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Embracing sustainability

We are back with another interesting set of articles to share, educate, and create thought process reactions.

With a focus on corporate, political, and business events in the past few months, as a conscious consumer, I was wondering about events—are events sustainable?

Sustainability in the events industry is becoming crucial and imperative. It is important to consider the environmental, social, and economic impact

The event companies and corporations are adopting sustainability to minimise their environmental impact and promote responsible practices. Large corporates are creating additional roles for senior management to engage, educate, and support the teams to focus on sustainable business models.

Measuring the sustainability impact of an event is essential to understand its environmental, social, and economic effects and

“Measuring the sustainability impact of an event is essential to understand its environmental, social, and economic effects and counter plan for corrections.”

of events, while minimising negative effects and focusing on results. With a lot of initiatives and advocacy by sustainability influencers, environmentalists, ethical entrepreneurs, minimalists, it is time now to concentrate on a sustainable approach than that of extravagance.

The need of the hour is to ensure our events are moving from traditional methods to more innovative and sustainable approaches such as zero waste concept, use of renewable energy, greener catering, limited, but healthy and adequate portions of food and beverages, and using digital material instead of paper.

counter plan for corrections. It is important to define the goals to achieve during and at the end of the event, collect relevant data for improvement, track the performance of internal and external custodians, and encourage by giving them certificates of accomplishment.

Hope you enjoy the topics that we have covered, and we would be glad to hear back from you on your experience and suggestions.

Wishing you all a wonderful day!

Warm regards
Jyothi Varma, Consulting Editor

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Green gaze into meetings

Primarily known for meetings management, BCD M&E is adapting to the shifting landscape and is expanding into event solutions and corporate incentives in India.



By MT Bureau

In India, where the market is burgeoning with opportunities and innovation, BCD Meetings & Events (BCD M&E) is taking strides to not only enhance its outreach but also lead the charge toward a more sustainable future. **Harshad Donde**, Country Director, India,

BCD M&E, shared with us how they are reshaping the landscape of events and conferences in India through its commitment to sustainability.

The key elements of BCD M&E's strategy is its stance towards sustainability. It stresses on holding hybrid events seamlessly integrating in-person and virtual components, leveraging advanced technology to

its events environment friendly through 'green meetings.' These 'green' initiatives include reducing waste and conserving energy, minimising use of single-use plastic, opting for recycled materials, and selecting venues with sustainability credentials.

Through efforts spanning venue selection, supplier engagement, client education, and employee

“These 'green' initiatives include reducing waste and conserving energy, minimising use of single-use plastic, opting for recycled materials, and selecting venues with sustainability credentials.”



HARSHAD DONDE
Country Director, India, BCD M&E

enhance the attendee experience. He highlighted the importance of customisation in events, leveraging data analytics to tailor experiences as per attendees' preferences. The company strives to create memorable experiences by incorporating elements of entertainment, wellness activities, and cultural experiences to enhance engagement among others.

Underscoring the role of adaptation in the MICE industry, Donde claimed, “The company works towards making

training, BCD M&E demonstrates its commitment to sustainability.

“Through these initiatives, it sets an example within the industry and drives positive change towards more environmentally conscious event planning and execution processes,” Donde affirmed. By embracing innovation and leveraging advanced technologies, the company enhances event accessibility and reduces its carbon footprint, paving the way for a green future in India's events industry. →

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交通部觀光署
Tourism Administration, MOTC

What does future hold for MICE?

MICE industry has the potential to draw more spending from business travellers riding on the coat-tails of growth of other sectors such as IT, banking, and FMCG.



By MT Bureau

MICE tourism, like a silent force, has a perceptible share in tourism's growth. Drawing elite business travellers, whose expenditures echo throughout the economy, it catalyses growth across diverse sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and entertainment. Recently, **Naveen Kundu**, MD, EbixCash Travel, unveiled his insightful study on the dynamics fueling MICE sector expansion and the myriad of opportunities poised to transform stakeholders' fortunes.

The report claimed that in 2022, the global MICE industry reached US\$598 billion and is estimated to reach US\$2,309 billion by 2032. Globally, it is projected to grow at 11.6 per cent CAGR from 2023 to 2032. However, India is expected to grow at 15.6 per cent during the same period. This could be considered as a potential moment for stakeholders to leverage the growth of the sector.



NAVEEN KUNDU
Managing Director, EbixCash Travel

Globally, MICE sector is projected to grow at 11.6% CAGR from 2023 to 2032

SECTORS TO IMPACT MICE GROWTH

The key sectors that will drive the growth of MICE are banking, IT, insurance, FMCG, and automobile, among others. The banking sector is projected to grow at 10 to 11 per cent year-on-year, while the IT and FMCG sectors will grow at the rate of 3.8 per cent and 14.9 per cent CAGR, respectively. Consequently, the growth of these sectors will lead to more MICE activities in the country.

The growth of MICE also depends on the employment rate of various sectors in India. The employees in the industrial sectors stands at 31 million, and 120 million in MSMEs. Report claimed that this could result in around 30 million MICE travellers, based on the assumption that only 20 per cent of the workforce from these sectors engage in incentive trips, conferences, product launches, events, worldwide. The report paints an optimistic picture for MICE in India, riding on the coat-tails of growth in interconnected sectors nationwide. →

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DreamSetGo, you will stay in the lap of luxury, either a charming boutique hotel or a lavish five-star resort nestled in the city.

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Meetings galore at 10th edition

Here is a peek behind the upcoming Travel MICE & Corporate Show in Hyderabad, which is set to witness a grand participation from travel and corporate professionals.

By MT Bureau

The much-awaited 10th edition of the Travel MICE & Corporate Show is set to take place from July 6 to 7 at the Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre. The two-day event will bring together stakeholders and professionals from the travel and corporate sectors for knowledge sharing, meetings, and networking. The event will provide a platform for forging new partnerships and strengthening existing ones. The highlight of the event is to facilitate direct interactions between hospitality professionals and corporate decision-makers.

THE GRAND VENUE

Amit Sachdeva, General Manager, Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard By

USP: TRAVEL MICE & CORPORATE SHOW

EXTENSIVE BUSINESS MEETINGS

More than 1,800 business meetings likely

DIVERSE PARTICIPATION & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Networking with professionals from IT, FMCG, and automobile sectors as well as international tourism boards

Marriott, Hyderabad, expressed high expectations for the Travel MICE Show. “Our goal is to showcase Hyderabad Marriott Hotel and Convention Centre as a premier venue for large-scale events,” he said. “We aim to highlight our exceptional facilities and services while interacting with leading corporates and MICE operators from across India. This event will provide valuable networking opportunities and allow us to market our property on a

national level, enhancing our visibility and reputation in the industry.”

Highlighting the commitment and dedication of the property to incorporate sustainable practices into the wedding and event spaces Sachdeva said, “The hotel uses energy-efficient lighting, recycling waste, sourcing local food, using digital screens to save paper, and conserving water.” Overall, the show will provide an opportunity to the hotel to showcase its potential as a MICE venue.



USP: VENUE

<p>PRIME LOCATION Easy access to attractions and business hubs</p> <p>LARGE VENUE CAPACITY Accommodates up to 1,500 guests</p> <p>LUXURIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS 407 rooms and suites with lake views</p>	<p>PROFESSIONAL EVENT PLANNING Seamless and stress-free services with world-class amenities</p> <p>TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT Advanced audio-visual (AV) equipment, high-speed internet</p>
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EPILOGUE OF 9TH EDITION

The 9th edition of Travel MICE & Corporate Show hosted at Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre in January 2024, witnessed over a staggering 1,600 meetings sparking corporate travel excellence and setting new standards in engagement. The event convened industry leaders and experts, who discussed the demands and challenges of corporates and the future of the MICE industry. The highlight of the show was an engaging panel discussion, where luminaries disseminated their perspectives on buzzing topics such as Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), Self-Booking Tools (SBT) and Online Booking Tool (OBT) in the industry, which steered industry stakeholders to navigate through the looking glass.

