

**STAY
UPDATED**

Authentic Travel News

Enterprising Industry Views

www.traveltradejournal.com

TTJ Travel Trade Journal

Vol. 11 | Issue 05 | March 2021 | Pages 32 | ₹50

TTJ
Travel Trade Journal

GET NEWS
DELIVERED
TO YOUR WHATSAPP



To subscribe to us
Give a missed call to
9560264443

Save this number in your contacts



India

Discover more

Team Sampan

Editor & Publisher	:	Ravi Sharma
Contributing Editor	:	Naveen Lal
Consulting Editor	:	Rachita Sehgal
Bureau Head (West)	:	Prashant Nayak
Reporter	:	Sonika Bhandari
Reporter	:	Aditya Vikram Singh
Consulting Editor	:	Sonia Dutt
Sr. Designer	:	Subhash Chaudhary
HTML Developer	:	Jitender Singh Shekhawat
GM - Marketing	:	Sonika Bohra
Bureau Head (East)	:	Partha Chatterjee
Manager PR	:	Ankit Dixit
Cordinator (West)	:	Bharti Kalia
Consultant (West)	:	Sameer Montario
Project Head Events	:	Rohan Rana
Photographer	:	Parth Sharma
Asst. Manager Administration	:	Kuldeep Singh
Accounts Manager	:	Priyesh Ranjan

Email: info@sampanmedia.com

Editorial and Marketing Office :
Sampan Media Pvt. Ltd., B-7/114A, 3rd Floor, Safdarjung Enclave, Near Sukhmani Hospital, New Delhi – 110029 Ph: 9560264443, ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

All information in Travel Trade Journal (TTJ) is derived from sources we consider reliable. It is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part. Opinions / views expressed by third parties in abstract or in interviews are not necessarily shared by us. Material appearing in the magazine cannot be reproduced in whole or in part(s) without prior permission. The publisher assumes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in transit. The publisher reserves the right to refuse, withdraw or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code. The publisher will not be liable for any loss caused by any delay in publication, error or failure of advertisement to appear.

Owned and published by: Ravi Sharma, Editor & Publisher, 18/3, Railway Colony, Sarojini Nagar, P.S. Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021 and printed on his behalf at Polykam Offset, C-138, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi-110028.



Dear Friends,

Domestic Tourism as a recovery strategy is not new in literature. It has been a default response in several countries during crises. In the COVID situation too, domestic tourism is leading the game and has become a game-changer in several countries. Local communities are becoming the centres of transformation for the tourism industry during this pandemic. In these uncertain circumstances, the involvement of local communities is going to be immensely critical in this journey, as the restrictions on international travel may stay longer than anticipated. The importance of promoting domestic tourism for sustainability will be of major focus this year.

Thus, TTJ March 2021 issue tries to cover few aspects of domestic tourism like insights from travel and hospitality stakeholders, and also showcases some emerging popular domestic destinations. The issue also covers the developments at travel associations like TAAI, ATOAI, and IATO among other topics.

While thanking you for your continued patronage,

Happy Reading!

Ravi Sharma

Ravi Sharma

ravisharma@sampanmedia.com

Editor's Desk

Jetsave
India Tours Pvt. Ltd.

India's Leading Visa Facilitation Company

Honeymoon Travel

Beautiful Greece (8 Nights)
Greece | Athens | Mykonos | Santorini

Exquisite Italy (9 Nights)
Rome | Naples | Amalfi Coast | Florence | Paris | Venice

Idyllic Maldives (4 Nights)
Maldives

Family Travel

- London, Switzerland and Paris (10 Nights)
London | Paris | Basel | Interlaken | Lucerne-Zurich
- Astounding Dubai (5 Nights)
Dubai | Abu Dubai
- Singapore with Sentosa Island (4 Nights)
Singapore | Sentosa Island

Friends Travel

- The Natural Treasure, Indonesia (6 Nights)
Bali | Ubud
- Epic Land of Spain (9 Nights)
Barcelona | Ibiza | Palma | Madrid
- Splendid Towns of Amsterdam (10 Nights)
Amsterdam | Berlin | Prague | Budapest

Solo Travel

- Splendorous Turkey (6 Nights)
Istanbul | Cappadocia | Antalya
- Scandinavia (7 Nights)
Copenhagen | Aarhus | Stavanger | Bergen | Oslo | Stockholm
- Mesmerizing Central Europe (8 Nights)
Prague | Vienna | Budapest

Package Starting @ ₹ 20,000/-

Inclusions

Hotel

Food

Transport

Sightseeing

Ace Inbound - Outbound Tour Operators

+91-11-45616161

journeys@jetsavetours.com

www.jetsavetours.com

30/28, 3rd Floor, East Patel Nagar,
New Delhi- 110008

Crystal Cruises launches new Close-to-Home Bahamas Escapes from Nassau and Bimini beginning July 2021



In a joint virtual press conference with the Honorable Dionisio D'Aguilar, Minister of Tourism & Aviation for The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Crystal Cruises announced its plans to restart cruising with new close-to-home Bahamas Escapes beginning July 3, 2021, with a series of 16 seven-night, round-trip cruises from Nassau on its award-winning flagship, Crystal Serenity. In addition to its Nassau itineraries, Crystal will also offer 16 seven-night voyages round-trip from Bimini beginning on July 4, 2021. With her new Bahamas Escapes cruises, Crystal Serenity becomes the first ship to home port in The Bahamas, as well as the first ocean ship to sail from the Americas since the cruise industry's voluntary halt in operations almost a year ago.

The new Bahamas Escapes cruises will allow travellers to enjoy luxury cruising now, as well as bring much-needed benefits to the local workforce, airlines, restaurants, retailers and hotels for pre-and post-cruise stays. The launch of these cruises will also drive economic growth to The Bahamas, which, like other destinations around the world, has been negatively affected by the global pandemic.

Crystal Cruises will go on record as the only cruise line offering Bahamas-only voyages that highlight the signature features and experiences travellers can find here in the islands, and the support that these cruises will bring to multiple communities within the country will be tremendous.

Sundance Mountain Resort announces upgrades for next ski season



Sundance Mountain Resort recently announced construction will begin in the coming months for changes that will be in place for the 2021-2022 ski season. The new additions are two new ski lifts and the retirement of the Rays lift, upgrades to snowmaking, more parking, renovations to the Creekside building. Resort leaders said one of the new lifts will be a seven-minute, high-speed quad to Mandan Summit at the resort. The lift will provide access to slopes for experienced and intermediate skiers, as well as mid-station unloading for routes easier for beginners.

An additional fixed-grip lift will also be constructed to provide better access to the backside of the summit. The resort stated this lift will be used to provide more access to that area in the summertime. The resort is open during the non-snow season months with multiple outdoor activities available, including ziplining, mountain biking and hiking. A 'snowmaking reservoir' will also be built, which will help collect water for snow guns. The tools are used to create snow so a resort can open sooner if needed. The resort will also add 125 to 150 new parking spots to help address busier ski days.

The biggest change in Sundance's 52-year-old history is new ownership. Robert Redford had owned the facility since founding the resort in 1969 but sold it to Broadreach Capital Partners and Cedar Capital Partners late last year. Sundance's new owners announced that they would expand amenities at the time. The changes announced last week were selected after 'considerable thought and desire to preserve existing lands and traditions' while also enhancing the visitor experience, according to resort staff.

IHG strengthens presence in South West Asia with a new Holiday Inn Express signing in Nepal

IHG Hotels & Resorts has signed a management agreement with Swornim Hotel Pokhara Private Limited to develop a new Holiday Inn Express hotel – Holiday Inn Express Pokhara Lakeside, in Nepal. The new-build hotel will feature 110 keys and will be operational by the first quarter of 2025. IHG currently has four hotels under development across the Holiday Inn brand family in Nepal, and this latest signing will further strengthen the company's mainstream portfolio in the tourism capital of the country.

Strategically located close to the city's main tourist hub, 'Lakeside' and with proximity to commercial establishments, the hotel will be an ideal destination for both leisure and corporate travellers. Additionally, Holiday Inn Express Pokhara Lakeside will be at a convenient distance of

6 km from the upcoming International Airport of Pokhara and 2.5 km distance from the domestic airport. Adding to the stay experience, the hotel will be situated in close proximity to multiple dining and shopping options and will also provide easy access to adventure sports and other tourist attractions.

Holiday Inn Express Pokhara Lakeside will feature well-designed, fully equipped guest rooms with higher floors offering a scenic view of the lake and Annapurna mountain range. Additionally, the hotel will offer a 'Great Room', a bar and a lounge for guests to relax and unwind. Other facilities will include a fitness room, two meeting rooms and signature amenities reflecting the brand's promise of providing a comfortable and efficient stay to the guests.

German National Tourist Board announces Germany Travel Mart GTM 2022 in Bavaria



The German Tourism Board (DZT) is hosting the GTM Germany Travel Mart™ (GTM) 2022 in the run-up to the Passion Play Oberammergau. The most important sales event for German incoming tourism will take place from 2 May for the first time in the municipality of Oberammergau until 4 May 2022.

The Passion Play is known worldwide as one of the most famous trademarks of cultural heritage in Germany and was included in the nationwide list of intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO in 2014. Every ten years, the performances attract more than half a million visitors, including numerous foreign guests. After the Passion Play could not take place due to the pandemic in 2020, they were postponed until 2022.

Petra Hedorfer, Chairwoman of the Board of The DZT said, "The development of supply and infrastructure in an appropriate way is the central challenges of the tourism industry in international competition during and after the Corona crisis. Every year, the key accounts of the international travel industry and German providers meet at the GTM Germany Travel Mart and negotiate business deals. After the two virtual implementations in 2020 and 2021, we are sending a clear signal for 2022 for further recovery of the incoming. Together with our guests we are again very much looking forward to the atmosphere of face-to-face communication in the unique scenery of Oberammergau in the Bavarian Alpine region."

Barbara Radomski, Managing Director of Bayern Tourismus Marketing GmbH said, "We are very pleased that the GTM will take place again in Bavaria as the most important event for the Germany Incoming next year – in this special year of the reboot for German tourism."

This is the third time that the Free State has welcomed the international travel industry to the GTM and, next year, even for the first time ever in rural areas. We see this as a great opportunity for Bavaria and Germany to transport images of this unique region to the world and to boost global incoming tourism for Germany once again."

KKR World to market BLS Interlaken Cruises in India



Mumbai-based, KKR World, which represents Rhaetian Railway (Glacier Express, Bernina Express) and Railtour Suisse since 2019, has recently signed up to represent and market BLS Interlaken Cruises in India.

BLS Interlaken Lake Cruises, which is operational since 1913 on Lake Thun and Lake Brienz in the Bernese Oberland, have hourly scheduled cruises from spring to autumn. During the winter season, BLS operates individual cruises on Lake Thun, such as the popular winter steamboat excursion on the paddle steamer Blümlisalp. BLS receives around 1 million boat passengers and is, therefore, one of the biggest tourism operators in the Bernese Oberland. BLS not only operates scheduled cruises but also organises special culinary cruises, such as the Fondue Chinoise Cruise and the Lake Thun Brunch Cruise. Travellers can also hire boats for special business events or private occasions.

On the signing, Niklaus Hotz, Sales Manager for BLS Interlaken Cruises said, "We were looking for an experienced new partner to consolidate our market presence in India despite the challenging circumstances. KKR World already has a supplier portfolio that fits perfectly with our product. Now, we can, bundle knowledge and improve the quality for our customers in consultation with KKR World." He further added, "BLS Interlaken Lake Cruises wants to be ready to welcome international guests as soon as borders reopen again. Therefore, we think it is very essential to keep in touch with relevant accounts in our key markets like India, even in difficult times. Our main objective is to increase the number of Indian visitors enjoying a cruise with BLS on Lakes Thun and Brienz during their visit to Interlaken."

KKR World is a business venture of Kunal Kothari (former Head of Rail Europe India) and the representation partnership in these difficult times speaks volumes of trust and market experience of the organisation in the European region.

