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Innovations at the helm

In the ever-evolving landscape of the travel and tourism industry, innovation is not just a choice—it is a necessity, which has been the predominant force behind the adoption of avant-garde technologies and infrastructure development in the sector.

The New Distribution Capability (NDC), spearheaded by IATA, is redefining how airlines connect with their customers and deliver value. By breaking free from the constraints of legacy

businesses. India is also gearing up with huge conventional centres to support both local and global events. However, my question still remains what about the infra structure support such as accommodation, ground transport, catering, etc.?

As Connect Hongkong, Malaysia's MyTripleE 2.0 and Japan Osaka event/campaigns are wooing MICE into their countries, where does India stand? Are the government bodies using the resources to increase inbound activities? How and where can

“As Connect Hongkong, Malaysia's MyTripleE 2.0 and Japan Osaka event/campaigns are wooing MICE into their countries, where does India stand?”

systems, NDC empowers airlines to become dynamic retailers, offering personalised, transparent and seamless experiences across all touchpoints. As we delve into the nuances of this game-changing capability, we celebrate the visionaries and pioneers who are leading the charge and also setting new benchmarks for excellence in the travel industry.

The concept of student insurance is also evolving to address the unique needs of students and their families. Some of the comprehensive packages available now, focus on mental health and digital accessibility, ensuring students can focus on their education without undue financial stress.

Now that we have entered the realm of innovations, the convention industry is also not a novice to it instead it is functioning at an unprecedented pace, playing a key role in shaping

organisations such as the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) offer support? Although on the positive side, individual Indian state tourism is trying to enlighten the travellers with the USP of each state. India's MICE is also gaining a lot of traction along with the evidential growth of corporate businesses. The recent initiative of FCM to work with the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) to decode the relevance of corporate travel programmes in India present hope for the country. Overall, it was a good financial year ending with a focus on events such as SATTE and OTM, reflecting the firm foundation of the travel industry driven by the spirit of innovation.

Warm regards
Jyothi Varma, Consulting Editor

20 Infra upgrades lead convention industry



Reflecting on compliance & licensing in wedding biz



NDC: Hype or Help for aviation sector?



Malaysia — the rising star for MICE industry



Rising India boosting outbound growth

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



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Tie the knot with royal vibrance

Juxtaposing royal heritage with modern opulence, Jaisalmer Marriott offers top-notch amenities and experiences making it an ideal wedding destination.

By MT Bureau

Jaisalmer, with its golden-hued landscapes and regal heritage, has emerged as a sought-after wedding destination where tradition meets grandeur. The Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa, nestled in this historic city, offers an unparalleled setting for couples looking to celebrate their union in royal style. The Jaisalmer Marriott seamlessly blends heritage charm

Whether envisioning an opulent palace-like affair or an intimate desert soir  e, the hotel offers breathtaking settings

with contemporary luxury, making it an ideal venue for a fairytale wedding. Whether envisioning an opulent palace-like affair or an intimate desert soir  e, the hotel offers breathtaking settings that turn dreams into reality for modern couples.

UNPARALLELED LUXURIES

Ensuring world-class comfort, the resort offers plush accommodation with modern amenities. It features grand banquet halls, poolside settings and terrace venues with views of Jaisalmer Fort, catering to both elaborate and intimate celebrations. Couples can host a *Mehendi* ceremony under a star-lit sky in the dunes, complemented by folk music, fire dancers and camel processions for unforgettable cultural immersion.

RIOT OF FLAVOURS

Food plays a pivotal role in wedding celebrations and Jaisalmer Marriott delivers an exceptional gastronomic experience. The resort's culinary team curates everything from authentic Rajasthani feasts to global gourmet delights. Signature dishes like *Dal Baati Churma*, *Laal Maas* and an array of Mughlai and international delicacies ensure that every meal is a celebration of flavours.

