on room availability and pricing."

Top priorities for travellers

Bakaya revealed that the top priorities for travellers today are value besides safety and security.

"Hotels are adapting to the travellers' needs," he said, adding that, "I am optimistic about the future of India's hospitality industry and believe that the next five to 10 years belong to India." 🇮🇳

In Numbers

10
hotels per year to be opened by Sarovar in next 5 years

25-40
age group opting for weekend getaways

50
new destinations will be equipped with required infra and connections to stimulate growth in hospitality sector

India shows its prowess in Berlin

Contd from page 5

Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, showcasing the diverse tourism products and services. MOT planned various events at ITB and had B2B meetings with tour operators, travel agents and various other stakeholders.

Incredible India pavilion at ITB focused on showcasing varied tourism products of India including culture, heritage, adventure, rural tourism and niche tourism products such as cuisine, wellness, yoga, wildlife, and luxury.

On Day 1, MOT also held a press conference on the theme 'Incred-



ible India welcomes the world' at the newly built City Cube Congress venue of the Messe Berlin, which saw in attendance Arvind Singh, V.

Srinivas Goud, Minister for Tourism, Government of Telangana, H.E. Parvathaneni Harish, and **Gyan Bhushan**, Senior Economic

Advisor, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, who presented the highlights of the new season.

The Ministry of Tourism through the integrated marketing and promotional strategy, and a synergized campaign in association with the Travel Trade, State Governments and Indian Missions, promotes India at the International Markets.

On Day 2, MOT bagged the Golden & Silver Star at The International 'Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2023' in 'TV/Cinema Commercials International' and 'Country International' Category at the prestigious international Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2023. The awards were received by Arvind Singh. The promotional films/ television

Incredible India pavilion at ITB focused on showcasing varied tourism products of India including culture, heritage and adventure

commercials that received the awards were produced by the MOT as part of its Post-COVID promotional global campaign on India reopening. 🇮🇳



It's cricket season in Mumbai

The travel industry recently got together for the first season of the MTF Cricket League in Mumbai. Conceptualised by Pradeep Saboo, Sanjay Arya, Rajat Bagaria and Sameer Karnani, the event saw eight teams, led by eight travel companies with the idea of playing together and bring out the spirit of sportsmanship among trade members.



Aviation takes off, but airfares pinch

With the summer schedule starting this month, expectations for the resurgence of Indian aviation industry are high. Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation, GoI, says UDAN has played a great role in providing domestic capability. Industry leaders also share their views on the challenges the industry is facing and suggest ways to overcome them.



TT Bureau

Speaking on how India has an advantage in medical tourism with its aviation industry and the kind of initiatives that have been taken by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India, said, "Medical tourism will be based on I to D, i.e. International to Domestic, with people from our neighbouring countries coming into India for the quality of medical care, along with the capability of people from tier-III and tier-II to travel to tier-I cities. The former will result in greater international connectivity, which will ensure that we can galvanise the potential on that front, which is already gathering base with many of our airlines looking at acquisition of wide-bodied aircraft and applying direct routes as opposed to the hubs in our neighbouring countries. As far as the domestic sector is concerned, I think UDAN has played a great role in providing that capability. With the penetration and the presence of greater than 71 airports, water dromes and heleports that did not exist before, as well as 2.15 lakh flights that have plied through this scheme, that service is being provided both for tourism as well as for medical tourism," he explained.

Modernization of airports

Sharing details on the development of airports across the country, Scindia updated, "In terms of greenfield projects, we had total of 21 greenfield projects that we focused on. Of those, two were in-



Jyotiraditya Scindia
Minister of Civil Aviation
Govt. of India

augurated by the Prime Minister—Hollongi in Arunachal Pradesh and Mopa in Goa. For Jewar, the foundation stone had been laid by the PM and we are looking at very fast-paced development of both the airports in Gujarat – Hirasar Airport in particular. Also, all our main six metros airports—Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ben-

galuru, Hyderabad—are augmenting capacity. We see it growing from the current 20 million throughput capability to almost 430 million by 2027-28."

ATF and price dynamics

Giving example of the telecom industry, he said, "The concept of economics of moving from a low volume high margin game to a high volume low margin game has been experienced in telecom and the same transition has taken place in civil aviation. In the early 90s, a Mumbai-Delhi ticket would cost upwards of ₹20,000-30,000. Today, it's a fraction of that not withstanding the inflationary cost of money. Connectivity in terms of its breadth and penetration has reached exponential levels in the last eight to nine years. There is an issue regarding pricing, but that issue is global and seasonal."

Industry growth

Scindia said that India is seeing a growth in the aviation industry. "There has been a birth of a new airline in India. There has been an increase in capacity, in terms of the number of airports, the increase in breadth and depth of penetration in terms of airline connectivity, as well as birth of regional airlines like Star Air and India One Air. These

are airlines that did not exist before UDAN," he said.

