

Volume XV Issue 1 Jan-Feb 2024 52 pages ₹ 20

ASIA'S leading business magazine

A DDP Publication

M!CEtalk[®]

micetalk.com

Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

RNI No.:DELENG/2010/34144



India
says
'I-DO'

9TH TRAVEL M!CE & CORPORATE SHOW

Elevate Every Gathering *with Marriott Bonvoy!*

In a city steeped in history and cultural richness, Le Meridien Amritsar sets the stage for extraordinary experiences with signature programs designed to spark creativity and forge new connections. Our meticulously designed venues, boasting over 20,000 square feet of versatile conference spaces, create the perfect backdrop for innovation, collaboration, and achievements.

Whether it's a grand product launch demanding an impressive setting or an off-site meeting seeking a dynamic space for inspired brainstorming, our ballrooms are the perfect space where your ideas come to life.



TO BOOK A CONSULTATION WITH OUR PLANNER, CALL:

0183 511 0000

MARRIOTT BONVOY™
EVENTS

ADDRESS:

SGRDJ International Airport, Ajnala Rd,
Bal Schander, Raja Sansi, Bal, Punjab 143101

Content-oriented themes enkindle meaningful corporate events



Hope your year has begun with lots of positivity and good health! We are already in the second month of the new year.

My first month was busy curating and working towards the 9th Edition of Travel M!CE Corporate show at Jaipur. After the successful event it got me to introspect and mull over my discussions with the audience at this event.

Currently the industry is looking for content-oriented events. The knowledge sharing can

travel influencers representing corporate houses and content influencers from supplier companies are aligned in thoughts, expectations, and purpose. The event should be supportive to the attendee, networking for potential collaborations, provide opportunities for knowledge sharing, focus on product demo sections for better understanding. These events should help the influencers to understand the requirements, availability, possibilities and create a meaningful session.

{ “The event should be supportive to the attendee, networking for potential collaborations, focus on product demo sections for better understanding.” }

be through industry experts disseminating their thoughts via keynote session, panel discussion, debates etc., or through exhibitors sharing information about their companies.

Some of the suppliers are focusing on events on their own to spread information, network and explore business opportunities. These endeavours are seen as marketing activity more than being educative.

At the same time more platforms are organizing events to get the supplier and buyers together for interaction and networking.

In my opinion, the platforms organizing these events need to focus and ensure the audience like

A pre-event brief about placing yourself, understanding the participants, and their requirements help in meaningful events. This makes all parties involved to stay focused, alert about new additions, technology penetrations, and map products and requirements realistically. These events can help in creating a community to support and understand better.

Wishing all of you a wonderful year ahead and looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Warm Regards

Jyothi Varma, Consulting Editor

contents

Jan-Feb 2024

ASIA'S leading business magazine
M!CEtalk
Meetings • Incentives • Conferences • Events

COVER STORY

Integrated Platform: Shifting Business Strategy



INSIGHT

MOT sets its M!CE agenda



FOCUS

India says 'I-Do' to wedding tourism



SPOTLIGHT

Incentive budgets on an upswing



INTERVIEW

A M!CE story for India



PUBLISHER & EDITOR

SanJeet

Devika Jeet
devika@ddppl.com

CONSULTING EDITOR

Jyothi Varma

CHIEF EDITOR

Nisha Verma
nisha.verma@ddppl.com

EDITORIAL TEAM

Janice Alyosius
janice.alysius@ddppl.com

DESIGN HEAD

Saurabh Mishra

ADVERTISING

Arumita Gupta
arumita.gupta@ddppl.com

Meetu Malhotra
meetu.malhotra@ddppl.com

Jaspreet Kaur

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNERS

Nitin Kumar

Aditya Pratap Singh

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Anil Kharbanda

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ashok Rana

MUMBAI: ADVERTISING

Harshal Ashar
harshal@ddppl.com

Samantha Pereira
samantha.pereira@ddppl.com



New Delhi:
72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi 110001, India
Tel: +91 11 23234177
E-mail: talk@ddppl.com

Mumbai:
504 Marine Chambers, 43 New Marine Lines, Mumbai
400 020, India
Tel: +91-22-22070129, 22070130
Fax: +91-22-22070131
E-mail: mumbai@ddppl.com

All information in **M!CE**talk is derived from sources, which we consider reliable. **Information is passed on to our readers without any responsibility on our part.** The contents of this publication contain views of authors and are not the views of DDP Publications.

Similarly opinions/views expressed by any party in abstract and/or in interviews are not necessarily shared/do not necessarily reflect any opinion of DDP Publications. All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction strictly prohibited. Material appearing in **M!CE**talk cannot be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written permission. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication.

Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission would face legal action.

Editorial enquiries and enquiries concerning the reproduction of articles should be emailed to talk@ddppl.com, advertising and circulation enquiries should be e-mailed to nikhil.jeet@ddppl.com

The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material nor is he responsible for material lost or damaged in transit. Any material submitted to **M!CE**talk will not be returned.

The publisher reserves the rights to refuse, withdraw, amend or otherwise deal with all advertisements without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the Indian Advertisements Code as well as the Advertisements Code of South Asia. The publisher will not be liable for any damage or loss caused by the late publication, error or failure or advertisement or editorial to appear.

M!CEtalk is printed, published, edited and owned by Sanjeet, printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Sheds, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - I, New Delhi - 110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi-110001

Where Grandeur Meets Innovation

India's Premier Integrated Hotel, Redefining Luxury, Conventions and Exhibitions.



Altus
Bar & Lounge



Paprika - all day
dining restaurant



Cafe Amaris
Patisserie & Brasserie



Spa
by **Hibiscus**



Convention
Hall



+91 120-6966555



info@expoinn.com



www.expoinn.com

Insurance awareness imperative

As global event insurance market accelerates, India faces limitations, leaving a void for M!CE coverage. Industry experts underscore low insurance adoption rates and urgent need for customized products.

By **Janice Alyosius**

According to an event insurance market research report by Allied Market Research, the global event insurance market was valued at US\$726.9 million in 2022, and was estimated to reach US\$2.3 billion by 2032, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.7 per cent from 2023 to 2032.

The increase in demand for event insurance is a key driver for the growth of event insurance market. There is a significant surge in the need for all-inclusive insurance

product specifically designed to safeguard the event industry.”

Sunaina Chatterjee, CEO, ICON Planners said, “Regular conferences, such as domestic or smaller-scale ones with 2,000-3,000 participants, the adoption of insurance in India remains relatively low. However, insurance is more common in some of the metro cities due to the involvement of numerous stakeholders.” In terms of percentages, 40-45 per cent of events in major cities such as Mumbai or Delhi incorporate insurance. However, the numbers drop significantly in smaller cities like Kolkata or Jaipur, ranging between 2-5 per cent.

It is time to develop an insurance product specifically designed to safeguard the event and conference industry

coverage that takes a wide variety of risks into account as events continue to expand in size and complexity.

Naveen Kundu, Managing Director, EbixCash Travel said, “In India, event insurance is only available for large-scale events, making it the only country where such insurance is limited to big events. When an organization cancels an event without citing any reason, it becomes exceedingly difficult for the travel companies to claim refunds and navigate between the airlines and destination management companies (DMCs). Therefore, it is time to develop an insurance

The lack of awareness regarding available insurance and its significance is one of the reasons why event insurance is not widely adopted in the meetings and events industry. “The educational gap persists in India, affecting both conference organizers and participants,” Chatterjee highlighted. She also emphasized that even Professional Conference Organizers (PCOs) often lack knowledge about event insurance. The adoption of insurance is mostly considered when foreign committees organize events in India, as they are generally more aware of insurance in the M!CE industry.



NAVEEN KUNDU
Managing Director
EbixCash Travel

The perception that insurance is an additional cost and *jugaad* mindset contribute to the reluctance to adopt event insurance in India. Emphasising on the high insurance premiums, **Sudeep Sarcar**, CEO, India Exposition Mart, said, “When dealing with international event organizers, there seems to be some level of uncertainty about choosing India as the host country for an event or conference due to the country’s vast size, which presents unforeseen contingencies along with opportunities. It can jeopardize the entire event, resulting in substantial

losses. Although there are insurances available to protect against event cancellations, the associated premiums are exorbitantly high. It is crucial to address this issue and explore potential interventions to make the process more feasible. By implementing softer interventions, we can convince both domestic and international organizers to take calculated risks that might offset potential losses.” Such considerations by the country’s large and small event organisers can undeniably strengthen India’s position internationally as a MICE destination. ➔



SUNAINA CHATTERJEE
CEO
ICON Planners



SUDEEP SARCAR
CEO
India Exposition Mart





NJCC beside hotel: a strategic alliance

Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC offer expansive exhibition and convention space equipped with state of the art infrastructure for large events.

