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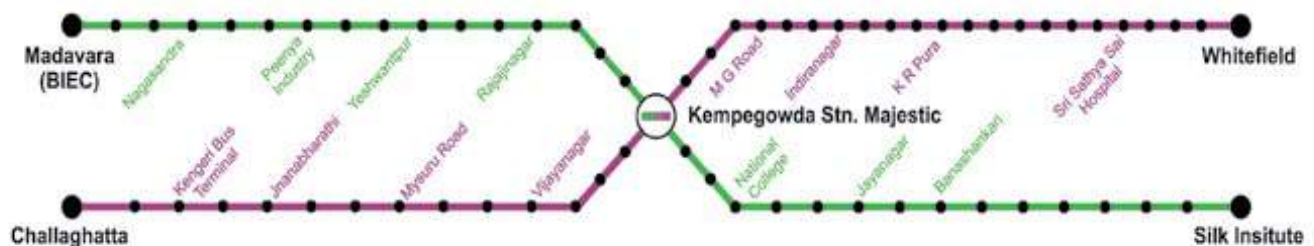


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Resilience amid policy shifts

Amid the shifting trade policies and economic risk, global business travel spending is expected to reach US\$1.57 trillion in 2025, which suggests a moderate year-over-year growth rate of 6.6 per cent. Even after this slow momentum, it is expected that the market will witness a rebound of 8.1 per cent growth in 2026, while long-term forecast remains clouded by geopolitical and economic volatility. According to the 2026 Global Business Travel Forecast,

resilience over cost-efficiency, it is favouring suppliers with diversified operations and digital capabilities. Suppliers need to get proactive and use predictive analytics and AI tools to mitigate situations, improve responsiveness and secure transactions.

While all these shifts are quite evident, most of the countries through their tourism boards are trying to draw traffic amid geopolitical tensions. They are enticing travellers with innovative,

{ “In today’s unpredictable travel landscape, staying informed and agile is the only mantra. It is a shift from reactive to proactive.” }

released by the GBTA, airfares, hotel rates, ground transport and meetings-related costs are expected to see modest shifts through the next 18 months. However, in 2025, the top 15 markets for spending are anticipated to account for US\$1.31 trillion, where the US (US\$395.4 billion) is projected to reclaim the top spot this year.

In these uncertain times, when changing trade policies, inflationary pressures and shifting global supply chains are reshaping how and where companies travel, we need to ask — How does this affect the suppliers? It is creating a complex landscape for suppliers. These unpredictable tariffs and trade barriers are forcing them to constantly revisit their deliverables, reduced margins and riskier long-term contracts. As buyers are prioritising

emotionally resonant, incentive-driven and tech-savvy strategies.

In today’s unpredictable travel landscape, staying informed and agile is the only mantra. It is a shift from reactive to proactive, where one must take data-driven decisions based on insights related to flight disruptions and traveller sentiments. At this point, being flexible is not just about rescheduling flights or rerouting itineraries; it is about reshaping policies and balancing cost with value. In a world where a single news cycle can upend plans, this mindset is the compass pointing towards smarter travel management.

Warm regards
Jyothi Varma, Consulting Editor

10 Unique incentives to attract Indian MICE



6 Singapore lures Indian travel trade with new perks



22 Business travel spending to rebound by 2026: GBTA



24 Smarter & smaller events rise amid global uncertainties



30 Will North Thailand intrigue Indian event planners?

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MICEtalk is printed, published, edited and owned by SanJeet, printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., C-52, DDA Shedi, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase - I, New Delhi - 110020 and published at 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001



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Singapore

hits bullseye with MICE push for India

To build on the growing inbound travel from India to Singapore, STB unveils new MICE incentives as the two countries celebrate 60th year of their diplomatic relations.

By **Janice Alyosius**

As Singapore is currently experiencing strong inbound travel from India, the city-state has witnessed over 500,000 Indian travellers in the first half of 2025 alone. Commenting on this growth, **Markus Tan**, Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa, Singapore Tourism Board (STB), recently said, “India continues to be one of Singapore’s top performing source markets and

we are heartened by the strong travel momentum in 2025.”

Underlining the ties between the two countries, he said, “As Singapore and India celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations, we remain focused on building long-term, trusted partnerships with the Indian travel trade. Together, we can unlock new growth opportunities across leisure, cruise and MICE.”

Stressing on the recent initiatives being introduced by STB for Indian market, he candidly informed, “To

attract more Indian travellers, we are continuously organising roadshows in India, which reflects our commitment to being present in key Indian cities and listening to our partners on the ground,” adding, “Together, we can unlock new growth opportunities across leisure, cruise and MICE.”

He further stressed, “With new trade initiatives such as the DMC fam support scheme and MICE incentives under our ‘Just Between Us Friends’ campaign, we are creating meaningful platforms that empower our partners to promote Singapore more effectively.”



MARKUS TAN

Regional Director, India, Middle East, South Asia and Africa, Singapore Tourism Board



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UPDATES ON SENTOSA

NEW PROJECTS

Singapore Oceanarium launched; 3 times the size of SEA Aquarium

Weave, a new retail and F&B enclave, part of the Sentosa-Singapore cable car line integration

Raffles Sentosa, a luxury villa resort with 62 private pool villas

Minion Land launched at Universal Studios Singapore

NEW EXPERIENCES

Harry Potter: Visions of Magic-immersive experience running till 2026

Madame Tussauds launched a new VR thriller coaster experience

Peranakan-themed light projection shows running at Palawan Green until end-August

Sensoryscape drew 5 million visitors since March 2025



FRESH MICE INCENTIVES

Singapore continues to see rising MICE traffic from India, with major events such as Sun Pharma's 6,100-delegate gathering and the upcoming CREDAI Natcon Convention, which will debut in Singapore this September with over 1,000 participants.

To further support this growth, as Tan mentioned, STB India is also extending its 'Just Between Us Friends' campaign to the MICE segment. The extended campaign will offer exclusive privileges to Indian incentive groups travelling between 1 August 2025 and 31 March 2026. Benefits include special experiences from Sentosa and its partners, additional support from city-wide tourism players and enhanced travel options through IndiGo and Singapore Airlines.

As a part of these efforts, STB recently concluded its latest B2B roadshow in India, introducing a reimagined format that reflects its renewed focus on deeper trade engagement and innovative storytelling.

Held from 15-17 July 2025 across New Delhi and Kochi, the event brought together more than 60 tourism partners from Singapore to highlight the destination's evolving offerings across leisure, cruise and MICE segments.

SENTOSA'S INDIA CONNECT

Appreciating how Sentosa stands tall as one of the highly attractive Singapore's attractions that draws highest number of Indian travellers, **Michael Ma**, Assistant Chief Executive, Sentosa Development Corporation, shared, "India is among one of the top source markets for Sentosa and that perhaps explains the special connection we have with our Indian friends. It has been that way for quite a while, and we intend to continue attracting and delighting our Indian friends." He added, "Indians visit Sentosa more times per trip than any other nationality. The average stay of our Indian visitors is about three days, which is nearly on par with the overall average in Singapore. We are now trying to push that to four."



MICHAEL MA
Assistant Chief Executive,
Sentosa Development Corporation

Ma also pointed out a noticeable shift in traveller's behaviour, "We are witnessing more independent travellers from India, alongside our traditionally strong group segment. Interestingly, Sentosa offers something for both the segments along with other niche categories. It encompasses group-friendly attractions to hidden gems that appeal to independent, discerning visitors." ➔

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Destinations roll out group incentives

From tailored incentives to immersive cultural experiences, global tourism boards are stepping up their game to attract Indian MICE groups.