India - A global aviation hub

Scindia insisted that it is very important that we create a hub for aviation in India. "This means that it's about time that we looked at creating a hub within India today for travellers coming into India as well as our citizens travelling abroad. We have neighbours on our Eastern border or on our Western border. Thus, it's important that we create a hub within India, where domestic to international connectivity, as well as international to domestic connectivity, becomes a reality," he shared.

2023—a year of resurgence

Calling 2023, a year of resurgence, Scindia said, "Last year we had 123 million on a calendar basis. But if we looked at December 2019 to December 2022, which is a pre-COVID period to post-COVID period, we grew from 12.23 million odd travellers per month to almost 12.7 million travellers in December 2022. Also, we've had greater than four lakh travellers for almost two to three weeks in the month of December touching a high of 4.53 lakhs or in a particular day up are 75 year high of roughly 4.2 lakhs." 📈

"I believe that there is an urgent need for enhancing passenger carrying capacity and connections must start to most places of the world. Larger twin alley aircrafts with nonstop services to most major destinations are required. Government can play a major role in this. Indian outbound demand for seats far outstrips the supply as of now and fares are therefore sky high. When it comes to new routes to destinations, we think that the Ministry of Civil Aviation should look at starting flights to Australia, Europe, United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada, as these destinations have a large vacuum to be filled. The fares need correction at the earliest."



Anil Kalsi
Joint Secretary
TAFI



EM Najeed
Chairman, ATE Group of Companies,
and Sr. Vice President, IATO

"The challenge is to meet the demand keeping the services intact and to keep the prices in check, as it is discouraging inbound tourism. I understand the market forces are in full play, but airlines must speak to the states on ATF and discuss modalities among them and with the government on this issue. It is heartening to note that Air India has ordered 470 additional aircrafts. We must increase supply to cater to a better price mix. Government should look at last mile connectivity. I am to understand that 43 UDAN flights in tourism are in operation, 20 more are in the pipeline. The 50 new destinations targeted in the budget need to be our priority. Varanasi-Aurangabad can give more to the Buddhist circuit."

"It's going to be a great start to the summer schedule in India with flight loads back to the pre-pandemic levels and showing all signs of breaking through to achieve all time high records. The challenge however remains—Are the fares too high and will they sustain? It's going to go back to the demand and supply tug of war. The fares are expected to stabilise in the second half of 2023 after a busy summer. The Government has announced in the last budget that new airports are coming up soon. For example, the Jewar airport in UP is expected to ease the madness at T3 Delhi much like Mopa."



Valmiki Harikishan
MD, Valmiki Travel & Tourism Solutions

"Aviation and tourism complement each other. Aviation plays a critical role in modern societies, recognised by business and leisure traveller alike. Recent IATA survey reveals that 84 per cent could not imagine doing business without air transportation, 91 per cent say that air connectivity is critical to the economy of any nation, 90 per cent say it is a necessity for modern life and 87 per cent say that it has a positive impact on societies. Whole world is watching now how the aviation industry is growing in India with the recent orders placed by Air India and even Indigo, likewise many more."

"During summer, travelling comprises family vacations, groups, weddings and group corporate travel. At present, we are experiencing high ticket costs. Government should overcome the challenges of congestion at top airports such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. It should focus on expansion of airport strips. Kudos to the government for doubling operational airstrips from 50 to 147 airports. Domestic connectivity has been addressed very well through UDAN. International connectivity requires special focus. India should start flights to SFO, JFK, Newark, Dallas, Seattle ex BOM and Delhi directly."



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

"The aviation industry is facing various challenges such as a shortage of skilled personnel, lack of regional connectivity, high fuel prices, and high maintenance and repair costs. To address these challenges, the industry needs to take several steps. Firstly, investing in training and upskilling programs is essential to meet the current demand for skilled workers and prepare a talent pool for future needs. Secondly, improving regional connectivity is vital to boost economic growth and expand access to remote areas. Thirdly, exploring alternative fuel sources will help to mitigate the impact of surging fuel prices and lower air travel costs for passengers."



AV Praveen
Executive Director, Southern Travels

"Innovation is our top goal in this digital age as we are dedicated to innovation on all fronts to enhance our services to meet global standards and practices. This is part of our commitment to support the Innovation Program by guaranteeing full involvement by our staff. We have launched a new innovation programme and the goal is to produce creative ideas that may help DANA's future growth, disseminate knowledge among workers about the innovation programme, and build a culture of innovation. This has been made possible by our workforce, which serves as the driving force us."