By **Lipla Negi**

A 226-keys hotel close to the recently inaugurated state of the art convention venue serves as a strategic alignment enhancing Accor's ability to efficiently render the needs of M!CE events. NJCC along with Jaipur Exhibition Convention Centre (JECC) is set to refurbish the standards of exhibitions and convention space by offering ultra-modern facilities. Calling it a 'spectacular space', **Manuj Ralhan**, General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, and JECC says, "We have the best infrastructure and are capable of organizing big M!CE events, weddings, concerts, among others."

While the brand aims to boost demand for Inbound M!CE business its primary target customers are—pharma firms, manufacturing industries, IT industry, BFSI, jewellery, PSUs,



MANUJ RALHAN

General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, and Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre

governments, weddings, and lifestyle events. "We will begin exhibiting at trade shows for ATM Dubai, ITB Berlin, SATTE, OTM Mumbai and the like in 2024," says Ralhan. Talking about the Indian wedding business, he adds,

PREMIUM FEATURES

One VIP Lounge

Two Green Rooms

Three dining venues

42 acres of total area

226 well-appointed rooms

13 breakout meeting rooms

70,000 sq. ft. lawn for weddings & social events

Two large pillar-less exhibition halls (**1,06,347** sq. ft. each)

Grand Ballroom with **740** retractable auditorium-style seats

"We aim to capture a substantial market share by ensuring flawless execution, exceptional hospitality, and personalized experiences—all at reasonable rates for big Indian weddings," with grand venues accommodating up to 3000 guests, on-site multi-cuisine catering, and unrivalled kids' play areas.

This apart, the team strategizes to work actively towards fostering collaborations with prominent wedding planners and create enticing propositions for industry leaders, while highlighting four hallmarks of the venue i.e grand meeting spaces, regional and frontier cuisine from the Northwest with organic tea stall, and an efficient team delivering spectacular experiences. ➔



In the realm of luxury travel and hospitality, DreamSetGo emerged with some exciting experiences at this year's Cricket World Cup, transforming the experience for fans into a grand spectacle of opulence and exclusivity.

By MT Bureau

As one of the official travel agents, DreamSetGo catered to the desires of over 5,000 travellers across nine cities for more than a month-long extravaganza. At the heart of this was a host of curated experiences. Official tickets, amazing seats, exclusive corporate packages, and luxury accommodation were just the tip of the iceberg.



AMIT VYAS
Head – M!CE & Sports Travel
DreamSetGo

The luxury accommodations, meticulously chosen, became a haven for cricket enthusiasts, providing a blend of opulence and accessibility throughout the tournament including stays in the Team India hotel at multiple locations. In fact, DreamSetGo's market analysis unveiled a fascinating trend – families including FITs were now allocating special yearly travel budgets for major sports tournaments like the Cricket World Cup.

Amit Vyas, Head – M!CE & Sports Travel, DreamSetGo says, "We have noticed that whether its FITs or corporates, they are leaning towards experiential travel that includes

sporting events across the globe. The Cricket World Cup in India was a great platform for us to showcase our prowess to the fullest at the biggest sporting tournament in the country."

For over 3,500 travellers, DreamSetGo curated exclusive corporate experiences. From coordinating more than 1,000 flights to arranging transfers and luxury accommodations in Team India hotels, the company left no stone unturned. The cherry on top was the exclusive time with legends such as Sourav Ganguly and engage in pre-match meet-and-greets with icons like Sunil Gavaskar, Yuvraj Singh, and Virender Sehwag. ➔

Industry Roundtable on Developing India as a MICE Destination

30th November, 2023
Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



MOT sets its **M!CE** agenda

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) organized an industry roundtable, bringing together CEOs and senior luminaries from the M!CE sector of the country, giving their suggestions to transform India into a premier M!CE destination.

on estination



JYOTSNA SURI

Chairperson & Managing Director
The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group

"Offering a little
incentivisation
to corporates would be
immensely beneficial."



By **Janice Alyosius**

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India, in a move to strengthen India's presence in the global M!CE sector, held an industry roundtable, which was in direct response to the overwhelming global interest sparked during India's G20 Presidency.

Kickstarting the conversation, **V Vidyavathi**, Secretary, MOT, called upon global agencies and industry leaders to consider their contributions to the tourism ecosystem and how the MOT can enhance this sector, stressing the importance of building on the momentum created by India's G20 Presidency.

Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, MOT, followed with a comprehensive presentation

on the National Strategy for M!CE Industry, detailing the vision, mission, goal, and key strategic pillars critical for nurturing and promoting the scope of M!CE industry in India.

The roundtable witnessed a collective and insightful contribution from CXOs and senior leaders across the industry. They emphasised on India's rich cultural and natural diversity as a significant destination for M!CE tourism, while also underlining the untapped potential within the domestic market.

Emphasising the importance of incentivising corporations to choose India as a preferred M!CE destination, **Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson & Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group said, "Most of our weddings and M!CE movements are taking place outside India. In fact, for M!CE, we have an excellent

infrastructure, offering a little incentivisation to corporates would be beneficial. For weddings in India, it is not just about the ceremony; we require more hotels with improved connectivity to various areas. By promoting the 'I-Do' campaign extensively, we can start domestically and gradually expand internationally."

Naveen Kundu, Managing Director, EbixCash Travel, highlighted the necessity for streamlined access to regulatory companies in India. He said, "We manage approximately 100,000 people in M!CE every year. Last year, due to visa unavailability, we conducted 50-55 per cent of these activities in India, and the rest were carried out overseas. This year, 70 per cent of our activities were conducted overseas, with only 30 per cent in the country. One critical action that the ministry ought to take is to ensure access to all regulatory companies in India. The ministry should issue advisories to these companies through the regulator, addressing the observed trend of sending people abroad. This trend leads to significant losses for the exchequer, particularly concerning the outflow of foreign exchange. Currently, India is experiencing an outflow of US\$5.39 billion in foreign exchange, and tourism alone contributes to 20-30 per cent of this outflow annually."



NAVEEN KUNDU
Managing Director, EbixCash Travel

"The ministry should issue advisories to companies through the regulator, addressing the observed trend of sending people abroad."



DREAMY DESTINATION WEDDINGS

at Anantara Kalutara Resort, Sri Lanka



Host the wedding of your dreams as you embrace the tropical charms of Kalutara, Sri Lanka where the ocean and the lagoon surround you with breathtaking backdrops. From stunning outdoor locations to regal ballrooms, Anantara Kalutara Resort offers the perfect settings for your ceremonies.

-  Expansive indoor and outdoor locations
-  Dedicated events team
-  Unparalleled service
-  International menus
-  State-of-the-art rooms and villas



For inquiries contact:

Snehal: +91 82866 04849

Bashitha: +94 74 186 0521

◀ Scan the QR code for more information


ANANTARA
KALUTARA RESORT

Commenting on the space constraint in India for future conventions, **Puneet Narula**, Hospitality Business Head, Convention & Exhibition Centre, Reliance Industries Limited, pinpointed, "85-95 per cent of our business last year and a half has been exclusively domestic. Someone mentioned that our books might not have enough space, and that holds true. Consequently, a 'yes' for a convention in India might not materialize in 2024 and 2025. Even if it were to happen today, it is likely that I would have already allocated that space to an exhibition or a domestic conference. However, we need to reconsider our share of the market significantly. This is crucial."

Narula also drew attention to the strategies adopted by various international destinations. He

said, speaking about the MICE board or bureau, "besides marketing efforts, focusing on evolved destinations—take Thailand, for instance—reveals a different approach. Thailand boasts a convention bureau budget of ₹200 crores, investing not just in marketing but also in business development. They offer substantial support to event organizers and the industry financially, aiding in the time-consuming bidding process, which incurs expenses. In these scenarios, intermediaries, such as our travel partners, often face compromise as they strive for this business. As a venue provider pursuing the same opportunities, the risks primarily rest on their shoulders, considering the expenses involved".

He underscored the need for India to leverage its inherent strengths, while addressing infrastructural



"85-95 per cent of our business last year and a half has been exclusively domestic. We need to reconsider our share of the market significantly."

PUNEET NARULA

Hospitality Business Head, Convention & Exhibition Centre, Reliance Industries Limited





Indian Machine Tool
Manufacturers' Association



FRAME YOUR IDEAS

At India's premier venue for business events



Bangalore International Exhibition Centre

4.4 ★★★★★ (24T) Exhibition and trade centre in Karnataka

EXHIBITIONS • TRADE SHOWS • MEETINGS • CONVENTIONS



77,200 sqm
of Covered
exhibition space



5,600 sqm
of Conference
Centre



7,500 sqm
of Food Court



10,000 sqm
Outdoor area



Certified as 'Green' building
from IGBC & LEED
certification from USGBC

Follow us on:



www.biec.in



PHIL CHUNG
CEO
Yasho Bhomi (Kinexin)

"Foreign organizers inquire about spouse programmes, half-day or full-day city tourism packages aligned with conventions when they visit India."

limitations and regulatory challenges. "We possess a significant opportunity, and India has everyone's attention. However, the convention bureau, like the ICPB or its reinvention must focus on business development rather than just marketing. They need to take the lead in this aspect. Thailand's convention bureau was established in 2002, boasting a ₹200-crore budget that reportedly generates revenue 100 times greater for the country. A comprehensive destination approach involving all stakeholders, with the government taking the lead rather than merely participating, is essential. There is a requirement of holistic destination approach and a strategic convention bureau guiding the way," he said.