The two-day show boasted a perceptible number of buyers, exhibitors, and attendees forming impressive connections, igniting opportunities for collaborations on an unprecedented scale. The business transactions accelerated during the event projected to escalate, nurture, and propel innovation

along the shifting tide of corporate trends. It also infused an opportunity for Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre to showcase its potential as a venue to seamlessly host large gatherings. The success of the event reverberated the vitality of Travel MICE & Corporate Show in the development of the travel and hospitality industry across the country. The exponential growth of

Travel MICE & Corporate Show, with every successful edition, underscores its evolution into a powerhouse event, commanding attention and attracting industry stakeholders seeking to leverage its unparalleled networking opportunities. Apparently, this is your cue to participate in the 10th edition of this grand travel show soon to entice Nizam's city. ➔



Keeping MICE travellers safe

Are you prepared for eventualities that could disrupt your business trip? Asego's travel assistance guarantee that MICE travellers receive prompt assistance, says **Dev Karvat**, Founder & CEO, Asego.



protection, leaving travellers exposed to unforeseen circumstances. Considering that we have meticulously curated travel assistance and insurance plans beyond basic coverage, and will address the distinct risks such as gadget protection, trip cancellation cover, self-drive cover, and baggage protection. We provide flexible travel protection plans with prompt assistance tailored to diverse preferences.

By Hazel Jain

Q WHAT ARE YOUR OBJECTIVES WHEN IT COMES TO TRAVEL INSURANCE IN INDIA AND HOW ARE YOU FULFILLING THEM?

A Since inception, it has been our objective to ensure ancillary revenue success for all our partners. This year we are going to drive this mission through the launch of our new proprietary software. It will empower our partners by offering advanced business intelligence and optimising operational efficiency. We are on the cusp of launching a innovative product that will revolutionise India's travel insurance landscape. It will provide holistic travel assistance. We expect that in 2024, it will seamlessly manage the anticipated surge in demand, enhancing ability to serve our partners. We are also excited to onboard new international clients soon.

Q WHAT IS YOUR FOCUS IN THE MICE SEGMENT?

A Traditionally, MICE trips have been viewed through a cost-centric lens, prioritising activities over travel

“We are on the cusp of launching a new product that will change how Indians view travel insurance.”

Q IS ASEGO DOING ANYTHING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY-EVEN IF IT IS IN-HOUSE?

A We are deeply committed to sustainability and this commitment extends beyond our operations to encompass our modest corporate social responsibility initiatives. We actively engage in activities such as tree-planting campaigns and are associated with a couple of animal welfare associations to promote environmental conservation. We have implemented waste management practices to minimise our ecological footprint. We have adopted simple measures like using LED lights and employed other energy conservation techniques as every small step in this direction will contribute to the larger goal of environmental preservation. ➔

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Crafting tomorrow's legacy: Eco-living

Corporates are embracing sustainability as a core component of its operations, driven by legal mandates. Industry experts demonstrate these practices are necessary in today's business landscape.

By **Janice Alyosius**

Sustainability has transcended its status as a mere buzzword to become a fundamental element of modern business practices, especially in the travel and hospitality industry. Leaders in this sector emphasise that sustainability is not just a social responsibility, but a determinant of a brand's integrity.

Underlining similar sentiments, **Rajdev Bhattacharya**, Global Head, Travel and Hospitality & Global Travel Services, Wipro, articulated this shift, "Legally, the infrastructure is pushing hotels, even the corporates or the airlines to sort of think a little bit more. It is no longer a social responsibility; it is a legal requirement." This evolution reflects a growing recognition of the urgent need to protect our planet, which requires a collaborative approach from every stakeholder involved in the sector.

WILLINGNESS TO INVEST IN SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

The willingness to invest in sustainable



RAJDEV BHATTACHARYA

Global Head, Travel and Hospitality & Global Travel Services, Wipro



DEVENDRA SARAIYA

Director, Administration, Deloitte India



practices, even at a higher cost, is shared by many industry leaders. Bhattacharya himself is prepared to pay extra for hosting more sustainable events. "It is high time we woke up; Mother Nature has given us enough warnings like COVID, floods in Dubai, and almost 40°C summers in Bengaluru!" he emphasised. He suggested that sustainability initiatives with long-term benefits should be prioritised, including energy-efficient venues, local and organic food sourcing, waste minimisation, and carbon offset options for travel. Bhattacharya also stresses the importance of balancing price sensitivity with sustainability. He advised negotiating with vendors for competitive pricing on sustainable products and services to help mitigate the additional costs.

The impact of sustainable practices extends beyond immediate

environmental benefits. Bhattacharya highlighted the importance of considering the overall effect of events on the environment and local communities. This holistic approach includes transportation logistics, waste management, and the social and economic implications of hosting events. "Collaborating with local stakeholders and engaging attendees in sustainable practices can further enhance the event's positive impact," he noted, advocating for a comprehensive strategy that benefits both the environment and the company's reputation.

CORPORATE COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Devendra Saraiya, Director, Administration, Deloitte India, reinforced the importance of sustainability in daily operations and



SANJAY PAI

VP and Head (Corporate Travel, Aviation & Facility Management), Larson & Toubro

GST, from pro-active audit compliance to lowest logical fares and will install this soon, this year,” **Sanjay Pai**, Vice President and Head, Corporate Travel, Aviation & Facility Management, Larson & Toubro, shared.

WAY FORWARD

The consensus among industry leaders is clear: Sustainability is an essential aspect of modern business that requires ongoing commitment and strategic investment. As Bhattacharya put it, “Sustainability should be viewed as an investment in the future that not only benefits the environment but also enhances the company’s reputation and brand value.” This forward-thinking approach ensures that sustainability efforts are not just about meeting current legal requirements but also about securing a healthier, more prosperous future for all.

With an increasing number of companies pledging to attain net-zero objectives, the imperative arises for them to adopt business models aligned with eco-friendly principles. Embracing sustainable practices and social responsibilities for corporate travel and meetings represents an investment in the future, ensuring a harmonious balance between business goals and environmental stewardship. By embracing sustainable practices, brands across various verticals cultivate a reputation that speaks volumes. It is more than just a corporate responsibility—it is a strategic decision that elevates brand value, which resonates with the stakeholders and echoes meaningful living for generations to come. ➔

Inputs from Hazel Jain

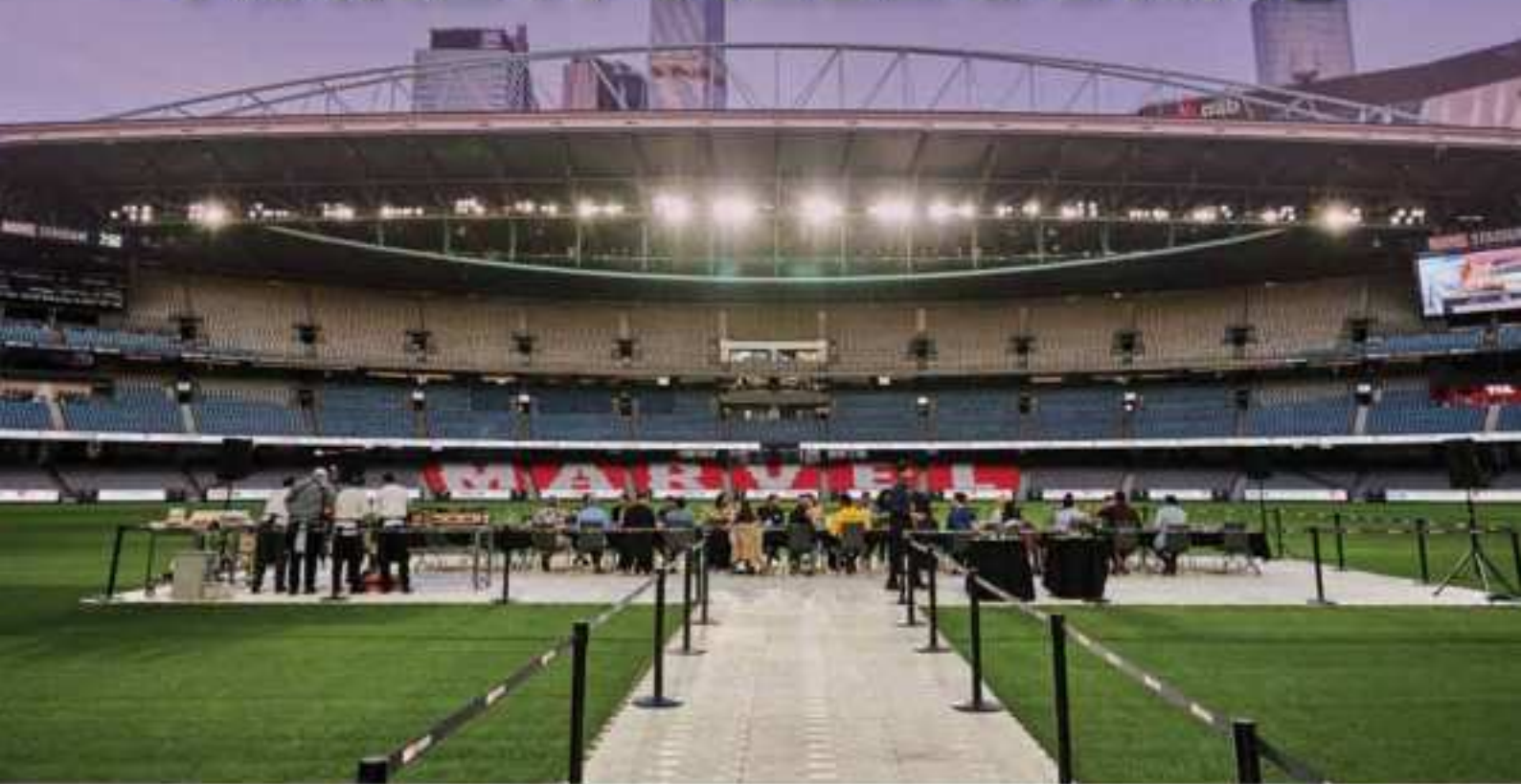
By embracing sustainable practices, brands across various verticals cultivate a reputation that speaks volumes

