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1



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FOR THE TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL **TravelBizMonitor**

TCS Rollback: Stakeholders Say Partial Relief

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The travel associations have welcomed the government's decision to defer the proposed increase in tax collected at source (TCS) on overseas tour packages from 5% to 20% on

relief this is a partial relief for our travel agents on retaining their competitiveness somewhat against global players," said Mayal.

But, Mayal added, "I think the government needs to consider the compliance deliverables on the agents. The transaction needs to be

take away the fact that the scheme is hastily implemented without fully appreciating the consequences."

"The disparity for the buyers for a high value tour against an Indian agent as compared to overseas tour operators still remains. Any amount

over INR 7 lakh would be liable to 20% TCS. This is way too high a figure. While buying a luxury car there is just 1% TCS, then why such treatment for the travel industry?," asked Prakash. He stated that change in system for revised TCS norms will lead to increase man power cost for the banks and medium and small travel agencies. According to him, "The compliance has

becoming increasingly cumbersome and need to be addressed. We talk about ease of doing business, let's see it being implemented on the ground," said Prakash.

While appreciating the government's decision, Rajiv Mehra President IATO, said, "Though we are happy with this roll back,

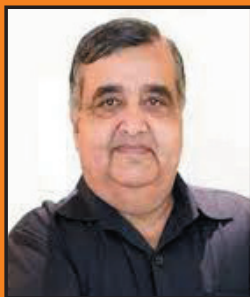
Contd PG. 6 ►



Jyoti Mayal
President
TAAI



Ajay Prakash
President
TAFI



Rajiv Mehra
President
IATO



Mahesh Iyer
Executive Director &
CEO, Thomas Cook (India)



Vishal Suri
MD
SOTC Travel Limited

amounts up to INR 7 lakh per annum. However, they termed it as "partial relief."

Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said that as understood from the government circular, TCS will continue to be 5% up to INR 7 lakh per individual on outbound tours even after October 1, post which 20% will be levied on INR 7 lakh-plus spend. "If this is so, then even if not a full

under the purview of the traveller and the bank. The agents do not have so much back office support."

Hailing the government's decision, Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, said, "We welcome the move to defer the implementation of 20% TCS until 1st October, 2023." Prakash termed the decision as breather and said, "It does not

Solution to the ongoing visa problems not possible overnight: VFS Global COO

Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

The Western Region Chapter of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) organised an interactive session with VFS Global in Mumbai on June 14. A large number of TAFI members were present in the meeting and raised the problems they have been facing on Visa front with Prabuddha Sen, COO, South Asia, VFS Global. Sen, answered a barrage of questions from the members and assured them that he will communicate to the Diplomatic Community about the problems. But, Sen made it clear that a solution is not possible overnight.

Later, speaking to **TravelBiz Monitor**, Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, said that the event is a dialogue between TAFI and VFS Global.

"We have been interacting with VFS Global and they are very helpful," he said. Prakash pointed out that the agents have been facing

is to sit down and understand how they can assist us in streamlining the process. And also to ascertain their limitations in this direction.

At the end of the day the goal of both VFS Global and the travel agents is same. Both are trying to ensure hassle-free travel for the passengers," explained Prakash.

The meeting brought up the problems especially with Schengen visas. "One of the problems here is fingerprints. This (fingerprints) is supposed to be valid for five years, but many times the officials involved in the job can't find it. This means travellers have to visit at the designated place again for the

fingerprints. But getting appointments is also difficult," explained Prakash.

Contd PG. 4 ►



problems on multiple fronts like getting visa appointments, procedures and in some cases extensive documentation etc. "So, the idea

Atout France launches certified B2B e-learning programme in India – “France Connaisseur”

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Atout France – France Tourism Development Agency (Paris) in collaboration with 8 of its worldwide offices – USA, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Middle East, India, Japan and South Africa has launched its certified B2B E-learning programme “France Connaisseur”. This will be the first to be followed by other markets.

This user friendly and interactive platform allows an in-depth discovery of each of France’s diverse regions and its overseas territories. The content includes information on accessibility, accommodation, sightseeing, gastronomy and the savoir-faire of the regions. In addition, the content weaves in informative trivia and lesser-known facts with videos and photos to illustrate the varied touristic offering of the country. The programme is so devised that users can complete it at their own time

and pace without a specific deadline. Upon successful completion of 15 modules, users are required to take a final assessment test before receiving a “France Connaisseur” certificate. For the Indian market, one lucky



winner stands to win a fully sponsored trip to France upon successful completion of the programme.

In the presence of the Consul General of France in Mumbai Mr Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet, Atout France organised a B2B event at the Residence of France in Mumbai on 13 June to announce the launch of the “France Connaisseur” e-learning programme in India.

Sheetal Munshaw, Director Atout France India, shared her thoughts, “We are very excited to launch the e-learning programme in India. The e-learning platform provides an in-depth understanding of France and its regions and for our trade fraternity, an opportunity to enrich their product knowledge of France. It is an endeavor to create an inner circle of “Friends of France” through this initiative and engage with a community that is committed to the cause of showcasing and promoting France as a preferred tourist destination to the Indian audience”. ♦

Noriah Jaafar takes charge as Director for Tourism Malaysia Mumbai

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Tourism Malaysia’s Noriah Jaafar has taken charge as Director for India, to be based at its office in Mumbai.

A dynamic leader at the forefront of Malaysia’s tourism sector, she has been instrumental in promoting and advancing the country’s thriving tourism and travel industry. With a remarkable academic background and extensive experience, she has consistently demonstrated her exceptional leadership skills throughout her career.

Her professional journey began in 2002 when she joined Tourism Malaysia as an Assistant Director at the Convention Division. Her dedication and expertise led to steady promotions and a diverse range of roles, including her role as the Director of Tourism Malaysia’s



Stockholm office in Sweden from October 2014 to March 2017, overseeing operations in Europe. Her international experience also includes managing the Thailand and Myanmar market for nearly two years.

Additionally, throughout her career, Noriah Jaafar has demonstrated exceptional language skills, excelling in both Malay and English. She also possesses a good understanding of Mandarin

and Korean.

Hailing from Pontian, Johor, Malaysia, she has always had a penchant for travel. After obtaining a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from the National University of Malaysia (UKM) in 2001, she embarked on a journey to expand her knowledge and skills. In 2012, Noriah completed her Master’s degree in Tourism Management at MARA University of Technology (UiTM).

As the Director of Tourism Malaysia Mumbai, Jaafar is currently leading efforts to promote Malaysia as a premier tourist destination. Her vision and dedication have positioned her as a significant force in the tourism sector. With her extensive experience and leadership abilities, she will further continue to contribute to the growth and success of Malaysia’s tourism industry. ♦

Solution to the ongoing visa problems....

CONTD from PG 03 ▶

He also said that such issues are beyond the control of VFS Global. “It is the prerogative of the diplomatic mission which decides how many visas to be issued in a particular region for a particular period,” he pointed out.

TAFI requested VFS Global to liaise and communicate frequently with the association so that the members know what is happening on the slots and other things. “Both TAFI and VFS Global agreed upon to create a working group so that we can meet frequently and discuss issues,” said Prakash.

Sen while speaking to TravelBiz Monitor said that the problems of travel agents are as much as his problems. “There wouldn’t have problems if the whole process is smooth and we could have saved a lot of our operating costs. But this is not the case today,” said Sen. He said VFS Global will continue to support agents as they compliment each other. Sen made it amply clear that there is no quick solution to the problems. “We have to continue our efforts,” he said. ♦

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'India must pull out all stops to realise its potential in Medical Tourism'

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

At a Wellness & Medical Value Tourism Conclave organised by the Indian Chambers of Commerce (IMC) at their Mumbai headquarters last month, panellists at a group discussion were unanimous in their opinion that India at large needs to work on the 'image building' at a global level to bridge the gap for Medical Tourism to reach its desired potential.

Ajay Prakash, President, Travel Agents Federation of India, said, "Medical Tourism is under developed in our country. There are serious gaps between our vision and the reality. The perception of India globally needs to be addressed by the government at a larger level. We in the travel industry are doing the support job for Medical Tourism, what is required is better coordination, and cooperation between the stakeholders. This is possible if we use the PPP mode for best

ways to tap the opportunities for Medical Tourism." Prakash called for dedicated spaces at tourism fairs for Medical Tourism, manned by medical practitioners



along with the travel trade to showcase the facilities available in India at various levels for end to end treatment.