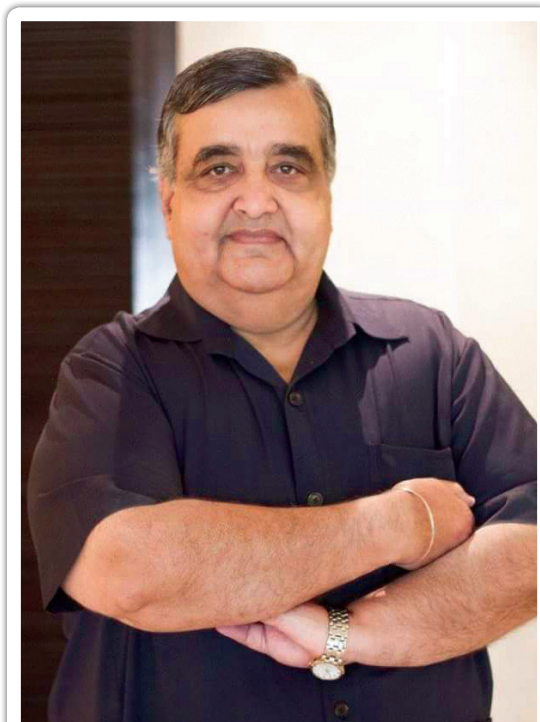
IATO ELECTIONS

A fractured verdict gives the best of both teams to fight for common goals

With a tough contest between Team Moving Forward led by Rajiv Mehra and Team for Change led by Lally Mathews, the IATO members on March 06, 2021, have voted a new team to power for term 2021-23 during the election process conducted physically at The Ashok Hotel, New Delhi. While both the teams were confident and looking forward to winning with comfortable margins, it turned out to be a fractured verdict after a hard-fought battle. Even members were anticipating a total change with one strong team leading. Thus, it was important for TTJ to get the Office Bearers' viewpoints and plans after getting elected in a split verdict through a nail-biting finish.

Ravi Sharma

Rajiv Mehra
President



IATO Elections are over now and I have been elected as the President of the Association and not of any group. So, my main objective is to keep both the groups together to help our members with the common points and I will ensure that this happens. All the plans and strategies have been thought over and, in the days, to come, everyone will

see how well both the groups work as One Team and I will ensure the same under my supervision.

My top priorities at the moment are:

- The change in the minimum amount of MDA from ₹2 Crore to ₹25 Lacs and upper limit from ₹25 Crore to ₹50 Crore and above.
- To get the SEIS benefit for our members for the year 2019 – 2020 as soon as possible.
- To ensure that Tourism is included in the next SEIS Policy from 2021–2025.
- To work with the Government for the announcement of the date as to when E Visa would be restored and international flights would start operations.

We require the help of each member of the association so that we can deliver as per the commitment made by all of us so that we could help the members for the revival of business.

E M Najeeb
Senior Vice President



Talking of election results, if you look closely, even though it's a fractured verdict it has 50- 50 per cent people from both teams. Should there be a clear majority for any one team, it could have been easy for the team to take up and implement

IATO ELECTIONS

their own manifesto items. But now, if both teams have got an equal position, the message is very clear from the membership that both teams have to work together for the betterment of the association. The membership feels that the strength of both teams is very much required in governing the association so that they get the best out of both teams.

We recently had the first executive committee meeting, and we have discussed the points, which had to be immediately addressed, and also the most important manifesto points like constitutional amendments, waiver of one-year subscription fees, and several important decisions have been taken on a consensus basis. Now, as one team, we are confident to work together and to move forward and finding solutions to the member's immediate requirements.

The priority area where we will be working is the SEIS issue, which is pending with the government for quite some time and has to be immediately sorted out. I and Rajiv Mehra have discussed this matter and we are going together to take up the matter with the Finance Minister and even with the other ministries if the need be. The second priority is to try to get some financial support for the tour operators from the government, either with soft loans or with some kind of grants. Another priority is to convince the government to open up international tourism, removing the restrictions of visas and removing restrictions on international flight operations.

Presently, Indian tourism destinations are ready to receive international tourists, as they now have the experience in servicing the domestic tourists in the COVID situation and it is evident in places like Goa, Rajasthan, Kerala, Himachal and many other places. The industry has also been following all international, WHO, state governments and the tourism industries, safety and hygiene protocols, to ensure the safety of the tourists on a holiday. We will keep on continuously upgrading the quality of our services, and also the upkeep of our properties and our operations, based on the needs and the standards which are being developed from time to time.

Tourism in India generates substantial employment and main revenue for the government, with a large amount of foreign exchange earnings for the country. But the sector should not have been neglected to this level, because today tourism stakeholders are struggling to survive.

Members are going back from cities to their hometown to look after small petty jobs in order to survive. In this, tourism is losing experienced personals, which definitely not good for the industry. The government should be aware of this crisis, and it should, without any further delay, intervene and support the tourism industry in the best possible manner, in consultation with the tourism industry and IATO. This is our appeal to the government, especially to the Finance minister, Prime Minister and the Tourism Minister.

Ravi Gosain
Vice President



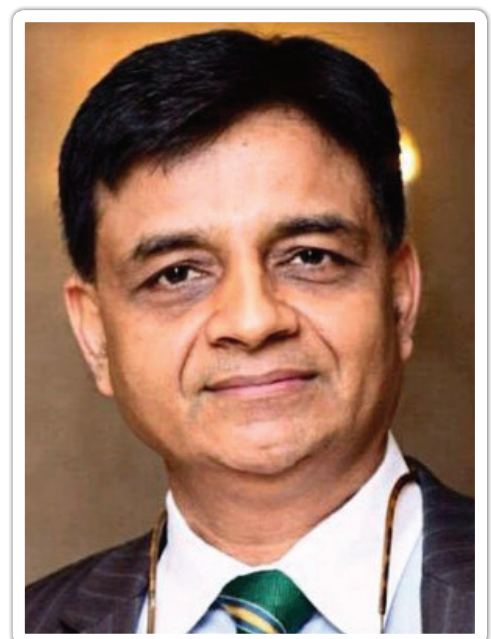
First of all, I want to say that IATO is a professional association and all the contestants are friends and have known each other for a long time. It's a democracy and everyone who put their candidature for elections is free to push their elections agenda to members. It is the members' decision whom to vote depending upon the wisdom and candidate's standing as an industry leader. In current elections members have chosen a new team, which they think is best for them, so we have to respect people's mandate. I believe there will no problem as we will have a common agenda to drive and work for membership benefits. However, there are already few pending issues that the last EC was working on and following up with various ministries, so the new EC will take it forward aggressively.

As the Vice President, I will have direct responsibility for membership development, conduct and supervise conventions, seminars, and overseas promotional activities. So, my priority

will be to take this task seriously with a systematic plan to drive new membership on pan India basis. Apart from this, business-oriented regional seminars both online or offline are on my priority agenda, which I want to implement and it will benefit our members in all parts of the country. I would like to rope in our state chapters, MOT regional offices and state tourism departments. Overseas marketing activities with or without MOT will only be planned once we see the indication of India visa application and border openings. IATO Annual convention is one of the flagship events for the tourism industry in India and I want to explore the right technology to find out, how we can make our annual convention useful for members and participants with round-the-year activity rather than just 3-4 days event. These are the few things that I think can be done in a better way with the support of my fellow EC and members.

Lastly, we are passing through a very bad phase and we hope this ends as soon as possible; we need not only to lift our members' self-esteem but also show them the path to recovery. This requires lots of brainstorming within the EC and also continue discussions with the MOT officials.

Rajnish Kaistha
Hony Secretary



Firstly, I shall like to thank the members who voted in the highest record number. This shows the growing interest of members in IATO and its activities. Members have voted with their wisdom, and it's not the first time

that a fractured mandate has come. All are like-minded people who are driven with the passion to take IATO forward. Everybody has suffered without any Govt support for survival, and we all are in the same boat. So collectively, we shall work on a common program for the revival of the industry. We had our meeting, and all were in sync with a positive thought process. We are seasoned professionals running our businesses, so I don't see any problem with a fractured mandate. Of course, we all work together as a group and move forward as a group for the betterment of the association and upliftment of our members.

We have to get Tourism back on track. Revival is where our major focus shall be. Getting long overdue SEIS, overhauling and correct implementation of MDA, immediate overseas promotions to keep brand Incredible India alive in people's minds are some of many immediate agendas. An increase in membership with ease in norms of MOT approval is also one of the major agendas. We are also working on a change in the IATO constitution to make it more members-friendly and in sync with tomorrow.

Sanjay Razdan
Hony Joint Secretary



I agree that the fractured verdict is not what we desired, but we respect the mandate with all humility. As far as possible we shall try our best to have the points mentioned in our manifesto implemented, and we have discussed with the new President about the same. At the same time, we also understand that

we need to make a "Common Minimum Programme" taking into consideration both the manifestos.

The best strategy in my opinion is to work in tandem with all the new Office Bearers and EC and shall do all possible to create a synergy so that the industry benefits as a whole. Moving together, sure, but at the same time assert our very important ideas. We will make sure in the new EC, everyone's voice is heard and decisions are taken accordingly in the best interest of members.

The highest priority for us is to try to have the SEIS released as soon as possible and hopefully, we shall be successful in this before March 31, 2021. My other priority is to have the membership status of those very senior members reversed back from Allied to Active and at the same time work on the amendment in the constitution. We need to bring smiles back on our member's faces.

I would like to assure our membership that we shall leave no stone unturned to impress on the authorities to start E-Tourist Visas from countries where ever it's possible and for people who have been already vaccinated. This will open many other avenues.



Office Bearers

- President - Rajiv Mehra, Uday Tours & Travels
- Sr. Vice President - E.M. Najeeb, Air Travel Enterprises (I)
- Vice President - Ravi Gosain, Erco Travels
- Hony. Secretary - Rajnish Kaistha, Paradise Holidays India
- Hony. Treasurer - Sunil Mishra, Cosmos Tours & Travels
- Hony. Joint Secretary - Sanjay Razdan, Razdan Holidays
- Immediate Past President - Pronab Sarkar, Swagatam Tours

EC MEMBERS – ACTIVE

- Deepak Bhatnagar, Aamantaran Travel Company
- Harish Mathur, Concord Travels & Tours
- Manoj Kumar Matta, Oriental Vacations & Journeys
- Tony Marwah, Indian Travel Promotion Company
- Vishal Yadav, Incredible Destination Management Service

EC MEMBERS – ALLIED

- Ashok Dhoot, Harsh Travels
- P. Vijayarathy, Benchmark Hotels
- Zia Siddiqui, Alliance Hotels & Resorts

‘We want to ensure our outreach is nationwide’

The Adventure Tour Operators Association of India (ATOAI) had held its Annual General Meeting and Elections early in January 2021 via Video Conferencing, thereby pioneering this initiative in the tourism industry. The Office Bearers and Executive Committee team of the association were elected unopposed and will hold office for the next two years. TTJ had an opportunity to discuss with the Office Bearers and here is what they had to say in unison.

Prashant Nayak



Q The pandemic has surely given a new vision and mission to revive the beaten-down tourism industry. How ready and prepared is the newly elected team to take on this immense challenge?

The new team at ATOAI has a wealth of experience in the outdoors and industry matters. For the first time, the Executive Committee has greater participation from outside Delhi than within - 5 of 7 EC members are from different regions of our country and thus reflect the growing diversity and reach of our membership.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been busy trying to meet key responsible Government functionaries such as the MOT and IMF and getting clarity on our objectives to ensure a productive and forward-looking term during our tenure. We are working very closely together to bring in some quick changes in our working and certain functional policies of the Association, so it becomes easier to govern and enables us to involve more of you in the running of the organisation. Going forward, we have set ourselves the following six-month goals that we are aiming to achieve:

- Increase membership, become more relevant
- State adoption of safety guidelines
- State chapters, local leadership
- Workshops, meetings, conventions
- Trade Value adds

To repeat an oft-quoted piece of wisdom, an Association is all about its membership and its members. The ATOAI Executive Team will work



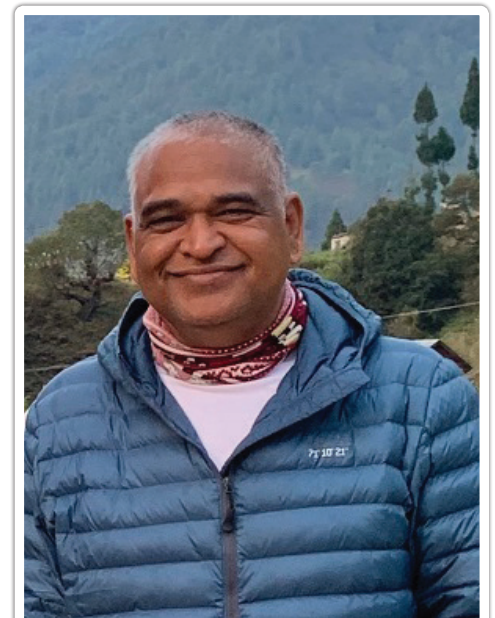
Vishwas Mahkija

together to help each other, out of this long storm that has shaken our foundations, our business, and our way of life. The present pan India membership of ATOAI is diverse, offering a wide range of products that we can all cross-sell. If we can achieve national scale on this, we can build an even stronger community of like-minded Adventurers creating joyful livelihoods around.