events. “We ensure that during our events, we use glass bottles, avoid paper and plastic cups,” he explained. Deloitte India is committed to balancing these expenses with the need for sustainable practices. “There is no compromise on it,” Saraiya asserted, reflecting a steadfast dedication to eco-friendly initiatives.

“My company had long been an Environmental, Social, and Governance

(ESG)-compliant organisation, even before sustainability became a global buzzword. We are a process-driven company, where we act in accordance with ESG regulations at every juncture. So, we are a huge contributor towards sustainability. We are now in the third version of building a next-gen corporate tool, which will take care of other parameters from ESG programmes to

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Elevating MICE offerings

Taiwan has exciting initiatives planned to attract Indian travellers, along with cost-effective schemes for Indian MICE groups.

By MT Bureau

Taiwan is rapidly emerging as a top-tier destination for MICE in the Asia-Pacific region. The country's commitment to excellence is reflected in its latest facilities, extensive government support, and tailored incentive schemes, making it stand out for hosting world-class events.

From the iconic Taipei World Trade Center to the newly inaugurated Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, Taiwan offers venues that rival the best in the world. With expanding capacities and new plans for 2024, Taiwan is poised to elevate the MICE experience to new heights.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT & INCENTIVE SCHEMES

The Taiwan MICE Project Office stands ready to support your endeavors, offering financial aid, and travel incentives and other tailored assistance. Local authorities, industry partners, and event organisers collaborate to create customised packages to meet the specific needs of MICE organisers.

For corporate incentive travel groups, Taiwan provides a group visa policy with

requirements based on the group's size. Groups of at least 300 people staying for four days and three nights can benefit from support for preliminary inspection trips and economy-class air tickets, with a subsidy cap of NT\$200,000 (₹5,16,516).

SPECIAL SUBSIDIES FOR INDIA'S MICE GROUP

Taiwan offers specific subsidies to Indian travellers: NT\$400 (₹1,033) per traveller for groups of 30 or more, and NT\$80,000-120,000 (₹2,06,709

to 3,10,064) for groups of 200 or more visiting local historical or cultural sites. These incentives make Taiwan a cost-effective destination for Indians.

MAJOR MICE CITIES AND VENUES

Taiwan's major cities—Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung—offer unique charms and world-class facilities. These cities provide a diverse array of venues and hotels to suit diverse preference, ensuring that every event held in the country is extraordinary. →





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Embracing 'greenery'

MICE is an indispensable vertical for escalation of tourism biz. Delve into green acts proposed by **Mustahib Khan**, which can transform it into an eco-friendly sector.

Tourism in India is one of the fastest-growing sectors with total global tourist arrivals witnessing a surge in recent decades. The success of G20 and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Meetings during India's Presidency in 2023 demonstrated the country's world-class exhibition and conference infrastructure, contemporary technology advancement, heritage, culture, and traditions. Thus, displaying that India is one of the riveting MICE destinations.

MICE is a key market segment and contributes to national economy. It generates many job opportunities in tourism and allied sectors. These attributes have resulted in a boom in MICE activities. This development has drawn criticism globally as events and meetings generate massive amounts of waste, impacting the environment. During India's G20 Presidency, four G20 tourism working groups were set up to

develop policies to promote 360 days of sustainable and inclusive tourism. All concerned, including various states, worked together to strengthen infrastructure, promote cultural heritage, preserve diversity, and achieve sustainable development.



MUSTAHIB KHAN
Tourism Consultant, Public Policy
Nangia & Co PPL

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Sustainability is a responsible way of hosting events. It conserves energy, minimises consumption of natural resources, reduces waste, promotes eco-friendly products, among others.

Event organisers can take various initiatives to promote sustainable ways of catering MICE gatherings. They can leverage digital tools for communications, and registrations to minimise paper usage. They can adopt ways to reduce energy consumption and use permanent electricity solutions to avoid wasting resources.

Stakeholders must support local vendors and promote economic benefits within the community. Set up local stalls to buy eco-friendly handmade products. Lastly, engaging communities and tourists in eco-friendly initiatives, and incorporating sustainability themes into events and workshops can help MICE to persist in coherence with nature. ➔

GREEN ACTS

1 Use digital materials and platforms

2 Reusable materials, purchases, and decorations

3 Reusable catering solutions & water usage

4 Efficient use of energy & resources

5 Local sourcing and community engagement

6 Education and awareness about sustainable practices

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Decoding what corporates want?

As service providers are pivotal in organising a corporate event, MICETalk spoke to a senior corporate executive on priorities and expectations from suppliers.

By **MT Bureau**

The corporate MICE travel has changed by leaps and bounds in the last few years and hence they need to be catered differently. Offering a buffet of experiences to embedding end-to-end technology solutions might just be the beginning of a positive future.

CHALLENGES

It is not easy for MNCs to organise an incentive trip at an overseas destination. If someone was planning for 500 people, they have to cut it down to 250 people. Budget, price point, availability, awareness, and the demands have changed post-pandemic, said a corporate executive. When it comes to an event, a service provider has to cater to the needs of diverse segments of people. Each industry or a corporate would have a unique requirement. Hence, planners need to curate their services based on the individual segment and manage the expectations.

EXPERIENCE IS KEY

Today MICE is about creating an experience, as per diverse requirements. “A leadership event

in an organisation versus a dealership event—both need to be looked into differently. Today, all MICE service providers have a fixed menu and fixed vendors, without any tailor-made service. Hence, there is a need to customise the needs to create an experience,” he claimed.

SUSTAINABILITY

Mentioning that sustainability plays a huge role for corporates the expert suggested, “We will do business with partners who are carbon neutral and ecologically conscious. Planners should give us the partner’s vision on net zero before we collaborate with them. Fuel efficiency, EV vehicles, green hotels with water conservation plans, avoiding usage of single-use plastic, and using screens instead of standees, are things we need to consider. It is not a one-sided thing. It is the event planners who play a pivotal role.”

PRIORITISE TECHNOLOGY

The philosophy should be to digitize, automate, and outsource. “Currently, we do not have an end-to-end digital platform. Many start-ups have come up, but each caters to one particular unit. A corporate would not prefer to have multiple plugins



through API solutions. If an event planner comes with integrated solutions, they are running ahead of the curve,” he claimed.

As an event planner, technology can give you an edge over others. The expert also said when managing a large event of 100 to 500 people,

picked up owing to less travel time,” he added. Also, visa cost and the process of getting the visa play a crucial role.

CHOOSING A PLANNER

While choosing an event planner, a corporation prefers somebody who proactively comes up with solutions independently. Our expert said, “It is crucial to help your business partner to know what kind of service you expect. A collaborative approach can help you both in succeeding as a corporate and as a supplier.” The bottom line is ‘embrace the change before it embarrasses you’,” he concluded. ➔

Planners need to curate their services based on the individual segment and manage the expectations

a notification at the right time on the phones goes a long way.

CLOSING ON A DESTINATION

Along with budget, flying time is another challenge while choosing a destination. “You want to see that the team spends less time travelling and more time at their destination. In Southeast Asia or within India, things have





Tips to make your **incentive** **a success**

Corporate travel, particularly in MICE, has evolved, shaped by global trends and specific needs. Corporate leaders share priorities, offering a comprehensive view of this dynamic field.

By **Janice Alyosius**

The insights from industry leaders reveal the intricate planning and diverse considerations involved in corporate travel. From visa planning and catering to dietary needs to selecting visa-friendly destinations and ensuring safety, MICE sector requires a multifaceted approach. As India's prominence in the global MICE industry grows, addressing safety concerns and leveraging government support will be key to its continued success.