Param Kannampilly, CMD, Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., The Fern Hotels & Resorts, said, "India has huge potential for Medical Tourism with the best

doctors and facilities. However, we have only scratched the surface for Medical Tourism and the waiting time for approvals is enormous." Kannampilly went

on to say that long-staying guests are a key requirement for the hospitality industry, and hospitals need beds to be available to welcome new patients, therefore the post-operative care aspect of Medical Tourism needs a serious relook.

Moderator Farhat Jamal,

Chairman, Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee, IMC, said, "The hospitality industry is not even tapping into the post-operative care opportunities, an important area for hotels to start focusing on."

Vivek Braganza, Assistant Vice President, Shangri-La Group, shared, "The challenge is the very opportunity that we can tap into. There is a space to fine tune the consumer experience. Doctors at the hospital are the last leg of the value chain, it is the destination experience that comes first. It is all about creating an impression about India." Citing the example of Singapore for its Medical Tourism infrastructure,

Braganza said the city-state ranks excellent on the three aspects of destination attractiveness, safety & security, value of care. "India needs to improve further on the destination attractiveness aspect if Medical Tourism has to reach its desired potential." ♦

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CONTD from PG 03 ▶

TCS Rollback: Stakeholders...

our long standing demand is that the TCS should be reduced to 2.5% as the main objective of the government is to bring more players into the tax net, and if the government reduces the TCS percentage on overseas tour packages, higher number of people will book through the Indian tour operators who are registered in India, instead of booking directly with the foreign tour operators or online tour operators who are not registered in India, and are therefore not liable to collect tax at source."

IATO also advocates that the international credit card should not be included in the LRS i.e. that was being followed before May 16, 2023 should continue. The new taxation regime would put the onus of collection of tax on the tour operators for which they neither have the band with or the resources required for implementing

it. "The tax collection should foster ease of doing business while the new regime would work cross purpose to it. We would want the government to reconsider this aspect as well," added Mehra.

Mahesh Iyer, Executive Director & CEO, Thomas Cook (India) Limited, believes that Government's announcement to defer the proposed increase in the TCS rate for remittances under LRS to Oct 1, 2023, will help create level playing field. "We appreciate the government's initiative that will help create a level playing field - taking on board inputs from relevant stakeholders, including travel and authorised foreign exchange players," said Iyer. He added, "As India's leading foreign exchange provider, we believe this positive announcement also brings in much need clarity with Prepaid Forex cards (the preferred mode of transactions for overseas

travellers) now being treated on par with credit/debit cards."

Vishal Suri, MD, SOTC Travel Limited, said, "We welcome the government's announcement that highlights no change in the rate of TCS under LRS for all purposes and also for all overseas tour packages across all modes of payment for amounts up to Rs. 7 Lakh per individual per year. Further, more time has been given for implementation to ensure that all systems are in place for revised TCS rates & for the inclusion of credit card payments in LRS till October 1, 2023."

Suri urged the government to bring overseas tour operators within the TCS ambit while implementing the revised credit card guidelines to ensure a level- playing field for India-based travel companies. ♦

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OF REAL MEAT AND TOFFEE

Industry meets need to step out of the usual routine and open up to proactively changing ground situations outside their usual domain.

Let's face it. On the best of our city roads speed limits are enforced not as much by laws as by sheer traffic congestion.

Tourism is all about perception. And let's get real- the perception of India is not good. How do we alter it- since tourism will be the direct beneficiary of better conditions of road driving?

If people behave better on the city metro trains it is because the rules are clear, unambiguous, and enforced strictly. There are similar rules for the highways and city roads but they don't seem to work. What prevents our travel associations and pressure groups from making presentations to police, and local governments and chalking out plans for stricter enforcement of laws?

Often during travel association meets and conventions the main focus is on extracting concessions, benefits, and support from government sources. There is, however, a sporadic and perfunctory effort to educate members about opportunities of business as well.

The essential element of community responsibility to ensure discipline in civic life remains distant on any agenda. In fact, it is seen as irrelevant and superfluous to the industry's domain, priority and focus. 'It's the government's job' is the usual refrain.

Perhaps the time has come when travel meets turn their attention to larger issues than mere bread and butter. The interesting thing is that by going beyond their brief, the chances of ultimately influencing larger and better outcomes that benefit the business grow exponentially. Such efforts are not a token toffee but it's the real meat on the table.

A disciplined nation on the roads directly becomes a magnet for tourists. The most important and relevant aspect of disciplined traffic is that it becomes the springboard for a sense of regularity and compliance in all other aspects of life as well. Now that real-time travel industry meets is happening once again I hope they set aside special sessions to explore these options.

Indeed, there are enough brains in the fraternity to determine how exactly.

Anurag Yadav
Industry Expert

Anurag Yadav is a travel author and columnist, writing on hospitality and design. An avid traveller, he has published five books and divides his time equally between Delhi and London.

The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.

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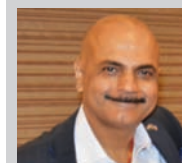
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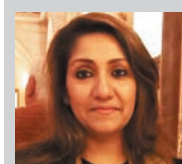
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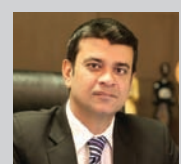
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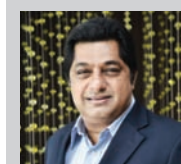
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'People in major metropolitan regions of India are now seeking experiential travel opportunities'

Tier - II cities of India have immense potential for outbound travel; however, limited awareness about new products and destinations hinders its growth. Our Online Training Program will help tap this market says newly - appointed **Noriah Jaafar, Director for Tourism Malaysia Mumbai**, in a conversation with **Disha Shah Ghosh.**

Q How important is India as a source market for Tourism Malaysia and what is your priority for this market?

India holds a significant position as one of our top 4 markets, offering immense potential in terms of population and geography for attracting Indian tourists to Malaysia. It is noteworthy that as of 12 December 2022, only around 7.2 percent (approximately 96 million) of the total population of India, which stands at 1,420,200,276, possess a valid passport. These statistics underscore the vast untapped opportunities in the outbound Indian market, further highlighting the promising prospects for promoting Malaysia as a preferred destination.

Q What are the reasons for hosting an Online Training Programme at this juncture? Enlist some of its salient features.

We have noticed a trend among Indian residents in major metropolitan areas, where they have already embarked on international travel at least once and are now seeking experiential travel opportunities. In Tier II cities, there is immense potential for outbound travel; however, limited awareness about new products and destinations hinders its growth. To address this, we have developed an Online Training Programme to tap into this market and enhance awareness.

Through this comprehensive Online Training Programme, we are confident in our ability to increase the number of Indian travellers visiting Malaysia and provide them with enriching experiences.

Q How would the Indian travel trade benefit participating in the online education programme?

By enrolling in our online education program, Indian travel agents will gain in-depth knowledge about the various products and attractions that Malaysia has to offer. They will also receive comprehensive

interests and preferences of every traveller, ensuring a memorable experience for all.

Q In terms of trade and consumer outreach, what are some of the activities chalked out?

As we rightly say "Malaysia – Truly Asia" because you name an activity and Malaysia has it. Whether you're seeking a family-friendly getaway, a romantic honeymoon, a culturally rich Indian wedding, and especially solo travellers who wish to explore with the freedom of self-drive, Malaysia has it all. The country's stunning islands and beaches cater to families, while luxurious escapes await honeymooners. Additionally, Malaysia has gained popularity as a preferred destination for Indian corporate MICE events.

Q With regards to the air connectivity, what enhancements in flight capacity have been made on the India route?

“ Our target audience encompasses individuals from all walks of life, including families, couples planning weddings, organizations seeking MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) venues, Gen Z adventure enthusiasts, and golf enthusiasts looking for luxury experiences ”

travel agents in promoting and selling Malaysia as a destination, ensuring a seamless and satisfying experience for their customers.

Q Which are some of the traveller segments that you are targeting in India?