Q In your present positions, what is that you wish to achieve for the betterment of the association, members, and adventure tourism in the next 2 years?

The new Executive Committee and Office Bearers are planning to do a lot. Actions are being divided between short, medium and long term. And more importantly, we will ensure that every Office Bearer (OB) and executive Committee (EC) member has a role to play and is actively involved in the functioning of the association.

Our top priority, of course, is to help our members survive this pandemic. I wish we had a magic potion to fix everything. Even the Government has



Rajesh Ojha

let us all down in the recent budget. We are almost disheartened.

The whole industry has to grow. None of us can flourish when others are suffering. We have to work on increasing the size of the pie. So we have to work in teamwork.

We want our association to work around the clock on issues that make a difference. From micro issues like resolving grievances to macro issues like trekking routes, safety and more. Unlike our larger association brothers, we recognize that ATOAI is made up of small organizations. We will aim to work towards only one goal – to help make your job running our member's companies easier. At a very fundamental level, we will continue on the paths we have already laid out by the previous EC. So many issues are already in discussion and we will take those forward, adding more from our vision.

For the members -

We propose to continue the frequent interactions we have been having online. I think that just the ability to speak to each



Vaibhav Kala



Vinayak Koul



Pradeep Murthy

other and share our thoughts and opinions is most helpful. We want to ensure our outreach is nationwide. Technology has shown us the path to this.

Going forward, all member meetings will be recorded and put online for members to see at their own time. We will also continue to live-stream these meetings and to allow you to ask questions or interact from remote locations. This will help members from outside Delhi NCR and also those in Delhi who may not be able to attend a meeting.

We need to bring in a strong focus on Education and Training. We need to address the need of owners to mid-level and senior managers as well. We need to empower all our members and their employees with the skills needed in today's world.

We also aim to encourage members to work with other members. If we increase our allied member base with more suppliers, we will have better oversight when problems happen.

At an association level, the high-level areas we wish to focus on include -

1. Enhancing our interaction and relationships with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Forests & Environment and our fellow trade bodies such as IMF, FAITH, IATO, ADTOI, etc. We recognise that we have to partner with like-minded bodies to achieve our common goals.

2. Increasing our membership but also becoming more relevant to existing members. We must not take you for granted.

3. We want to increase our deliverables of value to you. You must be able to quantify what the association can do for you.

4. Encourage more states to adopt our Safety Guidelines.

5. Create more events for our members to interact and for us to generate revenue for association activities.

6. Create more opportunities for education and skill development of our member-owners and employees alike.

7. We have a very long wish list, and we recognized we need to move swiftly. But we also need to move smartly.

Q Anything else you would like to share with us?

The new ATOAI team will continue to progress the growth of adventure travel in India by taking forward the association's aims and shaping government policy for this sector. Apart from resolving issues impacting adventure tourism in the country, our main objectives is to bring more adventure tour operators across the country into the mainstream of Quality and Responsible Tourism Practices as a member, getting all states to adopt ATOAI's safety guidelines, prioritizing operational risk

assessment within the membership, conducting skill development & capacity building workshops in association with state tourism departments and local associations, running educational seminars and FAM tours for members, fostering new and innovative adventure tourism products and creating a pool of trained human resources within the industry.

ATOAI also seeks to take measures to reduce environmental impact on India's natural resources, check mass-tourism in our remote locales, and take active measures to help reduce a rising accident rate in recent times as a result of mass-tourism. To encourage more women entrepreneurs in the Adventure Tourism industry, ATOAI will set up a dedicated Women's Task Force consisting of current Women Entrepreneurs within the membership. There are also plans to introduce an ATOAI Mobile App showcasing India's adventure activities in conjunction with a revamp of the ATOAI website.

ATOAI Office Bearers

- President - Vishwas Makhija, Managing Director, India Insight Tours
- Sr. Vice President - Rajesh Ojha, Managing Director, Banjara Camps
- Vice President - Vaibhav Kala, Managing Director, Aquaterra Adventures India
- Hon. Secretary - Vinayak Koul, Director, Snowlion Expeditions
- Hon. Treasurer - Pradeep Murthy, Director, Muddy Boots Vacations

ATOAI Executive Committee Members

- Commander Sam T Samuel - Kalypso Adventures
- Ronny Singh Gulati - Youreka Campouts
- Nirat Bhatt - Nidus Enterprises
- Nadeem Sheikh - Sea & Sky Travel (India)
- Arvind Bhardwaj - Red Chilli Adventure Sports
- Milind Bhide - Countryside Adventure Holidays

TAAI conducts 'Tourism Conclave' at Statue of Unity in Gujarat

India's premier and largest Travel-Tourism Association, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), conducted a Tourism Conclave from 9th to 12th March 2021 at the Statue of Unity (SoU) in Kevadia, Gujarat. This was organised in association with Gujarat Tourism. Members from 20 Regions and Chapters across India participated in the four-day event at Kevadia. The TAAI conclave is the second big travel trade event to be held in Kevadia this season. Earlier in February, ADTOI had organised its annual conference in Kevadia.

Team TTJ

With an aim to revive domestic tourism and build confidence among the travel fraternity, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) recently concluded 'Tourism Conclave' at Tent City in Kevadia, Gujarat. The conclave was a perfect mix of networking sessions, destination tours, and panel discussions.

A half-day business session was organised on 11th March 2021 which was addressed by Hon. Minister of Tourism, Govt of India, Prahlad Singh Patel, via a video message. He welcomed the initiative of India's largest and premier travel-tourism association, TAAI, which has set a historic example of positivity due to the changing times. He also said that TAAI membership had all the qualities and aspects of professional tourism services, and in the coming future the responsibility and challenges shall increase when inbound tourist commence their India visits. TAAI members must be ready with newer ideas and strategies to ensure Tourism in India is smoothly facilitated by them.

Jenu Devan, Commissioner of Tourism and MD-Gujarat Tourism addressed the conclave via live video call wherein he highlighted the initiatives of the government

in promoting Gujarat to the world and thanked the TAAI committee for bringing their members to SoU, in Gujarat and also assured full support and encouragement to the members in promoting Gujarat as a wholesome destination.

Hon. Secretary-General, Betaiah Lokesh gave an overview of the business sessions stating that the inaugural address was an eye-opener and vision for members on Domestic Tourism by President Jyoti Mayal. A panel discussion moderated by Vice President Jay Bhatia on Bharat ka Vikas – Empowering Domestic Tourism, had panelists like Achyut Singh Jt. General Manager-Indian Railways (IRCTC) who spoke about connecting tourist up to the last mile and how TAAI members could promote rail packages to travellers across India.

A presentation was also made by Singh for members to register and connect with IRCTC. Ajay Kumar Wadhawan, Chief of Sales at Air Asia India participated in the panel citing views of newer airports and air connectivity across smaller airports in India as well. Past President of TAAI, Balbir Mayal gave his views on the changing dynamics in the travel and tourism field of the last few decades and how India shall be a top tourist destination in the world with the joint initiatives of TAAI on skilling and educational capabilities with state tourism boards, airlines, railways, etc.



This was followed by a discussion on "Where Winners Play" a panel moderated by Ashish Gupta, Founder – Strategy Pluto and Consulting and CEO of FAITH. A healthy debate with IATA and its functioning was had with Rodney Dacruz, Asst. Director IATA presented the views,



cruise along the River Narmada.

Sightseeing of the tallest statue in the world at Statue of Unity (SoU), Jungle Safari, Sardar Sarovar Dam Project, Valley of Flowers, Cactus & Butterfly Garden was also undertaken. Delegates also visited the 5 gardens inside Arogya Van (Herbal Garden), which exhibits a wide range of medicinal plants and health-related landscapes. Members also visited the cultural shopping arena of Ekta Mall in the SoU region.

perceptions and future of IATA. Lokesh Bhattaiah represented TAAI and was vocal in representing the core issues of the membership with IATA and the airlines. Sunil Kumar Rumalla, President of UFTAA, gave a global view of the challenges faced by agents across the world with IATA and made suggestive recommendations to IATA to ensure the survival of the airlines as well as the agents.

A discussion moderated by Amish Desai, TAAI Karnataka Chapter Chairman along with Parineeta Sethi, Chief Editor & Publisher of Pinnacle Connect, a leading media company in wellness and luxury with Vasudha Sondhi, MD, OMPL Group. Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson of Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) also participated in the panel discussing 'Customer satisfaction in Tourism through Technology, Marketing and Skilling'. With their expertise in sales, marketing, PR and social media, technology and skill development, the panelist suggested how today's evolving TAAI member must pursue and be empowered with all the skills apart from delivery of service. Mayal also updated on the upcoming initiatives of WITT (Women in TAAI and Travel), where TAAI shall give back to society and empower the women to become entrepreneurs through skilling and work towards making India safe and secure tourism destination.

Appreciating the efforts and initiative of Gujarat Government and Gujarat Tourism to invite TAAI and its members to SoU, Hon. National Treasurer-TAAI, Shreeram Patel in his vote of thanks emphasised TAAI's role in the growth and development of the trade. He thanked the vision of Hon. Minister of Tourism, Jawaharbhair Chavda, who along with Principal Secretary Tourism - Gujarat, Mamta Verma, Commissioner Tourism and MD of Gujarat Tourism, Jenu Devan and Nirav Munshi – Manager Commercial (Travel & Marketing) along with other officials gave full support to TAAI. He also thanked Indigo Airlines that was the sole airline that ensured delegates from every corner of India connected to



Gujarat for this conclave.

In the duration of the conclave, member delegates experienced the accommodation and facilities at Tent City 1 and Tent City 2 at Kevadia along with an evening dinner

The Statue of Unity depicting the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, is aimed to inspire generations with Sardar Patel's vision on Unity, Patriotism, inclusive growth and good governance.



Jyoti Mayal

Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI

The conclave was organised to educate the travel trade members and promote Gujarat as a Tourism Destination for domestic as well as inbound tourist. Members of the trade were going through challenging times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this gave an opportunity for them to adapt to transformation, and ability to explore.

More such conclaves across the country shall be organised in association with State Tourism boards in the near future which shall educate, skill and empower the trade members of TAAI to promote Incredible India.



Jay Bhatia

Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI

This initiative of TAAI shall ensure members were familiarised with the region to promote Dekho Apna Desh and revive the promotion of domestic and inbound tourism through skilling and personal experiencing.



India's domestic tourism boom sparks opportunity for sustainable growth

With Domestic Tourism giving some leverage to businesses and with more drive and determination, the timing has never been better to position local brands, destinations, and attractions for success when this crisis is over. TTJ gives an industry outlook from few tourism and hospitality stakeholders as to how they look at the potential of the sector in the ever-changing COVID-19 scenario. Their views are comprehensive with many domestic tourism aspects put together, and it makes an interesting read. The best part is to get to know that Indians are ready to explore their own land like never before. Read on!

Prashant Nayak



Prateek Hira

President & CEO, Tornos
Director, River Rhapsody

No doubt that these are the toughest times that the industry has seen but then there are two ways to see it, one, that we are doomed and we can only sulk; two, we are on learning and re-engineering sabbatical and we have to refresh and revive with the newly acquired knowledge and skills during this business break. At my company, we did just that. We have been studying, gaining knowledge, fine-tuning products, and re-energising the team to perform much better and with full zeal, once things open up. 'Renewed Preparedness' is what we called this strategy. The ultimate aim is to revive much sooner than one could think. The day we were allowed to open offices, we opened up ours, knowing that there would be no business but the idea was to come out of the boredom, get into a routine and plan well for the times ahead. Our revival strategy primarily focuses on the extension of our business, exploring new opportunities, and creating more revenue heads. The idea is to place the eggs in many baskets, multiply revenue heads, include new avenues

and extend the market so that the business revives faster and losses incurred in the financial year 2020-21 and possibly the extended losses till the first half of 2021-22 are recovered sooner.