As Indian outbound MICE travel continues to gain momentum, several national tourism boards from South Korea, Spain, South Africa and Israel are stepping up efforts to attract corporate groups and business events from India. From monetary support and curated experiences to visa facilitation and infrastructure upgrades, leading destinations are rolling out multifarious strategies to draw more Indian MICE planners and travellers.



MYONG KIL YUN
Regional Director, India & SAARC
Korea Tourism Organization

“Our support includes assistance for site inspections and tier-based benefits for confirmed groups.”

SOUTH KOREA MICE STRATEGY

India has emerged as a key long-haul MICE market for South Korea and the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) is leaving no stone unturned to position the country as a preferred destination for Indian corporates. **Myong Kil Yun**, Regional Director, India & SAARC, Korea Tourism Organization, shared, “Our support includes assistance for site inspections (airfare and visa for up to five members) and tier-based benefits for confirmed groups starting from just 10 participants.” Indian groups automatically receive a one-tier upgrade, granting access to higher benefits for smaller group sizes.

Indian MICE travellers benefit from per-person subsidies ranging from KRW 20,000 to KRW 30,000 (approx. US\$15-22) and value additions such as venue support, official dinners, welcome events and curated cultural experiences. Special provisions also exist for cruise-based incentive groups staying over two days in Korean waters. KTO facilitates itinerary customisation while aligning with eligible support framework. “Groups are free to choose from iconic or niche attractions. We will coordinate everything,” he noted.

On the infrastructure front, Korea has significantly expanded its MICE capabilities.



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“Venues like COEX in Seoul, KINTEX in Goyang, BEXCO in Busan and the newly launched INSPIRE Entertainment Resort are redefining the business events landscape,” Yun shared. KTO’s ‘Korea Unique Venue’ portfolio now features over 50 unconventional options including hanok villages, performance halls, cruise ships as well as modern art spaces.

Korea is making a strong case as a MICE destination of choice for Indian corporates. “India is not just a priority market; it is a partner in Korea’s future MICE journey. In 2024 alone, we supported over 240,000 corporate MICE participants globally. Sectors like pharmaceuticals, IT and financial services are showing strong outbound MICE movement, typically between 100 to 1,000 participants,” Yun confirmed. One standout was an incentive group from a leading Indian bank that brought 3,200 delegates to Korea in October 2023.

SPAIN TARGETS INDIAN EVENTS

Spain remains a top choice for Indian MICE groups. While the National Tourism Office of Spain in India does not offer direct financial incentives for MICE groups, **Elena Orland**, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in India, highlighted the significant organisational support provided through the Spain Convention Bureau. “Through its expertise and extensive network, Spain offers a variety of support for all organisational needs — be it congresses, trade



“Through its (Spain Convention Bureau) expertise and extensive network, Spain offers a variety of support for all organisational needs — be it congresses, trade fairs or incentive trips.”

ELENA ORLAND, Director, Tourism Office of Spain in India

fairs or incentive trips. With the most extensive high-speed rail network in Europe, globally recognised hotel chains and unmatched cultural and geographic diversity, Spain acts as an irresistible draw for MICE groups.”

Spain has been actively aligning its infrastructure and services based on Indian preferences. “Indian corporates value the blend of luxury, culture and leisure Spain offers. They enjoy scenic destinations, luxury experiences and vibrant shopping and entertainment options,” Orland noted.

She especially recommended the Paradores de Turismo—a network of over 90 upscale hotels located

in historic castles and monasteries across Spain. “Paradores are ideal for MICE tourism. They not only provide unique venues with historic charm but also prioritise sustainability and community involvement,” she said.

Culinary preferences are also being considered. “Gastronomy in Spain is evolving to accommodate Indian tastes, with top hotels now offering vegetarian and Indian menu options to make Indian travellers feel at home,” she added.

The Indian MICE market’s interest in Spain is evident in recent trends. “Business travellers from India now make up 30-40 per cent of our total



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Indian arrivals. We have also seen a significant uptick in incentive travel, with many corporates choosing Spain to reward top-performing employees,” she shared.

SOUTH AFRICA'S OFFERINGS

Unlike a standardised incentive scheme, South African Tourism offers bespoke support to Indian MICE groups depending on the group's size, purpose and potential. “We work closely with corporate planners, MICE operators and industry stakeholders to extend tailored support including assistance in curating customised itineraries, facilitating introductions to local suppliers and DMCs and supporting marketing collateral to promote the event,” said **Mitalee Karmarkar**,

Marketing and Communications Manager, MEISEA, South African Tourism.

South African Tourism also coordinates with consulates and government organisations to ease visa processes and planning. Their support may include site recce hosting, venue recommendations and promotional resources to boost delegate engagement.

Two major reforms — the Trusted Tour Operator Scheme (TTOS) and the Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), launched in early 2025, are expected to simplify group travel from India. TTOS accelerates group visa approvals, while the ETA enhances the travel experience by reducing documentation and delays. In 2024, business and MICE travellers contributed to 49.6 per cent



“We work closely with corporate planners, MICE operators and industry stakeholders to extend tailored support including assistance in curating customised itineraries, facilitating introductions to local suppliers and DMCs.”

MITALEE KARMARKAR, Marketing and Communications Manager, MEISEA, South African Tourism



of Indian arrivals to South Africa, with MICE accounting for 20.2 per cent and business travellers 29.4 per cent

From the iconic Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), offering six hectares of central conferencing space, to Johannesburg's Sandton Convention Centre and Durban's ICC, South Africa's venues are primed to handle large-scale MICE events. Durban's ICC alone can host up to 10,000 delegates. Complementing this infrastructure are more than 3,000 adventure activities, making South Africa ideal for bleisure travel. "We see high interest from Indian corporates who reward top-performing employees with trips that blend business with extraordinary experiences," Karmarkar explained.

To tap into regional potential, South African Tourism has conducted roadshows in Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. "These platforms introduced

new MICE product lines, from adventure-based retreats to sustainable incentive modules tailored to Indian preferences," said Karmarkar.

Their initiatives also reveal key insights, over 30 per cent of Indian MICE delegates extend their trip for leisure and around 40 per cent bring family along, turning incentive trips into full-fledged holidays.

Industries driving MICE traffic include IT, finance, pharma, beauty, mining, insurance, entertainment and sports. Karmarkar shared examples, including a recent incentive by a cement manufacturer and another by a consumer electricals company. "These large-format movements underscore South Africa's capability to manage scale with efficiency and sophistication," she noted.

HOW ISRAEL IS COURTING INDIA

Despite a lull in Indian MICE movements to Israel in the last two years, the country is gearing up to

attract corporate groups from India through a mix of financial incentives, new hotel infrastructure and dedicated trade engagement programmes.

Amruta Bangera, Director of Marketing, India, Israel Ministry of Tourism, said, “Tel Aviv offers an incentive of 75 NIS (approx. US\$20) per MICE participant who stays in the city for at least 2-3 nights. This amount is paid directly to local service providers like audiovisual companies and caterers.”

The scheme applies to groups of 100–300 international participants and requires coordination with the Tel Aviv Convention Bureau at least a year in advance. However, Bangera noted that the board is currently more flexible given the ongoing situation in the country. While no Indian groups have availed this in the past two years, the city is keen to collaborate and encourages early planning.

Jerusalem, on the other hand, offers significantly higher financial support to qualifying events. “For



AMRUTA BANGERA
Director of Marketing, India
Israel Ministry of Tourism

“Tel Aviv offers an incentive of 75 NIS (approx. US\$20) per MICE participant who stays in the city for at least 2-3 nights.”



international conventions with a minimum of 300 participants and three-day duration, support ranges from NIS 75,000 (US\$20,250) to NIS 1,000,000. (US\$ 270,000). Incentive trips of 100 participants staying three nights with at least two full activity days are eligible for NIS 50,000 (US\$13,500) to NIS 1,200,000 (US\$324,000)," he added.