In the post-Covid era, Tourism Malaysia is actively promoting the concept of 'Malaysia - Beyond Kuala Lumpur,' making it an ideal destination for a wide range of travellers. Our target audience encompasses individuals from all walks of life, including families, couples planning weddings, organizations seeking MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) venues, Gen Z adventure enthusiasts, and golf enthusiasts looking for luxury experiences. With our diverse offerings, Malaysia caters to the varied

When it comes to air connectivity from India to Malaysia, we have a robust network with approximately 159 direct flights operating on a weekly basis, offering a combined seat capacity of 28,362. In addition to our Malaysia Airlines, Batik Air, and Air Asia, we are pleased to have domestic carriers like Indigo providing direct flights to Malaysia.

Exciting news awaits as well, with the upcoming merger of Air India and its alliances, further expanding the direct connectivity between India and Malaysia.

So it won't be just Kuala Lumpur that benefits from these direct flights, but also popular destinations like Langkawi and Penang, making it more accessible and appealing for Indian travellers seeking an unforgettable experience. ♦

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Bullish on India, Minor Hotels keen on signing more deals

Disha Shah Ghosh | Mumbai

After having forayed into India with hotels in Bodh Gaya and recently in Jaipur, Minor Hotels is open to exploring more lucrative deals in this market.

During her visit to India recently, Marion Walsh Hedouim, VP Communications & PR for Minor Hotels, said, "We are certainly interested in India, and are looking for greenfield opportunities

or conversion options for our eight brands. Our CEO was in India last month to meet with prospective partners. Minor hasn't been in Mumbai since pre-Covid, and now the time is opportune to reconnect with the trade. We have recently announced a launch in Jaipur. We are interested in the outbound traffic from here since India is the number one source market for Thailand." Minor Hotels is headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand.

Talking about the traveller segments, she said the Minor Hotels in Thailand offer opportunities for hosting destination weddings, and recent opening in Jaipur will cater to the domestic wedding segment in India. "We have hotels suited the weddings and MICE clients from India."

Commenting on the acquisition of the NH Hotels brand, Hedouim said that it has served as a three-fold advantage – diversification in

the geographies in Europe and Brazil, introducing the Asia guest to the European hospitality and gaining foothold in the corporate segment since Minor is a leisure heavy brand. "We are looking at cross over hotel opportunities." ♦

disha.shah@saffronsynergies.in

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Global Travel Technologies Market projected to touch USD 13 billion by 2033 : Report

According to Fact.MR, a market research and competitive intelligence provider, the global travel technologies market is anticipated to achieve a valuation of USD 13 billion by 2033, expanding at 8% CAGR over the next ten years.

Travel technology applies to information and communication technology in the travel and hospitality sectors. Solution providers offer various software and applications to travel companies to plan and book flights and tours, facilitate seamless transactions, and for other tour-related processes. The airline industry widely uses travel technology solutions, which rely heavily on online reservation systems.

Substantial development in the travel and tourism sector and an increasing requirement for automation across industries are major factors propelling the global demand for travel technologies. Moreover, the growing adoption of SaaS-based models and artificial intelligence (AI) is fuelling market growth. AI provides interactive conversational systems, such as chatbots and virtual support agents, which can directly address the consumer's needs, improving their overall experience.

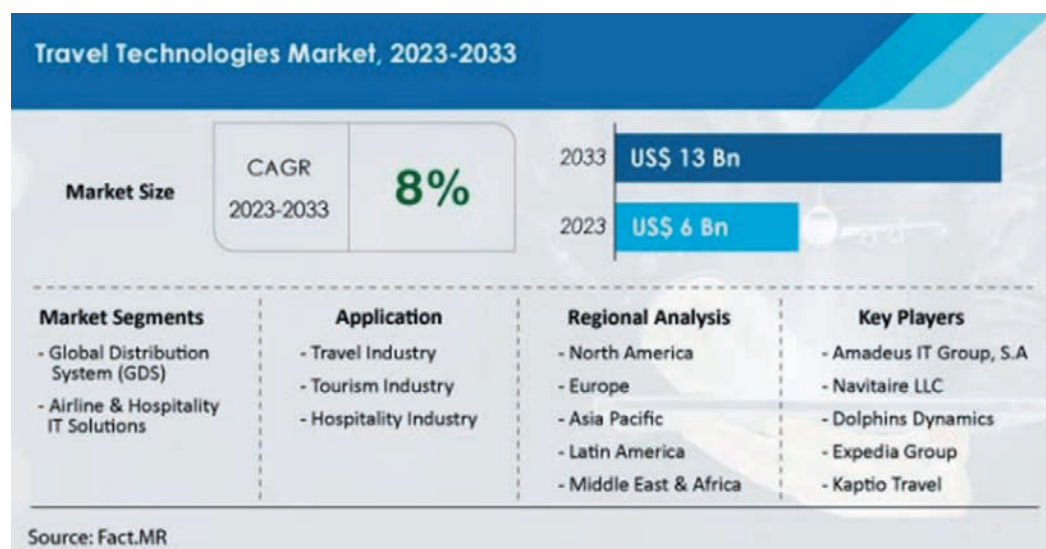
Technological improvements such as the use of recognition technologies, incorporation with the Internet of Things (IoT), and the adoption of smart devices are having a beneficial impact

on market growth. Numerous facial and fingerprint recognition technologies are used in hotels and other public areas to automate payment processes, check-in, and check-out. Other factors, such as rapid urbanization, rising consumer spending power, and intensive R&D activities, are expected to bolster market growth over the coming years.

"The main factors boosting global travel technologies market growth are steadily expanding travel & tourism industry, rising demand for online travel bookings, and increasing usage of advanced technologies such as AI and IoT," says a Fact.MR analyst.

Key Takeaways from Market Study

- The global travel technologies market is valued at USD 6 billion in 2023.
- Worldwide demand for travel technologies is estimated to evolve at a CAGR of 8% from 2023 to 2033 (forecast period).
- The global market is forecasted to garner USD 13 billion by 2033.
- The global distribution system (GDS) segment is projected to evolve at a CAGR of 6.1% from 2023 to 2033.
- North America captured a 39% global market share in 2022. ♦





“ We constantly analyse the various risks involved while travelling and accordingly design exclusive offerings like our global assistance services to alleviate these risks. Also, we conduct regular engagement and training programmes for our business partners to aid upselling and cross-selling ”

Asego as their preferred travel assistance and insurance provider?

To start with, I believe it is our sole focus on travel insurance business that sets Asego apart in the industry. This vision and the close ties with our partners allows us to step into the travellers'

conduct regular engagement and training programmes for our business partners to aid upselling and cross-selling. We're happy that this has positively reflected in their ancillary services revenue. But, most importantly, it is the trust our travel agent partners have in us that gives us the edge.

‘Our constant endeavour is to design innovative travel assistance and insurance solutions’

We are proud to be serving our clients with more than 200 customised products catering to leisure, business and student travel says **Dev Karvat – Founder & CEO, Asego,** while speaking to **TravelBiz Monitor**

Q How has been your experience in the Indian Travel Industry for the last 23 years?

Just like the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, we ventured into the Travel Assistance and Insurance market with just one office and a handful of passionate individuals. Today, we stay committed with a vision to transform the way people perceive travel insurance backed by over 350 employees spread across 40+ branches in India. I am extremely thankful to the Indian travel fraternity for the acceptance and relentless support we have received in our journey until now. As a way of giving back, we have constantly strived to design innovative travel assistance and insurance solutions that add value to their business. We take immense pride in the fact that Asego is one of the biggest revenue generators in the ancillary services business. It has been an extremely gratifying experience for us to be a part of this prestigious industry.

Q Why do you think the travel fraternity considers

shoes, gauge their requirements and curate innovative and relevant products and services for them. Today, we are proud to be serving our clients with more than 200 customised products catering to leisure, business and student travel.

Besides, we constantly analyse the various risks involved while travelling and accordingly design exclusive offerings like our global assistance services to alleviate these risks. Also, we

Q If you had to point out the one thing that has stayed with you in the last two decades, what would it be?

I have always believed any company that continuously strives on fresh and innovative ideas to keep pace with consumer's requirements will flourish and grow.