Sandeep Verma
Head, Inflight Services, Air India

"With a sizeable aircraft order that was announced earlier in the month, more flights on international and domestic networks, and re-alignment of domestic routes with AIX connect, cabin crew will play a decisive role in shaping the present and future of the Air India group. Addition of fresh talent will also accelerate the pace of cultural transformation at Air India, which is an integral part of our Vihaan. AI transformation program. We are also looking to step up hiring of more pilots and maintenance engineers. The cabin crew, who will be recruited from around the country, will undergo a 15-week programme imparting safety and service skills."



HE Mohammed Abdulla Ahli
Seconded CEO, Dubai Air Navigation
Services (DANS) and Director-General,
Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA)



Manoj Saraf
Managing Director
Gainwell Travel & Leisure

Tap tourism potential: PM to industry

► Contd from page 5

should digitally promote all these destinations and send promotional material to all embassies for the same. We will target many countries of the world. We must make the whole system modern, and our tour operators also have to think from a new perspective. All tourist destinations should have apps in all the languages of the UN, as well as that of India and not just in English and Hindi. Not only this, the signages at our tourist destinations should be in all languages too. These are small things. Once we understand its (of suggested measures) greatness, then we can take tourism forward in a scientific way," he said.

Better facilities better tourism

He shared that better facilities at destinations add to tourist numbers considerably. "We are seeing this in the country after reconstruction work at Kashi Vishwanath Dham, Kedarghati, Gujarat's Pavagadh, redevelopment of Kankaria Lake in Ahmedabad and development at the tallest statue of the world - Statue of Unity. This shows that if civic amenities are increased in various places of India, there is good digital connectivity, good hotel, hospitals, no

trace of filth, excellent infrastructure, then India's tourism sector can improve manifold."

Vibrant Border Village plan

He claimed that this is the time when villages are also becoming centres of tourism. "Due to better infrastructure, our remote villages are now coming on the map of

ing to India, PM shared, "Today, as the attraction towards India is increasing in the world, the number of foreign tourists coming to India is also increasing. Last year, India received 2 lakh international tourists, but in January 2023 we received 8 lakh foreign tourists. We will have to profile the tourists coming to India from abroad and



tourism. The Central Government has started the Vibrant Border Village Scheme in the villages situated on the border. In such a situation, be it homestay, small hotel, small restaurant, we all have to work together to support people as much as possible for many such businesses," he suggested.

High-spending foreign tourists

Speaking on foreign tourists com-

decide our target group. For people living abroad who can spend more, we need to make a special strategy to bring them to India in maximum numbers. Such tourists may stay in India for a short period of time but will go after spending a lot of money. Today the foreign tourists who come to India spend an average of \$1700, and in America and Australia, this spend is \$2500 and \$5000 respectively. India also has

a lot to offer to high-spend tourists. Every state needs to change its tourism policy accordingly." He added, "It is generally said that the tourist who stays the most at any place is a bird watcher. These people keep camping in a country for months at a stretch."

Professional guides

PM suggested that the tourism industry must work on the shortage of professional tourist guides. "There should be certificate courses in local colleges for guides, there should be competition, and good youngsters should work hard to come forward in this profession. We must have multi-lingual tourist guides. We can use technology and digital tourist guide can be made available. The guides working in a particular tourist destination should also have a specific dress or uniform, so that they can be easily identified by tourists. When any tourist reaches a place, his mind is full of questions and wants immediate solutions. That's when a guide can help them find answers," he said.

Student tourism

He advised that if every state emphasizes on one or two "very good" tourist destinations, decide to invite students from school and

colleges to come for two-three days to its different destinations. "You can decide that initially 100 students will come to such a destination every day, then 200 will come per day, then 300 will come per day, then 1,000 will come per

will be eight universities in a state," he claimed.

Weddings and conferences

In the same way, he said, nowadays wedding destinations are an important segment of tourism and has a huge business potential in the country. "The middle and upper middle class want to go for destination weddings and India has not utilised this opportunity fully. Similarly, people travel for conferences across the world and India should create infrastructure for the same in PPP model. Then people will come for conferences, and will also stay in hotels, in turn boosting the hospitality industry. Thus, a complete ecosystem will develop," he said.

Similarly, sports tourism is an important area. "After hosting Football World Cup, there was a huge impact on the economy of Qatar, as lakhs of people came from all over the world. We can start small, but it can be very big. We must find ways and create infrastructure in the beginning. Whether people come or not, we can take our school and college students, and have meetings of our government there. Automatically more people will start coming," he added.

Today, as the attraction towards India is increasing in the world, the number of foreign tourists coming to India is also increasing

day. Seeing so many people come, a system would set up where shops, water and other amenities would start automatically," he said.