PERFECT WEDDING VENUE


From vibrant *Haldi* ceremonies to grand *Baraats*, Marriott's wedding planners manage everything in detail. With awe-inspiring d  cor and hospitality, each event becomes a fusion of tradition and modern luxury. For couples seeking a wedding infused with heritage and romance, Jaisalmer Marriott Resort & Spa is an unmatched choice. ➔



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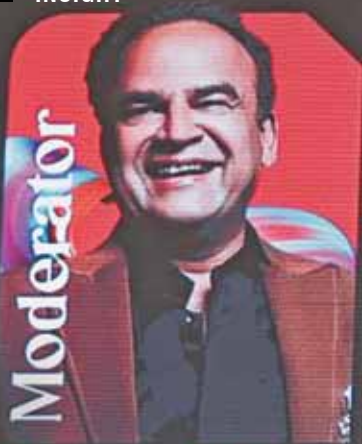
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Rajeev Jain
Rashi Entertainment



Rohit Chopra
Minor Hotels



Amanveer Singh
Ten Events & Entertainment



Wedding business **Commissions & compliance**

At the Travel Wedding Show, experts highlighted key debates on travel agent commissions, revenue-sharing and licensing, determining need for fairness, transparency and collaboration.



Harkaran Singh

The Leela Ambience
Convention Hotel



Pritesh Sharma

Mapsor Experiences



By **Janice Alysius**

As India's wedding industry grows more competitive, the relationship between hotels, wedding planners and event managers continues to evolve. The recent Travel Wedding Show organised at Anantara Jewel Bagh Jaipur ascertained the need for stronger collaboration. One of the key discussions at the event revolved around Travel Agent Commissions (TAC), revenue-sharing models and licensing complexities. Industry experts debated the changing dynamics of TAC, fair commission structures and external

catering policies, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that will shape the future of wedding industry and partnerships.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TAC

Explaining the indispensable role of TAC in their operations, **Pritesh Sharma**, Director, Mapsor Experiential Weddings, stated, "TAC is a crucial part of our business, especially at Mapsor, where we operate two divisions—hotel deals and wedding planning. For our hotel division, TAC is the foundation of our business."

However, **Rajeev Jain**, Founder and Director, Rashi Entertainment, pointed out a growing issue in the industry. He stated, "Hotels have become greedy.



Under Indian Copyright Act, 1957, social events, including weddings are exempted from licensing requirements

Earlier, they offered 10 per cent on room bookings. Then ITC introduced 10 per cent commission on food. Later, Leela reduced it to 5 per cent on rooms. There is a lot of money-driven competition among hotels.” Sharma further added, “If hotels do not offer TAC, we do not do business with them. This is a critical aspect for any businessman, event manager, or wedding planner. We must treat each other as partners and follow better business practices.”

FAIR COMMISSION PRACTICES

A significant concern discussed was the fairness

of commission structures. **Amanveer Singh**, Managing Director, TEN Events & Entertainment, highlighted discrepancies in commission calculations as he informed, “If a room is sold for ₹1,40,000, it may be listed at ₹40,000, with 10 per cent commission on that amount. Breakfast charges might be deducted and 60-80 per cent of the revenue goes toward food, rentals and other expenses. The distribution of earnings must be fair, and commissions should apply to total revenue—whether at 5 per cent, 10 per cent or 15 per cent.”

With new luxury hotels entering markets such as Jaipur and Udaipur, Jain underscored the necessity for hotels to recognise planners as key business drivers as he stated, “Seven new hotels are opening in Jaipur, three in Udaipur. Ritz-Carlton and Fairmont are entering the market. Hotels need to view us as partners who drive their profitability.”

PPL AND IPRS FOR WEDDINGS

The discussion also touched upon the complications surrounding PPL (Phonographic Performance Limited) and IPRS (Indian Performing Rights Society) licensing.

While these licenses are often mandated for corporate events, their applicability to weddings remains debated.



Sharma clarified, “In Rajasthan, particularly Jaipur, this is not a major issue for weddings. However, for corporate events in Udaipur, it is already a significant challenge. Multiple licenses—PPL, IPRS, NOEX, etc. are required, complicating the process. Weddings should not be subject to such process of acquiring licenses.”

Jain reinforced the legal standpoint, “Under Section 52(1)(za) of the Indian Copyright Act, 1957, social events, including weddings are exempted from licensing requirements. Hotels must recognise this provision. No licensing authority can issue a specific wedding license. If they attempt to do so, their legitimacy will be questioned.”

EXTERNAL CATERING MODELS

The role of external caterers in hotels also surfaced as a key topic. **Rohit Chopra**, Area Commercial Director, India, Minor Hotels, acknowledged industry challenges, “Hotel chains follow specific SOPs for external caterers due to hygiene concerns. If an organiser signs an LOA (Letter of Agreement), we can explore options, especially for niche cuisines such as Sindhi or Marwari.”