It is this very passion for client centricity and innovation that has played a huge role in our journey so far. From the very beginning, our goal has been quite clear – to be a strategic partner for our business associates and not a mere service provider. ♦

“ I am extremely thankful to the Indian travel fraternity for the acceptance and relentless support we have received in our journey until now. As a way of giving back, we have constantly strived to design innovative travel assistance and insurance solutions that add value to their business. We take immense pride in the fact that Asego is one of the biggest revenue generators in the ancillary services business ”



'Wherever TAAI has had a Convention, the footfalls have not doubled, but multiplied'

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The annual 67th TAAI Convention, prominently sought after by NTOs from across the world and the first major industry event from India post-Covid to travel overseas, is all set to mark its second attendance in the island nation after a gap of 20 years. The event, scheduled in Colombo from July 06-09, according to TAAI, has generated great enthusiasm, both among its members as well as the host destination.

Speaking about the Colombo event, TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal, "We have already reached the capacity of 500 delegates for this Convention in Sri Lanka. People in the tourism sector understand that TAAI Conventions are fun as well as meaningful with the immense power of knowledge, & certainly the strongest networking event in the industry."

The 67th TAAI Convention is also touted to bring massive inbound dividend to Sri Lanka from the Indian outbound market. "Sri Lanka will benefit immensely from this Convention as nearly 600 tourism stakeholders are visiting the destination along with 50 media professionals – who will all play a very important role. This is what we believe in. We believe in Synergy, we believe in Collaboration, we believe in Co-

ordinations, we believe in working together. If Sri Lanka is going through challenging times, we certainly need to be a good neighbour & extend all our support and ensure that it revives quickly," Mayal said.

Furthermore, the event will have up to 200 tourism stakeholders from Sri Lanka who



Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI

will interact, network and conduct business with Indian tour operators. "We have seen that wherever we have had a Convention, the footfalls have not doubled, but multiplied. I, as the President of TAAI truly believe in 'One Earth One Family," said Mayal. Curated around theme, 'Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives' the 67th TAAI Convention and Exhibition

in Colombo, Sri Lanka is touted to pitch for destinations beyond the usual and long-haul destinations, especially keeping the visa hassles and high-ticket prices in mind and open up India tourism to destinations closer to home. "These countries have huge tourism potential, and we must strengthen our tourism ties with them, not just for outbound, but also inbound. This is mainly going to be the focus of our Convention in Sri Lanka this year," adds Mayal while also saying that the Convention this year has an interesting line-up of sessions and speakers that will add great excitement to the event.

Mayal says that the tourism industry is "done and over" with the pandemic and TAAI is keen for the industry to get back to its feet at the earliest. And therefore, she says that while the pandemic was tragic, brutal and truly devastating, it is now time to move forward. "The focus of the Convention this year is completely Futuristic. When we are talking about Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives, I am talking about crossing borders as countries because Tourism doesn't need any borders. Tourism brings prosperity and peace to every country, and it is a highly economic-driven sector, which is the backbone of every country. We need to focus on how growth can happen and not live in our past." ♦

Team TAAI welcomes Members to 67th Convention with Renewed Vigour



Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI

"With the global aviation and economies opening up for tourism with relaxation of travel restrictions, including India, the endemic of Covid-19 seems not so far. Who other than us the travel trade of India, needs to reiterate with confidence to the traveller, by ourselves travelling with renewed vigour. We at TAAI have taken this rightful opportunity to hold the 67th Convention of TAAI at Colombo, Sri Lanka from July 6-9, 2023 so as to facilitate international mobility amongst our members and the trade at large. This shall give us all a platform to promote to 'Transcending Borders, Transforming Lives' with all our stakeholder partners in India and overseas."



Bettiah Lokesh
Hon. Secretary General, TAAI

"We look forward to active participation from all our members at the 67th Convention of TAAI. Sri Lanka has always been one of the favourite destinations for Indians and now with the international skies opening up, it is an ideal destination for hosting the convention. Sri Lanka's close proximity to India along with its focus on boosting regional tourism, strengthening bilateral relations and developing trade, investments and tourism makes it an important market for our country. The convention will provide a wonderful opportunity for our delegates to experience the serene beauty of this country."



Shreeram Patel
Hon. Treasurer, TAAI

"The Convention will present an ideal opportunity to collaborate for trade and business, with the fast-growing Indian outbound Industry, and to promote India as well.

Those looking forward to learning, networking and exploring and connecting with new business opportunities and stakeholders must plan their participation and not miss out on attending this important convention. No better time than now to let the world knows that Indians are ready to travel and to welcome travellers again."

The President and PM of Sri Lanka to grace TAAI Convention

TBM Staff | Mumbai

The President of Sri Lanka H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe will be the Chief Guest at the opening ceremony of the 67th Convention of TAAI, being held in Colombo from July 6 to 9, 2023. He shall be addressing the delegates and welcoming them to Sri Lanka.

H.E. High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka Gopal Bagley shall also be present and shall be gracing the inaugural ceremony, addressing the delegate members of TAAI. Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Dinesh Gunawardena shall be a part of the event on 7th July'23 and the event celebrations and the dinner is being hosted at Lemon Trees, The Prime Ministers Residence for all delegates of the Indian Travel Congress.

As the date for the upcoming 67th TAAI Convention and Exhibition in Colombo draws closer, the Association has lined up an interesting and invigorating mix of Knowledge Session and Speakers, who will keep the delegates engaged during the Convention. Scheduled to take place from July 6 – 9, 2023, the Convention has received overwhelming response and the delegation size has 500 stakeholder member partners from India.

Speaking about the focus of the Convention, Jyoti Mayal, President TAAI says, "The focus of the Convention this year is completely Futuristic. The pandemic is done and over with. While it was tragic, brutal and truly devastating, the time is now right for us to move forward. When we are talking about Transcending Borders, we refer to the crossing borders of countries because Tourism doesn't need any borders. Tourism brings prosperity and peace to every country and it is a

highly economic driven sector, which is the backbone of every country. But we at TAAI, would like to go beyond the Transcending Borders, because even in life, you have to transcend all your thoughts and literally break the glass ceiling and this is where tourism is going. Tourism is changing dramatically. People are not interested in the same type of travel. They are looking for new adventures and fresh destinations. So just as you have evolved, your mind needs to evolve too. We need to focus on how growth can happen and not live in our past. We need to Transcend minds to Transform lives."

The Business Sessions lined up for the Convention will focus on topics - 'India Tourism Vision 2047: A Transformed Landscape of Experiences and Connections'; The boundless potential of the skies; Experiential Travel – A Paradigm Shift in Tourism; NEXTAAI – The TAAI Members' Technology initiative; Differentiating Travel – Perspectives from Industry Experts; Transcending Borders – Strengthening International Relations for a Transformed World and TAAI – The Road Ahead.

Some of the Speakers includes Arvind Singh, former Secretary Tourism, Government of India; Madhavan Menon, Managing Director, Thomas Cook India Limited; Nipun Agarwal, Chief Commercial and Transformation Officer, Air India and . K.B. Kachru, Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor – South Asia, Radisson Hotels Group, Ashish Gupta, Consulting CEO, FAITH; Pieter Elbers, CEO Indigo; Amitabh Khosla – Country Director - India, IATA; Praveen Iyer – Co-Founder & Chief Commercial Officer, Akasa Air; Rajeev Bhatia – Chief Commercial Officer,



Amadeus India; Vinay Malhotra – Head of Global Sales, Indigo; Richard Nuttall – CEO, Sri Lankan Airlines; Kapil Kaul, CEO and Director, CAPA India; Ajeet Bajaj, Dev Karvat – Founder and CEO Asego Insurance; G B Srithar – Regional Director, India, Middle East & South Asia, Singapore Tourism Board; Commander Nevil Malao - Senior Vice President, JM Baxi & Co.; Noel Swain, COO – Passport, eVisa, Identity & Citizen Services, VFS Global; Sandeep Dwivedi – CEO – InterGlobe Technology Quotient, to name a few.

On the final day of the Convention, there will be Special Address by Harin Fernando, Honourable Minister of Tourism and Lands, Sri Lanka. Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI shares, "Our convention will serve as a conduit for fostering stronger bi-lateral relationships between India and Sri Lanka. With around 200 Sri Lankan tourism stakeholders participating in the B2B sessions, we expect this event to be a fruitful venue for networking and establishing strong business relations. Such interaction is vital in harnessing the growth of inbound and outbound travel from India and channelling it towards destinations that offer new, exciting experiences."