He also mentioned the Ashta Lakshmi of Northeast, which are the eight Northeastern states. "Every year we must select eight universities in each state and each university will tour for 5-7 days in one state of North-East. This way there

Industry leaders meet at Accor show

Accor hosted its hotel exhibition series, Accor Showcase, at Pullman New Delhi in Aerocity recently. Representatives from hotels around the world participated in the event, in which the attendees, including travel agents, wholesalers, corporate clients, tourism partners, and MICE organisers, were provided with an insight into the group's new developments, products, and services.





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Ramoji continues to be success story

Vijayeswari Cherukuri, Managing Director, Ramoji Film City, took the reins of the company in her hand at a crucial time and thanks the team of experts around her for making her learn the ropes of the business and the resulting success. Over the next few years, Ramoji Film City is going to see a new 500-room hotel and a future requirement park.



TT Bureau

COVID-19 was destructive to every tourism business, especially adventure and theme parks, which were the last to open when tourism restarted. However, things are recovering well, says **Vijayeswari Cherukuri**, Managing Director, Ramoji Film City. "We are blessed to be experiencing revenge tourism now. Over 1.3 million tourists visited Ramoji Film City last year. Film shootings are back to pre-COVID times, with Hindi, Tamil and Telugu banners dominating the scene. Wedding season is in full swing. MICE tourism is back to normal," she shares.

Geared up for 2023

Claiming that they know their customers, she said, "One of the reasons Ramoji Film City has stayed relevant after all these years is the fact that we constantly gauge the pulse of our audience

and continuously innovate. After COVID, there is a need for us to be mindful regarding the development of new projects, but having said that, we are on the path to development. Over the next few years, Ramoji Film City is going to see a new 500-room hotel. Then there is the Bala Bharath Park, a future requirement park that we are banking on. We have plans in place for an entertainment and infotainment park. There are more in the pipeline but these few are the ones that we are already working on and will come to fruition in the next couple of years. Ramoji Film City spans around 2,000 acres and while one may think that space is not a dearth here, it's the opposite. Just because we have the space, it doesn't mean we can build indiscriminately. There is a need to plan every inch of it with the intention of maximisation. Giving a visitor an enthralling and engaging experience is key here."



Vijayeswari Cherukuri
Managing Director
Ramoji Film City

Woman in travel

Commenting on her experience as a woman in the travel industry, she said it has never looked like a difficulty. "It was always a learning path for me. The journey is in understanding various aspects of the industry, knowing what is happening, looking for ways to improve, and

acting on the current opportunities available for our destination. It was never a 'gender problem' for me at all and I say this with the knowledge that I had immense support from all the experts who were already at Ramoji Film City. They played a huge role in fostering a 'mentoring' atmosphere here. Not to mention the guidance I have received from my father-in-law Sri Ramoji Rao himself and, of course, my husband late Cherukuri Suman. To be honest, even if there were attempts to dominate me, I don't think it registered in my mind," she claimed.

Cherukuri added that in this industry, gender gaps or gender stereotypes are just a perception. "I think every individual needs to take that ownership and pride to discover and innovate things. Some industries, including the hospitality industry, are innately non-gender biased. You will see both men and women share the same roles with

equal weightage — be it a chef or a waiter or house man or even at the front desk. At Ramoji Film City, we insist on fair pay for professional

Hospitality industry is innately non-gender biased. You will see both men and women share the same roles with equal weightage

experience, not dependent on gender," she underlined.

Journey

Elaborating on her journey in the industry, she said, "While I have indirectly been a part of this indus-