Though Indian participation is yet to resume, past large-scale groups hosted in Israel include 6,000 delegates from World System Builders in 2019 and 1,600 participants from Optical Center in 2021.

Sharing details of upcoming infrastructure to serve the MICE market, Bangera said that the InterContinental Jerusalem, set to open in 2026, will feature 237 rooms, a rooftop bar, spa and business facilities. "It blends modern design with Jerusalem's historic charm," she noted.

The Isrotel chain is also expanding aggressively, with seven new hotels planned by 2027. One of

its flagship projects in Zion Square, Jerusalem, will include a skybridge linking heritage buildings and offering city views.

Israel is also investing in outreach initiatives. "Tel Aviv Global & Tourism will soon launch a Travel Agent Specialist Program in collaboration with Northstar, which aims to educate Indian agents on Tel Aviv's offerings through structured content and interactive learning," she shared.

While the past two years saw no MICE or business groups from India due to regional challenges, Bangera remains confident, "It is just a matter of time before we see great numbers from India. Our destination is promising and the support systems are in place."

BLEISURE REMAINS KEY TREND

Tourism boards are witnessing clear shifts in how Indian corporates travel. The destinations are





adapting to the latest MICE trends as per the Indian market.

CULTURE-DRIVEN TRIPS

According to Yun, “Indian MICE groups are looking beyond just conference halls. They want a mix of culture, wellness and engagement.”

While Seoul continues to attract large corporate groups, destinations such as Busan, Jeju and Gyeonggi-do are rising in popularity due to their scenic appeal and upgraded MICE infrastructure. These cities offer new backdrops to Indian groups for team bonding, creativity and executive retreats.

Experiential activities are driving the shift. “We have seen growing interest in hanbok try-ons, K-pop performances, Korean cooking, wellness spas and traditional tea ceremonies. These immersive experiences turn a formal

Indian MICE groups are looking beyond just conferences. They want a mix of culture, experiential activities, wellness & engagement

meeting into a memorable cultural encounter,” Yun added claiming, “Indian MICE travellers are evolving and Korea is fully aligned with that evolution.”

EXPANDING BEYOND CLASSICS

For Orland, destinations such as Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia remain at the top of the MICE charts for Indian corporates. However, she was quick to point out, “We are observing a growing interest in destinations such as Seville, Granada, Málaga and San Sebastián. These cities offer outstanding MICE infrastructure at competitive pricing, combined with rich local heritage and charm.”

On the experiential front, traditional favourites such as flamenco performances and visits to UNESCO World Heritage sites still hold a valuable slot in itineraries. However, there is



MICE TRENDS FROM INDIA

TOP PREFERRED CITIES

South Africa: Cape Town, Sun City, Knysna, Durban, Johannesburg

Spain: Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, Granada, Málaga, San Sebastián

Korea: Seoul, Busan, Jeju, Gyeonggi-do

Israel: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv

TRENDING EXPERIENCES

South Africa: Private game drives & wine pairings

Spain: Outdoor adventures & skydiving

Korea: Hanbok try-ons, K-pop shows, wellness spas

Israel: Cultural and historical explorations

EMERGING TRENDS

Rise in Bleisure travel

Growing interest in smaller, high-impact groups

Preference for authentic, local and exclusive experiences

a noted surge in requests for outdoor activities, such as exploring natural parks and even adventure sports like skydiving.

She further averred, “Many Indian MICE travellers are combining business trips with their personal holidays, while extending the stay to enjoy Spain’s diverse regions.”

INCENTIVES WITH IMPACT

Karmarkar shared that group structures are becoming more segmented. “While demand for large incentive groups of over 120 participants is still strong, we have observed a rise in smaller, high-impact leadership offsites and strategic meetings involving 10–20 delegates. These focused gatherings deliver value for companies looking to engage top talent or reward leadership.”

Cape Town remains the clear favourite for Indian MICE groups due to its picturesque settings, event-ready venues and leisure activities. However, itineraries are featuring Sun City, Knysna and even Durban. Johannesburg continues to attract business-driven delegations owing to its connectivity and professional infrastructure.

Experiences are getting more personalised and immersive. “There is a visible shift from standard gala dinners to private game drives, wine estate tours with Indian food pairings, CSR engagements with local communities and adventure-based team building activities like ziplining and sandboarding. Indian corporates are clearly looking to deliver once-in-a-lifetime incentives that blend nature, culture and a sense of exclusivity and South Africa can deliver on all these fronts,” Karmarkar explained.

DIVERSITY IN GROUP SIZES

Bangera, observed strong and consistent demand for MICE travel to Israel, with Jerusalem and Tel Aviv being the most preferred cities. “We have seen group sizes ranging from 30 to 300 pax, demonstrating Israel’s versatility in hosting both intimate and large-scale events with precision.”

From historical significance to modern innovation, Israel offers a powerful backdrop for Indian companies seeking substance and connection during their incentive travel programmes. ➔



Business travel wallet set to widen

As global travel spending upswings, India shines as an influential market strengthening the corporate confidence outpacing many mature economies.

By MT Bureau

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Outlook – Annual Global Report & Forecast July 2025 predicts global business travel spending to reach a record US\$1.57 trillion in 2025, reflecting a moderate growth of 6.6 per cent over 2024.

While this builds on near double-digit gains in previous years, the pace is slower than last year's forecast, dampened by trade policy volatility, inflationary trends, and shifting global supply chains.

In 2024, business travel spending reached US\$1.47 trillion, slightly below the prior estimate of US\$1.48 trillion. Although nominal spending has surpassed pre-pandemic levels,



inflation-adjusted volume remains 14 per cent below 2019 benchmarks. The forecast anticipates a rebound to 8.1 per cent growth in 2026, with continued

moderate growth at 6.4 per cent in 2027 and 6.3 per cent in 2028.

Regional analysis highlights that the top 15 business travel markets

The forecast anticipates a rebound to 8.1 per cent growth in 2026, with continued moderate growth at 6.4 per cent in 2027 and 6.3 per cent in 2028

led by the US (US\$395 billion) and China (US\$373 billion) account for US\$1.31 trillion of total spending. Among these, emerging markets like India, South Korea and Turkey are posting the strongest gains, whereas Spain and the Netherlands show limited growth. Sector-specific performance varies as manufacturing industry, which remains highly sensitive to trade tensions currently lags the pace, while professional services, arts and entertainment exceed pre-2019 levels.

Traveller sentiment remains robust. In a survey of 7,300+ global business travellers, 86 per cent agreed their trips were 'worthwhile', with conferences and training standing as the top purpose for the trip. Most had taken between one and five trips during the past year, and over 80 per cent are now travelling as much or more than pre-2019. The average per-trip spend rose to US\$1,128, a significant rise from US\$834 the previous year. Additionally, mobile wallet adoption and corporate card usage are climbing in many regions. ➔





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Reinventing
strategy
amid global
volatility

24 July-August 2025

Indian corporates are switching to hybrid formats and small-size events as an alternative to the ongoing uncertainties rising due to global tensions.

By **Janice Alyosius**

When the world is increasingly experiencing unpredictability like geopolitical tensions, economic headwinds or currency fluctuations, India is reconsidering its strategies towards MICE. It is no longer just about scale or spectacle, today's corporate events are becoming smarter, smaller and strategically aligned.

From pharmaceutical leaders such as Cipla to financial powerhouses like Nuvama Group and travel enablers like TravelPlus and RezLive.com, the consensus is clear: flexibility, cost-efficiency and purpose are now non-negotiable. In this recalibrated ecosystem, corporate event leaders are stepping up with resilience, redesigning



SHENAZ KANORWALLA
Head, Business Travel & Events
Cipla

"We postponed several global events, prioritising the safety and security of our employees."