Mayal added, "The Indian market will undoubtedly become one of the most sought-after markets globally, given the immense potential for outbound travel. As we all prepare to gather in Colombo, let us seize this opportunity to explore these trends, share our insights, and work together to shape a future where travel transcends borders and truly transforms lives." ♦

Sri Lankan Airlines to soar new heights

TBM Staff | Hyderabad

Sri Lankan Airlines, the national carrier of Sri Lanka, has continued to make significant achievements and expand its route network in 2023.

One of the notable achievements of Sri Lankan Airlines in 2023 is the recognition it has received for its service excellence. The airline has been consistently ranked among the best in the world for its customer service, punctuality, and overall passenger experience. This achievement is a testament to the airline's dedication to providing a seamless and enjoyable journey for its passengers.

In terms of expansion, Sri Lankan Airlines has introduced several new routes to its

network, enhancing connectivity and opening up new travel opportunities. One of the noteworthy additions is the launch of direct flights between Colombo, the capital city of Sri Lanka, and major destinations such as New York, Los Angeles, and Sydney. Furthermore, the airline has also focused on expanding its regional reach. It has introduced new routes to cities in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, enabling travellers to connect easily to various destinations within these regions. This expansion strategy has allowed Sri Lankan Airlines to tap into emerging markets and cater to the growing demand for air travel in these regions.

To attract a larger number of Indian customers, Sri Lankan Airlines has announced plans to expand its operations to three additional cities in India, including Ahmedabad. Currently,

the airline operates flights from nine Indian cities, and this expansion aims to further strengthen its presence in the Indian market.

While speaking about the demand, Dimuthu Tennakoon,

SriLankan Airlines, Head of Worldwide Sales And Distribution said, "Around 55 to 65 percent of our flights [in Airbus A330-300s] to Sydney with three dailies and a daily to Melbourne comprise passengers from Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, and several secondary Indian cities. The demand from India is so strong and growing." ♦



Dimuthu Tennakoon
Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution, SriLankan Airlines

Sri Lanka emerges as an attractive MICE destination

TBM Staff | Mumbai

Sri Lanka has emerged as an attractive destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) events in recent years. Its combination of natural beauty, cultural heritage, modern infrastructure, and warm hospitality make it an ideal choice for hosting various types of corporate gatherings.

Sri Lanka is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, making it easily accessible from major international hubs. Bandaranaike International Airport, located near the capital city of Colombo, is well-connected to many global destinations, facilitating smooth travel for MICE delegates.

Besides location, the country also has modern infrastructure, including world-class convention centers, luxury hotels, and state-of-the-art facilities. Sri Lanka has made significant investments in developing venues suitable for hosting large conferences, exhibitions, and meetings.

Sri Lanka offers a diverse range of locations for MICE events. From vibrant cities like Colombo to scenic coastal towns like Galle and cultural sites like Kandy, event organizers have numerous options to choose from based on their specific requirements and themes.

As far as accommodation and hospitality are concerned, Sri Lanka offers a range of accommodation options to suit different budgets and preferences. From luxury hotels and resorts to boutique properties and eco-friendly lodges etc. Take the example of Cinnamon Grand Colombo, the property is just 35 kilometers from the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA). The luxurious Cinnamon Grand Colombo is located in the heart of Colombo City's business, shopping and entertainment center. Elegantly designed, spacious rooms at the Cinnamon Grand offer a wide range of in-room amenities, king size beds, and a pillow menu to ensure guest's comfort and pleasure. All rooms feature carefully attended-to bathrooms and toiletries, large flat screen TVs, a mini bar, and WiFi access. The hotel's 14 restaurants provide an

electric mix of international cuisines, including award-winning Sri Lankan seafood at the Lagoon Restaurant & Garden, and the best of European fine dining at the London Grill.

Similarly, Shangri-La Colombo presents a new level of luxury in the city. Located in the heart of the business and entertainment district, the hotel offers the various collection of guestrooms with stunning views of the Indian Ocean, Beira Lake or cityscape. The property has 3 innovative restaurants and 2 bars, and it is Colombo's largest and stylish event spaces.

Set to be the city's dining destination, Shangri-La Colombo's restaurants and bars include Capital Bar & Grill, presenting tasty steaks and seafood grills with a wide selection of whiskey. Sapphyr Lounge is a place to meet with friends and family over simple indulgences. There is a Pool Bar overlooking the Indian Ocean and it is perfect for light refreshments. The hotel also offers direct access to the most extensive international shopping mall in Sri Lanka, Shangri-La Colombo's own One Galle Face Mall. ♦



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Paris: A Captivating Blend of Elegance, Culture, and Romance

TBM Staff | Paris

Paris, the enchanting capital of France, is a city that epitomizes elegance, culture, and romance. With its iconic landmarks like the Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum, and Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris offers a breathtaking blend of history, art, and architectural marvels. From charming neighborhoods and picturesque cafes to world-class cuisine and fashion, Paris - the city of love continues to captivate visitors with its timeless beauty.

Musée Grévin

Musée Grévin is a renowned wax museum that houses an impressive collection of lifelike celebrity figures. With over 200 wax sculptures, the museum offers visitors a chance to encounter their favorite stars up close. The Hall of Columns, an architectural masterpiece, showcases a grand display of historical and contemporary personalities, including notable Indians like Mahatma Gandhi, Shahrukh Khan, and Ranveer Singh. Each wax figure is meticulously crafted to capture the essence and likeness of the celebrities, creating a surreal and immersive experience for visitors. Musée Grévin is a must-visit attraction for both art enthusiasts and fans of popular culture.

Hotel de la Marine

Hotel de la Marine, a historic monument in Paris, has undergone a magnificent refurbishment since last year, restoring its grandeur and preserving its rich heritage. The site now houses the captivating Al Thani Collection, showcasing exquisite jewelry and precious artifacts from India and the Middle East. Additionally, visitors can explore the Intendant's



Apartments, a stunning example of the Age of Enlightenment, with its opulent interiors and intricate designs. Hotel de la Marine offers a fascinating glimpse into history and art, making it a must-visit destination for cultural enthusiasts in Paris.

Crazy Horse Show

Founded in 1951, located on the Avenue George V between the Eiffel Tower and the Champs-Élysées, Crazy Horse Paris is the most emblematic of all Parisian cabarets. Main characters and sparkling performers, Crazy Horse Paris' dancers grow to cinematic dimensions on stage, dressed in kaleidoscopic plays of light, graphical light projections and costumes so small, they could be stashed away in a shoe box. Zany and amazing guest artists, as well as a master of ceremonies who, through song, accompanies the audience throughout the evening. Totally Crazy audaciously combines the cabaret's timeless classics with must-see contemporary performances by world-renowned creators. Crazy Horse Paris invites audiences to escape their everyday worries and dive into the heart of a sparkling and oh-so-glamorous performance, celebrating 72 years of creativity.

Toot Bus



Discover the enchanting city of Paris aboard Toot Bus, a leading hop-on hop-off sightseeing tour. With panoramic views from an open-top bus, one can explore iconic landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum, and Notre-Dame Cathedral. Toot Bus is committed to sustainable tourism, promoting eco-friendly practices and reducing their carbon footprint.

FlyView Paris

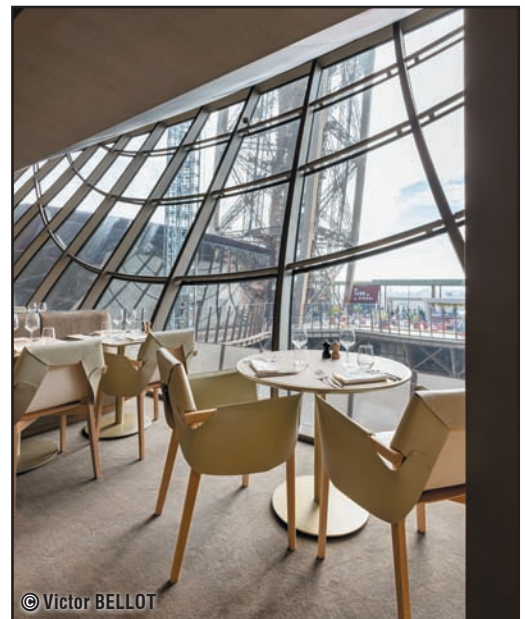
Embark on a breathtaking journey across France with FlyView Paris. Using cutting-edge virtual reality technology, FlyView offers a unique and immersive experience where one can soar above iconic



landmarks, picturesque landscapes, and historical sites. From the comfort of their state-of-the-art equipment, visitors can witness the beauty of France.