FIRST SORT VISA & DIET

Talking about the key factors to investigate, while planning an incentive trip or a conference, **Mridul Pahuja**,

**MRIDUL PAHUJA**

Associate Vice President - Travel Mobility and Insurance, Motilal Oswal Financial Services

**ANJALI CHUGH**

Chief Marketing Manager
Nuvama Group

Associate Vice President, Travel Mobility and Insurance, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, emphasised, “Early visa application is an advantage. Regarding visas, we normally plan well in advance. We like to work on visa at least three or four months ahead for international trips,” he said.

He also pointed out the need to cater to specific dietary needs. “As Indians, we have specific requirements such as Jain food and additional services, so we cater

to these needs in advance,” he said. This attention to detail ensures a comfortable experience for all travellers.

OPTING FOR VISA-FRIENDLY DESTINATIONS

Anjali Chugh, Chief Marketing Manager, Nuvama Group, underscored the importance of selecting visa-friendly international destinations to streamline the travel process for large groups.

“When it comes to an international

location, the area or country must be visa-friendly. I do not have to spend a lot of time getting visas for a group of 150 to 200 people. Other constraints regarding the convenience of getting direct flights and the attractions that the destination has to offer are crucial to keep the team motivated,” she explained.

For domestic travel, safety measures and travel convenience are paramount. “Travel convenience from the airport to various destinations is important. In India, it is easy to connect to many airports, but traveling from the airport to different cities or places frequently involves a lot of time on the road.”

INDIA, THE NEXT BIG MICE INDUSTRY

Gaurav Narula, Head, Supply Chain, Aakash Life, said India is making strides in the industry. “In the Indian MICE industry, we are doing a commendable job. The country’s investments and government support are noteworthy,”

India is making headlines internationally, positioning itself as a destination of the future



GAURAV NARULA
Head, Supply Chain
Aakash Life



promote tourism and incentivise corporate events. India is yet to capitalise on this opportunity. Incentivising global corporations to host events here could greatly enhance our standing in the global MICE market,” he said.

CORPORATE TRAVEL TRENDS

Annabel Christine, AGM, Head of Travel, Ashok Leyland, observed a shift in corporate travel preferences, with organisations increasingly sourcing their own convention centres. “As an organisation, we prefer to source our own convention centres, occasionally seeking support from specific vendors. Direct involvement allows us to manage the process more efficiently. We prioritise venues such as hotels that can accommodate a larger bandwidth of attendees, facilitating a seamless experience within one property,” Christine said.

She stressed, “Convention centres remain a focal point due to their tailored offerings for corporate events. Thus, securing suitable space for our conventions is paramount.”

She also noted the resilience of travel demand post-COVID, with organisations recognising the value of in-person interactions. “Despite initial concerns during the pandemic, travel has rebounded significantly. Video-conferencing has not replaced the need for in-person interactions; rather,

he asserted. Narula highlighted the rapid development of new hotels and destinations, such as Ayodhya, which are gaining global attention. “This increased visibility is intriguing. India is making headlines globally, positioning itself as a destination of the future. As we are working to becoming the world’s third-largest economy, our achievements in the MICE sector are notable” he said.

Despite the progress, Narula acknowledged challenges in safety and security, particularly for global travellers. “Despite potential, there remains apprehension among global, although this sentiment is not shared by Indian travellers. Addressing concerns regarding safety and security is paramount in instilling confidence among international visitors,” he emphasised.

Narula also witnessed potential in incentivising global corporations to host events in India, “Reflecting on my experiences with various countries and convention centres across the globe, it is evident that many nations actively

Logistics, novelty, and accommodation capacity are paramount. There are other vital factors such as selecting suppliers for corporate events



ANNABEL CHRISTINE
AGM - Head of Travel
Ashok Leyland



Picture credit: WTM London 2023

people are eager to reconnect and make up for lost time. Organisations recognise the value of investing in incentive programmes to foster employee engagement and dealer satisfaction,” Christine remarked. The support from tourism boards and the importance of building relationships with destination management companies (DMCs) are key aspects of her travel planning strategy.

One major trend that Narula highlighted is the increase spending capacity, “Post-COVID landscape has seen a notable shift. Despite initial hesitance, people are increasingly eager to travel and invest in experiences. Money is no longer a major concern for everyone. For instance, the hotel prices and airfares are skyrocketing, yet people continue to travel without much worry” Narula said.



AMOL PRASADI
Head, Supply Chain Management
Metro Brands Limited

LOGISTICS REMAIN VITAL

Amol Prasadi, Head, Supply Chain Management, Metro Brands Limited, outlined the critical factors in selecting suppliers for corporate events. Logistics,

novelty, and accommodation capacity are paramount. “The first thing we consider is the distance. Can the chosen location or site handle a group of our size efficiently?” he questioned.

“We assess what new offerings the supplier has to offer. For instance, we opted for complete commando training, a departure from our usual leisure activities. This unique experience not only provided fun but also unveiled new trends among our team members,” Prasadi asserted.

Adequate medical support and suitable accommodations are also crucial. “We evaluate whether the location offers suitable accommodations and amenities. Is there a range of properties available? Can they cater to our needs, including food and medical facilities? Given the size of our groups, such considerations are crucial,” he underlined. ➔





Green sports extravaganza

The 17th edition of Rendez-vous en France, held in Toulouse this year, set the tone for Paris Olympics 2024 with a stellar lineup of gastronomy, games, and cultural experiences.

By **Lipla Negi**

A colossal hangar filled with authentic aircraft taking you in and around past as well as future—the iconic Aeroscopia Museum played host to the opening gala dinner for the 17th edition of Rendez-vous en France. This year, France’s most popular B2B trade made headway into the city of Toulouse, the capital of France’s southern Occitanie region. The trade show was an opportunity to showcase the riches that make France one of the world’s most popular destinations. The evening witnessed an engaging night where travel professionals from across the world conversed over a multi-course menu served with a dash of entertainment with musicians, singers and aerial dancers. The two-day event was all about networking and exploring the new dimensions of France and its tourism offerings—or as **Christophe Decloux**, Director General, Paris Region, put it, “We want to go from the first destination in the world to the best destination in the world. We aim to be the best destination in eco-friendly and regenerative tourism as well.”

The event was organised by Atout France, the France Tourism Development Agency. It witnessed



SHEETAL MUNSHAW
Director, Atout France India

“Using 95 per cent of its existing or temporary venues, the Paris Games seek to be efficient and environment friendly. Many events will be held in existing well-known stadiums whose facilities are perfectly suited to an event of this magnitude.”

635 French exhibitors and 813 international tour operators from 62 countries. It was attended by 68 American travel professionals, representing both boutique enterprises and larger companies. The travel show boasted around 26,000 business meetings, where the firms reconnected with suppliers and learnt about new offerings.

THE CITY AS THE STADIUM

Paris 2024 will mark the centenary for the Summer Olympics making a comeback to the capital city. The modern Olympic Games were founded in France, and this is indeed a historic milestone that the country is keenly looking forward to and has been the leitmotif in France. Writing a new chapter in sustainability, the opening ceremony will be

held in the city centre and at the very heart of the city along its main artery, River Seine allowing for more visitors to take part in the celebration and accommodate spectators in a convivial atmosphere and that too at no admission fee is a major first! “Using 95 per cent of its existing or temporary venues, the Paris Games seek to be efficient and environment friendly. Many events will be held in existing well-known stadiums whose facilities are perfectly suited to an event of this magnitude: the Stade Roland-Garros, Parc des Princes, Accor Arena, Stade de France, Golf National as well as the Vélodrome National,” **Sheetal Munshaw**, Director, Atout France India, said. The organisers have introduced innovative solutions for food, venues, transport, energy resources, and digital services to



TOULOUSE – RUNWAY FOR LEARNING

1

Home to Airbus, the SPOT satellite system, ATR, and the Aerospace Valley, Toulouse, is a must-visit city for aviation enthusiasts.

2

Cité de l’Espace, the theme park offers an immersive exhibit called LuneXplorer replicating the experience of an astronaut on a mission to the moon.

3

La Halle de la Machines, a street theatre company, combines theatrics with huge machines like a giant minotaur, mechanical spider, or a makeshift orchestra made with recycled objects.



From staff training in energy-saving to waste management measures, these establishments are going green like never before

reduce the carbon footprint around Olympic sites. All these sites are accessible by trains, which is expected to reduce the environmental footprint.

CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

The country is taking action by rebuilding and reimagining tourism with sustainability at its core. From staff training in energy-saving to waste management measures, these establishments are going green like never before. Imagine staying in a hotel that rejects usage of single-use plastics, serves local produce, and provides bikes for guests’ use. “Over 190 French accommodations boast the EU Ecolabel, while 640 proudly wear the Green Key initiative badge, setting the bar high for responsible travel,” Munshaw said. France cherishes its vibrant

outdoors, boasting 11 national parks, 54 regional parks, and 47 Grands Sites attracting 32 million visitors yearly. Protecting 16.7 million hectares of lush forests, including the National Forest Park in Burgundy—biodiversity is a top priority. “In the majestic mountains covering 25 per cent of the country, ski resorts such as Châtel and Chamonix-Mont Blanc champion sustainability with the ‘Flocon Vert’ label, reducing CO₂ emissions through renewable energy use,” she added.

BEYOND FRENCH RIVIERA

From games to gastronomy, cuisine to culture—France is all geared up to take global tourists beyond the French Riviera or Paris. “While the Olympics take centre stage, visitors will find many motivations to visit France this year as we celebrate 150 years of Impressionism, the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day, and the reopening ceremony of Notre-Dame de Paris to name a few,” Munshaw asserted. Clearly, the country is expecting more than 100 million global visitors from around the world for the various sports events throughout the year. Raising the bar, the next edition of Rendez-vous en France is scheduled to take place from April 1 to 2, 2025 in Léon. ➔



From royal weaves to vibrant prints:
Discover textile tourism
in MADHYA PRADESH

Unveil the magic of rich textile heritage

Madhya Pradesh is a kaleidoscope for textile lovers, with centuries-old tradition of handloom weaving and dyeing skills. Let us peek into some of the top destinations in MP for textile tourism.

Chanderi – the thin air like Chanderi cotton textile, a hand-woven interlacement of gold and silver warp and weft forming popular motifs like paisley, peacock, mehra and flowers beholds the rich culture of Chanderi. The fabric was exclusive among royals. Folklores are prevalent as soft as the cloth as high was its price. Chanderi sarees are a handwoven saree exemplifying the history and the century-old tradition of sarees that come in three types of fabrics - pure silk, silk cotton and Chanderi cotton.

Maheshwar, a centuries-old centre for handloom weaving on the banks of

the Narmada river, has been famous for its Maheshwari sarees with vibrant colours, gold zari borders, and unique pit loom weaving techniques. Traditionally made from cotton, they come in a variety of designs including plain, striped, and even geometric patterns. Explore the bustling handloom market, visit heritage havelis displaying the craft, or try hand at weaving a small piece of cloth under the guidance of a master weaver.

CITIES WITH HAND BLOCK PRINTING ON TEXTILES

- Nandna print, a colourful block print produced in the village of Tarapur in Neemuch and Umedpura.

This comfortable clothing is the traditional attire of the Bhil and Bhilal tribes.

- Bagh Print is a 1,000-year-old traditional form of natural dye block printing originating from the town Bagh near the historic city Mandu.
- Batik Printing, in Bherugarh near Ujjain, is an age-old wax-resist dyeing and printing craft being practised in Egypt, Japan and India for over 2,000 years.
- Handblock printing fabricating and dyeing craft belongs to Indore, referred as Bandhani or Bandhej in MP. In this process, vegetable, and natural dyes such as indigo, turmeric roots, pomegranate skin, lac, or iron, are used to create the colours.

The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board is recognising



the potential of textile tourism and taking steps to promote this unique travel experience. Pranpur village in Chanderi is India's first Craft Handloom Tourism Village developed by the tourism department. This unique initiative intends to allow tourists to visit the weaver's community in Pranpur and directly interact with artisans, witness the weaving process, and understand the cultural significance of these textiles. ➔





Elegance in demand



As the market for environment-friendly events and conferences is expanding across the country, experts from the hospitality sector highlight trends and advancing technologies driving the demand for eco-conscious solutions in the sector.

By **Janice Alyosius**



In a recent discussion about Narendra Modi's, Prime Minister of India, call to promote the country as a premier destination for weddings and events, industry leaders voiced their opinions on the infrastructure readiness and imperative of sustainability in event planning. With insights from experts, a multifaceted narrative emerges, emphasising India's potential to become a global hub for events and weddings, while embracing eco-conscious practices.

INDIA'S INFRA TO HOST BIG EVENTS AND WEDDINGS

Rajat Sethi, General Manager, Fairmont Jaipur, said, "India boasts a diverse array of venues ideal for hosting grand weddings and events, with Fairmont Jaipur standing out as a prime example. Rajasthan with its historic palaces, majestic forts, and breathtaking scenic beauty provides a unique backdrop for ceremonies and celebrations. The combination of Fairmont Jaipur's versatile venues and Rajasthan's allure creates an unforgettable wedding experience, seamlessly blending luxury with cultural immersion."

K.P. Singh, General Manager, Le Méridien Amritsar, highlights, “India's wedding market is estimated around US\$51 billion, making us one of the largest markets in the world. In 2023, the country earned ₹4.74 trillion from weddings alone. At Le Méridien Amritsar, we are prepared to host grand weddings and events with our facilities and services. Our venue offers open spaces such as the events lawn spread across 5,320 square feet, along with meticulously designed banquet halls such as the Maharaja Ballroom (4,316 square feet), and Maharani Ballroom (2,509 square feet).”

Echoing similar sentiments, **Rubin Cherian**, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre

evolution in event infrastructure. Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru boast world-class venues, supported by the growth of the hospitality sector and government initiatives. Srikant said, “Incredible India and Make in India campaigns and investment in infrastructure projects contribute to the expansion of event hosting capabilities. Technology has played a crucial role; with digital platforms facilitating smoother coordination and logistics management for large-scale events. Despite efforts to enhance infrastructure, India possesses the necessary framework and expertise to host large weddings and events, leveraging its rich heritage and modern amenities to create an unforgettable experience for attendees.”

Technology has played a crucial role; with digital platforms facilitating smoother coordination and logistics management for large-scale events

(NHCC) & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), said, “The recent surge in interest from HNIs and businesses underscore the allure of India as a wedding and event destination. With NHCC offering 287 inventories and the capacity to extend up to 200 rooms for destination weddings, we can accommodate more than 4,000 guests for large-scale events.”

Srikant Kanoi, CEO & Founding Partner, Ethereal Celebration Management, shed light on India's

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE EVENTS AND WEDDINGS

The quest for sustainable practices in events and weddings has gained momentum, with venues and event planners undertaking initiatives to minimise environmental impact, while delivering exceptional experiences.

Fairmont Jaipur's commitment to sustainability through eco-conscious practices. “A focus area is sourcing ingredients locally to minimise carbon footprint,” Sethi underlined.



RAJAT SETHI
General Manager, Fairmont Jaipur



K.P. SINGH
General Manager, Le Méridien Amritsar



RUBIN CHERIAN
General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC)



SRIKANT KANOI
CEO & Founding Partner
Ethereal Celebration Management





“By using locally sourced ingredients, we support nearby communities. This approach extends to crafting reduced-waste menus that feature live cooking stations, helping to minimise food waste during events,” he added.

To combat food wastage, the hotel has Orbisk's image-capturing technology to streamline calculations and gain insights into food consumption. This tool has led to a 30 per cent reduction in plate waste by enabling meticulous portion control and efficient resource management within the kitchen.

To reduce single-plastic usage, Fairmont Jaipur has introduced paperless check-in and check-out processes, providing biodegradable wooden keys, soap dispensers, combs, toothbrushes, refillable bottles, and stirrers. Also, it offers amenities, such as five EV charging stations for guests with EVs. Waste management practices, including

recycling and composting, are prioritised during events to reduce environmental impact. Fairmont Jaipur integrates local folk artists into weddings and events to showcase Rajasthan's rich culture.

Similar initiatives are part of Le Méridien Amritsar's operations as well. Singh said, “Our eco-conscious operations transform food waste into nutrient-rich compost, enriching the soil for future growth. Our in-house water bottling plant produces glass bottles, eliminating plastic pollution and emissions associated with traditional bottling methods. These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to sustainability in event hosting.” Stressing on sustainability being an integral part of event planning at Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre, Cherian asserted, “We have eliminated use of single-use plastic and opted for



biodegradable alternatives and glass-bottled water. We implement rainwater harvesting and recycling techniques for open spaces and conserve water resources. Solid waste generated during events is recycled into manure. These initiatives, combined with our dual solar power and water heating system and Orbisk food waste management technology, highlights our dedication to eco-conscious events.”