MICE as a core business function rather than just a calendar event.

PURPOSEFUL PIVOTS

For Cipla, global disruptions have triggered both direct and indirect impacts. "We postponed several global events, prioritising the safety and security of our employees in light of ongoing geopolitical tensions," shared **Shenaz Kanorwalla**, Head, Business Travel and Events, Cipla. Internal meetings too, have been restructured for cost-efficiency. "We have taken conscious steps to reduce overall spending on internal staff meets, focusing instead on more cost-effective formats and local alternatives." Indirectly, the situation has encouraged Cipla to explore regional destinations and hybrid events. "We are now exploring alternative formats and timelines to ensure such events can be conducted effectively without compromising on impact or employee well-being," Kanorwalla added.

Similar sentiments were echoed by **Anjali Chugh**, Head, MICE & Strategic Engagements, Nuvama Group. "The prolonged Russia-Ukraine conflict, unrest in the Middle East and global economic headwinds have pushed for more agile and responsive planning," she explained. Events are being scaled



ANJALI CHUGH
Head, MICE & Strategic Engagements
Nuvama Group

"Global economic headwinds have pushed for more agile and responsive planning."





NAVIGATION STRATEGIES

CIPLA

Opted for **hybrid formats**, regional destinations and ROI-focused planning with backup strategies in place.

NUVAMA GROUP

Shifted to Southeast Asian and domestic venues, embedded backup policies, events aligned with business KPIs.

REZLIVE.COM

Offers **instant bookings, flexible cancellations**, mobile access and **renegotiated supplier terms** to support agile planning.

TRAVELPLUS

Delivered **seamless crisis management, restructured formats for cost-efficiency**, positioned events as business interventions.

down or localised and large-scale global gatherings are being reconsidered with Return On Investment (ROI) and safety at the forefront.

CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS

The falling rupee and inflationary pressure have also reshaped destination strategies. "Due to ongoing currency fluctuations and rising costs, we have become increasingly conscious of our MICE-related spending," said Kanorwalla. Hybrid formats now serve as a practical middle path between engagement and financial prudence.

Chugh pointed out, "Premium destinations such as Europe and the US have become less attractive," pushing companies toward cost-effective and potential markets like Thailand, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. Indian cities such as Goa, Udaipur, Jaipur and Kochi have also risen in appeal due to their infrastructure and relative affordability.

The same trends are visible in the B2B space, noted **Jaal Shah**, Founder, RezLive.com and Group MD, Travel Designer Group. "Agents are increasingly



JAAL SHAH

Founder, RezLive.com and
Group MD, Travel Designer Group

"Within the UAE and India, there is renewed interest in tier II cities providing solid infra and better pricing."

searching for destinations that offer strong experiences without premium pricing," he said. "Even within the UAE and India, there is renewed interest in tier II cities that provide solid infrastructure and better pricing than major metros." Similarly, **Nupur Chandra**, Associate Vice President, Head MICE, TravelPlus, has also seen a clear shift in client mindset. "There is a visible shift from aspirational to pragmatic. What has not changed is the desire for meaningful engagement and that is where we come in," she said.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Uncertainty has shifted backup planning to a strategic imperative. "While it was not required in the current scenario, I firmly believe in always having a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in place," said Kanorwalla, which includes identifying and preparing secondary locations for major events.

Nuvama has gone a step further, institutionalising this approach. "We have embedded a backup location policy for all major events both domestic



"What has not changed is the desire for meaningful engagement and that is where we come in."

NUPUR CHANDRA

Associate Vice President, Head MICE, TravelPlus

and international," explained Chugh. "Contracts now often include flexibility clauses with vendors and DMCs."

TravelPlus has lived through contingency firsthand. "When we had 300 guests at Mt. Fuji station during the Japan earthquake, our exit plan kicked in within minutes," recalled Chandra. "Similarly, during the Bali volcanic activity, we had 600 people on-ground — all accounted for, all managed safely with zero panic." Their most recent test was a cruise with 850 guests during India-Pakistan border tensions. "Yet,

with standby logistics and split-routing in place, we ensured the show went on seamlessly and with care." For RezLive.com, enabling quick pivots is part of their DNA. "We support agents with instant confirmations and flexible cancellation policies," said Shah. Their platform also offers hotel bookings via mobile apps, which speeds up bookings in volatile environments.

SMART SUPPLIER STRATEGIES

With tight budgets, corporates and agents alike are renegotiating supplier

terms and rethinking how events are structured. "We are in regular contact with our suppliers, including direct negotiations with hotels to secure better rates and last-minute deals," said Shah. Their inventory is curated with group flexibility and cost control in mind, including single-click access to hotels, transfers, rail and cruises.

On the corporate side, creativity has become currency. "We have to get more creative, whether it is about reworking contracts or tweaking formats," stressed Chandra, adding, "From full-scale galas to power-packed regional chapters, flexibility has been our greatest strength." To this, Kanorwalla agreed, "We are also opting for hybrid formats to balance engagement with cost-efficiency."

ROI IN FOCUS

Gone are the days of MICE as isolated event planning. It is now a vehicle for measurable business impact. "At Cipla, we ensure that every event is planned with a clear and well-defined objective aligned with our broader business goals," said Kanorwalla. "Whether

it is stakeholder engagement, team alignment, market positioning or brand visibility. We design the event strategy to maximise ROI." Everything from venue selection to branding and content is curated for measurable outcomes and long-term value.

Chugh added that at Nuvama, "ROI is measured through a blend of KPIs, participant satisfaction, business conversions, brand recall and cost-per-engagement." They use historical data to fine-tune future formats and ensure stakeholder alignment.

For TravelPlus as well, Chandra agreed "MICE is more than an event, it is a business intervention." He affirmed, "Every gathering is an opportunity to build culture, drive performance and reinforce brand ethos." Their approach layers sustainability, data-led design and business KPIs into every engagement.

Shah summed up the role of platforms like RezLive.com succinctly, "Our goal is to empower agents with choice, flexibility and control, along with delivering strong ROI, enhance

As companies rethink how they gather, the question is not just where to go or how much to spend but why the event matters at all

stakeholder satisfaction and align with their brand's objectives and vision."

As businesses navigate turbulence, the MICE sector is no longer about who can go big, it is about who can go smart. Whether it is Cipla postponing global leadership meets, Nuvama shifting to domestic options, TravelPlus executing split-routing mid-crisis or RezLive.com powering last-minute agent agility, each stakeholder is contributing to a more resilient, responsible and results-driven MICE ecosystem.

As Kanorwalla rightly said, "When the purpose of an event is clear, the impact is magnified." In this new world of MICE, clarity, contingency and creativity are no longer optional; they

are essential. In today's unpredictable world, the true measure of a successful corporate event is no longer its size, budget or destination but its purpose, agility and impact.

As companies rethink how they gather, the question is not just where to go or how much to spend but why the event matters at all.

When every meeting becomes a strategic intervention and every itinerary is backed by contingency, it forces us to ask — Are we planning for presence or for purpose? The future of MICE belongs to those who can answer that with clarity. At this time event planners need to smartly use the technology and resources available at their disposal. ➔



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Will Indian planners bet on **Chiang Mai?**

30 July-August 2025



As Chiang Mai presents itself as a prospective MICE destination in Thailand, Indian travel planners gauge what the city has to offer to their clients.

By **Amita Pandey**

While the pristine and bustling beaches of Southern Thailand continue to lure Indian holidaymakers and corporate travellers, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is navigating a fresh course by steering its compass towards picturesque north that leads to the spiritually rich landscapes, hotels amid tranquil vistas and Michelin-starred restaurants.