Madame Brasserie

Indulge in a memorable dining experience at Madame Brasserie, a charming restaurant located on the 1st floor of the Eiffel Tower. Known for its delectable French cuisine and warm ambiance, Madame Brasserie offers a perfect setting for a closing dinner to celebrate special moments. From classic dishes to innovative culinary creations. With a menu curated to please discerning palates and an attentive staff, Madame Brasserie ensures an unforgettable dining experience in the enchanting city of Paris. ♦



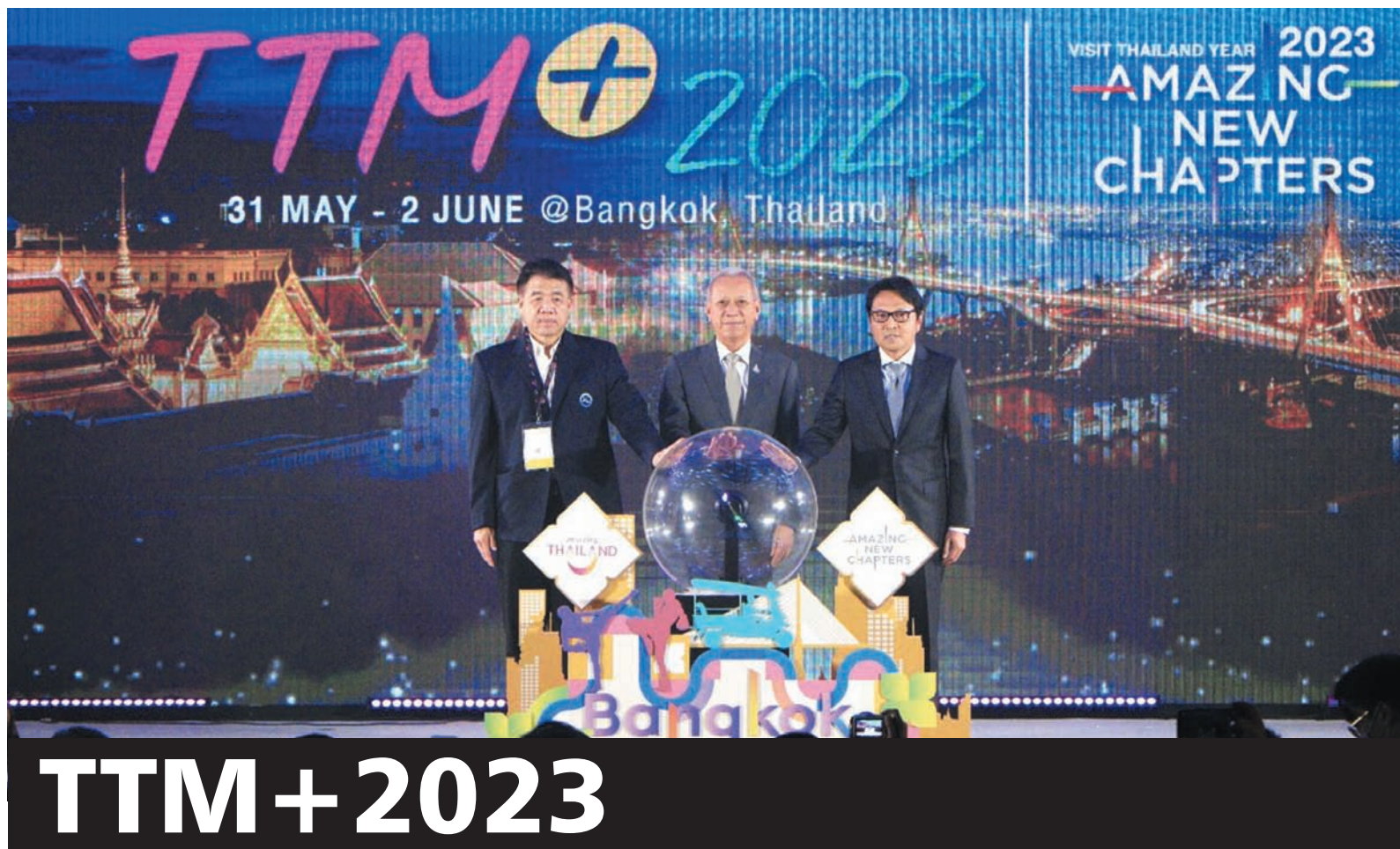
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TTM+2023 Showcasing Thailand's Effort toward Sustainable Tourism

The event ushered in a new era of business opportunities for buyers from across the world as the Kingdom showcases its newest products and services.

✍️.....Prasenjit Chakraborty | Mumbai

Exhibitors' View

"The exhibition is very good. There is a sense of optimism as tourists are coming back to Thailand. For us, the Indian market is very promising especially for the high-end segment. Travellers of this segment prefer the Chiang Rai region. The exhibition will help us to recover from the Covid-induced losses,"

Eric Hallin, General Manager, The Legend Chiang Rai

"The event is well organised. We have received a very good response from the visitors across the world. The exhibition helped us to meet our known clients after a gap of 4 years. Besides meeting our known clients, we also met many new clients which will help us to strengthen our business. I also met many new clients from India as well,"

Sarinphat Thongsiriwaranon, CEO, Khaoyai Nature Life & Tours Operators

The Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2023, the country's leading B2B travel Show took place between May 31 and June 2 at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok. The event ushered in a new era of business opportunities for buyers from around the world looking for the meaningful, one-of-a-kind travel experiences in Thailand and within the ASEAN region.

The theme of TTM+ 2023 was 'Visit Thailand Year 2023: Amazing New Chapters' as part of the Tourism Authority of Thailand's (TAT) strategy to highlight the country's ongoing efforts towards a meaningful travel direction. The objective is to elevate supply and distribute tourism revenue countrywide, while creating sustainability by leveraging the kingdom's 5F soft-power foundations - Food, Film, Festival, Fight and Fashion.

The 2023 edition of TTM+ witnessed a strong growth of participants, 374 buyers from 50 countries, 435 booths of quality sellers from across Thailand and the Greater Mekong Sub-region, and 112 media from overseas and in Thailand.

Presiding over the opening ceremony, H.E. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Thailand's Minister of Tourism and Sports, said, "The TTM Plus 2023 is a showcase of the Amazing New Chapters of Thailand's tourism towards sustainability and being a quality destination. While

continuing to be an important platform for all participants to foster a long-lasting business relationship, the event is also envisioned to highlight the leveraging of sustainable standards, technology and Thai soft powers to transform Thailand's tourism sector."

This year, the TTM+ has returned to Bangkok after it was relocated to Chiang Mai, Pattaya, and then Phuket in previous years as part of the TAT's strategy to promote provincial destinations. This provides a great time for overseas buyers and media to first-hand experience the growth of facilities, infrastructure, and business prospects that Bangkok has to offer after the travel and tourism industry has returned to normal.

The opening day programme included Thailand product update and TTM Talk, and the Greater Mekong Sub region (GMS) product update presented by Cambodia. The TTM Talk on the subject of 'Building A Sustainable Future for Tourism with Innovation Technology' was presented by Google Cloud Thailand.

Tanes Petsuwan, TAT Deputy Governor for International Marketing - Asia and the South Pacific, said, "The TTM Plus is one of Thailand's most significant B2B travel trade events, and has gained its own reputation as a 'must-attend' on the annual travel trade calendar. This year's event marks the 20th time that it is being held and continues to maintain Thailand's market position, as well as help promote travel within the ASEAN region."

He also said, "The TAT is targeting THB 3 trillion in revenue from the tourism industry next year, with 2 trillion from the international market and 1 trillion from the domestic market."

Steps on Sustainability

The Thailand Pavilion, which continues to be a centrestage for business negotiations, also reinforces the country's direction towards sustainability led by technology, digital transformation, and sustainable practices.

Thailand's tourism towards sustainability comprises a wide range of destinations and activities that deliver sustainability experiences, including exploring local community by bike at Bang Krachao, Samut Prakan; adventurer travel in Umphang, Tak; slow life at low-carbon destination on Ko Mak in Trat; and exploring the Little Amazon and surfing at the Memories beach in Takua Pa, Phangnga.