Kanoi shed light on emerging trends in sustainable events—eco-friendly decor, local sourcing, and sustainable catering. He said, “My colleague was recently involved in a wedding arrangement. The couple had opted for minimalistic decor using recycled materials and locally sourced flowers. They were served a vegetarian menu sourced from local farms. This reduced the carbon footprint of the event. They had an early dinner, so that by 10 pm the leftover food was sent to a nearby orphanage.”

PRICE SENSITIVITY & SUSTAINABILITY

Sethi said, “Some couples prioritise eco-friendly options and are willing to invest more, while others are price sensitive. At Fairmount Jaipur, we strike a balance by outlining sustainability features

In India, the market for sustainable preferences is poised for expansion because of shifting consumer preferences

in wedding packages and offering customisable options that allow couples to incorporate sustainable elements within their budget.” Similarly, Chieran acknowledged the varying priorities among clients as corporates prefer sustainable events. However, wedding guests sometimes prioritise affordability. Therefore to strike a balance, NHCC offers flexible packages with transparent pricing, aimed to make sustainability accessible to all clients, while absorbing any additional cost.

Clients are willing to pay extra for sustainability, but at Le Méridien Amritsar, “We achieve the balance by offering sustainable options without compromising on quality and educating clients on the long-term benefits of sustainability.” Kanoi said, “Local sourcing and mindful catering choices also contribute to cost reduction, ensuring sustainability aligns with clients’ financial constraints,” Singh said.

MARKET GROWTH ANTICIPATION

In India, the market for sustainable preferences is





To combat food wastage, Fairmont Jaipur has Orbisk's image-capturing technology to streamline calculations and gain insights into food consumption. Usage of this tool has led to a 30% reduction in plate waste

poised for expansion due to shifting consumer preferences towards environment-friendly choices and awareness among young couples. This trend indicates a growing demand for eco-conscious venues and services. Singh emphasised there are several factors contributing to the growth of the market in Amritsar. “Firstly, with the addition of 500 to 800 new rooms in the hotel inventory of the city, there is a clear indication of increasing demand. The introduction of new direct flights to Amritsar shows the city is steadily becoming a preferred destination. The rise in inbound tourism, particularly from Israel, Greece, Mexico, and Chile, adds to the clientele base. The Government of Punjab's investment in Amritsar as a tourist hub bolstered this trend,” he added.

While underlining the increase in travel demand in the past three years in India, Cherian attributed the same to MNCs' expansion and networking needs. “While MICE is poised for 15 to 20 per cent YoY growth, demand for destination weddings is likely to

stagnate. Leisure destinations, in India and abroad, may experience accelerated growth. At HICC, we are aligning our efforts, expanding our network, and innovating sustainable offerings to cater to evolving consumer preferences.”

Kanoi anticipates growth in the sustainable wedding market due to awareness of environmental issues, government incentives, and consumer demand for eco-conscious solutions. “As technology advances and sustainable practices become accessible, we can expect to see expansion in this market segment,” he added. However, he suggested that integrating sustainability into the core values of event planning companies and adopting certification standards to maintain accountability and transparency in efforts towards creating environmentally friendly events.

With the country's vision to position itself as a destination for conventions and weddings internationally, the convergence of sustainability and hotels' operations is vital to leave a positive impact on the environment and attendees both. ➔





Australia awaits Indian corporates

Australia stands ready to captivate Indian corporate audiences with its perfect blend of incentives, accommodation, and streamlined visa processes, thanks to shifting trends.

WHY CHOOSE AUSTRALIA?

Tourism Australia and Business Events Australia offer incentives for corporates through the **Bid Fund Programme**

Corporates bringing groups of **over 700 people**, contributing **AU\$3 million** to the Australian economy are eligible for the Business Event Bid Fund

Increased accessibility with **28 flights/week** between India and Australia

200 new hotels with almost **20,000 new rooms** for corporate travellers

Hassle-free visa process with **100% online process**

By MT Bureau

The Indian economy is projected to become the third-largest economy in the world within a few years. Consequently, corporates are expected to incentivise their employees, and stakeholders with global trips as part of their reward programmes. To capitalise on this potential, destinations are targeting Indian corporates by offering new offerings to attract them.

Nishant Kashikar, Country Manager, India and the Middle East, Tourism Australia, shed light on Australia's burgeoning popularity for MICE visits and outlined key reasons driving this surge in corporate interest.

Kashikar pointed out that Tourism Australia and Business Events Australia are offering incentives for corporates

through the Bid Fund Programme. He said, "When corporates engage with us during the bidding process and bring groups of nearly 700 or more, contributing more than AU\$3 million to the Australian economy, they are eligible to apply for the Business Event Bid Fund." This initiative serves as a compelling incentive for corporations to choose Australia for their events.

The increased accessibility to Australia is another factor for corporate attendees to consider the destination in Kashikar's perspective. He said, "In 2019, we had eight flights per week; now, we have almost 28 flights per week between India and Australia, with Qantas and Singapore Airlines returning to almost 100 per cent of their pre-COVID capacity." Moreover, the increase in the supply of accommodation

“Australian accommodation providers and service providers, advocate sustainability to a large extent.”

NISHANT KASHIKAR, Country Manager, India and the Middle East, Tourism Australia



options in Australia is also a factor for Indians to choose Australia. “Currently, more than 200 new hotels have opened, providing 20,000 new rooms for corporate travellers.” he added.

Australia’s appeal extends beyond conventional conference halls. From hosting events at legendary sites like the Melbourne Cricket Ground or the Sydney Opera House to engaging in adventurous activities such as climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge or surfing lessons, Australia promises iconic venues with unforgettable moments that money

can’t buy, making it an ideal destination for corporate gatherings.

One of the advantages that Australia offers is its streamlined visa process, which boasts a 100 per cent online application process with no biometrics or personal interviews required. This hassle-free approach, eliminates bureaucratic hurdles, and ensures a seamless experience for corporate travellers.

Interestingly, Kashikar noted a palpable increase in interest from India’s corporates from various sectors. As they seek to reward and incentivise

their stakeholders through incentive programmes, Kashikar asserted, “We have observed an increase in visitation from India, especially for incentives. We maintain a lead tracker, and we have seen a substantial surge in these leads since the borders reopened, surpassing pre-COVID levels.”

In terms of sustainable practices, while hosting events, Kashikar said, “Australian accommodation providers and service providers, advocate sustainability to a large extent. This goes beyond the use of single-use plastic; it extends to the food served, including the entire paddock to plate experience with authentic local ingredients. Additionally, it involves using solar energy to reduce electricity consumption, as well as implementing water and waste management practices. I guess Australia has embraced sustainability.” →

WAIT IS OVER

Tourism Australia’s signature incentive showcase, **Australia Next**, previously known as Dreamtime, is going to take place from **September 8 to 11, 2024** in **Cairns/Gimuy, Queensland**, in partnership with Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef (BECGBR)

AI-powered event planning: Efficiency meets creativity



From seamless event planning and captivating visuals to personalised guest experiences, Colja Dams, CEO, VOK DAMS, reveals how AI is revolutionising the way we conceive, execute, and engage with events.

By MT Bureau

Imagine this—you are hosting a grand event, meticulously planned down to the smallest detail. The stage is all set, the venue is ready, and your attendees eagerly await. But something extraordinary takes place—an Artificial Intelligence-powered virtual assistant takes the

stage, effortlessly guiding the audience through the event with a warm, human-like presence.

When it comes to future of events, AI is no longer a dream, but a reality rapidly transforming the MICE industry. Addressing the IMEX Frankfurt, **Colja Dams**, Chief Executive Officer, VOK DAMS, shared how AI is transforming the event industry

and why it is the need of the hour for event planners to ease processes.

AI IS EVENT PLANNER'S NEW BEST FRIEND

Gone are the days of endlessly sifting through spreadsheets and juggling countless emails. AI-powered project management tools such as Microsoft Copilot have become the event



COLJA DAMS
CEO, VOK DAMS

planner's new best friend, streamlining workflows, and boosting productivity. With AI's aid, drafting emails, organising meetings, and finding time slots become a breeze, freeing up valuable time and energy for more strategic tasks.