Emphasising about the absence of prominent Indian campaigns featuring on billboards on Broadway in Manhattan, New York, **Phil Chung**, Chief Executive Officer, Yasho Bhomi (Kinexin) questioned why the country lacked visibility on the global stage. "Why do not we have Indian campaigns there? Why do not we see promotion campaigns for India?" He said that there was an urgent need to exhibit India's multifaceted appeal more aggressively.



Nestled within the luxurious confines of Novotel Pune, Crimson Hall stands as a testament to sophistication and versatility in event spaces. This exquisite banquet hall is renowned for its opulent ambiance and state-of-the-art amenities, making it the ideal venue for a myriad of occasions.



CAPACITY AND CONFIGURATIONS:

Crimson state of the art 4500 Sqft. ballroom can accommodate up to 400 people whether it's a grand wedding reception, corporate seminar, or an intimate family celebration.

Crimson Hall can be configured to suit the specific requirements of each occasion. The capacity for seating and standing arrangements is meticulously planned to ensure comfort without compromising the aesthetic appeal.



HOMA MISTRY
CEO
Trail Blazer Tours India

"There needs to be a meeting with insurance companies so that whatever the premium, we should be able to buy insurance."

Chung also stressed on the importance of government intervention in encouraging international conventions and exhibitions across diverse industry sectors. He said, "If the Indian government mandates every industry to bring in more global conventions and exhibitions, covering top players from all industry sectors, it would be mutually beneficial. We need to acknowledge the top ten events as per each industry and incentivize them."

While discussing challenges faced by foreign organizers, Chung underscored the lack of standardized tourism packages aligned with conventions in India. He pointed out, "When I try to introduce India or our venue in New Delhi to foreign organizers, they ask about the tourism

packages available when they visit India. They inquire about spouse programs, half-a-day or full-day city tourism packages aligned with those conventions. There is not a standardized platform or package despite the presence of many travel agencies. So, we need city-by-city and region-by-region package programs for all aspects."

Homa Mistry, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours India, shed light on the absence of insurance coverage for business losses. He emphasized, "The loss of business is not covered by any insurance companies. We, as tour operators, faced losses during COVID—flight cancellations, advances." The lack of insurance options for cancellations is beyond the control of tour operators, where the government's support is necessary. "When looking at big MICE events, globally, people have business loss insurance," he added. The government should organize meetings with insurance companies to assure appropriate event insurance coverage plans irrespective of the premium so that more event planners can rely on Indian partners, as per Mistry. ➔



GREENER CONFERENCES

MADE IN SINGAPORE

Our City in Nature offers easy access to sustainable venues, experiences and services, so your business event can achieve great results with a smaller footprint.

[VisitSingapore.com/MICE](https://www.visit-singapore.com/mice)





AIME 2024 to appeal Indians

Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings event (AIME) will feature new trends over an expanded showfloor facilitating better networking for Indian stakeholders.

By MT Bureau

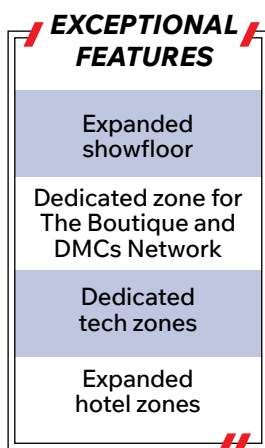
Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings event (AIME) is scheduled to take place from 19-21 February 2024 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The 31st edition of the trade event has many exceptional and distinctive features that could be appealing for Indian stakeholders this time.

BIGGER AND BETTER

AIME 2024 is anticipating 500 buyers and over 400 exhibitors from various business events sectors, including convention bureaux, hotels and resorts, event technology companies, production and audio visual companies, destination management companies, and suppliers from the Asia-Pacific region.

Silke Calder, Event Director, AIME, said,

“There will be dedicated spaces for organizing impromptu meetings and facilitating networking opportunities.” A dedicated technology zone will highlight the significance of the event technology companies. Moreover, the expanded hotel zone is a testament to post-COVID recovery of the travel business. The knowledge programme at the AIME 2024 is themed around ‘The 4Ps of GLOCALISATION’—People, Planet, Purpose, and Profit, and aims to harmonize the relationship between international and local markets.



APPEALING INDIAN EVENT PLANNERS

The AIME 2024 provides unprecedented access for Indian event planners, and stakeholders from the MICE industry to explore new business opportunities across the APAC region. They can explore



expanded innovative spaces dedicated to boutique experience makers, showcasing wineries with intimate spaces, and design-led luxury venues in a bid to match bespoke and highly customisable experiences.

Especially for Indians, the 2024 edition of the trade event is going to be an intriguing platform to acquaint with emerging trends in MICE industry. Interestingly, during the event, the Ideas Academy session will be delivered through individual headphones, with informative content for the attendees. ➔



Splash yourself with the **ARTISTIC HUES OF MADHYA PRADESH** in 2024

Get ready to inhale the cultural fragrance of Madhya Pradesh at Khajuraho Dance Festival & Lokrang Festival. Savour the multi-hued cultural canvas, where heritage fuses with modernity.

KHAJURAHO DANCE FESTIVAL (20 FEB – 26 FEB, 2024)

Dexterous dance

Brace yourself for a riveting experience at the 50th edition of the Khajuraho Dance Festival from 20 to 26 February. The annual event hosted by the Madhya Pradesh Culture Department is an eclectic mix of modern and classical dances staged against the backdrop of historical monuments. Feel the ancient stones come alive as the Khajuraho Dance Festival oscillates through various dance forms - Bharat Natyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi and more.

Immerse yourself in the cultural narrations of the artists at the Chitragupta Temple dedicated to the Sun God and the Vishvanatha Temple devoted to Lord Shiva.

More on the menu

Whether you are a history buff, an adventure seeker, a wildlife enthusiast, or looking for a relaxed vacation there is a lot on the plate beyond the realms of dance.

- **Panna National Park:** Wildlife exploration (50 km)
- **Raneh Waterfalls:** Natural Rejuvenation (24 km)
- **Pandav Falls:** Picnic Spot (32 km)
- **Adivart Tribal Museum:** Collection of art, sculptures & tribal antiques (5 km)
- **Kutni Island:** Serene landscape (18 km)

Khajuraho Dance festival isn't just about dance; it's a celebration of India's soul, its art, its legacy.

KHAJURAHO MARATHON

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is conducting the first ever Khajuraho Marathon prior to the Khajuraho Dance Festival. The Khajuraho Marathon will commence on 11 February, 2023 where participants from the age of 5 years can compete against more than 400 candidates. The participants will get a taste of the rich heritage of the area like Western Group of Temples, Datta Mountain and Raneh Falls. For participation, please visit <https://www.mptourism.com>

LOKRANG FESTIVAL (26 JAN – 30 JAN, 2024)



Cultural confluence

Embark on a cultural odyssey during the five-day Lokrang Festival, where the rich tapestry of India's tribal and folk traditions takes centre stage. From enthralling performing arts to classical and tribal folk dances, every performance narrates a story deeply rooted in the cultural ethos of the region.

For two decades, Lokrang has been a beacon of rural culture, celebrated annually from Republic Day on 26 January to 30 January. The festival attracts enthusiasts,

connoisseurs, and artists from every corner of the globe.

Heritage hues

These festivals aren't just events; they are gateways to India's soul. They are an amalgamation of intricate artistry and soul-stirring rhythms that form the cultural backbone of Madhya Pradesh.

Join us in celebrating the cultural splendour of the state.

Embrace the magic of tradition; knitted with the beats of heritage. Madhya Pradesh awaits! ➡



Integrated platform shifting business strategies

The 9th edition of the **Travel M!CE and Corporate Show** turned out to be the perfect platform for the convergence of industry titans and corporate leaders, with a focus on innovative strategies in the business. With over 1,600 meetings, the event highlighted corporate travel excellence, and set new standards in engagement.

Saviour

Travel

M!CE & CORPORATE SHOW



RAJDEV BHATTACHARYA
WIPRO LIMITED



By Janice Alyosius

The Travel M!CE & Corporate Show held recently, facilitated an exchange of ideas and laid the groundwork for implementing innovative strategies and solutions in corporate travel management.

The event provided a platform to discuss various topics in the industry including the adoption of Online Booking Tools (OBTs), which has risen to prominence as a necessity rather than a luxury. Industry leaders, including **Rajdev Bhattacharya**, Global Head, Travel and Hospitality, Wipro Limited; **Dr. Sanjay Pai**, Vice President & Head, Corporate Travel, Aviation, and Facility Management, Larsen & Toubro; **Rikant Pittie**, Co-founder, EaseMyTrip.com and **Devendra Saraiya**, Director- Administration,

{ The event provided a platform to discuss Online Booking Tools (OBTs), which has risen to prominence as a necessity }

Deloitte Shared Services India LLP, shed light on whether online booking tools are merely a marketing strategy or genuinely create value for businesses.