Domestic travel is one domain that is being seen as a saviour for now and people have started exploring new destinations, adapted to slow travel and are looking for immersive experiences as was the case earlier with the inbound markets. This shows that domestic markets have matured and have a great potential to drive the growth of tourism in the country.

We as a company have realised the potential of domestic travel and have forayed into tailor-made domestic programmes including some immersive experiences for which we are known for. Our new venture River Rhapsody which operates day boats sets up river-side camps, organises water-sports and river events are primarily focusing on the domestic market. Under this company we will have parallel market penetration, catering to both, domestic as well as inbound.

In my opinion, it's time we don't classify ourselves in brackets of domestic and inbound separately but be open to cater to both the markets with equal zeal as that will not only support business now but will also generate better revenue in the future and bring us out of the doom faster.

The states of Himachal and Uttarakhand are doing really well and have had good captive tourists on weekends and holidays. The trend of travelling on weekends has caught up after the hotels were allowed to open. Destinations close to metros and urban business cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, etc are doing well on weekends when

people in large numbers are moving out to holiday in nearby destinations, large self-contained resorts outside these have become quite popular with city dwellers. One of the reasons is good road connectivity, large well-spread resorts and accommodation options in all categories at these places.

Demand for Kashmir has gone up suddenly, and it is doing quite well despite all the negative publicity that surrounded it for quite a long time. People are looking for well-spread natural environs where they can unwind. Demand for concrete heritage is not so much visible as it was in the past. Hills, beaches, farms, wildlife, water bodies have become an attractive proposition for domestic travellers. 'Nature' is the keyword of tourism for now and it promises umpteen business opportunities.

Ayodhya is one of the newest destinations which has created just the right buzz and the world is looking forward to it. The government is investing quite aggressively to transform this almost forgotten but essential pilgrim city in India. Ayodhya is a city that has lived Hinduism beyond the brackets of religion, as a way of life and very unpretentiously.

The much-awaited development of Ayodhya is now becoming a reality, and people of Ayodhya can look forward to economic well-being, employment opportunities, and social inclusiveness in times to come. Uttar Pradesh Government plans to surpass Mecca's and Vatican's annual footfall of more than 20 million visitors and to cater to this

traffic, Ayodhya is being re-planned and restructured.

The new international airport, modern railway station, bus terminus, parking bays, four and six lanes of highways all are being done in a time-bound manner. From world-class five-star hotels to budget accommodations that will serve a cross-section of visitors will be a major fillip to the tourism in Ayodhya. Then, there are upcoming resorts and boutique properties that are yet other opportunities waiting in Ayodhya. Many countries are even establishing their temples, memorials, and religious-embassies in Ayodhya and this apart from Indian states that will have their own government guest houses to cater to their residents.

In my opinion, to get the most from it as a tourist destination, the government should involve tourism and hospitality experts to work in coordination with town planners and architects. Ayodhya has all the potential of becoming a world-class tourist destination in the coming years, and there is so much buzz already around that people are waiting in the wings to reach and experience Ayodhya in its newest form.

Domestic Tourism is being seen as a new saviour of the industry and one that will be an essential service offer for all operators, which can keep the cash flows of the company going even during the toughest days such as the ones we are experiencing now. Also, domestic travel will help operators to evenly spread their businesses throughout

the year and not only be dependent on the seasonal character of inbound tourism. The road travel trend has caught up quite well. Earlier we were contemplating five hours of travel time to be comfortable for travellers but the real trend is quite different and people are comfortable travelling by their cars for even ten hours at a stretch. This shows the desperation of travel when travel is restricted. Indian summers will see an upswing during summer vacations after the examinations, which this year are slated for the month of May and apart from cooler and natural environs, even cities in the north and south will do well. Religious tourism is on the rise and the air traffic is picking up slowly and steadily, this means travel by air to distant destinations too will be back. It will not be a surprise to even see Goa and Rajasthan being sold out again in summer, quite the unlikely character of the two destinations otherwise. Hill states of Himachal, Uttarakhand, Kashmir, and North East will be the favourite destinations for domestic travellers and the improvement in the infrastructure of these states will only pave the way for a tourist boom in these in the near future.

Tourism is coming back and as an industry, we need to be "Tourism Ready". Having little or no-business is no excuse to be lethargic, it is rather an opportunity to better equip ourselves with knowledge, plan businesses, re-establish, refocus and expand business horizons to enhance revenue when tourism returns.



Rajeev Kale
President & Country Head
Holidays, MICE, Visa, Thomas Cook (India)

At Thomas Cook India, our strategic focus was given to product development. From the early days of the lockdown, we realized that we had to quickly adapt to the new normal and create

basis the same to create easy to book, practical holidays such as workations, staycations, drivecations, and affordable luxury holidays. We focussed on quick breaks to counter the stresses of work from home and home chores and at convenient short drivable distances/within their city of residence. We invited our customers to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries with our specially designed holidays.

Today, in the face of limited international border reopening, domestic tourism offers a significant opportunity to the travel and tourism industry. Indians are displaying a keen and growing interest in domestic travel with 52 per cent of respondents of our Second Holiday Readiness Report (December 2020) indicating their preference for a Domestic holiday in 2021.

Domestic destinations are currently seeing strong demand. Indians are showing encouraging trends of wanting to discover incredible India and our Hidden Gems product is doing well. There is so much India has to offer: from Kashmir's tulip gardens, Lonar Lake - an astronomical marvel created by a meteor and

products and services in line with the requirements of the COVID-19 era.

The consumer wish-list had changed and our teams worked

just 4 hours from Aurangabad, awe-inspiring Living Root Bridges - a must-visit in Meghalaya. Spiritual Tours and our rejuvenation & wellness breaks are also popular – especially in these challenging times. A unique River water cruise –Antara – is also a new concept that Indians are showing interest in.

Some of the popular search terms on our website include holidays to destinations such as Goa, Himachal Pradesh. Other trending terms include short weekend breaks and more recently we have seen a growing interest in Ladakh holidays for our Bike trips.

Like Kevadia (Statue of Unity) in

Gujarat, Odisha's Muduligadia eco-village is a great example that can be replicated. Given the increased focus on domestic tourism, investments in eco-tourism attractions and infrastructure, especially in the new normal of travel will be beneficial.

At Thomas Cook India, we are already witnessing the rise of the sensitive traveller, a traveller who respects his eco-system and will seek deeper enriching travel experiences. With news on the vaccines and growing customer confidence in travel, we are seeing encouraging growth in demand, and this is not restricted to the summer vacation period alone. Our Holiday Readiness Report (December

2020) reveals a significant increase in consumer confidence in travel: 89 per cent of respondents displayed keen interest to resume travel and 67 per cent of respondents are willing to travel in the next 6 months.

With pent-up demand, Indians are using every opportunity to travel – for short breaks, weekend trips, celebrating a special occasion, etc. The work from home model is a great opportunity and India's young working professionals and millennials are making maximum use of this – exploring their bucket list locales India while ensuring that they are connected to work via Wifi.



Daniel D'souza
President & Country Head
Leisure, SOTC Travel

As the vaccine rollout accelerates, homebound Indian travellers are eager to plan their holidays in 2021 after having skipped them last year. Reinforcing our commitment to consistently provide value

for our customers, SOTC has introduced Summer Holiday Sale that offers the best deals such as free flight tickets on summer holiday bookings, full holidays at half price, etc. Travellers with pocket-friendly budgets can now avail of our value packages to a wide range of domestic and international destinations.

India has emerged as a favourite holiday destination and Indians are eager to explore the beauty of the country and discover the diverse travel experiences our own country has to offer. They are eager to explore the local cuisine, offbeat experiences, wellness experiences, culturally immersive activities and outdoor activities. Staycations, workstations across exotic locales are preferred in India that offer meticulous health and safety measures.

The pent-up travel demand due to the lockdown has resulted in a new-found interest in Destination India. Consumers are moving away from crowds/traditional tourist spots while seeking to discover India's untold stories and traveller secrets. To tap into this demand for non-standard/unique journeys, SOTC introduced India's Hidden Gems. SOTC's Hidden Gems incorporates a handpicked selection of Exquisite Locales: From Khajuraho, Rishikesh, Udaipur, Munnar, Jawai Sagar, Manali, Coorg, Kollam, Thekkady, Pachmarhi, Kabini, Bandhavgarh, Lalsot, and Goa. Exceptional Experiences included: a jeep

safari amidst the lush plantations of Kolukkumalai, Munnar - the highest tea estate in the Western Ghats, a royal 4-course dining experience set against an evening bonfire at the luxurious Amritara Pali Jawai Sagar, picturesque coffee and spice plantation tours in Coorg aboard a specially designed jeep, an exclusive, private, night drive and stargazing experience in a gypsy at Pachmarhi, a unique bush-dining experience in Bandhavgarh, a vintage car drive around Udaipur's picturesque lake, mangrove walks in the Sundarbans biosphere or the heady adrenalin rush of bungee jumping in Rishikesh, etc.

India's hidden gems also include India's Grand Canyon – the Gandikota Hills in Andhra Pradesh, Magnetic Hill in Ladakh, Chenab Bridge the world's highest rail bridge, the world's largest sundial in Jaipur, Varanasi - the world's most ancient living city, Dal Lake's floating post office, the Lonar Lake an astronomical marvel – created by a meteor, awe-inspiring Living Root Bridges in Meghalaya, and much more. For wellness and rejuvenation, India's choices are plentiful: Kerala's Ayurveda, yoga in the Himalayas to Tibetan medicinal therapy in Uttarakhand.

With this year offering many weekends that can be clubbed with other holidays that make weekends longer, we are observing a rise in inquiries for destinations like Goa, Kerala and Himachal. Travellers have shown a strong preference for short solo trips and short trips with friends or family during these holiday weekends.

In the absence of their annual summer vacation and short breaks this year, Indians are opting for a longer duration of stay - with 74 per cent respondents preferring a holiday of 4-10 nights - SOTC's Holiday Readiness Report (December 2020). There has been a rise in local tourism, offbeat places, and wildlife tours. Demand similarly increased for drivecations and rural getaways to experience the local culture. From exploring the local cuisine to finding offbeat experiences at every destination, millennials wish to explore the unknown and are keen to escape city life for more glocal experiences. Owing to the pressures of lockdown, customers have shown a strong sentiment and preference for outdoor experiences.



Mehul Sharma
 Founder & CEO
 Signum Hotels

The COVID threat is still looming and international travel continues to look bleak. At Signum, we are countering this with aggressive domestic marketing to tap small events, weddings, conferences,

opened at all our hotels and are contributing to survival.

Customer behaviour has certainly changed and safety, health and hygiene have become the priority for guests. A guest would call 5-6 times to ensure all facilities available and hygiene practices being implemented at the hotel. More guests are scanning TripAdvisor reviews to build confidence before booking a hotel. And in a way, this is also good for us as hoteliers as it keeps us on our toes to ensure we are delivering against all commitments and as per the expectations of our guests.

Religious tourism must be aggressively looked at tapping the domestic potential. Destinations like Ayodha, Tirupati, Shirdi, and Mathura, etc. hold tourism potential and should be paid more attention in terms of developing infrastructure and facilities. Also, religious locations that attract hyper-local visitors must be aggressively focused upon.

March to June, domestic bookings to leisure destinations will move in the right direction. There is a spurt of travel to destinations like Gulmarg, especially with the early onset of summers while Goa may take a backseat due to extreme weather. The business, however, is expected to remain low for other business and city locations.

outdoor catering, private catering at residences, etc. Essentially, we are focusing on taking the services to the doorstep of our customers offering them a fully customised, safe and hygienic experience in the comfort of their own homes.

The business has definitely shrunk by about 50 per cent and there is extreme pressure on rates and earnings. Cloud kitchens have been



Rubin Cherian
 General Manager
 Novotel Hyderabad Airport

Novotel Hyderabad Airport is strategically located in close proximity to the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport and is also in the midst of all the latest investments that have been announced in

The hospitality industry has had a facelift in past one year and has witnessed complete metamorphosis. Health and safety along with niche experiences top the lists for all customers. Guests need an extra level of assurance, hence communicating the steps taken by the brand is extremely critical and equally important is the consistent execution of all processes.