CREATIVITY UNLEASHED: AI AS YOUR MUSE

Unleash your creativity with AI tools, which combines text-based GPT models with image generation capabilities. Imagine being able to generate entire PowerPoint presentations, complete



AI's impact goes beyond the planning and creative stages. It is revolutionising the attendee experience itself

AI plays in sustainability. By analysing attendee data and travel patterns, AI can help you choose event locations that minimise carbon footprint and reduce emissions. This not only aligns with the growing demand for eco-friendly events but also demonstrates your commitment to a greener future.

It is essential to remember AI is not just a replacement for human ingenuity but rather a powerful tool to enhance it. Just as a skilled photographer can capture breathtaking images with the same camera as an amateur, the true magic lies in the human touch—the creativity, the vision, and the passion that AI can amplify but never replicate.

So, embrace the AI revolution in events with open arms. Let it be your guide, your muse, and your partner in creating extraordinary experiences that leave a lasting impact. In the end, the true power lies not in the advanced technology itself, but in how we harness the same to bring people together, spark conversations, and create unforgettable moments. ➔

with captivating visuals and compelling narratives, by describing your vision. No more staring at a blank canvas—let AI be your muse, sparking inspiration and bringing your wildest ideas to life.

VISUALISING THE EXTRAORDINARY

Speaking of visuals, AI has taken event visualisation to new heights. With tools such as Text-to-Space, you can transform words into stunning virtual environments, allowing you to experiment with layouts, stage designs, and seating arrangements effortlessly. AI's visuals capture the essence of your event's theme, ensuring a cohesive and immersive experience for your attendees.

THE ULTIMATE ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE

AI's impact goes well beyond the planning and creative stages. It is revolutionising the attendee experience itself. Imagine having a virtual assistant that can recognise and greet attendees by name, provide personalised recommendations, and even translate languages in real time. With AI-powered facial recognition and image processing, you can curate a collection of your attendees' best moments, ensuring they leave with cherished memories.

EMBRACING THE FUTURE, SUSTAINABLY

And let us not forget the crucial role

Singapore cheers for Indian partners

Singapore hails travel partners from North and East India at ‘M!CE Industry Appreciation Night’ following a hike in global visitor arrivals post-COVID.



partners here.” From the country’s perspective, **Gajesh Girdhar**, Founder & National Coordinator, Network of Indian MICE Agents (NIMA), said, “Singapore is a perfect destination. When we went to the convention, we explored a lot of attractions, and MICE venues, which the members were not aware of. It has almost everything to offer.”

The STB expects international visitor arrivals to reach to 15 to 16 million in 2024, driven by improved flight

By **Surbhi Sharma**

With Singapore regaining momentum post-COVID, Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is spearheading multifarious campaigns to act as a central node for business events. It is targeting India as one of its key source markets for MICE business after witnessing 1.1 million arrivals from the country last year. Recently, STB in collaboration with Singapore Airlines organised ‘MICE Industry Appreciation Night’ in New

Delhi. The evening honoured the best performers of trade sector from the North and East India.

On the occasion, **Kean Bon Lim**, Area Director, India, South Asia and Africa, International Group, STB, said, “This is the MICE industry trade appreciation night. We have gathered to celebrate and honour the industry’s contributions to Singapore’s MICE business. India is one of our top markets for foreign tourists’ arrival and MICE is a significant segment of visitors for us. We appreciate the support of our MICE

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Adiona Travels

NIMA



KEAN BON LIM
Area Director, India, South Asia and Africa,
International Group, STB



GAJESH GIRDHAR
Founder & National Coordinator
NIMA

connectivity, upcoming hotel openings, and a vibrant line-up of leisure offerings featuring global pop culture, lifestyle events, and music festivals. The board further expects India to be pivotal in shaping Singapore’s MICE canvas. ➔



Embracing inclusivity: Venue for all

EWB is the epitome of a venue determined to position itself as a captivating space for MICE events while being socially responsible and inclusive.



By MT Bureau

Social integration is the core of sustainable living, and this was exactly the sentiment carried by Exhibition World Bahrain's (EWB), when they recently hosted a 'Run for Autism' event. The event witnessed 500 participants, including children with autism, their caregivers, and featured variety of activities including timed runs, family-friendly walks, entertainment, and educational resources about autism.

EWB in partnership with Alia Centre for Early Intervention organised the 'Run for Autism' event for the second consecutive year, aimed to raise awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The event was graced by Her Excellency **Fatima bint Jaafar Al Sairafi**, Minister of Tourism, Bahrain. Spanning over 105,000 sq. mts., of total indoor space, the event at EWB has been an impactful occasion, where participants of all ages and abilities gathered for a day of unity, inclusion, and advocacy. It also featured a storytelling session, where individuals shared their journey related to autism, which helped in understanding the perspective of an autistic person. Autism is a neurological and brain developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.

EWB AS A VENUE

With this event, EWB has showcased that it is an ideal space for gatherings with a noble cause, which reflects the venue's potential for hosting large-scale sporting events. It highlights that EWB is a venue that is determined to foster a supportive community environment and make a positive social impact. →





Redefining hospitality in Varanasi

Om Vilas Benares, a haven where tradition meets modernity at a time when the city, with its spiritual vibe and latest amenities, has become a sought-after wedding destination.

By **MT Bureau**

With the choice to introduce a new era of luxury tented accommodations settled in a rural style with utmost luxury, something previously a rare sight in the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, **Dishaant Badlani**, Managing Director, Om Vilas Benares, shared his vision to offer guests a unique blend of traditional Indian culture and modern luxury.

Inspired by India's rich heritage and warm hospitality, Badlani envisioned a space where guests could immerse themselves in the cultural tapestry of Kashi (Varanasi). "We aim not just to provide a place to stay, but to offer an

experience rooted in the cultural ethos of Kashi," Badlani asserted. The hotel's essence lies in its ability to merge the spiritual core, historical depth, and architectural elegance of Varanasi with the highest standards of luxury.

While luxury and tradition form the cornerstone of Om Vilas Benares, Badlani remains steadfast in his commitment to sustainability. "We are committed to sustainable practices, supporting local artisans and community development projects. Our efforts include minimising environmental footprint with green space, promoting local arts, and running educational programmes for underprivileged children in the

area," Badlani said. The resort hosts sustainable events and weddings. It employs eco-friendly practices, such as biodegradable decorations, minimising food waste, and promoting locally sourced, organic cuisines.

"Our estate spans 10 acres, featuring luxury cottages encircling the main lawn. Our layout is planned to host inclusive weddings, positioning itself as a quintessential venue for wedding," he explained. Badlani shared, "Their five-year plan is focused on expansion, while leveraging technology to enhance customised guest experiences. Its objective is to preserve hotel's traditional allure, deeply intertwined with the country's spiritual essence. ➔



DISHAANT BADLANI
Managing Director, Om Vilas Benares



Red-carpet ready for MICE biz

Los Angeles Tourism sponsored MPI's eighth annual global broadcast of GMID, bringing together leaders from across the globe for a 12-hour virtual event to discuss best practices and ensure meetings are delivered responsibly, equitably, and sustainably.

By MT Bureau

Professional meetings and conventions—one of the largest unheard drivers of the local economy, represent Los Angeles' biggest contributors to employment, local business sales, and tax revenues that provide essential services to the local community. The Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board (Los Angeles Tourism), recently, celebrated the Global Meetings Industry Day (GMID).

On the occasion, **Adam Burke**, President & CEO, Los Angeles Tourism, said, "Meetings and conventions generate US\$24 billion in local business sales annually with a workforce and supply chain that reaches into every LA neighbourhood, including hundreds of small and diverse-owned businesses who depend on these events for their livelihood. From the family-

owned catering company in Leimert Park to the florist in Boyle Heights, event planner in Westlake, countless Downtown restaurants, and so much more, hundreds of thousands of Angelenos across the region work in careers that directly support professional meetings."

Specifying India's significance as a source market for LA, **Seema Kadam**, Regional Director, India, Los Angeles Tourism, shared before COVID, India represented one of the

fastest-growing markets in LA. "Despite the visa challenges, we have seen immense growth in the number of travellers. Though our primary focus in this market is the leisure traveller segment, there has been substantial interest and numbers from the MICE segment. With a number of large venues and hotel inventory that allow for creative events in indoor and outdoor spaces, there is plenty about LA that is



ADAM BURKE
President & CEO
Los Angeles Tourism



SEEMA KADAM
Regional Director, India
Los Angeles Tourism



attractive for groups,” she added. This includes a diverse hotel landscape, featuring 1,282 hotels and 114,431 hotel rooms ranging from value to trendy to luxury, highlighting endless meeting options from only-in-LA venues such as the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures and the Music Centre. Another

highlight is the Los Angeles Convention Centre and the LA Live entertainment complex. LA has much to offer in terms of activities such as innovative museums, the Hollywood Sign Hike, and Venice Beach.