Already holding a special place among European travellers, North encompasses the culturally rich city like Chiang Mai along with serene destinations such as Phrae and Nan, which offers an alternative Thailand steeped in heritage.

Now, to promote it among Indian travellers and other source markets, this year TAT strategically organised Thailand Travel Mart Plus (TTM+) 2025 in Chiang Mai. Interestingly, the common consensus of Thai stakeholders at the event had an optimistic view of Chiang Mai's potential in the Indian MICE and outbound market that the

city's spiritual aura, rich heritage and wellness retreats will resonate with Indian travellers due to deep-rooted cultural affinity. "North Thailand offers a completely different flavour," said **Thapanee Kiatphaibool**, Governor, TAT, Thailand. "While the South is known for beaches, the North captivates with rolling hills, ancient temples, gourmet experiences and cultural depth."

GATEWAY TO THE NORTH

Easily accessible via daily flights to Chiang Mai International Airport or scenic train rides from Bangkok, Chiang Mai is the undeniable jewel of the North. The city is famed for its hilltop Wat Phra That Doi Suthep temple, bustling handicraft villages like Sankampaeng and Bosang, and wellness retreats such as Oasis Spa. Visitors can explore the Royal Park Rajapruek, a 200-acre botanical garden showcasing global flora, which is a preferred MICE venue as well. Visitors can also wander through lively night markets, sampling local food and handicrafts.

While you are in Chiang Mai, the nearby provinces like Lampang, Phrae





TAT highlighted the growing appetite among Indian MICE planners for offbeat venues, which could be easily found in North Thailand

and Nan have numerous tourist activities and experiences to offer. Trying hands on making ceramic 'chicken-patterned' bowls at Dhanabadee Ceramic Museum and enjoying panoramic view at mountaintop Wat Phra That Doi Phra Chan temple can be a satisfying experience for the ones seeking tranquility. Wander through Phrae's teak mansions and surreal rock parks. In Nan, taste gourmet bites, mold chocolate at cocoa farms and craft lanterns with locals — each moment could be a living thread of Thailand's rich culture.

MICE OPPORTUNITIES

Speaking at TTM Plus 2025, TAT officials highlighted the growing appetite among Indian MICE planners for offbeat venues, which they believe could be easily found in northern region of Thailand, along with sufficient hotel inventories. The hospitality brands like Cross Hotels & Resorts, Marriott, Amari, Tree Tara Hotel and Emmaline Hotel Nan, are all set to redefine the MICE scene with their latest offerings in the region, which they also showcased during the event.

Cross Hotels & Resorts, for instance, noted a shift in preferences among Indian travellers, with increasing demand for local interactions and cultural explorations beyond traditional sightseeing and they believe northern region has the potential to cater these evolving demands. "We are adapting to these evolving preferences by curating customisable MICE and destination wedding packages with attractive rates and commission structures to encourage Indian travel agents," **Chatchaya (Mai) Glaiprayong**, Head of Global Sales, Cross Hotels and Resorts said. She revealed that the brand is engaged in targeted marketing campaigns to showcase the beauty of Northern Thailand, highlighting adventure opportunity, wellness and cultural experience to the Indian MICE planners and other groups.

Chiang Mai Marriott Hotel also underscored Chiang Mai's untapped potential for Indian MICE tourism. "Chiang Mai is a hidden gem, lesser known than Phuket or Bangkok but it offers a diverse range of experiences from nature treks and waterfalls to elephant

camps and ancient temples," said **Rajat Chatterjee**, General Manager, Chiang Mai Marriott Hotel. He stressed the city's family-friendly appeal, affordable pricing and rich cultural heritage rooted in the ancient Lanna Kingdom, which will resonate with the Indians. Chatterjee pointed out that Chiang Mai offers competitive rates, often up to one-third less than popular Thai destinations, without compromising on luxury or experiences. "Chiang Mai allows planners to organise more immersive events where attendees stay engaged, rather than being distracted by nightlife like in Bangkok or Pattaya," he said.

Chiang Mai Marriott Hotel boasts expansive MICE facilities, including a 1,000-square-meter ballroom accommodating up to 1,000 delegates, and a newly launched 400-square-meter venue equipped with 360-degree LED screens, capable of immersive event setups that can range from jungle themes to seaside ambiances.

"We see growing interest from Indian families, friend groups and even golf enthusiasts," Chatterjee added, pointing to Chiang Mai's diverse appeal.



Industry stakeholders believe destination like Chiang Mai is poised to become significant player in the Indian MICE and wedding market

Sumit Kumar, Director, TravelGen, shared a similar observation as he stated, “Chiang Mai and similar destinations may appeal to high-end corporate groups or top management for unique offsite experiences but they may not sustain regular MICE business due to limited nightlife options.” Still, he acknowledged, “The region holds significant potential for family holidays, individual travellers and destination weddings, thanks to its unique attractions and relaxed ambience.”

With Thai sellers brimming with optimism and Indian buyers acknowledging the realistic notions of Indian outbound market, the question remains: can Chiang Mai’s quiet charm and cultural richness has the potential to win over Indian travellers used to the beaches and nightlife of the South? Is Northern Thailand ready to rewrite the Indian traveller’s definition of Thailand? Could direct air connectivity to Chiang Mai be the game-changer in tempting Indian travellers northward? ➔

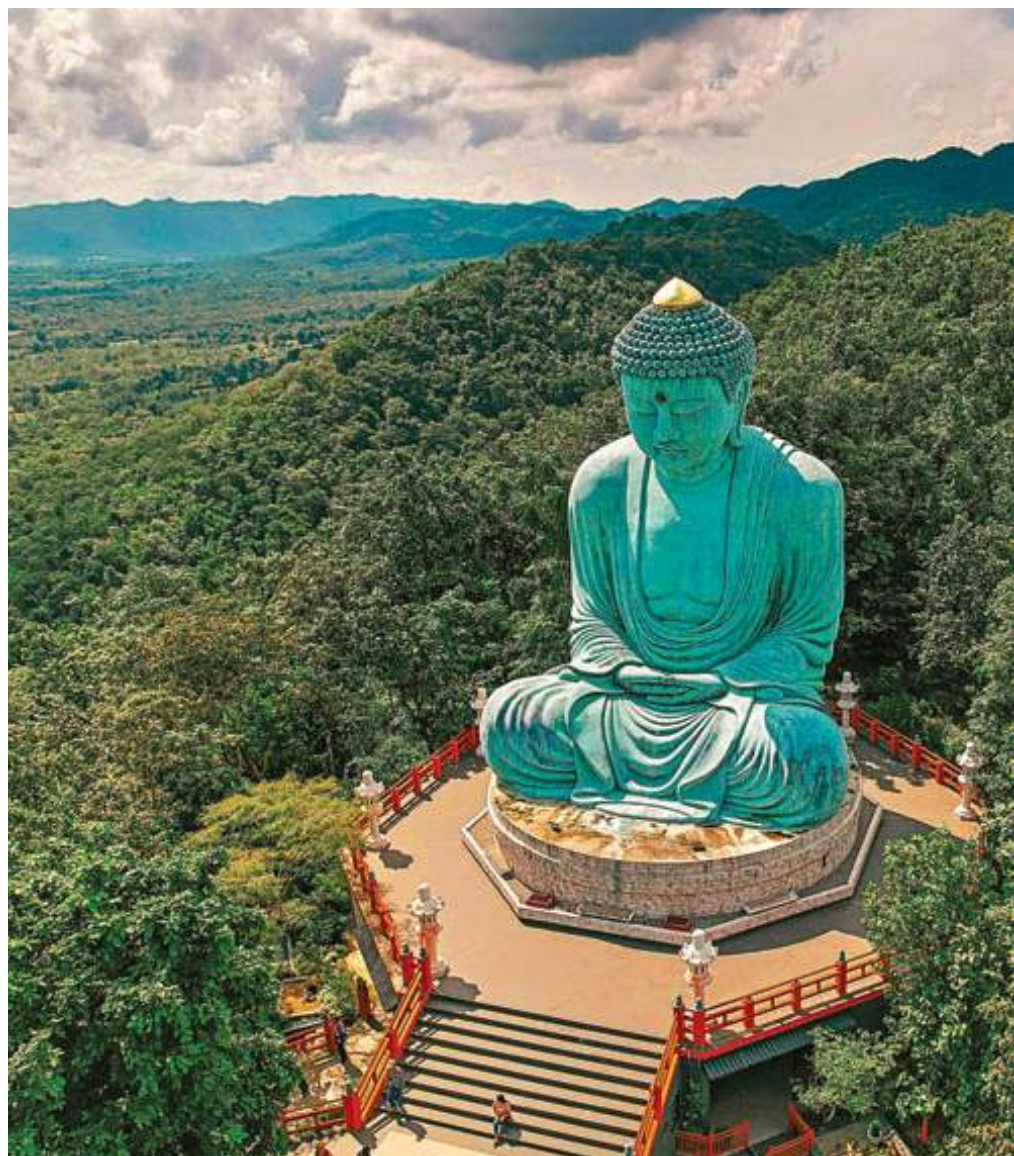
With TAT pushing for better air connectivity between India and Northern Thailand, industry stakeholders believe destinations like Chiang Mai are poised to become significant players in the Indian MICE and wedding market.