TAT is also developing a national drive that encompasses the entire Thai tourism industry with the development of the Sustainable Tourism Goals (STGs) based on the 17 goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations. Among the new

Buyers' View

"It's a very good exhibition. I am very impressed the way they organise it. The event clearly tells us that Thailand is not just Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya but it is more than that. I must say it is a successful visit for me,"

Manish Gupta, Partner, Encore Holidays

"I must say it is well organised. Many hotels have participated in this exhibition. No doubt, TTM+ 2023 edition is one of the best so far,"

Runit Mody, Director, Worldwide Tours & Travel

initiatives include a STAR (Sustainable Tourism Acceleration Rating) system to certify sustainable tourism businesses.

Meanwhile, TAT continues to develop a new tourism ecosystem and elevate supply through such initiatives as the Thailand Tourism Awards, 'Up-Skill Re-Skill' human resources development project, and 'CF Hotels' online platform for hotel and lodging operators to sustainably manage businesses.

There were booths dedicated for 'Technology' and 'Net Zero Tourism', the TAT's pavilion featured unique tourism-related products and DIY workshops to showcase meaningful travel experiences on offer in Thailand. Other activities included an exhibition and tasting of seasonal fruits as well as demonstration of brewing organic coffee, which will be served and paired with Thai dessert finger food.

For 2023, TAT hopes to see around 80 per cent of the tourism revenue generated in 2019, which is expected to be THB 2.38 trillion, out of which THB 1.5 trillion will be generated from the overseas market and THB 880 billion from the domestic market.

This year, from January 1 – May 27, Thailand welcomed 10,378,457 international arrivals generating THB 428 billion. The top five tourism markets were from Malaysia (1,606,373), China (1,098,604), Russia (734,995), South Korea (627,760), and India (583,319).. ♦

prasenjit.chakraborty@saffronsynergies.in



Whispers of History!

Nourishing the Soul!

By **Dr. Nimit Chowdhary**, Professor of Tourism
Faculty of Management Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Early this month, stepping foot into the eternal city of Rome, I found myself immersed in a captivating journey through time. A profound sense of awe coursed through my veins as I stood amidst the towering remnants of this ancient civilisation. The grandeur and scale of the ruins left me breathless. I couldn't help but marvel at the extraordinary human endeavour that had once thrived in this very place. Imagination became my guide as I closed my eyes and let the echoes of history envelop me. I could almost envision the bustling streets adorned with vibrant colours and resonating with the sounds of commerce and conversation. Once a hub of excitement and spectacle, the majestic Colosseum seemed to come alive before my very eyes. The grandeur of the Pantheon, an architectural marvel standing the test of time, stirred within me a profound sense of admiration for the ingenious minds that created such extraordinary structures.

In that moment, standing in the midst of Rome's magnificent ruins, I became acutely aware of the sheer scale of human achievement and the indomitable spirit that propelled the mighty Romans forward. It was as if their essence lingered in the air, whispering stories of conquest, innovation, and cultural richness. I couldn't help but feel a deep connection to those who had walked these streets centuries before me. Yet, it was not merely the physical remnants that stirred my soul. It was the realisation that a tapestry of human aspirations, struggles, and triumphs unfolded behind the stone walls and weathered statues. Rome stood as a testament to the resilience and ambition of the human spirit, transcending time and reminding me of our collective capacity to create, innovate, and endure.

As I delved deeper into the history and stories of ancient Rome, I found myself on a transformative spiritual journey. The ruins became more than mere artefacts; they became portals to another world, where the past intertwined with the present, and the wisdom of bygone eras revealed itself.

In that sacred space, I experienced a

profound sense of humility and reverence. I realised that my own struggles and aspirations were part of a larger tapestry interwoven with the dreams and endeavours of countless generations. Standing amidst the ruins, I could sense the interconnectedness of all human existence, transcending time and space. The experience was more than just a visit to a historical site; it was a pilgrimage of the soul. With its majestic ruins and the remnants of a mighty empire, Rome had the power to awaken something profound within me. It reminded me of the impermanence of human achievements, the fleeting nature of glory, and the importance of cherishing the present moment.

Visiting historical places like Rome not only enriches our knowledge of the past but also nourishes our spirits. It invites us to reflect on the legacy we are creating for future generations. It inspires us to embrace our own potential for greatness. It serves as a reminder that, though ephemeral, human endeavour has the power to shape the world and leave a lasting imprint on the fabric of time.

As I bid farewell to the ancient city, I carried with me the echoes of greatness that resonated within those ruins. The experience had transformed me, leaving an indelible mark on my soul. I departed with a renewed sense of wonder, a deep appreciation for the human journey, and a yearning to explore more of the world's historical treasures, seeking further spiritual nourishment along the way.

Back home, we may explore the sacred splendour of India's ancient monuments. India compels us to explore further into its stories of human creativity, spirituality, and artistic brilliance with its vast cultural heritage and enthralling past. These sacred sites, from the world-famous Taj Mahal to the enchanting remains of Hampi, throw light on our shared past and India's diverse cultural heritage. A profound journey of spirituality, cultural understanding, and personal connection awaits those who pay homage to their predecessors, embrace their wisdom, and immerse themselves



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in India's historic monuments. Imagine India's rich past, and you'll feel its transformational force in ways you never imagined.

In a world filled with constant distractions and fast-paced living, it is essential to carve out moments of stillness and reflection. Visiting historical sites and immersing ourselves in the depths of history offers a sanctuary for our souls- a sacred space where we can seek solace, wisdom, and spiritual rejuvenation. By exploring the interconnectedness of humanity, learning from the triumphs and mistakes of the past, cultivating empathy and compassion, connecting with ancestral wisdom, and transcending the boundaries of time and space, we embark on a profound and spiritually soothing journey. So, let us heed the call of history, for within its ancient walls and hallowed grounds, we discover a sanctuary for our souls, a place where the past meets the present and where our spirits find solace and nourishment. ♦

'The views expressed in the column are of the author, and may or may not be endorsed by the publication.'

The rise of India as Medical Tourism hub

By Farhat Jamal, Chairman, IMC Travel Tourism and Hospitality Committee

Today, India aims to become the world's top medical tourism destination, tripling its revenue to USD 13 billion in four years.

NITI Aayog estimates that the Indian economy could earn an additional USD 9 billion by 2026 from MVT and wellness tourism. Currently, India, ranked tenth with a score of 69.80 on the Medical Tourism Index, offers over 200 types of medical services ranging from fertility treatments to skincare. The most sought-after treatments are cardiovascular surgeries, cancer treatment and organ transplant surgeries, as these are 65-90% cheaper rates when compared to US, Europe, Australia or even Singapore. India has 40 healthcare facilities accredited to the Joint Commission International (JCI) and 1400 National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH)-accredited hospitals.

At the 68th Regional Commission for Europe on June 5th UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "Health tourism helps destinations diversify, creating jobs, supporting businesses and extending these benefits to rural communities. However, this part of our broad sector is especially reliant on skilled workers. As tourists' expectations rise, so too must the level of service that destinations can provide."

India has also been ranked 10th in the Medical Tourism Index (MTI) for 2020-21 out of 46 destinations in the world by the Medical Tourism Association. It also accounts for 6% of the global MVT (Medical Value Travel) market. An estimated 1.4 million medical tourists visited India in the past one year. According to the Ministry of Tourism website, India has 1000 recognised nurses-training centres with 10,000 nurses graduating annually. India also has Ayurveda, yoga & naturopathy and other traditional systems of medicine for the treatment of various ailments, promoting wellness tourism. The country witnesses an influx of patients from Bangladesh, Iraq, Maldives, Afghanistan, Oman, Yemen, Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania. These countries account for about 88 per cent of the total international patients visiting India and the stats are witnessing continuous growth even for patients from developed countries. The sector is projected to clock exponential growth by 2026. Undoubtedly, our strength lies in the infrastructure and diagnostic facilities, which are some of the best in the world while being cost-effective which puts us at the centre of the global healthcare industry.