COVID-19 was one of the biggest catalysts to embrace digitalization. Coupled with the All Safe label, we have also gone contactless in our process, the entire guest journey is mapped and all the touchpoints right from the check-in to ordering of food or other services have been digitalised to reduce touchpoints

India is a hidden jewel and yes there are lots of destinations that the Government can invest in terms of infrastructure, cleanliness, restoration, etc to make our great Country a haven not only for international tourists but also for foreign investments. I think rather than investing in hundreds of crores and making statutes of various famous persons, we should invest that money into modernizing and securing our Country.

Everyone is keen to explore the prospect of travelling and enjoying a leisurely stay, the domestic leisure travel seems to be an emerging trend in the industry. We are witnessing positive outcomes lately and are confident that better things are coming ahead for the industry.

The business sentiment for the hotel is improving with each day and we forecast to have a healthy mix of corporates, crew, MICE, social events, and weddings. Novotel Hyderabad Airport is one of the hotels which offer an expanse of open door and indoor venues which are perfect for gatherings ranging right from 10 to 1500 guests. Also with the luxury of spaces available with us, we are able to exercise social distancing norms to its full potential.

the business, aerospace and logistics port. Hyderabad is surrounded with a plethora of off-beat destinations which if marketed in the right light have immense potential, especially in today's world as travellers are looking to explore unexplored spots.

The team at the hotel is extremely agile and keeps a hawk's eye on the developments happening in the periphery of the hotel to leverage all the possible business opportunities emanating from them. While the international travel restriction has been extended till March 31, 2021, it is quite encouraging to see that domestic corporate MICE is gradually gaining pace supported with weddings and social events.

We at Accor have also launched various travel campaigns which have garnered great response and have given the necessary travel push. Winter is the new summer campaign that is ongoing and offers a 20 per cent saving on stays, dining and spa experiences, and a 30 per cent discount for our ALL members (loyalty).

Exotic and lesser-known beaches of Maharashtra

Maharashtra boasts of an extensive coastline of 720 km in the Arabian Sea and is home to incredible beaches and breathtaking shorelines. The State Govt.'s Tourism department has announced an enviable list of lesser-known, serene beaches in the State that tourists must explore during their visit to the mainland.

Team TTJ

A huge part of Konkan is covered by Maharashtra. It is here we have some of the most fascinating and alluring beaches in India. Of recent, most of them have been explored and commercialised but there are many more beaches silently opening up and catching the tourist attention. Presently, they remain a secret of a few. The below mentioned 10 offbeat stunning beach destinations in Maharashtra can also make a perfect getaway or an ideal place for a vacation.

Guhagar Beach

The sparkling golden sand beach of Guhagar stretches for approximately 5-6kms from Guhagar to Asgoli and is situated in Ratnagiri district. One can easily spot this beach from the



forests of Casuarina, locally called as Suru Tree. The beach endorses serenity with blue sea waves bumping against the seashore, dotted by the mountains in the background to the east.

Apart from the beach, Guhagar is home to some beautiful forts and temples.

One of the major attractions is the gorgeous scenic fort of Anjavel/Gopalgad. It is known for Vyadeshwar Temple, the temple of Lord Shiva. The idol (Shivlinga) is made of black stone, with the image of Nagaraj engraved on it with brass like metal. Another famed temple is Chandika Mandir, which is based 15-20 ft below the earth's surface, set inside a cave. The tranquillity of this temple makes it an essential place to visit.

Bhogwe Beach

Situated on the shores of Sindhudurg District, the pristine Bhogwe Beach is among the prettiest and most secluded beaches in Konkan. Scattered with rocks, views of the nearby



forts, and silvery-white sand with clear blue waters, this picturesque beach is a magical haven for beach lovers.

This beach is located pretty close to Tarkarli, the water adventure destination, and is the perfect place for a long stroll or to enjoy a surreal sunset. This idyllic beach is famous for being the merging point of the river Karli and the Arabian Sea. One can enjoy majestic views of the Karli River mingling with sea waters from Devbaug's famous Mobarra Point. Another major attraction here is dolphin sighting. One can also plan a visit to Nivati Fort, which is 8.5 km away from the beach.

Velneswar Beach

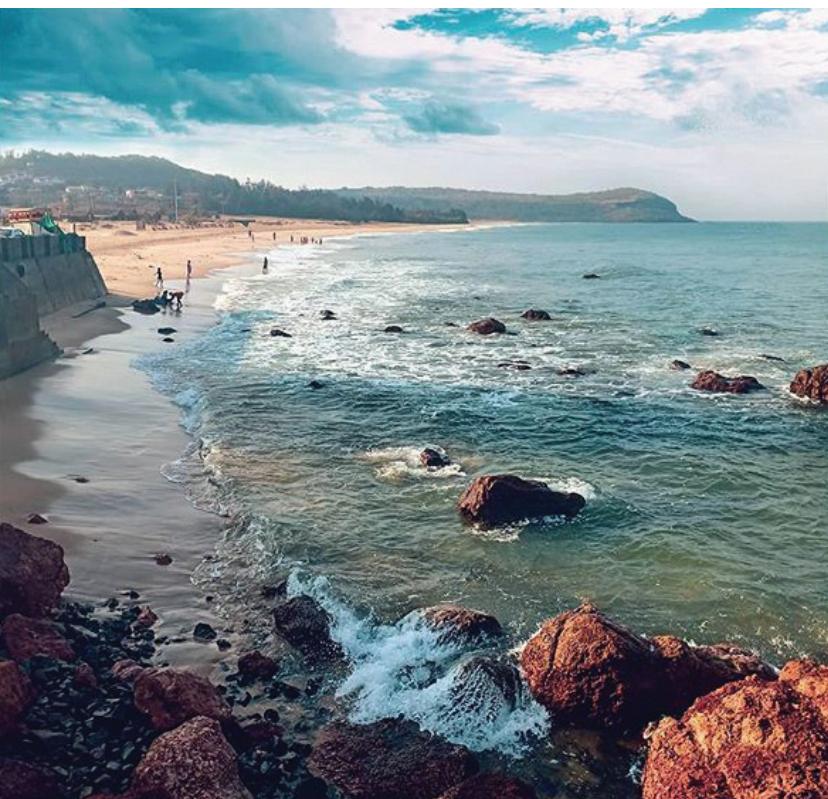
Situated in Ratnagiri district, it is one of the most serene beaches on the west coast of India and is ideal for some quiet time. The stunning seashore which is surrounded by beautiful



coconut grooves makes a picture-perfect backdrop for a stroll. It is one of the cleanest beaches of Maharashtra and is popular for its rock-less sea and peaceful atmosphere. On the seashore, the magnificent ancient Velneswar temple of Lord Shiva is located and the history of this temple is as old as the village. Another sacred temple, Dashabhuj Ganesh Mandir at Hedvi, which is located 9 km away from Velneswar, is often visited by tourists. Some other places worth visiting in the vicinity include the Shastri River, Anjanwale Fort, Vyaghrambary Mandir, Laxmi Narayan Temple, and Uma Mahesh Mandir.

Kunkeshwar Beach

One of Maharashtra's most pristine white sand beaches is Kunkeshwar Beach, a major attraction in the region of Sindhudurg. Situated at 16 km from the town of Devgad, the sloping dunes and the palm trees here offer wanderers a soothing experience and is the ideal weekend getaway to soak oneself in serenity amidst the chaos. Enjoy the long seashore whilst swimming and sunbathing at Kunkeshwar, accompanied by the spectacular view of the Arabian Sea. Devgad Fort and Vijaydurg Fort, which is about 8.5 km and 34.5 km away from the beach respectively are some of the nearby attractions.



Satpati Beach

Counted among some prominent and largest beaches of Maharashtra is the Satpati beach. Located 13 km from the main town near Shirgaon beach, Satpati is truly a haven for the ones who love to travel. Being one of the cleanest beaches of Maharashtra, it offers the wanderers peace and tranquility in its arms. With most of the fishing villages located nearby, it is also popularly known as the fishing hub of India. The nearby places one can visit are Shirgaon Fort, located approximately 9 km from Satpati beach and Satpati Lighthouse, which is half a km away from the beach which are nearby attractions worth visiting.

Anjarle Beach

Anjarle beach enjoys a reputation of being one of the cleanest and unpolluted beaches in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri. Settled on the Konkan Coast near Dapoli, the beach welcomes its visitors with the sweet twittering of birds. The tourists can see a dense cover of coconut trees at one side of the beach with little tops of local Konkani hutment wrapped under the foliage of the green cover. It is a perfect vacation spot for adventure-seeking travellers as it offers water sports like parasailing, snorkelling and windsurfing available.

The beautiful beach is known for its conservation of the Olive Ridley Turtles. So one of the most exciting experiences that the travellers can witness at the beach is watching the baby Olive Ridley Turtles hatch out of their shells to take their first step towards the sea. Kadyawarcha Ganpati, the well-known temple situated on a cliff, is also one of the major attractions and is 3 km away from the beach.





Arevare Beach

The twin beaches, located in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, are a geological wonder in itself as it was formed ages ago due to the convergence of the mountain into the ocean, which is believed to be a one of a kind phenomenon. Arevare is blessed with clear blue water with a heavenly seashore. Wrapped in the golden sand, the beach offers magnificent views of the sunset over the azure waters of the Arabian Sea. One can enjoy the beauty of the view from the nearby Arevare point located on the peak of a nearby hill. Another attraction is the famous Ganapatipule Temple, which is 10 km away from the beach.

Bhandarpule Beach

A less-explored destination, it is one of the crown jewels of Maharashtra situated on the Konkan coast. It is situated at a distance of 2 km from Ganapatipule Beach. From the nearby hillock, one can enjoy mesmerizing views of both Bhandarpule beach and Ganapatipule beach. The beach nestles comfortably amidst two hillocks and is lined with Casuarinas trees. The mystic water and the bluish-green hue of the sea are magical. The nearby Ganapatipule beach and the Ganapati temple are major attractions for people visiting this beach. One can also visit the secluded twin beaches of Arevare (10 km away). On the way to Bhandarpule via NH 16, one can visit Marleshwar Temple which is near Sangameshwar.



Diveagar Beach

It is amongst the pristine destinations of the country which is situated on the Konkan coast. Approximately 170 km away from Mumbai, the beach is surrounded by Suru trees while the access to the beach has a dense cover of Belu trees which accentuate its beauty. The beach is clean and uncluttered with just the blue sea, surf, and the pristine white sand spanning the horizon. The region is sparsely-populated with diverse flora and fauna which helps preserve its magnificence. While starfish can be seen during the winters, summers are more dominated by crabs. It is also famous for the Turtle Festival held in the month of April.

One can visit a small village near Diveagar named Devkhol. The main attraction of this village is bird watching where one can get to see several rare birds. Other must-visit places near the beach are Roopnarayan Temple, which has a fantastically carved statue of Vishnu, SuvarnaGanesh, Sundarnarayan Temple, Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, and Madagad Fort.

Bordi Beach

It is a coastal hamlet located in the Palghar district. The beach is surrounded by extraordinary natural beauty and the golden sand of the beach is ideal for a long stroll or to enjoy a surreal sunset.

It promises tranquillity and peace to the visitors, providing relief from the hustle and bustle of city life. It is surrounded by the chikoo trees lending a charming look to the place. Every year, the village also hosts a Chikoo Festival, which is attended by many chikoo fruit lovers. One of the prominent nearby attractions is Kalpataru Botanical Garden. The place is home to the famous Vrindavan Studios, where the epic TV series Ramayana was shot. It is also known for Depchari Dam and Reservoir and Asavli Dam, as the construction of this Dam is said to be similar to the Great Pyramid of Egypt. The place also boasts of ancient temples, caves, and stunning chikoo orchards.



KEVADIA

The new tourism hub of India

The travel industry recently saw two major events, the ADTOI's 10th Annual Convention and TAAI's Tourism Conclave at Statue of Unity, Kevadia in Gujarat where the world's tallest statue stands majestically. Both the events were supported by the Gujarat Government who wanted to showcase Kevadia to the association members and stakeholders. This new tourism hotspot has various tourist attractions in close vicinity and there is something new for every member of a family. TTJ was indeed impressed by the Statue, the tranquil locales, and new discoveries.