Kadam’s opinion is supported by presence of a range of venues in ‘red carpet ready’ LA, which will draw the limelight as the city will host upcoming global sporting events such as brand-new Intuit Dome (host of NBA All-Star 26), SoFi Stadium (host of the FIFA World Cup 26 and the opening ceremony of the 2028 Olympic & Paralympic Games), and iconic venues such as Crypto.com Arena, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, Dodger Stadium, BMO Stadium, and Rose Bowl Stadium.



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Along with building relationships, meetings drive the welfare of communities, considering which, LA Tourism has augmented its CSR efforts over the past year by initiating programmes focused on workforce development. LA Tourism is the first urban destination in the USA to join the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, recently completing GSTC’s comprehensive destination sustainability assessment, which is tied directly to the SDGs. At the heart of LA’s commitment to ecological sustainability in events lies the LACC, which has been certified as a ‘Certified Green Business’ under the California Green Business Network.

This certification underscores LACC’s commitment to environmental stewardship and its dedication to leading sustainable practices within the event industry, making Los Angeles an ideal choice for eco-conscious event planners and attendees. ➔



ROBYN CHENG KING
 Manager, Karnataka and Telangana
 Singapore Airlines

we have increased our flight frequency from seven to 12 times weekly, with a mix of wide-body and narrowbody aircraft. For Kolkata, we will exclusively operate wide-body aircraft in the coming months. We are excited to announce the reopening of routes to Brussels in Europe and London Gatwick, in the coming few months.”

Additionally, SIA offers a comprehensive MICE programme, known as MICE 2.0, to refurbish the MICE experience. The programme offers perks such as special boarding and inflight announcements, and customised seating arrangements, in order to enhance the travel experience for the corporate clients. Furthermore, sustainability remains a core pillar of SIA’s operations. “We are not only committed to reducing its ecological impact but also offer MICE travellers the option to offset their carbon footprint through our sustainability programmes,” King shared. ➔

SIA plans MICE revamp

Operating in 13 Indian cities and expanding, SIA is now offering MICE 2.0 to revamp the MICE experience.

By MT Bureau

With robust plans for expansion and a keen focus on enhancing their MICE offerings, Singapore Airlines (SIA), is charting a course toward even greater success. Currently, SIA operates in 13 cities across India and aims to increase its capacity, as exemplified by the recent launch of a second flight to Hyderabad. “In India, we have reinstated our

capacity to pre-COVID levels and, in fact, increased it beyond pre-COVID levels, especially in Hyderabad and Kolkata,” **Robyn Cheng King**, Manager, Karnataka and Telangana, Singapore Airlines, asserted. This reinstatement of capacity marks the airline’s commitment to meet the growing demand for air travel in key Indian cities.

Highlighting the specific initiatives reflecting the responsiveness to market dynamics, King said, “In Hyderabad,





Pinnacle of innovation and networking

As preparations for the 17th edition of ITB Asia 2024 are underway, organisers expect participants from across the globe to have networking and business opportunities.

By **MT Bureau**

Scheduled from October 23 to 25, 2024 in Singapore, ITB Asia will have three days of unparalleled networking and business opportunities. The cherry on the cake is the early bird rates for both exhibitors and trade visitors, offered by the official partner hotel for the show, The Ascott.

The three-day event is set to be a platform for professionals in the travel industry, covering verticals such as leisure, corporate travel, MICE, and travel technology. Co-located with MICE Show Asia and Travel Tech Asia, ITB Asia boasts an impressive roster of top exhibitors, where attendees can expect to connect with destination experts, industry suppliers, top-tier buyers, and thought leaders. Overall, attending ITB Asia is equal to exploring the optimistic sentiment of the industry.

“The comeback of outbound travel after COVID in Asia was the growth driver in 2023. We are thrilled with the momentum building towards our 17th edition. The calibre of exhibitors, the depth of insights shared, and the

opportunities for collaboration make ITB Asia the premier event for the travel industry in the APAC. The show will surpass expectations and continue to be the pinnacle of business, networking, and innovation,” **Joyce Wang**, Executive Director, Messe Berlin APAC, organiser of ITB Asia, MICE Show Asia, and Travel Tech Asia, said. Confirmed exhibitors at ITB Asia and MICE Show Asia include firms showcasing the latest tourism products and innovations.

Travel Tech Asia is a vital travel technology marketplace. Taking place parallel with the 3-in-1 show, the event will feature leading brands and start-ups, unveiling the emerging technological trends shaping the future of travel. ➔



MOVEMENTS



GLEN DSOUZA
General Manager
Hyatt Centric Ballygunge
Kolkata

Glen Dsouza has been appointed as General Manager of Hyatt Centric Ballygunge Kolkata, bringing over 18 years of industry expertise to the role. Dsouza began his hospitality career with Marriott International, progressing through various key positions, including Hotel Manager at Fairfield by Marriott Goa Anjuna, and Director of Rooms at both Goa Marriott Resort & Spa. He has consistently excelled in overcoming pre-opening challenges at prominent properties.



JITENDRA SINGH DADYAL
GM, Ramada by Wyndham
Gandhidham Shinay

Ramada by Wyndham Gandhidham Shinay has appointed Jitendra Singh Dadyal as its General Manager. In this role, he will oversee staff and operations, manage sales and marketing, and handle budgeting and P&L responsibilities. Shinay is committed to maintaining the exceptional value that guests of Ramada by Wyndham Gandhidham Shinay have come to expect. With more than 39 years of industry experience, he has held positions at renowned international hospitality brands.



MANOJ JANGID
General Manager
Fairfield by Marriott, Kolkata

Manoj Jangid has been promoted to the position of General Manager by Fairfield by Marriott, Kolkata. Jangid has showcased unparalleled expertise throughout his 21 years of career in the industry. Previously, as Hotel Manager at Fairfield by Marriott, Kolkata, he spearheaded the successful positioning of the hotel convention centre as Kolkata's premier banqueting facility. With a proven record of excellence, he is expected to establish a continuous success of the hotel in delivering unparalleled hospitality experiences.



SURESH KUMAR
General Manager
WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh
Resort & Spa

WelcomHeritage Cheetahgarh Resort and Spa has announced the appointment of Suresh Kumar as its new General Manager. Kumar brings a wealth of experience from his professional journey. In his new role, he will oversee the resort's daily operations, aiming to enhance guest satisfaction with his unique leadership style. Under his guidance, the luxurious resort is anticipated to maintain its status as a premier destination for travellers seeking luxury, relaxation, and unparalleled service.



MEDHA TIWARI
Head of Sales & Marketing-
India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka,
BWH Hotels

Medha Tiwari assumed the role of Head of Sales & Marketing for India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka at BWH Hotels. With more than two decades of invaluable experience in the hospitality industry, Medha is expected to strengthen relationships with key decision-makers of the industry in these regions and ensure client retention and loyalty in her new role. Throughout her career, Tiwari has worked with the top brands in the industry such as ITC, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, among others.



SARAH MARSHALL
Venue Director, Farnborough
International Exhibition &
Conference Centre

Farnborough International has appointed Sarah Marshall as the new Venue Director of its Exhibition & Conference Centre. With an experience of over 25 years within the events industry, she has a track record of managing large-scale exhibitions and conference portfolios for several organisers, including Dods (Total Politics), Hyve, EMAP and Informa among others. In her new role, Marshall will be leading the commercial growth strategy and cementing the brand's position as a leading venue.



ABHINANDAN GOOPTU
Director
Conference & Events
Conrad Pune

Conrad Pune has appointed Abhinandan Gooptu as its new Director of Conferences & Events, boasting over 16 years of rich experience in the hospitality sector. His journey commenced as an F&B Executive at Four Seasons Hotel Sydney, later diversifying into corporate sales, managing prestigious sporting events like IPL, ISL, and World Cups, as well as orchestrating MICE events and weddings. Gooptu is known for result-oriented leadership and adeptness in fostering high-performing teams.



AVINASH KAUR
Director
Conference & Events
Eros Hotel New Delhi

Avinash Kaur has been appointed as the Director of Conference & Events by Eros Hotel New Delhi. With a career spanning 15 years in the hospitality sector, she will be pivotal in driving the strategic direction of sales initiatives in her new role. Kaur is expected to foster long-term partnerships with corporate clients and event planners, and deliver tailored solutions to ensure exceptional guest experiences. She has a proven record of exceeding revenue targets in her professional journey.



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