Millennials make the way for health & wellness

Millennials are already driving the hotel and health industries in varied ways. For them, discovery of the outer world is intertwined with the discovery of the self. While revenge travel is driving occupancies at hotels, the average-spend by millennials on health -- be it gears, gadgets or nutritional supplements -- has increased significantly. The Deloitte Global 2021 Millennial and Gen Z Survey, which tapped the pulse of more than 14,600 Millennials in 45 countries, asked respondents to identify their top three personal concerns. Twenty-eight percent of Millennials cited health care and disease prevention as a top concern in 2021, as compared with 21% in 2020. The pandemic altered the way we perceive our health, especially for millennials for whom health is no more restricted to the boundaries of a 'holiday' or a break from daily monotony. Even companies are including it in their employee-care programs. As employee well-being grows in importance, employer sponsored medical travel is making more sense than ever. Budgets are being earmarked and health policies are being redefined.

The rising demand for wellness resorts among travellers and an increasing interest in luxury senior living projects offering state-of-the-art medical facilities serves as a positive affirmation for opportunities in medical tourism sector. People are constantly looking for places that offer the best of both the worlds -- health and hospitality. Experiential and immersive travel experiences such as Yoga, workouts, meditation coupled with carefully curated food menu and local community practices, also giving fillip to the local economy are going to be a newer area of wellness resort development in the coming years.

Holistic wellness – the India way

Since time immemorial, India has been the epicentre of wellness tourism boasting of

Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Sidha and Unani systems of health & wellness. When it comes to holistic health, India offers a 360-degree that combines science as well as ancient knowledge. Thanks to a robust medical and healthcare system supported by strong infra, talented doctors and skilled healthcare staff, it has the potential to attract patients from developed countries as well. Today, medical travelers are trusting India for niche treatment areas include cardiology, oncology, fertility, orthopaedics, neurology, and aesthetics such as bariatric treatments -- as well as dental services. Competing with the front runners in Medical Tourism such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, India is leaving no stone unturned to become the world's top medical tourism hotspot.

This year, in the month of April, India hosted the 'One Earth One Health – Advantage Healthcare India 2023 – programme in New Delhi in a bid to promote India as a hub for medical tourism. With 500 foreign participants from over 70 countries, the two-day summit aimed to promote the export of medical services from India and provide networking opportunities for Medical Value Travel (MVT) experts, industry stakeholders and professionals. At the inaugural event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi touted India's traditional healthcare systems as holding a lot of answers to stress and lifestyle diseases. While policies will provide the framework and direction, creating infra and supporting facilities for a seamless experience from the airport to the hospital and back is vital. This means all the stakeholders such as airlines, hospitals, wellness centres, tour operators, transport providers, insurance companies and hotels need to put in a collaborative effort.

Exploring the new realms of PPP

To market the nation as a wellness and medical tourism destination, the government has launched a 'Heal in India' campaign. Targeting the global demand for holistic healing for lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, the government is pitching Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy -- falling under the ambit of the Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) ministry -- as an alternative to modern medicine. India has launched e-visas for MVT travellers from 156 nations and has also accredited AYUSH centres, formalising their status in the Indian medical industry. ♦

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Changing Business Travel Preferences: A Shift in Traveller Attitudes and Behaviour

Global assistance provider International SOS has been closely tracking the changing traveller sentiment due to a plethora of issues. **Neeraj Balani, Managing Director, Indian Subcontinent, International SOS,** speaks to **Disha Shah Ghosh** about the heightened risk for travel, globally, and the need for businesses to invest in robust technology for effective employee travel risk management.

Q What are some of the foreseeable risks for business travellers in the year ahead?

In the post Covid world, besides financial risks, there is a heightened health risk, and the ongoing war and geopolitical situation has only created more uncertainty. There are tensions in the APAC region due to border disputes and bilateral fallout. There is instability due to Covid related financial disruption in our own neighbourhood and African nations. Travellers are not keen to travel as they used to be before.

All the businesses and their travel managers are witnessing heightened need for better travel risk management of employees. Travellers are more reluctant to travel including their perseverance to risk, mental issues, and family reservations, financial and heightened risks.

We have recently come out of Covid, and at an organisation level, Covid related health issues and global inflation is seeping in.

Q How can businesses upgrade their travel risk management policies to be more inclusive to changes?

Some of the recent traveller

surveys have pointed out that the aversion in terms of their readiness in moving back to travel. ISO has released the latest 310013 new guide for organisations, which are best practises. One can audit their existing process for their documentations. These best practises provide organisations with business and related risks assessments. It provides with a robust travel policy framework for understanding the business and related risks. It gives guidance on how to have a robust framework which includes procedures and risks.

One of the recent audit of our client showcased lack of consistency, almost 8 departments needed to collaborate on a

of deliberation being done by them today for domestic travel is the same as they do for an international trip. In that sense, businesses are not seeing the situation as any different. Mental well-being is being affected by various factors but sales teams, and operations workforce has to travel. Therefore, organisations are thinking of case management software to monitor cases at a domestic level. This is felt because there is an increased need for call for help, medical assistance in case of emergency, etc., while on a trip.

Q In terms of preventive measures, how can employees themselves protect their response plans?

Today the employee itself is afraid to the extent that he doesn't want to travel. There are people who are travelling and people who are averse to travelling, but how do you keep the workforce motivated on what they should be doing in case they need any help? These

situation, and this shows the kind of complexity on the business side.

“ Training, retraining, communication ability, and proactive coordination need significant IT investment. Organisations' systems at the back end need support, and apps need to serve as the one-stop shop for travel advisory, and the most important factor to determine risks and as a travel assistance platform. ”

Q Enumerate on some of the factors, global or local, that would impact a resilient Indian traveller's appetite to travel.

We have to break down travel into two parts; one is the leisure traveller, and one the business side. While travelling with families domestically, the risk is perceived is much lower than visiting a different country. We have been talking to the CXOs, and they assert that the amount

are some of the big questions every organisation is struggling with. The travel managers are supposed to be helping people and similarly employee training education and upgrading of information in terms of what's happening in real-time which needs investment, and has been identified by organisations. ♦

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Start-Up Forum

Bringing Innovations to the Forefront

Tripomatic Travel Solutions Private Limited

By TBM Staff | Mumbai

Anticipating the impact of technology, 16 years ago, **TravelBiz Monitor** introduced an industry-first live news portal, with hourly online reporting on travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality industries. Since then, we have created a niche for ourselves by providing analytical stories and statistical information to the travel trade on a regular basis. To keep this momentum going, the Editorial team has decided to showcase new-age technology products and services every month that have the potential to disrupt the market further. Moreover, the time now is also appropriate as the on-going pandemic has further widened the scope of using technology.

For this unique initiative, TravelBiz Monitor has partnered with 'Start-up Mentor Board', a visionary platform with credentials in business, technology, e-commerce, digital market place, payment solutions and IT infrastructure, to highlight the stories of new-age technology ideas. Start-up Mentor Board has been set-up as an initiative to mentor and guide the travel technology driven start-ups and facilitate collaboration in the larger travel ecosystem.

Website – <https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com>

The Board is spearheaded by well-known thought leader Ashish Kumar, who is also the Co-Chairman of FICCI Travel Technology Committee. It comprises Bharti Maan, who has led start-ups to scale rapidly; Patrick Richards, an experienced travel industry leader in the UK; Chetan Kapoor, an analyst with deep understanding of the travel and tourism business and trends; Kartik Sharma, an artificial intelligence practitioner; Karthik Venkataraman, a digital transformation & an e-commerce visionary; Jure Bratkic, who led innovative solutions in the USA and Kyasha Bhoola, with expertise and advanced insight into the travel industry across Africa.

***One can register for the SMB Program at**

<https://startupmentorboard.vgmrtechsolutions.com/form.html>

Startup Name: Tripomatic Travel Solutions Private Limited

Core Team: Pratik Malladi, Founder

Founding year: 2020

Company Website: <https://rutugo.travel/>

Description: There are thousands of travellers who were considering a holiday but not sure about the where, when, what, how and how much?

Most confused by the tons of content online, limited holiday time, and budgetary constraints. Most searches would lead to dead ends, and they'd finally go to online/offline agents only to look for the best deals on what everyone else was doing. This is when we found meaning in trying to help travellers find their next holiday destination objectively.

Using Open AI and some other simple tools, we've tried to create a tool which might just be able to help travellers find their next holiday destination by asking them a few simple questions.



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