Jain added, “Internationally, we allow external caterers for celebrations, provided they meet hygiene regulations and sign documentation.”

Amanveer noted a crucial distinction in pricing models, “When we host events internationally, hotels do not impose exorbitant minimum food revenue requirements. In India, hotels often push higher revenue targets for weddings, which leads to food wastage.”

He elaborated, “A 250-room hotel may mandate lunch and dinner for 500 guests per meal. Clients are forced to pay, while additional catering options are added separately. This results in nearly seven times the required food being prepared per meal,





Internationally, hotels do not impose exorbitant minimum food revenue requirements

much of which goes to waste. Instead of focusing on biodegradable waste disposal machines, hotels should reduce waste and lower revenue demands.”

APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS

Sharing their strategy in working with wedding planners, **Harkaran Singh**, General Manager, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, said, “The main challenge arises when we are not on the same page. When we collaborate, the process is smooth. Mutual respect is key.”

On PPL and IPRS, he echoed industry frustrations advocating that acquiring licenses does not benefit anyone. He said, “Despite the Wedding Act exemption, dealing with PPL and IPRS

representatives mid-event is challenging. Hotels brands manage someone else’s assets and legal notices cause concern for owners and brands.”

FUTURE OF TAC

Summing up the discussion, Jain posed a key question, “Do you think being a commissionable business helps event management companies grow?” Amanveer responded, “I believe the commission is our right when we bring business to a hotel. If I drive revenue, I deserve a commission. However, my business model is transparent—I work on a fee-based structure, not hidden commissions.”

With rising competition and pricing fluctuations, he noted, “Hotels must prioritise service excellence over unnecessary add-ons. The inflationary pricing model is unsustainable. However, an inclusive approach—welcoming both established planners and startups—is a positive shift in the industry.” As the wedding and hospitality sectors evolve, insights from this discussion reinforce the need for transparency, collaboration and a more balanced approach in hotel-wedding planner relationships. ➔





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Building travel safety net for students

Asego's comprehensive student travel assistance and insurance offers safety against disruptions, ensuring students can embrace study trips with peace of mind.

By MT Bureau

With a rise in educational opportunities globally, the number of students travelling abroad for higher studies is skyrocketing, which is reflected in recent data stating that over 1.33 million Indian students are pursuing higher education abroad as of January 2024. While it is a positive sign, there are inherent challenges too—ensuring personal safety, financial security and uninterrupted education.

While studying abroad is a transformative experience, it also



DEV KARVAT
Founder & CEO, Asego

Asego offers
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demands careful preparation. Whether it is recovering lost baggage, handling emergency medical expenses, or protecting valuable gadgets, safeguarding every step of student's academic adventure is crucial. This is where Asego's 'Global Assistance & Travel Insurance for Students' plays a key role, offering all-around protection beyond standard university insurance.

From personal accident coverage to study interruption and sponsor protection, Asego ensures that students can focus on education without the stress of unforeseen disruptions that one might face while travelling and adapting a new milieu. Its student insurance goes beyond medical assistance, covering vital aspects of student life abroad. ➔

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

STUDY INTERRUPTION COVERAGE

Financial support in case a student **discontinues studies due to medical emergency** or other covered reasons

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Ensuring students can continue their education even if **financial sponsor faces unfortunate circumstances**

GADGET PROTECTION

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NDC upping airline retailing game

A pivotal force in reforming airline retailing, NDC offers personalised content, eliminating hindrances posed by traditional GDS, says **Dr Sanjay Pai**.

New Distribution Capability (NDC) is a standard that helps airlines and travel agents communicate efficiently. Developed by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), NDC aims to improve the airline retailing process by enhancing content distribution, improving personalisation and enabling direct interactions between airlines and travellers.

EVOLUTION OF AIRLINE DISTRIBUTION

In the 1990s, airline tickets were primarily sold through Global Distribution System (GDS) such as Amadeus, Sabre and Travelport. Airlines paid GDS providers a fee per sector booked, and GDSs compensated travel agents for making bookings. In 2012, IATA introduced NDC as a new XML-based data transmission standard, enabling airlines to distribute content dynamically and independently of traditional GDSs. Unlike the legacy EDIFACT technology used by GDSs, NDC leverages APIs to provide a superior retailing experience.