WHAT INDIAN BUYERS THINK

Indian travel planners, however, are weighing both opportunities and challenges. A travel agent from Jaipur, **Rajiv Rawat**, Director, Prime Link Travels, commented, “Currently, the destination attracts a niche group, mostly families, seeking tranquillity and scenic settings. It is a fantastic option for weddings, with the added comfort of easily available Indian food.”

However, Rawat flagged connectivity as a key hurdle as he mentioned, “Connectivity remains a drawback, especially for Chiang Mai, which requires an additional flight from India. This is something that many travellers find inconvenient.”

When it comes to MICE preferences, Rawat candidly averred, “Northern destinations lack the vibrant nightlife that Indian travellers enjoy. Most venues close by 9:30 or 10 pm, making them less suitable for MICE tourism.”



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Is travel assistance the new essential?

With the rising issues of mishandled bags, ASEGO BOLT has stepped up to provide an assistance bundle of TrackMate and WaitMate to provide real-time solutions.

By MT Bureau

In today's fast-moving travel landscape, disruptions are routine — 25 million bags mishandled and over 35 per cent of flights delayed over an hour, leaving travellers battling longer waits, lost luggage and rising uncertainty, according to the Global Airline Performance Report.

This is where the gap between travellers' actual insurance requirements and travel reality becomes clear. Insurance coverage may reimburse financial loss but it does not show up when a bag goes missing, or when

TrackMate brings global, real-time baggage tracking across all airlines and routes, with guaranteed compensation

travellers are stranded in a foreign airport with no assistance. What travellers need today is not just reimbursement. Recognising this shift, ASEGO has launched ASEGO BOLT, a new assistance bundle created by combining two of its services — TrackMate and WaitMate. Together, they deliver rapid response and real protection, exactly when customers need it the most.

TrackMate brings global, real-time baggage tracking across all airlines and routes, with guaranteed compensation of up to ₹66,000 per checked-in bag up to 2 bags if it is not recovered within 96 hours. On the other side, WaitMate activates premium lounge access automatically if a flight is delayed by more than 60 minutes, giving travellers a moment of comfort. The coverage extends across up to four flight segments in a single trip and includes access to over 1,300 lounges across more than 100 countries. As a booking partner, offering BOLT is more than an upsell — it is about being proactive and aligned with what modern travellers truly value: peace of mind and dependable support. ➔

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Monsoon escapes in MADHYA PRADESH

Gurgling streams, gushing rivers and thunderous waterfalls of Madhya Pradesh turn the state into an appealing spectacle for travellers during the monsoon season.



In Madhya Pradesh, the monsoon is not just a season — it is a celebration of the senses. During this wonderful weather, some visitors seek stillness, others seek drenched forests, while the adventurous souls feel the thrill of rain during long road trips.

ESCAPES NEAR REWA

Located near Rewa, the Bahuti and Chachai waterfalls cascade dramatically into a verdant gorge, offering a mesmerising spectacle for travellers seeking magnificent view. In this serene part of the state, the untamed beauty of nature captivates photographers, artists and nature lovers alike.

PARADISE IN PACHMARHI

Embark on a scenic road trip to Pachmarhi and enjoy a tranquil cruise across the pristine waters of Tawa Dam and Reservoir. Trek through rain-kissed forests to Apsara Vihar, where the enchanting 'Fairy Pool' awaits.



MANDU'S MONSOON MAHALS

The historic city of Mandu comes alive in the rain. Medieval monuments like the Jahaz Mahal appears like a ship floating in monsoon-filled pools, while Hindola Mahal exudes a dreamlike charm. As mist wraps around the Rani Roopmati Palace, it is easy to believe you are inside a timeless love story.

WATERFALLS AROUND KHAJURAHO

When the rains arrive, the wild landscapes near Khajuraho transform into a realm of cascading beauty. Just 34 km away, Pandav Falls in Panna National Park tumbles into a heart-shaped pool, surrounded by ancient caves believed to have sheltered the Pandavas. Nearby, the volcanic rock canyons of Raneh Falls erupt with seasonal cascades plunging into the Ken River gorge. It is a spellbinding mix of nature, myth and monsoon magic, where every drop narrates a story. ➔



Jahaz Mahal,
Mandu

JWCC turns BKC into global gateway

With Jio World Convention Centre (JWCC) and a thriving hospitality scene, BKC has cemented its status as a magnet for high-profile events.

By Hazel Jain

In the last three decades, Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) has gone from being a marshland to the beating heart of India's financial capital. As Mumbai's first planned suburb, it has a high concentration of corporate offices, foreign consulates, F&B, retail options and hotels. Its accessibility from different parts of the city, especially the international airport continues to remain a huge draw as infrastructure and connectivity improve by leaps and bounds. With 5-star hotels like the Trident BKC and Sofitel Mumbai BKC and the latest ibis Mumbai BKC, the location will see many more world-class hotels.

BKC is now the stage for many prestigious Indian and global events, so it is only natural that its MICE landscape would also evolve further. Amid this evolving dynamics of BKC, Jio World Convention Centre's (JWCC) effect on BKC's business travel landscape is immense. As the venue for a staggering number of major events per year, it helps generate direct and indirect opportunities across diverse sectors.

Devendra Bharna, CEO, Jio World Centre, said "A global MICE event is a good example, where delegates travel to India by air, often using public transport to arrive in BKC. They pick accommodation at hotels, typically within five



kms of our Centre's radius. Beyond convention hours, our guests unwind at various restaurants and entertainment hubs across the precinct, often venturing beyond to explore other parts of the city. Whether it is souvenir shopping at Mumbai's markets or simply the use of Indian currency, every step of the journey adds to India's exchequer."

HIGH-IMPACT EVENTS

Bharma added, "If you look at all the high-impact events that JWCC has hosted in the last years, they have always given impetus to the local economy. Not just hotels, events at JWCC enable increased engagement for travel and

logistics, F&B, entertainment industries and even for local retail and handcrafts." Some of the events it has hosted that created a ripple effect across Mumbai are World Congress of Accountants (2022), G20 Sessions 2023, the 141st International Olympic Committee Session 2023, Global Fintech, Miss World Grand Finale 2024 and the recently concluded World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES).