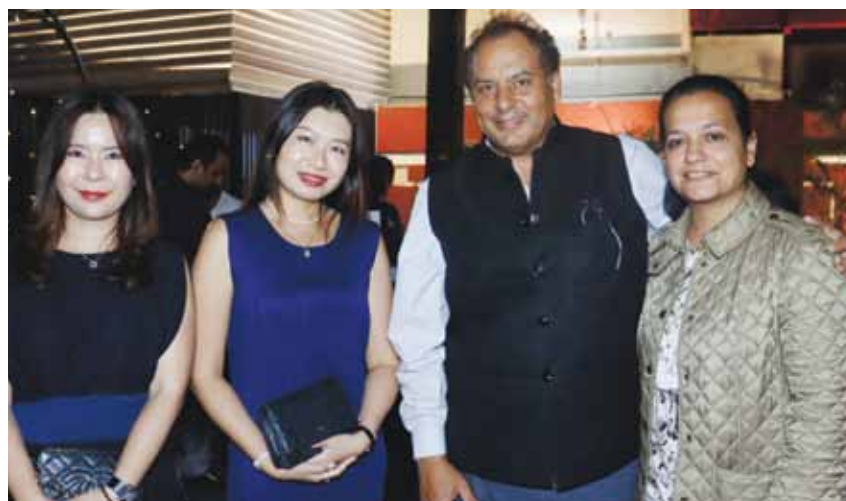
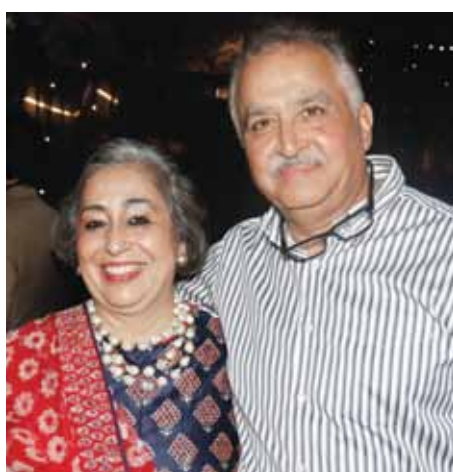
try for many years, having had a front-row seat as my father-in-law and husband built the brand that is Ramoji Film City, I took on the mantle of Managing Director when my husband was sick. When I took the role, I admit, I was a novice. So, I made it a point to learn from the experts around me, the experts who those before me placed their trust in. I attended conferences, visited other hotels to learn from them, and studied the operations of each and every department in various star-level hotels. At the same time, I give my managers the space they deserve to run the hotel with the immense knowledge they have and come up with innovative ideas."

Updates

Sharing their plans, she said, "Aside from the hotels and the existing entertainment facilities we have to offer, we would like to see more events happening here in 2023."

'Banyan Tree' roadshow in Delhi

Banyan Tree Holdings organised a roadshow at Delhi Golf Club recently. Trade partners, travel consultants, and sales representatives from leading companies participated in the event. The prime objective of the roadshow was to strengthen relationship with the participants and create awareness among them about the unique selling points of Banyan Tree properties.



Nok Air enters India via Hyderabad

Nok Air, which has started its operations from Bangkok to Hyderabad, celebrated its debut in India in the City of Nizams with prominent travel trade partners. Gracing the occasion were V. Srinivas Goud, Minister for Prohibition & Excise, Sports & Youth Services, Tourism & Culture and Archaeology Government of Telangana and Wutthiphum Jurangkool, CEO, Nok Air.



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GPS captivates Chandigarh

The Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) took place at The Lalit Hotel in Chandigarh on 28 February and 1 March. The premier B2B trade event offered tour operators and travel agents coming from Chandigarh and surrounding regions a chance to interact with each other and explore the diverse tourism attractions and business opportunities in the region.



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

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Date	Event	Time
16-17	CAPA India Airline Leader Summit 2023	6:00 pm
15-17	India International Travel Mart-Ahmedabad	9:00 am
17-19	India Travel Mart-Bhopal	11:00 am
17-19	Indian Travel Exhibition-Bengaluru	10:30 am
18-19	Travel MICE Show-Chennai	10:00 am
20-21	International Tourism Investment Summit	9:00 am
20-22	CAPA India Aviation Summit	8:30 am
23-25	Dhaka Travel Mart	10:00 am
24-25	GPS-Pune	10:00 am
24-26	India Travel Mart-Lucknow	11:00 am
24-26	Holiday Expo-Varanasi	9:00 am
31-2April	ILTM Africa	9:00 am

APRIL 2023

3-5	World Travel Market Africa	10:00 am
4-6	Azerbaijan International Travel & Tourism Fair	10:00 am
10-12	Global Tourism Investors' Summit-Delhi	9:00 am
19-21	Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair	10:00 am

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

Empowering women in tourism

Kerala inks a pact with UN Women India to empower women in tourism. As per the pact, signed at the first-ever Global Responsible Tourism Summit, both parties will promote women-friendly tourism in the state. State Responsible Tourism Mission will implement the MoU.

Kerala has entered into an agreement with UN Women India to boost women-friendly activities in the state's tourism sector. In a memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed by Kerala Tourism Director **P. B. Nooh** and UN Women India Representative **Susan Ferguson**, they agreed to work

Ferguson said that women merited encouragement to work in tourism, so as to instill a sense of security among the travellers to the state. "More jobs to women in key slots will not only generate employment but curtail the prevailing gender inequality," she noted.

As per the pact inked at the first-ever Global Responsible Tourism

advisory support for baseline research, implementing women-friendly tourist destinations and supporting interventions to change prevalent discriminatory social norms.

The world body will help Kerala tourism in developing reports and material related to women-friendly tourism and their publication. The agreement will

Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas, while inaugurating the four-day summit at Lakesong resort, said the MoU was in

Women merited encouragement to work in tourism, so as to instill a sense of security among the travellers to the state, Susan Ferguson said



towards promoting gender-inclusive tourism sites in the state.