INTEGRATION IS IMPERATIVE

Highlighting the importance of a unified platform in the corporate event industry, Rajdev Bhattacharya, said, "We need to get into a platform where everything comes together, right from the



Technology can provide a seamless experience and better accessibility to the user on a unified platform with integrated products

user to all the other stakeholders that we have.” Underlining the shifting trend for adaptation of OBTs, Dr. Sanjay Pai, added, “People are talking about voice technology, AI, blockchain management, or non-fungible technology. It is an evolution; some have incorporated it, while others are yet to get on the bandwagon.”

Moreover, Devendra Saraiya, envisions AI as a crucial parameter in achieving the end goal of ensuring traveller convenience. “Considering the aspects of simplicity and user-friendliness, AI will be a crucial parameter. It can assist travellers in evaluating fares and resolving issues that may arise during the booking process,” he said.

In addition, Rikant Pittie shifts the focus from marketing to technology’s role in enhancing customer experience. He stresses the importance of leveraging technology beyond marketing strategies. He claimed, “With over one billion people in India using the internet on their mobiles, ensuring user-friendly interfaces, data security, and integration becomes paramount.”

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES WITH CHOICES

Emphasising the inevitability of incorporating technology and Self-Booking Tools (SBTs) into corporate travel systems, Saraiya shared, “When it comes to technology, there is no choice but to incorporate both technology and SBT into the system. We are aware that most of our travellers are experienced and have exposure to Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and other industry data, readily available on the internet today. Additionally, to empower employees to make their own decisions, having an OBT, allows one to integrate one’s policies seamlessly providing significant opportunity for policy compliance and cost savings.” Dr. Pai delves into L&T’s journey in corporate travel



tools and highlighted the necessity of such tools and the shift from a focus on SBT to value-added services such as GST compliance and Management Information Systems (MIS). Pai emphasizes the importance of customization, advocating for tailoring SBT tools to specific business needs based on factors like geography and spending patterns.

ALL-IN-ONE AS A STRATEGY

Like Bhattacharya, Pittie also focuses on the integration of products and services, i.e. a platform with all-in-one features. He shared the impact of bundled offers, where flights, hotels, and transportation are packaged together. Emphasizing that this strategy has proven successful, leading to increased business, he said, “We received excellent market traction, recording almost 15 per cent



increase in our business when we started selling flights, hotels, and accommodations together.”

Additionally, he discussed innovations in visa and passport information, insurance integration, and efforts to reconcile GSTs, recognizing the challenges faced by corporates. “In terms of visas and passports, creating an ecosystem with accurate content is essential. However, upon inclusion of such content, we observed a significant increase in traction, ranging from 20-25 per cent. We have since been innovating and curating content related to visas and passports, providing users with informative options regarding the formalities for travelling abroad,” Pittie emphasised. Moreover, the incorporation of travel insurance for corporate customers is another game-changer in boosting revenue, he highlighted.

In today's fast-paced, technology driven business landscape, corporate travel management has become a complex web of choices and challenges. Corporate leaders at the Travel MICE and Corporate Show this year claim that owing to changing needs and shifting trends, the focus must be on the need for incorporation of new tools and technologies. They claimed that technology can provide a seamless experience and better accessibility to the user on a unified platform with integrated products for escalation of business. ➔

Discover Timeless Luxury

Experience The Mid-Century Modern Elegance Of Le Meridien Nagpur's Club Room

Step into our mid-century modern-inspired hotel room, newly refurbished to blend timeless elegance with contemporary comfort. With a chic color palette, captivating 3D floral panel, and carefully curated fabrics, this space promises an enchanting stay that seamlessly marries sophistication with indulgent comfort. Welcome to a visually pleasing and cozy retreat, where every detail has been refreshed for your ultimate enjoyment.



Wardha road, opp. Mihan flyover, nagpur,
maharashtra, india, 441108



reservations.nagpur@lemeridien.com



+91 7103-663333







Incentive budgets on an upswing

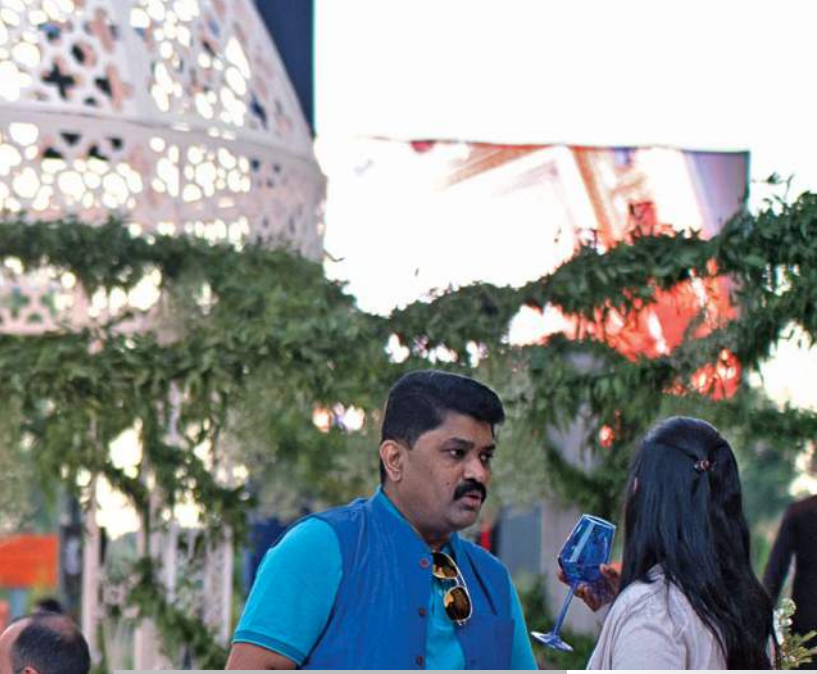
The recently held Travel and Corporate MICE Show provided an opportunity to delve into changing dynamics, understanding corporate budget allocations, and the importance of incentive travel and conventions in 2024.

By MT Bureau

In the post-COVID era, the consensus is that travel remains crucial, with organisations balancing increased importance against the backdrop of cost and well-being considerations. The recent Travel and Corporate MICE Show in Jaipur provided insights into the expectations and actions that corporate leaders are considering for accelerating incentive travel in 2024.

Highlighting the noticeable surge in travel budgets, **Khadija Bagasrawala**, Senior Manager, Travel & MICE, Qure.ai, said, “Travel budgets have increased; people are travelling more. What we spent last year has almost doubled. We are also planning a few international trips, to support that, we have increased our budget.” This reflects a growing recognition within the industry of the essential role travelling plays in business operations and growth.

Contrasting this perspective, **Sudha Prasad**, Senior Manager, Compliance (Travel-Industry), Mphasis, said cost control is key. “From an IT perspective, we do not anticipate any IT company



The common thread
is the acknowledgment
of travel as an integral
component of
organisational growth
and success



KHADIJA BAGASRAWALA
Senior Manager, Travel & MICE
Qure.ai



SUDHA PRASAD
Senior Manager,
Compliance (Travel- Industry)
Mphasis



ANNABEL CHRISTINE SAM
AGM
Ashok Leyland

being interested in increasing their budget. Our focus is on cost control while ensuring that all requirements are met, end-to-end,” said Prasad. The IT sector, known for its meticulous budgeting, places a strong emphasis on achieving objectives within existing financial frameworks.

Prasad also sheds light on the significance of employee’s well-being during travel, particularly when they are away from their families. This concern is seamlessly integrated into their M!CE programme, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to corporate travel.

Annabel Christine Sam, AGM, Ashok Leyland, representing an organization involved in incentive programs provided a unique perspective on the changing nature of travel budgets. She noted, “For us, the budget has increased over 20 per cent. Keeping in mind that hotels are also raising their prices by a minimum of 20 per cent, the perspective has shifted from merely handling a M!CE movement to providing a life experience.”

The competitive market has prompted organizations to rethink their approach to travel

and move beyond routine business transactions to offer an enriching experience. Christine emphasized an “experience-selling approach,” she said, “There is competition in the market. We are competing with each other to offer the best to our own people. Hence, it is an experience-selling approach, and we are willing to leverage the budget.”

Highlighting the prominence that travel has gained in organizations nowadays, Christine said, “Travel has become a crucial need of the hour. During COVID, people believed that there might be an increased reliance on online/video conferences instead of travelling. However, now the people want to come out, and catch up with what they had missed during that time.”