Spread across an area of around 1 million sq ft, JWCC, featuring five-capable venues, has hosted close to 4,000 events including landmark conventions and exhibitions. Another great example of JWCC transcending

beyond the ordinary is its ability to bring weddings to life with many unique wedding hosted in its spaces. Bharma said, "Weddings are an integral part of JWCC. With unique specifications and vantage points, the venue beautifully

EXCLUSIVE FEATURE

JWCC recently introduced '**Wedding Concierge**'—a service that consolidates everything from venues, curated options for décor and F&B, accommodation and even personalised shopping assistance and excursions.



DEVENDRA BHARMA
CEO, Jio World Centre

"Not just hotels, events at JWCC enable increased engagement for travel and logistics, F&B and even for local retail and handcrafts."

caters diverse weddings, pre-wedding functions and celebratory galas. Whether it is the chandelier-lit Lotus Ballroom, the pillarless Jasmine Halls, 5G-capable, live-stream ready pavilions, or the views of the Sky Deck, you name it, they all add to the charm." JWCC's relentless persuasion for attracting large scale global events to Mumbai has also resulted in the city bidding and winning future convention business like International Baccalaureate Congress (2026) and the UIA International Forum of Architects (2027). ➔

Event sector soars to billion-dollar biz

Once considered a seasonal segment, India's wedding and event industry has evolved into a robust economic engine projected to grow into a billion-dollar industry.



India's tax base. "We are one of the biggest money spinners. The government is earning from us and we are proud of it. At this point, this sector should be treated like a serious, structured industry." He added that the industry's growing visibility could open doors to deeper institutional support.

Echoing similar sentiment, **Sabbas Joseph**, Co-Founder, Wizcraft International Entertainment, affirmed, "I think the event industry is poised for huge growth, just like India itself. As India becomes the 3rd largest economy, its event industry has already become the 4th largest globally and it is further going to grow, not in millions but in billions."



RAJEEV JAIN
Founder and Director
Rashi Entertainment

By **Janice Alyosius**

India's event industry is booming with its value almost touching ₹12 lakh crore. From multi-crore artist fees to sold-out concerts and soaring brand partnerships, the sector is thriving. Yet, it struggles with licensing systems, limited venues and lack of regulation, while it is on its way to become an economic powerhouse.

A RISING INDUSTRY

Rajeev Jain, Founder and Director, Rashi Entertainment, said, "The Indian wedding industry has grown from ₹5 lakh crores to ₹10-12 lakh crores. Live events that were once worth ₹1,000 crores now generate ₹13,000 crores. This is no longer just a trend; it is a movement."

Jain emphasised that the industry is now one of the top contributors to

"The Indian wedding industry has grown from ₹5 lakh crores to ₹10-12 lakh crores."



“Today, the sector employs 10 mn people. Tomorrow, it has the potential to employ 30 mn people.”

SABBAS JOSEPH

Co-Founder, Wizcraft International Entertainment

Additionally, too many venues are owned by the government, which are restricted for use because they are only for sports and not for events. The government needs to develop these venues into multipurpose venues.” He also highlighted the problem of licensing, mentioning, “Licensing system has to be improved as taking multiple permissions becomes a big hurdle.”

POTENTIAL OF THE SECTOR

Joseph made a critical point about the job potential of the event sector, “Today, the sector employs 10 million people. Tomorrow, it has the potential to employ 30 million people, which cannot be takeover by AI.” Jain backed this projection with data that outlines the sector’s economic weight. He noted that 30,000 events were held in the past year. The sector is growing at a 35 per cent year-on-year rate, far ahead of sectors that grow at an average of 5-7 per cent. Interestingly, a 19 per cent annual growth rate is projected by 2027. ➔



BIGGER EXPECTATIONS

From 5-star rooms costing ₹1 lakh per night to celebrity artists quoting record fees, the scale of Indian weddings and events is unprecedentedly soaring. “Diljit Dosanjh is charging ₹12 crores and Honey Singh is asking for ₹5 crores. A crore has become the new ₹10 lakh,” Jain noted. However, despite the escalating cost, the market remains strong. To this, Joseph added, “Spends and possibilities everything will increase, not just in big cities but across tier II and III cities and even in rural India.”

GROWTH AMID RISING COSTS

While the industry is booming, it has its own challenges to address. “It has become expensive to organise large-format weddings but we are managing. As business grows, so do the complexities. We are adapting and delivering,” Jain said.

Joseph agreed but warns that the main hurdle is internal, “We need to educate ourselves. We need to get skilled

correctly in technology, in creativity, in engagement and in organising.”

Underlining the need for infrastructure reform and better regulation, he said, “Multipurpose venues are the need of the hour.

SECTOR UPDATE

Delhi Govt is planning to turn the capital into a global event hub under PPP model. It has recently unveiled a digital single-window system for event clearances.

Stakeholders propose reforms to boost live events & cultural programmes across heritage & public venues.





JECC pulls large-scale events to Jaipur

After hosting event like IIFA 2025, JECC intrigues MICE fraternity drawing impactful global opportunities.

By **Janice Alysius**

Jaipur has long been synonymous with royal weddings and cultural tourism but with the successful hosting of International Indian Film Academy Awards (IIFA) 2024's Silver Jubilee edition, the city has made a strong case for itself as a global MICE destination. The event, held at the Jaipur Exhibition & Convention Centre (JECC) and Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, showcased Jaipur's capability to

host large-scale international events with seamless efficiency.

GAME CHANGER

According to **Manuj Ralhan**, General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC, "IIFA 2024 was a game-changer for Jaipur, proving that the city can host world-class events beyond weddings and tourism. It positioned Jaipur as a serious contender in the global MICE industry, showcasing the blend of heritage and modern infra."

This high-profile event not only attracted international celebrities but also put Jaipur on the radar of global event planners, reinforcing its appeal beyond leisure tourism.

WORLD-CLASS INFRA

To successfully host an event of IIFA's scale, JECC and its partners made upgrades in security, logistics and large-scale event staging. "These upgrades have now set a strong foundation for attracting major business events, ensuring Jaipur is future-ready for any global conference, summit or exhibitions of similar stature," Ralhan explained.

COMPETING WITH METROS

Jaipur stands at position, where it is competing with metropolitan cities for large-scale events by offering a world-class convention facility with fewer logistical challenges and lower costs. "JECC, managed by Accor, is one of India's largest pillarless convention spaces, providing over 10 lakh sq ft of exhibition space and seamless event execution. Having Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre within the



required working closely with multiple stakeholders, including government authorities, security personnel and vendors, to ensure everything ran smoothly.” He also credited the Rajasthan government and Rajasthan Police for their crucial roles in ensuring a seamless event. He said, “Their expertise in handling large gatherings helped us maintain order and security throughout the event. This event reinforced how early planning, strong communication and teamwork are the backbone of successful event execution.”

With these learnings, Jaipur is poised to take on bigger and better events in the future, building on its success as a global MICE destination. ➔

“JECC, managed by Accor, is one of India’s largest pillarless convention spaces, providing over 10 lakh sq. ft. of exhibition space.”

MANUJ RALHAN,

General Manager, Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre and JECC



same complex ensures unparalleled convenience for event organisers and attendees,” Ralhan shared.

With 226 well-appointed rooms, premium dining and business facilities located within the event space, JECC provides an integrated solution that enhances efficiency and comfort.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Beyond the immediate tourism boost, IIFA’s successful hosting has unlocked long-term business opportunities generating enormous revenues for Jaipur. “IIFA has put Jaipur on the radar for global corporate events, driving demand in hospitality, F&B and local businesses,” Ralhan said.