The Responsible Tourism Mission will be the implementing agency for the agreement.

Summit in Kumarakom, both parties will promote women-friendly tourism in Kerala. This will be done by creating modules and capacity-building of relevant stakeholders, besides providing

strive to build synergies with other flagship programmes of the state and help in rectifying social attitudes that are checking gender-inclusive public spaces in tourism.

continuation of the state government's renewed efforts towards women-friendly tourism since October last year. "We will ensure good female participation in tourism initiatives and allied services besides RT (Responsible Tourism) projects. The idea is to promote tourism with focus on women empowerment," he added. The conclave saw attendance from 280 delegates and 70 speakers.

GRN Connect plans expansion

GRN Connect, a travel services company, has announced plans to introduce a new development phase on its portal that includes Rail Europe, theatre tickets, and self-drive cars, and has recently established a fourth DMC in the UAE. The company is also offering various schemes to travel agents on the portal, including a promotion with Saudi Tourism.

Deepak Narula, Managing Director, GRN Connect, while sharing the company's long-term plans said, "In the near future, we will be introducing a new phase

that includes Rail Europe, theatre tickets, and self-drive cars. Additionally, we have recently established a UAE DMC, making it our fourth DMC alongside the USA, Egypt, and India DMCs. The UAE DMC has been developed with



Deepak Narula
Managing Director
GRN Connect

an aim to offer incentives to the travel agents," he said. "In addition, we have various schemes on our portal, which are available to travel agent. Currently, we are running a promotion with Saudi Tourism, wherein they book a hotel in Saudi and we are giving three nights and complimentary transportation. We have several other schemes in place, and we are currently waiv-

ing off credit card charges. These schemes are available on our portal," he added.

Speaking of the Indian travel agents, Narula said, "They are performing exceptionally well, and their service standards are of a high calibre. Although we have been hearing discussions about the travel trade struggling to survive, I am confident that it will endure."

Sighting an example, he said, "In the USA, a significant number of travellers are handled by travel agents, accounting for 65-70 per cent of the market, which is an encouraging statistic. Therefore, my recommendation and advice to travel agents would be to continue the fantastic job they are doing and to persevere and flourish in their trade."

He added, "We came to the conclusion that there existed a disconnect between the travel trade and various government agencies during the pandemic. It became apparent



that we required a grassroots organization or association to bridge this gap and aid travel agents in addressing the COVID-related gaps.

Although we have been hearing discussions about the travel trade struggling to survive (in India), I am confident that it will endure

This led to the conception of the GATE association." When asked about what sets the association

apart from others, he explained that the team is unique and highly motivated. "The individuals involved have experienced significant hardships during the COVID era, and they have brought me on board as an experienced member. Together, we are committed to making a meaningful impact," he said.

India is introducing new policies for National Tourism Boards and tourism offices worldwide, emphasizing the significance of digitization and online marketing in reaching a broader audience. This move is beneficial. "The digitization approach is crucial, and India is taking measures to implement it. In the USA, we have commenced making presentations to local tour operators, receiving favourable responses, and India is gaining support," he said.

Form - IV

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MOVEMENTS

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT

Shillong

TUSHAR NAGAR has been appointed as the General Manager at Courtyard by Marriott Shillong, the debut property of Marriott International in the Northeast region of India. He comes with more than 14 years of combined experience across Operations Management, Quality Management, Training and Development, Client Management and Team Leadership. In his present role, Tushar will don an all-encompassing role, and will be responsible for the hotel's overall performance in addition to front-lining all conversations and shaping the hotel as a leading benchmark in the hospitality industry. Defining operating procedures and service standards is his expertise.



RAMADA KHAJURAHO

Khajuraho

The Ramada By Wyndham at Airport Road, Khajuraho, has named **Vinod Nair** as the General Manager. In his new role, Vinod will be responsible for overseeing the hotel Operations, Sales, and Marketing. During his 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he has served as General Manager for Ramee Group of Hotels based in Mumbai and prior to this as Food & Beverage Operations Director for Radisson Blu, Dubai. He also has considerable experience in chain hotels like Hilton & Millennium. Vinod is a Tourism & Hospitality Management graduate from City Of London Business College, London.



RAMADA PLAZA & RAMADA LUCKNOW HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTRE BY WYNDHAM

Lucknow

The Ramada Plaza & Ramada Lucknow Hotel and Convention Centre by Wyndham appoints **MUKUNDA CHOWDHURY** as the General Manager. In his new role, Mukunda will be responsible for overseeing the hotel's operations, administration, revenue, and sales & marketing. Previously, he served as General Manager for MGM Muthu Hotels in Mombasa- Kenya & Chennai - India, Accor Hotels in Riyadh - Saudi Arabia responsible for entire Operation & Administration. Mukunda is a native of Kolkata and an alumni of IIM Bangalore and had done his Hotel Management & Applied Nutrition from IHRM, Kolkata, in 2002.