The perspectives shared by the industry experts underscore the varied opinions and focus of organisations toward their travel budgets. Although, the common thread is the acknowledgment of travel as an integral component of organisational growth and success. As the business landscape continues to evolve, these insights provide a glimpse into the adaptive strategies shaping corporate travel budgets. ➔

A romantic scene of a bride and groom standing in a garden. The groom, on the left, is wearing a light blue shirt and a dark grey vest. The bride, on the right, is wearing a white lace long-sleeved gown with a full, flowing tulle skirt. They are holding hands and looking at each other. The background is a lush garden with trees and bushes displaying vibrant autumn foliage in shades of red, orange, and yellow. The overall mood is romantic and celebratory.

India says **'I-Do'** to wedding tourism

Industry experts applaud the govt's 'Developing Tourism in Mission Mode' initiative, encapsulated in the 'I-Do' campaign, predicting an upsurge in wedding tourism, elevating India's global image and boosting revenue.



By **Janice Alyosius**

The wedding service industry continues to showcase robust growth, poised to escalate significantly in the coming years, according to a report by ResearchAndMarkets.com. From its valuation at US\$175.46 billion in 2022, the market is projected to surge to US\$196.58 billion in 2023, demonstrating a substantial compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12 per cent. Anticipating further expansion, the market has been forecasted to reach US\$295.47 billion by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 10.7 per cent. Notably, the Asia-Pacific region emerged as the largest contributor to the wedding service market in 2022, underlining its pivotal role in the industry's landscape.

Rajeev Jain, Director, Rashi Entertainment, emphasized the country's position as the world's largest and rapidly growing wedding industry.



RAJEEV JAIN
Director
Rashi Entertainment

With a projected size of US\$50 billion, India's wedding sector is set to surge by 30 per cent. In comparison, UK exhibits a US\$30 billion size with a growth projection of 3 per cent, while China, with a US\$10 billion size, is expected to grow at 12 per cent. The UAE, hosting a US\$1 billion industry, is expected to witness a growth rate of 20 per cent. However, in contrast, the USA holding a US\$53 billion industry is projected to experience a decline of 2 per cent.

The Ministry of Tourism (MOT) recently unveiled the 'I-Do' campaign. The idea is to scale tourism in India to new heights. The campaign also seeks to attract couples from around the world to celebrate their special day in India.

"With a projected size of US\$50 billion, the country's wedding sector is all set to surge by 30%."

A key highlight of the campaign lies in its collaborative approach developed in close consultation with industry experts, associations, and seasoned wedding planners. By opening the doors to India's captivating locales, vibrant rituals, rich gastronomy, and world-class infrastructure, the campaign has the potential to mesmerize couples globally.

Jain believes that Indian weddings are not just events, but profound experiences with a lasting impact. "This endeavour would significantly contribute to foreign revenue, benefiting the country's economy and boosting tourism."

planners to India, allow them to explore our country and potential locations and venues. These steps outlined in the proposal are essential for the MOT to implement in promoting the same."

Pramod Lunawat, Founder, Millennium Event, M!CE and Corporate Events, also shared his insights, "This is the first time that the MOT has decided to focus on wedding tourism. Campaigns on tourism have induced inflows of tourism into the country in huge numbers. However, this will result in getting people in bulk from various parts of the world,



PRAMOD LUNAWAT
Founder
Millennium Event

"This campaign, if backed by a lot of funding at exhibitions and roadshows by MOT, will add to its appeal."

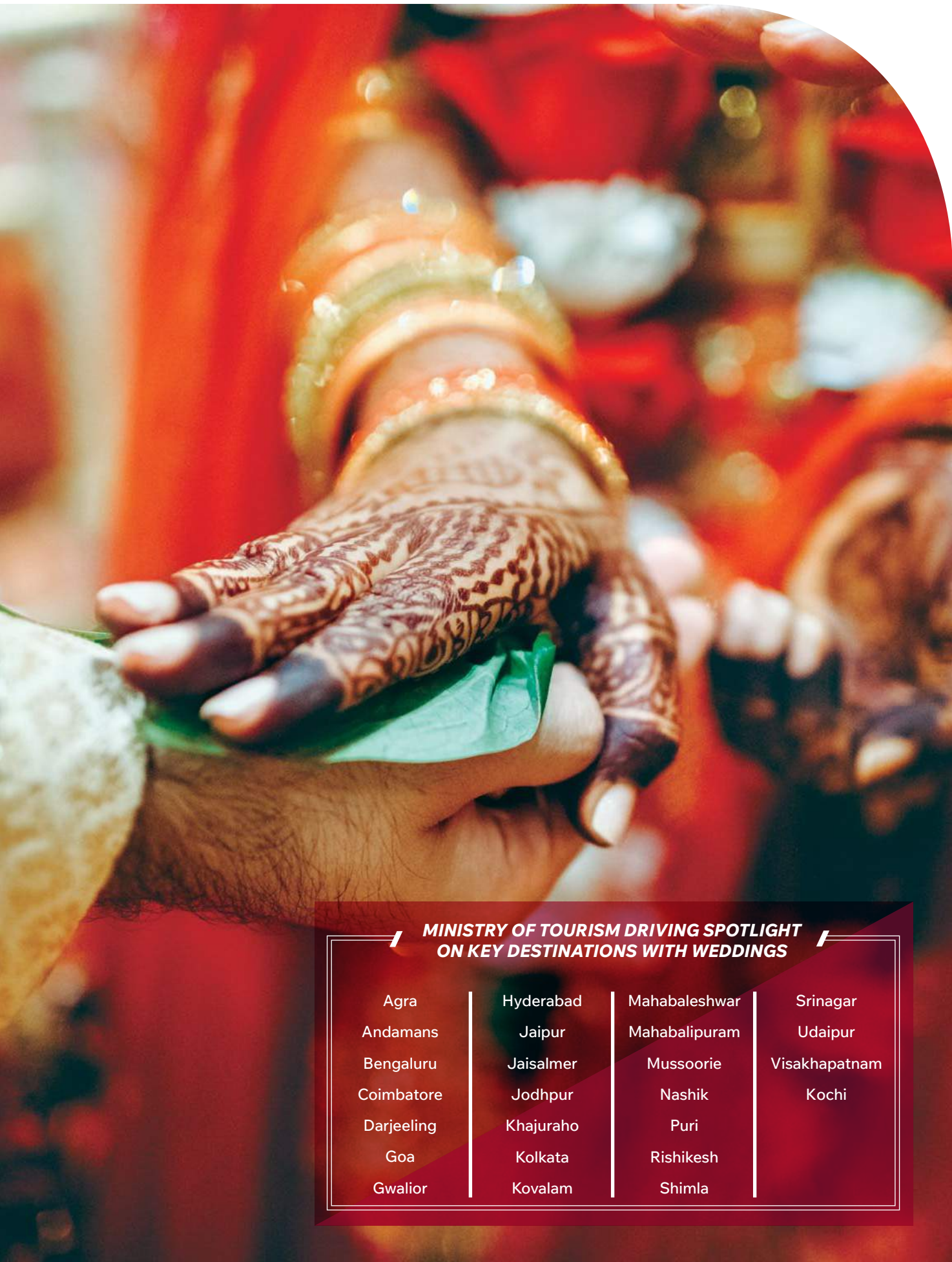


He disclosed that the campaign involves proposing incentives for wedding planners, a suggestion still under consideration by the MOT. Expressing gratitude to the ministry for spearheading the campaign, Jain underscored the importance of encouraging weddings in India. He said, "Our wedding tourism proposal emphasizes advertising in global media to attract weddings to India. We recommend participating in exhibitions and conventions worldwide, accompanied by Indian wedding planning agencies, to showcase Indian weddings and generate excitement about hosting them in India. We urge the government to invite foreign wedding

especially the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), as also certain small and intimate wedding celebrants. This has put the country into focus, with its palaces, forts, beaches, cities, and various religious backdrops. I think we will have a lot of traction for this campaign in the international diaspora."

Highlighting that the initiative adds credibility to India's potential as a premier wedding destination, Lunawat said, "Until now, getting inbound weddings was the domain of marketing by wedding planners and event managers. It is the first time that the government has taken this initiative and understood the tourism potential of weddings. It will add a





**MINISTRY OF TOURISM DRIVING SPOTLIGHT
ON KEY DESTINATIONS WITH WEDDINGS**

Agra	Hyderabad	Mahabaleshwar	Srinagar
Andamans	Jaipur	Mahabalipuram	Udaipur
Bengaluru	Jaisalmer	Mussoorie	Visakhapatnam
Coimbatore	Jodhpur	Nashik	Kochi
Darjeeling	Khajuraho	Puri	
Goa	Kolkata	Rishikesh	
Gwalior	Kovalam	Shimla	



lot of credibility to the belief that India can be a great destination for weddings. Also, it will take India to places where wedding planners could not have reached by word of mouth. This campaign, if backed by a lot of funding at exhibitions and roadshows by MOT, it will add to its appeal. This is going to be a gamechanger. I am hoping for it to continue as marketing is not a one-time effort, it is a continuous, credible and sustainable process.”