Prashant Nayak

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is most often remembered for his efforts to unify the country- something which perhaps explains the name "Statue of Unity". He was responsible for integrating 533 princely states into the Indian Union, post our independence. Sardar Patel's commitment towards the unification of the princely states for the formation of a consolidated Indian republic, and his tireless relief efforts for the refugees leaving Delhi and Punjab and integrating the British colonial provinces that were allocated to India, earned him the title 'Unifier of India'. It was in his memory, and as a mark of his contribution to a nation filled with diversities, the idea of the Statue of Unity took birth.

The Statue of Unity, the world's largest statue, stands on Sadhu island on the Narmada, 3.2 km downstream of Sardar Sarovar Dam. During the day, the magnificent statue is a sight to behold and can be seen from as far as 7 km away. Inside the complex, one might have to encounter long queues unless you have an express ticket. The viewing gallery is at +193m level and has a view of the river on its way downstream. The most attractive of the views in the gallery is from the front side of the statue, facing the dam from which one can observe the whole visitor centre, the dam, the reservoir and the reserve forest.

No place is better than the selfie point to enjoy the surrounding view. Even the museum and the audio-visual gallery within the statue are major attractions for

tourists. The Statue of Unity also provides a ferry ride facility for the visitors and now they have started helicopter ride as well. It allows the visitors to get an aerial view of the Sardar Sarovar Dam and the Statue of Unity. Visitors can enjoy the view of the Narmada River and the Satpura and Vindhya hills. The helicopter ride costs ₹2900. One ride accommodates five to seven people and lasts for 10 minutes.

Beside the statue is The Valley of Flowers (also known as Bharat Van) and is spread across 24 acres of land and is a haven for colourful flowering plants along the bank of river Narmada. The Valley of Flower began with 48,000 plants in 2016 and has now reached up to 22, 00,000 plants. Besides the parks, several photo booths and selfie points have been developed to take back fond memories





of the visit. A right blend of ornamental flowers, trees, shrubs, herbs, climbers and creepers are planted along with various shades of foliage, which form the green cover in this area.

The evening is the best time to visit the statue. The laser (projection mapping) show reflects the journey of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and his role to create India as a nation from various subcontinents. Every evening, it attracts thousands of spectators eager to see the grand event. The show uses statue as a canvas with a beautiful mixture of laser lights, sound, graphics, and storytelling. The 25-minute show leaves the viewers spellbound and patriotic and in goosebumps.

Continuing with patriotism, tourists can also visit the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Dam for the Light & Sounds Show. The Dynamic LED lighting at 163 meters high and 1210 meters long Sardar Sarovar Dam, in the serene atmosphere of Narmada Valley with patriotic songs, is worth watching and hearing. Besides the dam, one will find a park illuminated with attractive and vibrant lights, known as the Unity Glow Garden, a unique theme park that has been developed with a glimmering array of installations, figures and optical illusions. There are many botanical, animal and bird representations covered with LED glowing lights on display to welcome all tourists to experience the joy of night tourism.

There are many more feathers that can be added to the cap when it comes to the Statue of Unity and its surroundings nearby. The Cactus Garden has two parts, one is a Cactus garden, and another is Butterfly Garden. Both the places are very inspiring. The Cactus garden consists of around 450 varieties of cactus and succulent plants collected from different parts of the world. It's hard to believe that even a cactus can be so beautiful and there are hundreds inside. Few varieties are also available for sale. One can be amazed to know even species

like dragon fruit and Blue Agave, a plant from which Tequila is derived grows here.

The Butterfly Garden is an open park and a must-visit place. It is where you can spot more than 15 varieties of local butterflies and more after the rains. Good pathways are built around

where you can see butterflies closely. Cute selfie points are also placed in the garden. Definitely must visit this place to connect with nature.

The key highlight of Arogya Van is the 'Aushadh Manav.' This is a giant three-dimensional layout of a human body in a resting posture. Each human organ is represented by a medicinal plant that is beneficial for that particular organ. So these plants are planted on the specific part of the body to make the visitors understand the specific plants used for the therapeutic treatment of that particular organ. This is also the place to understand the importance of medicinal plants in daily Ayurvedic use. The place is located around 10 minutes from the Statue of Unity near the helipad. The morning or evenings are best suited for this activity and one has to make sure to book a guide, and they do an excellent job by explaining about the place and letting tourists know about the plants.

The Children Nutrition Park is a unique

theme park envisioned and inspired by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi and which has been developed as a part of Kevadia Integrated Development. It provides high-quality entertainment and vital knowledge to the children on healthy eating habits and nutritional values based on the theme of "SAHI POSHAN DESH ROSHAN." The entire park is designed and implemented for the benefit of the children, and extensive use of state-of-the-art technology is being made, which gives a fascinating experience to the children visiting the park.

Again, Ekta Nursery was envisioned by Narendra Modi, while dedicating the Statue of Unity to the Nation. He suggested developing this Ekta Nursery as a tourist destination to spread awareness about eco-friendly practices. This nursery serves dual purposes of serving as an educational cum demonstration centre for tourists and providing employment to local people. Ekta Nursery yields one million plants and tourists can experience making of Bamboo Crafts, Areca Leaf Utensils and Organic Pots live, and can purchase them too, along with plants.

The Jungle Safari in Sardar Patel Zoological Park is spread over an area of 375 acres at seven levels ranging in altitude from 29 metres to 180 metres. It houses more than 100 species of animals and birds, including wallaby (a macropod related to the kangaroo and found in Australia and New Guinea); llama and alpaca (camelid species native to the Andes of South America); giraffe, zebra, blue wildebeest, gemsbok or oryx, and impala (all native to Africa). In all, the





safari is the only safari of its kind in the country with such a wide range of exotic animals.

A ferry boat service called the Ekta Cruise goes from Shrestha Bharat Bhavan to the Statue of Unity, covering a distance of 6 km downstream on the Narmada over 40 minutes. The cruise has two vessels: Unity-1, a two-deck catamaran certified to carry 200 passengers, and which can provide a dinner cruise with a 160-sq-foot performance stage on the upper deck; and Unity-2, a high-speed monohull boat that can carry up to 25 passengers, with a travel time of 25 minutes.

River rafting activity has now become possible at the Khalwani area in Kevadia, due to the regular release of 600 cusec flow of water from the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Adventure enthusiasts can now enjoy river rafting in 4.5 km stretch with whirlpools, rapids, and many turns which provide an exciting and unforgettable rafting experience for the first time in Gujarat. So be embraced by the thrills of

rafting, as there are as many as 6 rapids through the channel of Narmada.

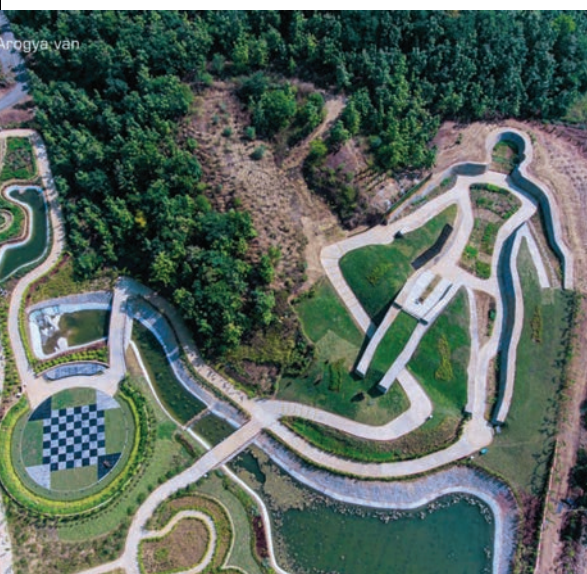
The deciduous site surrounded by hillocks and the Narmada flowing by is unhindered by any human interventions. This is an ideal camping and hiking site. The nearby Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary is a treasure trove for wildlife enthusiasts, and the growing popularity of the Statue of Unity immensely adds to the tourism potential. Also, a cycling tour presents a unique way of discovering the region. This place offers all aspects of nature—from lush green mountain forests to invigorating rivulets, the region offers scenic beauty, exquisite flora and fauna, and an oozing dose of culture. There is a proper natural cycling trail for around 8 km one way and splendid eco cycles available on rent.

The Zarvani Waterfalls is a popular spot among tourists and nature lovers from Gujarat. The place provides ample opportunities for eco-tourism and campsites owing to its immense aesthetic beauty. To the mind and body of a weary

tourist, the sparkling water of the fall in the middle of a lush green forest is a transformational experience. The water is so clean that one can see through and spot small fishes at the bottom. Local guides are available at the site and they are all cooperative.

In the Kevadia tourism zone, the government has built 3-star hotels, shopping centres, and a research centre. There are also many private hotels and tent accommodation available. However, if you want to spot the best scenes of the Statue of Unity, Sardar Sarovar Dam and the surroundings, for accommodation, then one should consider Tent City options with tent city 1 and 2 which offers all sorts of luxurious living for different types of tourists. They are equipped with all the latest amenities, providing excellent service and help to make your visit memorable. Here, you can get closer to nature with the best camp-like accommodation. The tents help you to feel the ultimate serenity of the place. There are different packages and some come with sightseeing and you have to choose the one that suits your specifications. It's a perfect destination for family tours, educational tours, weddings, conferences, etc.

Recently, the Statue of Unity crossed the 5 million visitors mark in just 553 working days, making it a greatly popular domestic tourist destination. Overall, Gujarat's Statue of Unity has been drawing more tourists than the Statue of Liberty in the US and has also emerged as a family holiday destination of international standards offering multiple attractions for all age groups. In a bid to make the destination more accessible, the government plans to improve rail and air connectivity to Kevadia. The government recently added eight new trains from different parts of the country and a seaplane service from Ahmedabad. Indeed, this place is a must-visit. Do plan a trip there whenever you can.



A glimpse of events by the India Tourism Delhi Office in March 2021

India Tourism Delhi is under the Ministry Of Tourism, Govt. of India and is the regional office responsible for the promotion, development, marketing of tourism in North India and India as a whole. In the first half of March 2021, the office undertook various activities and events for the promotion of tourism in the Northern Region. TTJ features some of them.

Team TTJ

Tourism Stakeholders meet in Agra

India Tourism Agra organised a Tourism Stakeholders meet in Agra on 6th March 2021. Regional Director

promote Agra in collaboration with stakeholders. Lt Col Harshvir Singh, Officer Commanding Military Police, proposed to develop adventure activities in Agra.



North, Director IT Agra, Principal IHM Gwalior, President ATAA, President Agra Tourism Guild, President Agra Hotel Association participated in the meet. More than 60 stakeholders including the India Tourism Delhi office attended the Meet. An action plan is being developed to

of Tourism to the stakeholders. He also urged the stakeholders to apply for recognition of the Ministry for standardisation of service offered by them and to avail benefits offered by the Ministry to the industry for promotion of Tourism in the country.

Travel Trade meet in Punjab

India Tourism Delhi in association with Gujarat Tourism organized a Travel Trade Meet at Chandigarh and Amritsar on 06th & 07th March 2021, respectively. The theme of the meeting was the promotion of Gujarat and its iconic new tourist product, the Statue of Unity. More than 60 stockholders have attended the event. Officers from Gujarat Tourism made a presentation on the Statue of Unity. The officer from the India Tourism Office in Delhi, Awanish Mishra, explained various schemes of the Ministry



Celebration of International Women's Day

India Tourism Delhi celebrated International Women's Day on March 08, 2021, with eight women bloggers at an army-themed park at Manesar. The park has lots of



activities for adults and kids. They give you an insight into the life of an army man on the field. Speaking during the occasion, Regional Director, Anil Orav emphasised the role of women in nation-building. He motivated the bloggers to promote lesser-known places of tourist interest. The entire event was filled with various activities, and all the bloggers participated with full zeal and enthusiasm.

Promotion of Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification (IITFC) Program in Jammu

India Tourism Delhi, along with Food Craft Institute (FCI) Jammu organised an awareness programme among the students of FCI, Jammu on March 09, 2021. The Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification (IITFC) Programme aims to create an online



platform to provide training and certification to new age tourist facilitators available Anytime, Anywhere, Any device and Self-paced. Enabling Indian citizens to develop and enhance the skills associated with tourism, this is a digital initiative where one can incorporate knowledge about facilitating tourists across the country. Approximately, 60 students from FCI, Principal of FCI Jammu, Assistant Director India Tourism, Delhi attended the programme.