This visibility of the city will translate into increased bookings and global partnerships attracting economical benefits for the city in future.

LEVERAGING SUCCESS

The IIFA milestone is just the beginning. “We plan to actively bid for global events, strengthen partnerships with international organisers and market Jaipur’s successful hosting of IIFA. Our focus is on reinforcing Jaipur’s position as India’s top experiential MICE destination,” Ralhan stated.

FUTURE STRATEGIES

Reflecting on the experience, Ralhan emphasised the importance of early planning and revealed, “One of the biggest takeaways from this event was the importance of collaboration and meticulous pre-event planning. Organising an event of this scale





Experiences to catch spotlight @ITB India 2025

ITB India 2025 is set to be held from 2-4 September in Mumbai with a sharper focus on experience-led travel & curated itineraries.

By MT Bureau

The 4th ITB India 2025, to be held from 2–4 September 2025 at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai, will run alongside MICE Show India and Travel Tech India, uniting over 400 exhibitors, 600 top buyers and over 8,000 attendees. The theme of the event — ‘The Business of Experience: Curated Travel for Targeted Growth’, reflects growing global demand for personalised and experiential travel.

The show will spotlight sectors such as wellness, film tourism, culinary journeys, cultural trails and adventure escapes. Exhibitors include NTOs and RTOs from countries like India, Japan, Malaysia, Finland, Kenya and Sri Lanka. There will also be DMCs, lifestyle hotel brands and travel tech firms offering AI and CRM solutions.

Darren Seah, Executive Director, Messe Berlin Asia Pacific, highlighted ITB India’s pivotal role, saying, “This platform drives innovation, strategic partnerships and sustainable growth in one of the world’s most dynamic travel economies.”

A key highlight of the event is the Indian Film Tourism spotlight, featuring

Interactive onsite elements such as Experience Zones, Curated Spotlight Sessions and the Experience Networking Lounge will bring destinations and products to life. The conference will explore traveller insights, immersive MICE formats, sustainability and tech innovation. With a strong focus on meaningful engagement, niche

The show will spotlight sectors such as wellness, film tourism, culinary journeys, cultural trails and adventure escapes

panels, B2B meetings and co-creation opportunities with film producers, festivals and tourism boards, leveraging cinema’s emotional power to drive destination appeal.

market development and experience personalisation, the event will serve as a vital platform for the travel trade to forge new alliances and stay ahead in an evolving global landscape. ➔



SILKE CALDER
Event Director, AIME

AIME 2026 ready to host global buyers

Scheduled from 9-11 February, 2026, AIME will offer Indian event professionals unmatched opportunities to explore global suppliers and discover new venues.

By MT Bureau

India's business events professionals now have an unprecedented opportunity to connect with global peer community as hosted buyer applications are officially open for Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) 2026.

To be held from 9-11 February 2026 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), AIME is where the business events world meets in Asia-Pacific and is the region's longest running and most influential business events trade show.

The 2026 edition is already shaping up to be the biggest yet, with more than 80 per cent of exhibition space sold or reserved. In fact, over 700 exhibitors, 700 hosted buyers and 20,000+ pre-scheduled appointments are expected across 16,500 sqm of exhibition space.

For Indian event professionals, the AIME Hosted Buyer Program is a premium opportunity to uncover new

venues, suppliers and destinations. The programme also leverages cutting-edge matchmaking technology to pair buyers with right exhibitors from international convention centres and luxury hotels to AV providers, caterers, airlines and tourism boards and other stakeholders as per their needs and preferences.

"AIME 2025 was a landmark event. Now we are raising the bar again in 2026 and the early interest from buyers across Asia, including India, reflects AIME's critical role in driving business outcomes in the region," said **Silke Calder**, Event Director, AIME. Indian buyers are encouraged to apply early via the AIME website, as demand for hosted buyer positions might exceed capacity. ➔



MOVEMENTS



NEHA KAPOOR
General Manager
Hyatt Place Gurgaon

Neha Kapoor has been appointed as the General Manager by Hyatt Place Gurgaon. With 21 years of experience, Kapoor brings an extensive knowledge in delivering exceptional guest experiences and operational excellence. Her people-centric ideals are expected to drive the hotel's ongoing expansion in the competitive Gurgaon market. Previously, she has served at senior positions at Hyatt Regency Pune and Hyatt Place Hyderabad Banjara Hills, where she showcased exceptional leadership qualities.



LAVRAJ MATNANI
Director of Convention Sales
Expolnn Suites & Convention

Lavraj Matnani has been appointed the Director of Convention Sales by Expolnn Suites & Convention. With his expertise spanning revenue management, client acquisition and strategic account servicing, he is expected to make a valuable contribution towards brand's conventions and MICE segment. In his previous roles he has played a significant role at renowned properties such as Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida and The Pullman & Novotel Aerocity, New Delhi.



RAJIB ROY CHOUDHURY
Associate Vice President
Vedic Village Spa Resort

Rajib Roy Choudhury has been elevated to Associate Vice President by Vedic Village Spa Resort. In his new role, Choudhury will oversee overall brand and operational alignment, while driving multiple sustainable development initiatives across the group. With his expertise, he is expected to champion operational excellence, brand consistency and innovative eco-friendly practices, reinforcing Vedic Village's leadership in sustainable hospitality.



MEENA REWARI
Director, Sales and Marketing,
Shangri-La Bengaluru

Shangri-La Bengaluru has appointed Meena Rewari as the Director of Sales and Marketing. Rewari brings a wealth of expertise in sales strategy, diplomatic engagement and market expansion. Having led transformative sales and marketing initiatives at luxury properties such as JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar and Hyatt Regency Delhi, Rewari is recognised for her ability to foster meaningful relationships across diverse customer segments including the diplomatic and corporate communities.



VIDISHA PURI
Marketing & Communication
Manager, Mercure Lucknow

Mercure Lucknow has appointed Vidisha Puri as Marketing and Communication Manager. She brings with her over 13 years of extensive experience across various facets of marketing and public relations. In her new role, she will be responsible for spearheading all marketing, branding and communication initiatives for the property. Her focus will be on driving brand visibility, enhancing guest engagement through integrated marketing campaigns and turning leads into conversions.



POOJA GAUR
Director, Marketing
Jaisalmer Marriott
Resort & Spa

Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa has appointed Pooja Gaur as its new Director of Marketing. Gaur is a seasoned marketing strategist with over 12 years of experience across luxury, lifestyle and hospitality brands. Since joining Marriott International in 2019, she has spearheaded marketing and pre-opening campaigns across diverse properties including Jaipur Marriott, Fairfield by Marriott Jaipur and Katra Marriott Resort & Spa. She is known for translating campaigns into performance.



DINESH KUMAR
Director of Services
The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore

Dinesh Kumar has been appointed as the Director of Services by The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore. With an experience of 18 years in the industry, Kumar is bringing expertise into housekeeping operations, guest satisfaction, budgeting, sustainability and inventory control. He has established himself as a highly detail-oriented professional with a proven track record of consistently delivering excellent customer service. In his new role, Kumar will oversee all housekeeping operations, while implementing sustainable practices.



JOHN PAUL
Director, HR
Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore

The Ritz-Carlton, Bangalore has appointed John Paul as the Director of Human Resources (HR). With an wide experience in cultivating stakeholder relationships, implementing strategic best practices across diverse hospitality environments, John has established himself as a successful HR professional. In his new role, John will oversee all HR and training functions, ensuring seamless hotel operations through strategic recruitment, brand compliance while fostering strong community relationships.



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