NEXUS DMC

Mumbai

VIJAY PUTHRAN strengthens the Nexus DMC leadership team as he joins as the National Sales Head for the Indian Market. He comes with a rich experience of more than 45 years and excels in hospitality, business development, strategic management and knowledge of various market segments. He brings with him a deep expertise in the industry and great experience in handling the Indian market while having worked at key senior positions with reputed organizations like VFS Global, Royal Arabian, and Dubai Tourism and Business Events. At Nexus DMC, he will work closely with the leadership team to position the brand as a market leader in the B2B segment.



SOFITEL MUMBAI BKC

Mumbai

Sofitel Mumbai BKC has appointed **SEEMA NANDWANI** as the Marketing & Communications Manager. Seema will leverage her extensive experience to create solid communication strategies for the hotel, with an emphasis on marketing, integrated social media campaigns, media engagement, brand management, and developing effective reporting systems to help analyze performance and profitability from a PR perspective. A spirited marketing & public relations professional with a passion for communications & digital marketing, Seema spent a major part of her career in the UAE.



RAMADA ENCORE BY WYNDHAM

Bareilly

Ramada Encore by Wyndham Bareilly appoints **MANESH DATT** as the General Manager. In his new role, Manesh will be responsible for promoting and marketing the hotel business among other things. He is a Hotel Management Graduate from IHMCATN – Tataralla in Kolkata, WB. Commenting on his appointment Saurabh Mehrotra, the hotel owner, said, "Manesh is a talented and experienced hospitality professional and will play a key role in ensuring that the Ramada Encore by Wyndham – Bareilly, Civil Lines, continues providing guests with the same high-quality service and exceptional value that it has become known for in the Bareilly community."



COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT & FAIRFIELD BY MARRIOTT OUTER RING ROAD

Bengaluru

The Courtyard by Marriott & Fairfield by Marriott Outer Ring Road has appointed **KIRTHI SHETTY** as the new Director of Sales. Kirthi's exceptional track record of success in driving revenue growth and delivering outstanding customer experiences make him an ideal addition to the hotel's dynamic team. As the Director of Sales, Kirthi will be responsible for leading and guiding the hotel's sales team in collaborating with other teams to implement successful strategies and identifying areas for improvement. Kirthi will also be instrumental in capitalizing on the hotel's digital footprint and enhancing visibility on social media platforms.



NOVOTEL VISAKHAPATNAM VARUN BEACH & THE BHEEMILI RESORT

Visakhapatnam

The Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach and The Bheemili Resort managed by Accor hotel appoints **SAI KUMAR P** as the Talent & Culture Manager. Sai Kumar brings with him a wealth of experience and knowledge, having worked in the hospitality industry for over 6 years. He will be responsible for overseeing the overall functions of human resources at the Novotel Visakhapatnam, Varun Beach, and The Bheemili Resort. He will work for attracting the best talent, creating an engaging workplace culture, and providing exceptional guest experiences.



CRUISE MASTER LLC

Dubai

KASHISH JIANDANI has been appointed as Marketing Manager at Cruise Master LLC, Dubai. She will handle the marketing & public relations for different cruise brands under the portfolio of Cruise Master. She has been offered an interesting and diverse scope of work and activity. Kashish was earlier with Norwegian Cruise Line in their Mumbai office. Cruise Master is a well-known name in the cruise industry and the only dedicated B2B Cruise Agency in the Middle East. Its representation portfolio includes the most respected and popular cruise brands, and it is also a 'Preferred Business Partner' for many other contemporary and premium cruise lines.



TALKing People

ABHIJEET GADGIL, Director, Sales and Marketing, Novotel Pune, says, "Stress is something I never acknowledge; however, I do cook at home to keep myself refreshed and active. One skill I learned during the lockdown was patience! Everything has its end, and we just need to



have faith. All would be in control eventually. In India, my favourite destination is Kashmir, which unfortunately I'm unable to go till date. However, I'm positive, I will plan a trip on priority. When it comes to international destination, New Zealand is my dream destination. My next holiday will be to Goa! There is something in the air there, which attracts you like a magnet."

MOKSHA GANDHI, Founder, Vahn, says, "It's usually hiking up a hill with my family and friends that unwinds and de-stresses me besides any other outdoor adventure or road trip. One skill I have learned during the lockdown was designing and making caravans! What started as a



passion project during the lockdown turned into my first business, which now runs under the name Vahn." She loves travelling and says that her next holiday will be hopefully be to someplace in the Kumaon region before the snow begins to melt. The Kumaon region includes Nainital, a famous tourist destination.