Unveiling India @75, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

Embarking on the path of the celebration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the Ministry of Tourism's field Offices across India organised various events along with the participation of travel trade and hospitality members, guides, students, and general public/visitors, etc.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (India @ 75) is a series of events to be organised by the Government of India to commemorate the 75th Anniversary

of India's Independence. The Mahotsav will be celebrated as a Jan-Utsav in the spirit of Jan-Bhagidari. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi flagged off the 'Padyatra' (Freedom March) from Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad and inaugurated the curtain-raiser activities of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (India@75).

India Tourism, Delhi, Office and its field offices based in Agra, Jaipur and Varanasi conducted a Heritage Walk at various places of importance which were attended by the travel trade and hospitality members, students, etc. India Tourism Jaipur Office organised a Nukkad Natak (Play) based on Gandhian Principles and practices. People from different walks of life came together to take part in events held in Agra, Chandigarh, Delhi and Srinagar.

Explore 'Journeys in Arabia' with Saudi Tourism Authority

Saudi Arabia is a relatively new destination on the global stage. As the authentic home of Arabia, Saudi offers unique, diverse, and unparalleled experiences, a land of natural assets, rich culture and heritage and adventure. To bring to light the Saudi offering, the Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) has recently launched 'Journeys in Arabia', an online event, curated especially for Travel Trade Partners around the globe. TTJ engaged with a spokesperson from STA to know how India falls in their plan of action, as it has been identified as one of the key source markets for Saudi Arabia.

Prashant Nayak

Q What are the strategies and plans being worked out/implemented to promote Saudi Arabia to the global traveller?

STA: In January 2021, we launched the biggest international destination marketing campaign in the country's history. The goal of our 'Welcome to Arabia' campaign is to build awareness of Saudi in key source markets as a warm, welcoming, fascinating leisure destination that offers a unique and diverse range of cultural heritage, adventure and nature experiences. Running across North America, Europe, Asia and the GCC, the campaign targets travellers seeking great outdoors, wide-open spaces, inspiring views and authentic experiences.

We know that while border and travel restrictions exist for most countries around the world, people are still dreaming of travel and this campaign aims to inspire so that when travel safely resumes, Saudi is top of mind.

We are investing in developing strong relationships with key partners in the travel trade sector in all of our priority source markets. We are in the process of building a network of international offices, responsible for both trade and consumer marketing activities, to expand the reach and relevance of Saudi's tourism offer.

Each market will be tasked with developing a tailored, strategic approach to most effectively engage with their target audiences, whether it be workshops, roadshows, and training, marketing campaign, or FAM trips.

Q When an Indian arrives in Saudi as a leisure tourist, what he /she should expect?

STA: Saudi has a diverse and exciting offering when it comes to culture and heritage. The country is home to five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and a further 11 sites on the UNESCO tentative list.

As we develop this aspect of our offering, Hegra in AlUla and Diriyah on the outskirts of Riyadh are spotlight projects for tourists considering a visit to Saudi in the coming months.

Hegra, once the southern capital of the Nabataean kingdom, officially opened to leisure tourism in October 2020. Located in AlUla, there are several exciting infrastructure projects in the pipeline, such as French architect Jean Nouvel's luxury resort in the Sharaan Reserve and Singapore luxury hotel group Aman's three eco-focused resorts.

Diriyah, the birthplace of the Saudi state, aims to become one of the region's

foremost destinations for historical and cultural knowledge-sharing activities and international events.

Q Is your organisation especially working on facilitating 'ease of travel' for the Indian audience in terms of visa or connectivity or relaxing some rules?

STA: In September 2019, the tourist e-visa was introduced. The launch of the e-visa was a significant milestone in the opening up of the Kingdom. From September 2109 to March 2020, we had issued more than 400,000 tourism visas, and we are confident that we will exceed this target once borders re-open.

Visitors from 49 countries can apply for the visit visa online, while other nationalities can apply for the visa at the Saudi embassy or consulate in their home country.

Q Presently, how is your organisation tackling the COVID-19 situation?

STA: We continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health on health and safety standards. The Ministry has put in place comprehensive protocols for establishments to provide visitors and their families with a safe experience, which are aligned with the guidelines

recommended by the WTTC.

Free healthcare is provided to anyone in Saudi Arabia (citizens and visitors alike) affected by COVID-19

Tracking and testing apps have been introduced to help people assess their health and manage any quarantine requirements

The Saudi tourism e-visa process is 100 per cent digital, ensuring the reduction of touchpoints ahead of travel and upon arrivals

Q What are your targets set for the global leisure tourist footfalls as well as the Indian travellers?

STA: We aim to achieve 100 million annual visits to the Kingdom by 2030, made up of both domestic and international travellers.

To achieve this goal, we have developed a comprehensive strategy to drive the number of visits, increase spend and build a leading tourism brand for Saudi.

We have identified 15 priority leisure source markets spanning the GCC region, Asia, North America, and Europe. This is broken down further into three target segments, leisure, MICE, and spiritual travel.

Since opening our doors to leisure tourism in September 2019, STA has unveiled many new destinations and experiences for audiences from home



and abroad.

The campaigns highlight what Saudi has to offer today – its rich culture, deep heritage, diversity of landscapes and unparalleled hospitality. It is the authentic home of Arabia: a place of exploration, of unique experiences. This is what we want the world to discover about Saudi.

Q Anything else to share?

STA: In alignment with the Ministry of Tourism, STA is rapidly laying the foundations for a thriving tourism ecosystem that will drive economic growth, create inclusive and sustainable employment and attract investment,

while preserving the environment and the livelihood of local communities.

Our approach is rooted in an understanding that the tourism sector needs to safeguard the environments, cultures and communities that underpin its appeal.

All tourism developments are being examined through the lens of sustainability. The destination scale initiatives like the Red Sea, NEO, Qiddiya, Amaala, AIUla and Diriyah have sustainability at the core and are setting new global standards in managing the relationship between tourism and the environment.



For a dreamy honeymoon in the Seychelles Islands

Big fat weddings may have taken a backseat in 2020 with low-key, intimate festivities. But with the market slowly opening up, couples can re-look at planning their honeymoon in a big way, making up for the lost time with a celebration to remember. Seychelles has everything one may visualise on their dream honeymoon, be it untouched beaches set amidst azure blue waters, exquisite beauty, delish delicacies, heart-warming people, and the carnival-like spirit of the place. It is perfect for an indulgent beach holiday dotted with cultural experiences and island-hopping opportunities.

Team TTJ

A cluster of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, Seychelles is mysterious and beckoning all at once. It is a year-round destination to indulge in sun, sand, and surf for a splendid honeymoon. A 6 nights 7 days holiday is ideal for a relaxing honeymoon with our list of jaw-dropping romantic experiences including diving with sea turtles and manta rays, hiking through verdant jungles and cruising along the coastline at sunset with a glass of bubbly to celebrate the 'I dos.'

Stay at a private island resort – Get whisked away on an aircraft to a remote paradise for a private island stay on Desroches Island, Fregate Island, or Felicite Island. Detach from the world and unwind in a private pool, indulge in an array of spa treatments, or add a bit of water adventure with ocean kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, and snorkeling. Get a chance to meet and feed the island's oldest residents, Aldabra giant tortoises, a native species that's vulnerable to extinction and tick off an unforgettable bucket list experience.



Watch a film under the stars - Félicité island's tropical vegetation and granite boulders is pure honeymoon bliss. Explore the stunning scenery through the day and enjoy 'cinema under the stars', a private stargazing setup available for exclusive hire at a luxurious private island resort for couples to cozy up under the stars with no one else around.

Spend a day with a dozen tortoises at Curieuse Island – Imagine being on an island with several giant tortoises roaming freely; people from around the world visit the marine park for a nature trail that has plenty of birds, indigenous creatures, mangrove forests, takamaka trees, green sea turtle breeding, hawksbill, turtles and the famous Seychelles Black Parrot. Curieuse Island also has a hidden beach, a breathtaking walk on the other side of the island.

Hike up the highest mountain in Seychelles – Lush green and untouched, the Morne Seychellois National Park on Mahe island has the highest mountain in all of Seychelles surrounded by rainforests and granite peaks. Take a guided hike through the stunning park filled with unusual birds and plants and up the Morne Seychellois Mountain to reach the Morne Blanc peak for a view worth the effort.





Check out Coco de Mer, the world's largest fruit - Indigenous to Seychelles, Valle De Mai is the UNESCO World Heritage Site and the natural habitat of the infamous and rare Coco de Mer fruit or the sea coconut. Couples can take a guided tour of the heritage site to make memories with the endangered fruit and spot the elusive 'black parrot' or the world's smallest frog endemic to the Seychelles Islands while on a short hike to witness panoramic views of Praslin and nearby islands.

Island hopping – It is easy to go island hopping in Seychelles with every island offering a unique

Sail into the sunset – Book a private luxury yacht for the day and leave it to the experts to divulge the island secrets and take you to the extraordinary inner islands' seascape. Sail to some stunning coral reefs to snorkel and revel in an idyllic sunset with champagne around the Cote D'Or Beach, Praslin.

Biking along the coast – Romance is in the little things like renting out bikes to explore the tiny islands of La Digue and Silhouette. There are tons of hidden beaches and caves to explore, many tiny eateries to stop over, and many opportunities to plunge into the ocean for a quick snorkel while leisurely biking around the islands.

Champagne with the dolphins – The raw beauty of Seychelles allows you to



history, culture and landscape. Swim, snorkel, lay out a picnic by the beach and live the true island life to feel that Cast Away vibe. From Mahe, go on day trips or island hopping to Praslin, Cerf, Silhouette, Round Islands, etc. If staying in Praslin one can visit La Digue, Curieuse, Bird, Cousin Islands and many more.

Marine Park yacht tours – Take a half or full-day yacht tour from Mahe to the St. Anne Marine National Park that offers couples a luxurious getaway replete with memorable activities. Hike at an uninhabited island, enjoy a delicious barbeque on the yacht, and snorkel or swim in the middle of the magical ocean.

witness experiences that may come as an unplanned pleasant surprise. For a relaxed afternoon leading up to sunset, couples can hire a speed boat or a yacht and pop a bottle of bubbly while spotting dolphins play in the turquoise waters of Seychelles.

Go Parasailing and Scuba Diving – What's a honeymoon without some adventure? Pick an activity of your choice; whether it is parasailing on Beau Vallon Beach, Mahe, or scuba diving to the shipwrecks and coral reefs in the underwater world, Seychelles has a lot to offer to the adventure junkies.



Isha Goyal appointed CEO and Executive Director of STIC



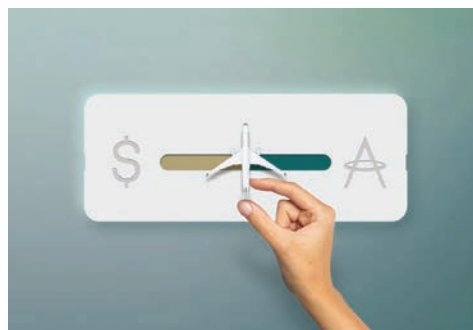
The Board of Directors of the 47-year-old STIC Travel Group announced the appointment of Isha Goyal, as their CEO and Executive Director effective April 1, 2021.

Serving as a Director and key management committee member since 2004, Isha takes over the new role after having worked in STIC

for over 15 years. With the appointment of Isha as CEO and Executive director, the Board of Director confirms their renewed focus on aggressively growing the GSA side of the business, while continuing to prioritise its related divisions in cargo, private charters, leisure and youth travel.

Speaking on the occasion, Subhash Goyal, Chairman of the Board, said, "Isha has been leading the team at STIC these past few years and has effectively navigated the organisation through the toughest part of the pandemic. As she builds a dynamic leadership team in her new role, we are confident in her ability to continue developing the existing portfolio, while bringing new opportunities and innovation to the STIC brand as we countdown to our Golden Jubilee in 2023."

Cathay Pacific launches new payment option 'Miles Plus Cash'



Cathay Pacific is

launching Miles Plus Cash, a brand new payment option that gives customers in India and around the world the

flexibility to pay using a mix of Asia Miles and cash when booking seats on our website.

Starting March 30, 2021, customers will not only be able to purchase tickets using Miles, but also earn further miles and club points on their tickets. With Miles Plus Cash, customers can book any available seat option on any flight – including on partner airlines – with the benefit of instant confirmation. This means a whole lot more choice is now on offer with more access to seat availability, with just a minimum of 5,000 miles required.