Lauding the Indian government for showcasing real weddings on its social media pages and in international ad campaigns, Lunawat said it is to provide potential customers with a glimpse of what their weddings could look like in India. He also highlighted the warm

hospitality offered by Indian hotels, particularly those belonging to hotel chains in India that view weddings as a lucrative business prospect.

Sumit Garg, President, EEMA, and Co-founder and Managing Director, E-Factor Experiences, expressed his views on the collaborative campaign between the Event & Entertainment Management Association of India (EEMA) and Deloitte, emphasizing its strategic and innovative approach to boost the wedding tourism industry in India.

He emphasized that by positioning India as a wedding destination, the campaign effectively taps into the country’s rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and traditional ceremonies,

making it appealing to foreign couples seeking unique and exotic wedding experiences. He mentioned, “The campaign’s concept of making India the protagonist, saying ‘I do,’ is both creative and compelling.”

He pointed out that the attention from the MOT adds credibility, encouraging more couples worldwide to consider India for their weddings. He said, “This campaign serves as a powerful marketing tool to showcase India’s potential as a wedding tourism destination.”

In terms of the impact on Indian businesses and promotions, Garg highlighted the potential for increased revenue across various sectors, including hotels, event management



Feb 22-24, 2024

India Expo Mart
Greater Noida, Delhi NCR, India

atithi



Incredible India

informamarkets

SOUTH ASIA'S NO.1 EXPO!

#SatteBiggerBolderBetter

Uniting global high-quality
buyers for networking,
business opportunities &
growth.

Register Now

Save INR 1000/-

RSVP: Pranav Navare

M: +91 77383 23257

E: pranav.navare@informa.com

Scan QR Code For Registration



www.satte.in



SUMIT GARG
President, EEMA and Co-founder and
Managing Director, E-Factor Experiences

"To ease the process for foreign couples, streamlined visa processes and comprehensive logistics support can be offered."

companies, local artisans, caterers, and transportation services. "Internationally acclaimed campaigns like this elevate India's image as a top-notch wedding destination," he shared.

Discussing specific strategies and promotional activities, Garg outlined the importance of engaging content, targeted social media campaigns, partnerships, and collaborations with wedding planners, influencers, and travel agencies. He also suggested, "To ease the process for foreign couples, streamlined visa processes and comprehensive logistics support can be offered."

Prerana Agarwal Saxena, Lead, EEMA Wedding Council, shed light on the paradox of India being frequently associated with grand weddings, but not ranking among the top 10 wedding destinations globally. Saxena said, "When we talk about big fat weddings, India is frequently mentioned. However, unfortunately, India still does not rank in the top 10 destinations." She expressed concern about the significant revenue loss incurred due to not attracting weddings in India. Saxena highlighted the potential of leveraging the appeal of Indian weddings as a means for Brand



PRERANA AGARWAL SAXENA
Lead
EEMA Wedding Council

"This campaign requires promotion on social media and invitations to top international wedding planners."



India to gain attention. To address this issue, EEMA initiated discussions with Arvind Singh, former Secretary, MOT, presenting an overview of the wedding industry. Saxena emphasized that the growing trend of more weddings taking place abroad compared to those being hosted in India, resulting in substantial revenue loss. EEMA collaborated with MOT to develop a comprehensive 10-point strategy for wedding tourism. Saxena explained, "We propose conducting roadshows in different countries as part of this strategy with provision of special immigration counters for inbound weddings and opening up heritage sites for wedding ceremonies." Emphasising on digital marketing, Saxena said, "This campaign requires promotion on social media and invitations to top international wedding planners to showcase and experience the offerings of our wedding tourism destinations." A holistic approach is also required to make this campaign a successful strategy and make foreign capital say, 'I-do' to the Indian market. ➔



Invitation to join the **South African Tourism Roadshow** in India

12

February
at The Lalit
Jaipur

Scan to register



13

February
at Shangri-La Eros
New Delhi

Scan to register



14

February
at Hyatt Regency
Ahmedabad

Scan to register



15

February
at ITC Gardenia
Bengaluru

Scan to register



16

February
at ITC Grand Central
Mumbai

Scan to register



Registration time: 9:30 am followed by lunch

RSVP

Jaspreet Kaur: +91 96501 96532, jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com

Kerala buckles up for M!CE

With its panoply of hotels and resorts, Kerala packs the perfect punch to attract weddings & events.

By Amita Pandey



The God's own country with its serene backwaters, attractive beaches, mystic hill stations and tea and spice plantations is a unique destination. The state recorded 159.69 lakh domestic visitors during January-September 2023, resulting in impressive growth of 19.34 per cent, which is a testament that Kerala is a safe and hospitable destination offering an indelible voyage into the state's beautiful past. To augment events in the state, Kerala Tourism unveiled groundbreaking products to position it as diverse wedding destination during Kerala Tourism B2B Partnership meet in Delhi recently.

With the belief that tourism cannot stay as a stagnant sector, **P B Nooh**, Director, Kerala Tourism, showcased tourism products, innovative tourism circuits, multiple initiatives taken in terms of investments in infrastructure development, capacity-building projects, and revamped strategies to the wider

Kerala is committed to creating a conducive environment for destination weddings, attracting couples from across the world.

stakeholders at the event. Nooh explained the gaps in infrastructure and policies to position Kerala as a destination of global standards for M!CE stakeholders.

M!CE & WEDDING TOURISM

Stating that Kerala hosted the G20 Sherpa meeting in Kumarakom, he said that it goes to show the state's preparedness to organize more such events. Highlighting Kerala's accommodation capacity, he added, "Kerala is at the forefront when it comes to luxurious hotel brands catering to a range of corporates

and trying to plug infrastructure gaps to hold bigger conferences."

Nooh said, "Kerala is committed to creating a conducive environment for destination weddings, attracting couples from across the world, boosting tourism and local economy." Kerala's unique geography boasts scenic destinations making it a coveted place for weddings as well as for honeymooners.

INITIATIVES TO ENTICE EMERGING MARKETS

Post-COVID, Kerala Tourism has been organizing campaigns to introduce its

tourism products and share information about the latest facilities available in the state. In the past two decades, Kerala has been conducting B2B meetings regularly at its regular source markets, including Europe. “We are targeting emerging markets as well, to entice foreign event organizers,” he added.

In terms of policies being drafted by the state, Nooh said, “There are certain gaps in terms of infrastructure development, and we are working on it. To come up to international standards, we are looking for private sector assistance also.” Kerala also held a Tourism Investors Meet in October 2023, which attracted investments worth ₹15,000 crore last year. To felicitate investors and to exchange information, felicitation centers have been built. Besides, last year it came up with a design policy to provide uniformity throughout the state. Kerala Tourism hopes that upcoming products enthralls the MICE community. Overall, they are working on filling the gaps in policies to make it an investor-friendly state. ➡



ICEGROUP INDIA CHAMPIONS



Your experience partner in creating lasting impressions of luxe, luxury and opulence.

Our Services:

Corporate MICE | Conferences
Exhibitions | Dealer Meets
Employee Trainings | Flight Bookings
VISAs | Hotel reservations
On-ground Events | Hybrid Events
Virtual Events | Product Launches
R&R | Corporate Videos
Branding Solutions
Corporate Gifting Solutions
And much more...

www.icegroupindia.com

Our company is a team of passionate travellers and event planners who are dedicated to creating unforgettable experiences for our clients. We believe that the key to a successful MICE is in the details, and thus one of our hallmarks is meticulous attention to detail. We plan and execute MICE that is tailored to each client's unique needs. As experts in creating experiences that leave a lasting impression we have a commitment to providing exceptional service and hospitality and that is what sets us apart from the rest. We also recognize the importance of responsible tourism and we strive to minimize the environmental impact of our tours and support local communities through initiatives that promote sustainability and social responsibility. We take pride in our ability to connect with our clients on a personal level and our hospitality is second to none.



Mohit Khanna
Managing Director & CEO
iceGroup India



Disha Shah
Director & COO
iceGroup India



A M!CE story for India

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager, India, Tourism Australia, claims easy visa and increased connectivity does the trick for Australia as it becomes one of the most preferred M!CE destinations for Indians.

By **Nisha Verma**

With so many countries vying for India's M!CE pie, it remains one of the most coveted M!CE markets for destinations around the world. **Nishant Kashikar**, Country Manager- India, Tourism Australia, could not agree more. "Today, India is considered one of

the fastest growing major economies in the world, and as a result, the business travel and M!CE sector is on the rebound. According to a recent American Express survey, 41 per cent of Indian businesses travelled to attend, host or present at conferences and events in 2023," he claimed.

INCENTIVES AT LARGE

Sharing details on how Tourism Australia is attracting Indian groups, he says, "In an effort to welcome more delegates to Australia from India, the Australia High Commission in New Delhi provides a streamlined and personalised visa process for large corporate or incentive groups. Plus, there has been a significant boost in flight options between Australia and India, with Air India and Qantas tripling direct aviation capacity between the two countries. The introduction of three non-stop Mumbai-Melbourne flights per week by Air India will further enhance accessibility. Business Events Australia also has a Bid Fund Programme, which is designed to increase the conversion of bids for new international business events for Australia through the offer of financial support at the critical bidding stage. Of the 26 incentive events won from around the world as a result of Bid Fund support, five are from India, worth US\$26.2mn in total."