IMRAN MOHAMMED KHAN, Cluster Revenue Manager, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach, Novotel Vijayawada Varun, and The Bheemili Resort managed by Accor, enjoys singing and dancing, as it brings him joy and a sense of pleasure. "This helps me shift focus away from



stressors and promote feelings of relaxation and happiness. During lockdown, I invested time in myself by singing and reading books to cope with the stress and isolation of lockdown. I enjoy travelling and in India, my preferred vacation spot is Kashmir, while internationally it is Dubai. I am currently making plans for a trip to Shimla," he says.



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Air India legacy to continue

Campbell Wilson, CEO & MD, Air India, shares how the Air India brand will continue its legacy as a full-service carrier after merger with Vistara, while AirAsia India and Air India Express will be merged to make a low-cost product.



Claiming that Air India has embarked on the greatest transformation in aviation history, **Campbell Wilson**, CEO & MD, Air India, said, “We have formed Vihaan.AI, which is a five-year transformation program split into three phases covering many streams, so that we can tackle this business and this challenge comprehensively. What we have been working in the past 12 months has been foundational and there has been a lot of investment in Air India, in terms of people, process, systems and a lot of this requires strengthening and improving, so that the aspirations that we have can be realised.”

Recruitment and refurbishment
He added, “We have recruited more than 1200 professionals to our ground staff cohort to fill in a gap left by about 15 years of non-hiring. We have invested in classrooms even as simple as Microsoft Outlook and office so that people have the tools that they need to collaborate and be productive. We’ve gone all the way through to a new IT platform for our restoration system, our website and our app, replacing carpets, cushions on board our existing fleet, restoring seats and inflight entertainment and even aircraft to airworthy capability. Twenty aircraft are being restored to service over the year to date and leasing in additional aircraft so that we can accelerate our transformation, both in terms of capacity in product and network. We have announced new routes. Our capacity has been increased by 80 per cent and we have done a number of things to invest in the future.”

Technology is future
Campbell insisted that they have focused a lot on IT. “We have invested, nearly \$200 million over the last year and this coming

year in improving the platforms, and in reliability and product. In terms of product, we have invested \$400 million in refurbishing, the interior of our wide body aircraft. The first of these aircraft should enter service in the middle of next year,” he elaborated.

Strengthening staff
What allowed them to do this, according to Campbell is ramping up the staff significantly. “Apart from the 1,200 staff that we’ve recruited into our ground-based positions, there are 300 staff that we have

There has been a lot of investment in Air India, in terms of people, process, systems and a lot of this requires strengthening and improving

recruited and deployed at our main airports in India and around the world, as well as nearly 2,000 cabin crew and several pilots. Clearly recruitment of staff is going to be a key to the capacity and fleet injection that we’re undertaking. Thus, we are setting up a training academy in partnership with others, so that we can produce our own talent for not just Air India, but also for the Indian aviation ecosystem.”

Way forward
As per other initiatives, Wilson said, “We are introducing new practices with respect to performance management, incentivisation and training. I must commend our existing Air India staff who have truly embraced this transformation, the cultural change and are really contributing very significantly to

the new Air India. We really want to make the Air India group into a significant player internationally, as well as domestically. However, we also see significant opportunities in the international long haul segment, with the manifold jump in the capacity.” He further said that the Tata Group will have two airlines — a full service carrier and a low-cost carrier. Vistara will be merged with Air India to become a full service carrier and Air Asia India and Air India Express will be the low-cost product.

AirAsia-AI Express merger
Speaking on the AirAsia India and Air India Express merger, he said, “Over the past few months, we have taken full ownership and commenced the process of integrating AirAsia India with Air India Express to create one significant low-cost airline within the group. As very complementary businesses, Air India Express serves short haul international routes whereas AirAsia serves domestic routes.”

Air India-Vistara
He further explained, “The other integration that we’re pursuing is the one with Vistara that is the subject to regulatory approval as well. The planning work is well underway, and when the integration is approved by the regulator, we can quickly merge two airlines together and ultimately, use Vistara’s capabilities to accelerate and improve the

transformation of Air India itself. The integration is now awaiting approval from the Competition Commission of India.”

Fleet order
On 14 February 2023, Air India announced placing of an order for 470 planes; 250 are from Airbus and 220 from Boeing. Wilson added that with the significant fleet order that they have made with the other aircraft that they are leasing in, the opportunity for Air India, but also India is quite unprecedented. He said the list price of a record 470 aircraft, ordered from Boeing and Airbus a few days back, is \$70 billion.

The Maharaja
When asked about the Maharajah, the famous mascot of Air India, he said the airline plans to retain it but in what capacity is still unclear.



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