After selecting a flight and seat on cathaypacific.com, there is an easy-to-use slider bar that now allows customers to decide exactly how many Miles they wish to spend – ranging from a minimum of 5,000 miles to the entire ticket purchase. So there is maximum flexibility.

Extreme E sporting race 'Desert X Prix' to kick off in AlUla, Saudi Arabia on April 3, 2021

Extreme E's first-ever race is gearing up for an epic opening weekend of action when it all kicks off in AlUla, Saudi Arabia, 3-4 April. There are ten teams signed up for Season 1 including three owned by current and former Formula One World Champions, with Lewis Hamilton, Nico Rosberg and Jenson Button founding X44, Rosberg X Racing and JBXE respectively. Joining those teams will be ABT CUPRA XE, ACCIONA | Sainz XE Team, Andretti United, Chip Ganassi Racing, Hispano Suiza Xite Energy Team, Team TECHEETAH and Veloce Racing.

The Extreme E driver line-up brings together champions from a variety of motorsport disciplines spanning single-seaters to rallying, rallycross, Dakar and sportscar racing: Mattias Ekström and Claudia Hürtgen (ABT CUPRA XE); Carlos Sainz and Laia Sanz (ACCIONA | Sainz XE Team); Timmy Hansen and Catie Munnings (Andretti United); Kyle LeDuc and Sara Price (Chip Ganassi Racing); Oliver Bennett and Christine Giampaoli (Hispano Suiza Xite Energy Team); Jenson Button (JBXE); Johan Kristoffersson and Molly Taylor (Rosberg X Racing); Stéphane Sarrazin and Jamie Chadwick (Veloce Racing); and Sébastien Loeb and Cristina Gutiérrez (X44).

Not only will Extreme E bring short, sharp wheel-to-wheel racing to a global audience through its more than 40 international broadcasters, it has a wider purpose – to highlight the climate emergency affecting everybody worldwide. Through motorsport, the series will showcase electric SUVs racing in some of the most remote corners of the planet that have all been damaged by climate change.

Each destination has been chosen with a different environmental issue in mind: the Desert X Prix in Saudi Arabia will highlight desertification, the Ocean X Prix in Senegal rising sea levels, the Arctic X Prix in Greenland the melting ice cap, the Amazon X Prix in Brazil deforestation and the Glacier X Prix in Patagonia glacial recession.



The vast goals of Saudi Vision 2030 have driven considerable investment by the Kingdom into hosting some of the world's biggest sporting events. The ambition is to introduce millions of Saudis to sport and promote wider sporting activity nationwide to ensure a healthier, more active population.

Members of Extreme E's Scientific Committee have been working with the championship over the last two years to ensure the series leaves a long-lasting positive impact in each location through Legacy Programmes, which include planting one million mangroves in Senegal and reforesting 100 hectares of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. The Legacy Programme plans for Saudi Arabia will be revealed in the days leading up to the first race.

The Desert X Prix, AlUla, kicks off on Saturday 3 April with the qualification rounds, and the final plays out on Sunday 4 April. Extreme E X Prix races are not open to fans to attend in person, but qualifications will be shown live on the Extreme E website, with the Finals broadcast live on MBC in the Middle East.

Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur turns three!



Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur, one of the most preferred hotels in the micro-market of Oragadam, celebrates three years of its inception. Set amidst the industrial corridor of Chennai, Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur, offers a luxurious abode that exudes modernity and tradition. Highly recognised by the guests and patrons, Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur serves as a home away from home for expats, business travellers as well as non-residential guests.

To commemorate the occasion, the hotel organised exciting events and offers throughout the month of March 2021 to enable guests to join the celebration. A charity event to support the New Life Charitable Trust & Old Age Home was organised followed by a 'Swachh Bharat Campaign' around the Oragadam – Sipcot area as the hotel's commitment to maintain cleanliness and hygiene in areas surrounding the property.

Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur also demonstrated its commitment to Accor's global sustainable development program – Planet21 by implementing "Plant for the planet" and "healthy and sustainable food". As part of these programs, the hotel team developed an "Organic Garden" in its own backyard to cater to the "farm to fork" concept where guests are served dishes made from garden-fresh fruits and vegetables like papaya, banana, brinjal, tomatoes, drumstick leaves, basil, etc. that help boost immunity and well-being of our patrons.

A plethora of enticing food & beverage offers like Women's Day special buffet, Biryani festival, Burger & Beer promotion and more are available at Melange restaurant and Hybrid – Café Bar and Lounge to mark the anniversary. An all-inclusive staycation package and day tour offer has been launched for leisure travellers, offering guided tours to Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram with meal inclusions. For the loyal patrons, corporate guests and socialites of the city, themed dinner parties have been organised following the COVID safety norms through the month of March 2021, hosting the who's who of the town.

Turkey launches vaccination registration program for tourism employees



Turkey has announced the rollout of a tourism employee vaccination registration program for tourism employees in coordination with The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Health and Turkey Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA). The Program has launched within the scope of 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' to welcome international travellers for the upcoming tourism season and to ensure the health and safety of tourism employees and its residents remains its utmost priority. The vaccination program will be meticulously carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor. Within the scope of the program, first, all the employees of accommodation facilities, restaurants, tour guides, travel agencies who are registered under the 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' will be vaccinated.

In collaboration with The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and The Ministry of Health recently launched a platform where tourism facilities can register their employees for vaccination. The platform covers all key players of the tourism industry within the Safe Tourism Certification Program including the accommodation facilities, dining facilities, tour and transfer vehicles and tour guides. Official representatives of touristic facilities will be able to register their current employees.

As part of continuing effort to fight against COVID-19 and further enhance its position as one of the world's safest destinations, Turkey is continuing to invest in 'Safe Tourism Certification Program' "which is one of the first and most successful examples in the world in this field. The Country has expanded the scope of the practice and made it compulsory for accommodation facilities with 30 or more rooms. Up to now, more than 8.000 facilities were certified.

As the country is expecting a V-shaped recovery in touristic travels, the tourism workforce is prioritised and will be vaccinated first. Turkey is taking all actions to make sure it remains to be a healthy and safe tourism destination in 2021 and will be one of the top choices as a safe travel option for international travellers.

Maldivian appoints Bird Travels as GSA for Passenger and Cargo in Mumbai

Maldivian, the National Carrier of Republic of Maldives, owned and operated by Island Aviation Services Limited (IAS) appointed Bird Travels, the airline management service arm of Bird Group as its General Sales Agent in Mumbai. The appointment of Bird Travels is a move by the airline to build upon its presence in the international arena.



This GSA's appointment is part of Maldivian's expansion in India, which aims to strengthen the airline's sales team and provide support to the Indian travel trade.

Maldivian is the leading domestic carrier 'connecting the atolls' within the Maldives and providing its customers with safe and convenient air transportation all year round. With a name like Maldivian, it is the obvious choice when the idea of a beach vacation comes to mind. On the international front, the airline currently operates in India and Bangladesh from its main hub at Velana International Airport.

Addressing the airline's forthcoming plans to launch operations in other strategic Indian markets, Aishath Jennifer, Deputy Managing Director of IAS said, "Maldives is the top destination in the South Asian region and the main leisure market for Indian travellers; and this relationship with Bird is a vital one for us and one we believe will flourish."

Rezlive.com signs dynamic distribution agreement with Hilton Worldwide Limited

Travel Designer Group has entered into a direct dynamic distribution agreement with Hilton to distribute Hilton's global hotel inventory in its B2B hotel reservation platform Rezlive.com. The agreement will allow Rezlive.com to access real-time availability and prices of Hilton's hotel inventories.

Hilton's portfolio has over 6400 properties under 18 brands across 119 countries. With over one million rooms worldwide, it is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing hospitality companies. Its portfolio encompasses some of the most prestigious brands such as Waldorf Astoria, LXR, Conrad, Canopy and Hilton Hotels and Resorts.

The dynamic distribution agreement makes Rezlive.com a preferred portal to make reservations in Hilton properties as the portal can fetch real-time availability, best deals and flexible cancellation policies and deliver best-in-class fulfilment and support. On the other hand, the agreement opens up Hilton Properties to over 22000 travel agents across the globe with access to Rezlive.com.

Etihad Airways achieves IATA's Level 4 NDC Certification

Etihad Airways has been awarded the New Distribution Capability (NDC) Level 4 certification, by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

NDC enhances communication between the airline industry and travel agents, which allows for more effective merchandising, competitive propositions and product personalisation.

The NDC standard allows Etihad to transform the way its products are retailed to corporations, leisure and business travellers by addressing the industry's current distribution limitations such as time-to-market and product differentiation.

Level 4 is among the highest NDC certifications awarded by IATA and demonstrates that Etihad's NDC Offer and Order capability now includes full service and change capability. As a

result, partners can now shop, order and amend the order using the NDC connection.



Travel Trade Cricket League (TTCL) 2021 concludes successfully

The TTCL event held on 13th and 14th March had 16 plus teams participating across Delhi and North India at the Warrior Cricket Ground, Baliaswas, Gurugram. The country's biggest tennis ball cricket tournament was won by Team Nijhawan Warriors, and the women's league was won by Team Wonder Women. Team Andaman Experts and Team Women Warriors were felicitated as the Well Played teams.



TAFI voices out over unethical policies of Air India, highlights not opening its Rome, Toronto, Vancouver flights to agents

Reacting over a tweet on Twitter by Air India, "Passengers travelling on AI flights to Rome, Toronto & Vancouver from India may kindly note that booking for these flights will not be available through Travel Agencies based in India. Bookings can be made only through AI Website, Mobile App, Call Centre & Booking Offices." TAFI, one of the country's largest travel associations, has labelled it as a restrictive and destructive policy of Air India.



Pradip Lulla, President of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) stated that there seems to be a dichotomy of their policy and appears to be a misuse of their commercial authority.

According to the association, Air India has completely ignored the support that Indian Travel Agents have been offering to Air India on its weak sectors to help increase the seat factor percentage. The Trade has been patronising the National Carrier but it seems it's a more one-sided affair where the Travel Agent keeps supporting Air India and Air India officers misuse this support and take the Travel Agent for granted.

While the travel agents are clueless about the reasons behind such a decision, it is to be noted that International Carriers maximise the use of the Indian Travel Agent and fill their flights to a high level of seat factor percentage and add to their Revenue Generation through this distribution through all the GDS suppliers, they seemed to have understood the advantages of the Indian Travel Agent and to work closely with them. The association also wanted to know who is monitoring seats not sold in these sectors and what action is being initiated against the officers who are making the wrong policy that hurts the revenue generation of Air India.

"The Air India management should remember that they are dealing with bonafide IATA agents. This is a highly myopic attitude for a Commercial Airline, no wonder they face such losses," expressed Lulla.

TAAI raises concern over booking of VBM flights, commissions and refunds with Air India

Jyoti Mayal, President - TAAI, recently met up personally with Air India-Commercial Director, Meenakshi Mallik, to discuss the way forward, resolve concerns of member agents and seek support from the airline. Many serious concerns were discussed, including refunds



and blocking of inventory for travel agents. Air India cited that many agents were misusing the inventory on the GDS, due to which seats were not available to genuine travellers. However, first, they will be formulating a time limit policy along with a refund mechanism which shall ease the concerns of the member agencies. "Airlines need to work in tandem with the recognised IATA agents & our members. We are confident Air India will also support our industry," said Mayal.

The association has also written down the grievances in a letter to Meenakshi Mallik, mentioning the major challenges being booking of VBM flights only via the Air India website, Refunds on GDS, and demand for 5 per cent agent commission from Air India on the total airfare.

Addressing the commission issue, the letter mentioned that, "Since last year Air India had withdrawn the commission @1.5 per cent and is only giving the same as an incentive on monthly basis. There has to be a fixed formula to this and we reiterate our demand for a minimum of five per cent as a commission on the total airfare. This shall ensure that members who have provided financial security through IATA at a cost-plus their cost of sales and employment, to earn a living are justified, especially by the National Carrier." Also, another major issue which the association has noted is booking special flights only through the airline's website. The association has requested that Air India should permit accredited agents to book Vande Bharat Mission flight seats on the GDS.

"We are hopeful that under your leadership, Air India being the National Carrier of India, gives due respect, an opportunity to accredited agents and ensures rightful ease of doing business, especially during these challenging times," was stated in the letter.



YEARS OF IMPACT