THE BIG SHOWCASE

Dreamtime 2023 recently concluded in Adelaide, which saw Indian MICE agents meet with representatives from Australian event industry. Speaking on the same, he adds, “We know from previous Dreamtime events that the showcase delivers tangible results. The 2017 event, held in Brisbane, generated 200 business leads, of which 73 converted into business worth US\$50 million. And even with the disruption of the Australian bushfires



“The latest arrivals data from India to Australia is on par with 2019 levels and spend is higher compared with pre-pandemic travel.”



NISHANT KASHIKAR, Country Manager, India, Tourism Australia



SUN, SEA, AND “I DO” Your Tropical Wedding Dream

Nestled on a breathtaking peninsula where the ocean meets the lagoon, Avani Kalutara is a dreamy tropical haven. With enchanting outdoor ballrooms and scenic locations, it's the perfect setting for an unforgettable destination wedding in Sri Lanka.



◀ Scan the QR code for more information

For inquiries contact:

Snehal: +91 82866 04849

Bashitha: +94 74 186 0521

AVANI
Kalutara Resort

and the pandemic, Dreamtime 2019 in Perth generated 36 business leads in three months worth US\$97 million. It may be noted here that agents that can experience a destination firsthand, understand the offering better, and therefore, can sell better it better.”

BIG ON INCENTIVES

When it comes to Indian incentive groups, there are specific requirements for service, food and experiences. Kashikar emphasizes that Tourism Australia leaves no stone unturned to cater to the same. “We find that due to India’s proximity to Australia compared with other key markets, business events groups from India often have a better understanding of

We have found groups from India often align their incentive programme with sporting events such as cricket test series or T20 tournaments

Australia and its offering, and so groups often explore further. Cricket tests and tournaments can influence destination and programme selections, and timings. We have found groups from India often align their incentive programme with sporting events such as cricket Test series or T20 tournaments,” he adds.

PROMOTIONS GALORE

Informing about the initiatives they take in India for boosting the MICE numbers, he says, “My team here in Mumbai keeps in touch with significant planners and decision-makers, we hold business events and seminars to help educate planners on the business events offering in Australia, and regularly host planners



DREAMTIME 2023

Dreamtime 2023 has been driving solid results for Australia, generating 149 business leads to date, worth AUD \$79 million.

POST-EVENT SURVEY RESULTS

100% buyers satisfied with the event

100% buyers were more likely to consider Australia

100% buyers likely to send an incentive or corporate meeting to Australia

100% Australian industry sellers satisfied

90% sellers intend to sell more after event

on Familiarisation trips to Australia such as the Business Events Australia mega-famil earlier this year. Our incentive inspiration magazine Australia Next, shares ideas on new restaurants, hotels, experiences, destinations and suppliers across Australia, to help planners arrange their next event.”

GROUNDBREAKING RECOVERY

Affirming the importance of Indian



market for Australia, Kashikar continued. “In reference to the leisure travel market, the country was the first global market to return to pre-COVID arrival numbers. The latest arrivals data from India to Australia is on par with the 2019 levels and spend is higher compared with pre-pandemic travel,” he said.

AUSTRALIA NEXT

“Business Events Australia would like to maintain the strong momentum generated since Australia’s borders reopened, and continue to cement Australia’s attractiveness as the preferred long-haul MICE destination amongst Indians corporates and business events planners,” asserts Kashikar.

He informs further, “To continue rebuilding a pipeline of global business events, our incentive showcase will return in 2024 with an additional event to take place in Cairns, and the incentive showcase will be renamed Australia Next. We look forward to welcoming a group of Indian agents to Cairns for Australia Next in 2024.” ➡



CROSS VIBE

PAASHA ATELIER

BALI KUTA

Booking Period: 5 February - 31 March 2024
Stay Period : 5 February - 20 December 2024



- Daily breakfast for 2 persons
- 1 x 2 courses set Lunch OR Dinner for 2 persons for a minimum 5 nights stay
- 15% Discount of FB exclude alcoholic drink and promotion
- 15% Discount of Spa treatment exclude promotion and spa retail

Contact us to know more:
sandeep.raghav@crosshotelsandresorts.in, +91 7428392662





buzz travel marketing
managing your destination image

Malaysia Visa-free: carte-blanche for Indian M!CE



In a run-up to the Visit Malaysia 2026 Campaign, Malaysia hits top gear with a range of immersive M!CE experiences, punctuated by visa-free travel for Indians.

By Lipla Negi

When it comes to travel and tourism, Malaysia knows how to do it right. Just before the holiday season, the country announced visa-free travel for Indian travellers, causing quite a stir in the industry. Besides being a masterstroke in the destination promotion, it also came as an inviting opportunity for the Indian corporates to host their M!CE events in Malaysia. It may be noted that 283,885 Indian tourists arrived in Malaysia in the period January to June 2023.

A series
of exciting
events will be
rolled out in a
run-up to the
Visit Malaysia
2026 campaign.

Malaysia Tourism held a FAM trip to Malaysia in along with Miss SHOPhia Shopping Hunt 2023—Penang Edition. The participants were encouraged to explore the city on foot and identify the key tourist attractions. A novel idea, it promoted Malaysia as a wholesome M!CE destination, offering an immersive range of activities encouraging camaraderie and performance.

Shopping is a vital component of Malaysia's tourism promotional strategy; it boosts economic growth through increased retail spending by global visitors. The country leverages duty-free zones like cultural markets, and modern shopping malls to attract tourists seeking diverse experiences. Special events, digital marketing, and collaborations with retailers are employed to create an enthralling shopping experience in Malaysia.

Malaysia recorded a footfall of 9.16 million tourists during January to June 2023, generating receipts totalling RM 30.12 billion. Shopping emerged as the second-highest contributor, accounting for 33.9 per cent (RM 3.1 billion). Comparatively, in 2022, Malaysia

MALAYSIA'S TOP M!CE PICKS

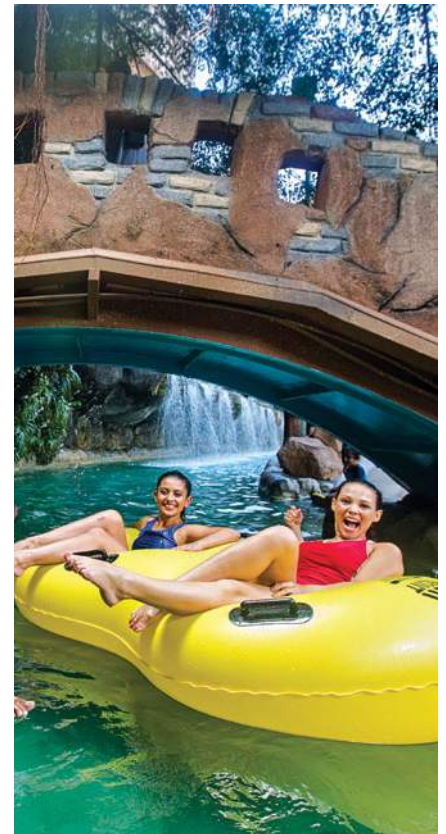
1 **Port
Dickson**

2 **Sunway
Lost World
of Tambun**

3 **Banjaran
Hotspots
Retreat**

4 **Pinang
Peranakan
Mansion**

5 **Rainbow
Skywalk,
The Top
@Komtar**



welcomed a total of 10.07 million tourists who spent RM 28.23 billion. The shopping segment played a pivotal role, contributing the highest share at 38.1 per cent (RM 10.7 billion), while food and beverages followed closely with 15.6 per cent (RM4.4 billion).

Along with these initiatives by Malaysia, Visa-free arrival is going to be a game changer rendering an upsurge of tourists with the upcoming Visit Malaysia Year 2026 event. As the iron is hot, Indian MICE community can also strike over the latest carte blanche. ➡



RAMADA

BY WYNDHAM
GOA ARPORA



Business Excellence
in a tropical paradise



Sweeping Vistas
for timeless romance

Contact Us For More Queries

18/1, Nagoa, Arpora, Bardez, Calangute – Mapusa Road, North Goa, Goa - 403516

Landline: +91 832 690 4000 Reservations: +91 89569 85210

reservations@ramadagoaarpora.com, delhisales@ramadagoaarpora.com, punjabsales@ramadagoaarpora.com,
gujaratsales@ramadagoaarpora.com, mumbaisales@ramadagoaarpora.com

Rise in digital focus

Shiladitya Mukherjee, Associate Vice President, Gujarat Region, Lords Hotels & Resorts, discusses the rapid growth of the hotel chain, along with insights into the 2024 agenda, competition, and industry trends.

By MT Bureau

Shiladitya Mukherjee, Associate Vice President, Gujarat Region, Lords Hotels & Resorts, disclosed plans to expand in tier II and III cities, including Bengaluru. The chain aims for comprehensive digitization and stay updated in all aspects by 2024.

DIGITALISATION & VISIBILITY – TOP PRIORITY

Lords Hotels & Resorts is known for integrating tradition and modern hospitality. With around 22 hotels in



SHILADITYA MUKHERJEE
Associate Vice President
Gujarat Region, Lords Hotels & Resorts

Gujarat and expansion plans in North, East, and international locations such as Africa, Dubai, and the USA.

In the competitive hospitality sector, continuous monitoring and adaptation are crucial. Mukherjee emphasized on analyzing customer preferences and adjusting services accordingly. Additionally, active participation in various industry association conferences is a strategic initiative to stay abreast of industry trends.

“We are creating different partnerships, tailor-made packages with the travel agencies as well to give the customer the best services”

TAILOR-MADE PACKAGES

Lords Hotels & Resorts has been working closely with the travel and trade associations. Owing to their engagement with the trade, the hotel chain has been participating in international and domestic travel and trade fairs regularly. “We are creating different partnerships, tailor-made packages with the travel agencies as well to give the customer the best services,” Mukherjee said, emphasizing on the importance of engaging with the trade.

HOTEL SECTOR BENEFITED

The last few years saw a dynamic shift in customer preferences across the world. Reflecting on the past year, he noted a surge in ‘revenge tourism’ as people eagerly travelled to desired destinations, benefiting the airline and hospitality industries. He highlighted a shift in mindset, emphasizing on a newfound eagerness to invest in tourism for family experiences. It is a realization that allocating funds for enriching life through exploration creates lasting memories. ➔





AIME 2024
MELBOURNE
19 - 21 FEB

Find your event inspiration in Melbourne



- + 500+ EXHIBITORS
- + 600+ HOSTED BUYERS
- + 3500+ VISITORS

REGISTER NOW | [AIME.COM.AU](https://aime.com.au)

WHERE THE WORLD MEETS IN ASIA PACIFIC





IEIA Open Seminar 2023

Connecting Industry Dots

The 12th edition of the IEIA Open Seminar, held at IEML, Greater Noida, Delhi-NCR, marked a significant milestone in the exhibitions industry, bringing together more than 500 participants.

By MT Bureau

The 12th IEIA Open Seminar 2023 successfully concluded at IEML, Greater Noida, Delhi-NCR. The seminar provided a significant platform for networking and knowledge exchange, fostering meaningful collaborations and business partnerships with more than 35 eminent speakers. The two-day seminar showcased premier products and services offered by the leading venues, and service partners across the exhibition industry with a special session on the Indian M!CE Industry.

The Exhibition Services Expo was inaugurated by **Radha Katyal Narang**, IRS, Director, Niche Tourism, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), and was followed by an address highlighting the

overview of the programme by **Sooraj Dhawan**, Honorary Secretary, IEIA. During the inaugural session, **Rakesh Kumar**, Chairman, India Expo Centre, highlighted how IEML is supporting the evolution of M!CE industry landscape in the country with its latest facilities and enhanced connectivity with upcoming Asia's largest airport in Jewar.

Sonia Prashar, President, IEIA, then delivered the presidential address throwing light on emerging positive trends and outstanding achievements of the association to support the futuristic growth of the stakeholders.

The first day of the event featured the keynote address by Narang on the meaningful initiatives spearheaded by MOT to promote the progress of the

M!CE sector in India. The highlight of the day was the interesting knowledge session on the topic—'Nudge-How People Decide'.

Day II unfolded with a special address by Guest of Honour **Arun Srivastava**, Joint Director General, MOT, applauding IEIA's efforts in supporting the growth of the Indian M!CE Industry and recommending future initiatives to further augment the progress of the sector. The event also saw the launch of 'IEIA TV'—a dedicated YouTube channel for providing a platform to broadcast stories, trends, and opinions on Indian Exhibitions Industry. Committed to drive the professional development and service delivery standards across the sector, the seminar has emerged as a success. ➔



MOVEMENTS



**VIJAY KRISHNAN
VAZHVELIL**

Vice President – Operations
Minor Hotels, India

Minor Hotels has appointed Vijay Krishnan Vazhvelil as Vice President – Operations, India. In his new role, Vazhvelil is going to be responsible for robust growth of Group's first Anantara property in Jaipur. His career spans more than two decades with a successful record of managing strategic growth for hotels, resorts, and safari lodges. He has worked with Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, American Express, Hyatt Hotels, and Aramness, a luxury wildlife lodge in India.



ABHIRAM MENON

General Manager
Hilton Bangalore Embassy
Golflinks

Abhiram Menon assumes the role of General Manager at Hilton Bangalore Embassy Golflinks. Previously, he was handling operations for Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, with focus on prioritizing end-results, and achieving commercial objectives along with guest satisfaction. He has many accolades under his name during his tenure with Lemon Tree Premier Mumbai International Airport to 3 quarterly APAC region awards in his previous roles at Hilton.



VIVEK MAHAJAN

General Manager
Grand Mercure Agra

Grand Mercure Hotels & Resorts has appointed Vivek Mahajan as General Manager of Grand Mercure Agra. With an experience of 20 years in the hospitality sector, Mahajan has a keen understanding of the industry's intricacies. He has to focus on establishing this new property as the foremost destination in Agra, setting new standards of excellence in the hospitality industry. He has previously served brands like Oberoi Group, Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces, and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide.



PIYUSH BHASIN

General Manager
The Fern Residency, Ajmer

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has newly appointed Piyush Bhasin as General Manager of The Fern Residency in Ajmer. With an experience of over two decades in the hospitality sector, Bhasin has made an impactful contribution to revenue performance, growth, and service excellence in prestigious organizations. His expertise as a strategic leader will contribute in elevating standards for the success of the organization and will take the property's position to new dimensions in a competitive market.



SAHIL ANAND

Cluster Revenue Manager
Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun
Beach & The Bheemili Resort

Sahil Anand is the Cluster Revenue Manager for Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach and The Bheemili Resort. With over 7 years of experience, he will play a crucial role in steering e-commerce by strategically utilizing e-distribution platforms for both properties. In his new role, he is expected to monitor competition pricing and offerings and adapt business strategies to meet market requirements. In 2016, he achieved a 100% reservation score for Novotel Chennai SIPCOT.



REMAK GOEL

Director of Sales & Marketing
Crowne Plaza Greater Noida

Crowne Plaza Greater Noida has promoted Remank Goel to Director of Sales and Marketing. With an expertise of 13 years, Remank has previously worked as Director of Sales at Crowne Plaza Greater Noida, where he spearheaded the sales team and worked on revenue maximization, and handled budgeting and forecasting. He holds diverse experience across different cities in India, collaborating with renowned brands such as InterContinental Hotels Group and The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group.



ENA ROY

Director of Operations
Sheraton Grand Bengaluru
Whitefield Hotel & Convention
Centre

Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Centre has appointed Ena Roy as Director of Operations. Roy brings 21 years of experience in leading hospitality brands like ITC Hotels and Hyatt Hotels. With expertise in managing hotel room operations, Roy has exhibited strategic planning to support business growth in her professional journey, adept revenue generation through upselling, and effective management of Rooms Division. Her passion is to create indelible experiences for guests.



RIDHIMA NAGPAL

Marketing and
Communications Manager
Hyatt Centric MG Road
Bangalore

Ridhima Nagpal is appointed by Hyatt Centric, MG Road Bangalore as the new Marketing and Communications Manager. She has been a part of the Marketing and Advertising domain since 2016. Her expertise encompasses areas such as content marketing, media relations, crisis communication, social media management, and digital marketing ensuring client retention and the continued success of the hotel. In her new role, Nagpal is expected to implement innovative ideas, operational policies, and quality standards.

BOOK YOUR NEXT **MICE TRIP** WITH THE **Leaders**

DOOK TRAVELS



Scan and Check Out Our
Ready-to-buy **MICE** Tour Packages



AZERBAIJAN
BAKU

ARMENIA
YEREVAN

BELARUS
MINSK

GEORGIA
TBILISI

KAZAKHSTAN
ALMATY

KYRGYZSTAN
BISHKEK

UZBEKISTAN
TASHKENT

RUSSIA
MOSCOW

TURKEY
ISTANBUL

...more



✉ SALES@DOOKTRAVELS.COM ☎ 01140001000 📞 +91 8368513675

📍 905, 906, Kanchenjunga Building, 18, Barakhamba Rd, Connaught Place
New Delhi, Delhi 110001

E X P E R I E N C E



DIVERSE LOCATIONS



FOR

Seamless Stays | Unique Dining Experiences | Memorable Celebrations

ACROSS 51 HOTELS IN 44 CITIES

Let FORTUNE take you to NEWER places

Become Club ITC Member Today to Unlock Exclusive Offers and Benefits
Book Direct on itchohels.com/fortunehotels or call 24x7 Toll Free 1800-102-2333, 1800-419-6444

Follow us on   