Currently, the transition is well underway with major airlines implementing NDC and technology partners providing NDC-based solutions. Airlines such as Lufthansa, British Airways and American Airlines have embraced NDC, offering exclusive

content and incentives to the travel agents or customers for direct bookings.

BENEFITS OF NDC

NDC empowers airlines with the following advantages and benefits:

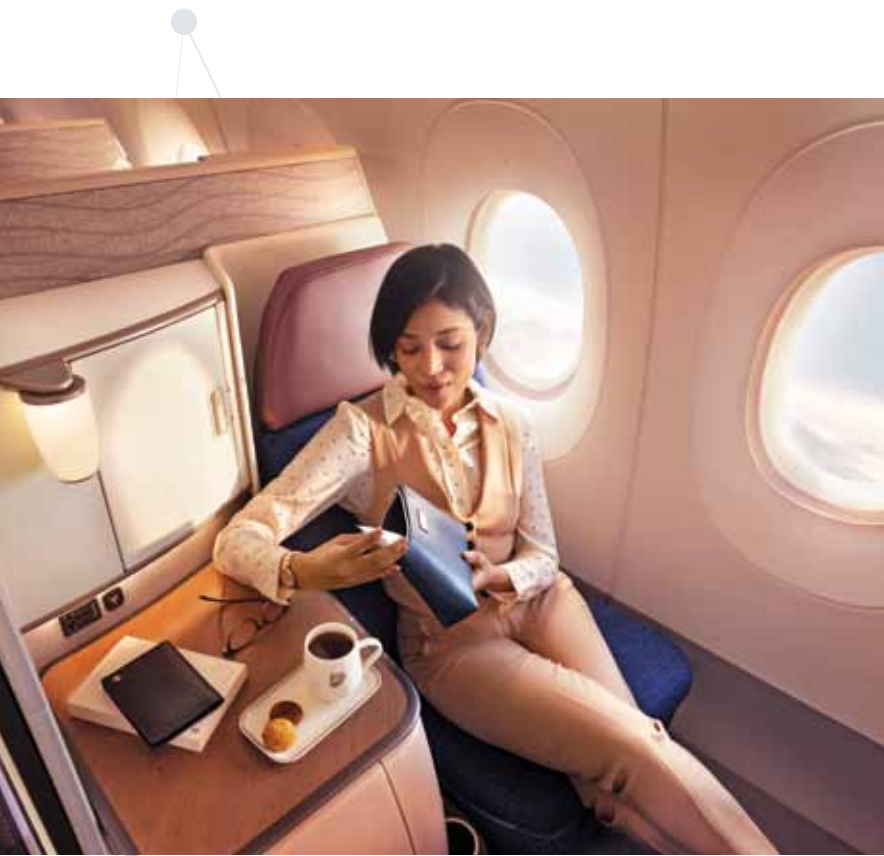
- **Better content delivery:** Airlines can provide more customised content, including seat maps, fare bundles and rich experience.
- **Real-time distribution:** Airlines can offer real-time booking of ancillary services such as Wi-Fi, meals and baggage.
- **Increased revenue control:** NDC enables airlines to control pricing strategies and avoid excessive GDS fees.
- **Seamless retailing experience:** Airlines can create dynamic offers and personalised



DR SANJAY PAI
Head, Travel & Facilities &
Director Aviation, Larsen & Toubro

Agents can book preferred seats, add baggage and customise services through NDC without leaving their booking system





promotions, which enhances overall user experience attracting the right audience.

Travel agents enjoy the following benefits provided by NDC:

- **Enhanced customer attraction:** Access to richer content helps travel agents retain customers.
- **Increased revenue opportunities:** Agents can offer more attractive fares and upsell ancillaries.
- **Seamless operations:** Travel agents can search, book and manage content in a single flow.

Benefits received by travellers from NDC include:

- **Personalised offers:** Travellers can save preferences to receive tailored flight and service recommendations. For example, corporate travellers may have Wi-Fi included in their company's travel agreement, while a leisure traveller sees an additional cost.
- **Faster service from travel agents:** Agents can book preferred seats, add baggage and customise services without leaving their booking system. Instead of booking extras on airline websites, agents can do it within their GDS via NDC.



CASE STUDIES: NDC SUCCESS STORIES

LUFTHANSA GROUP

Implemented an NDC surcharge in **2015**

By 2022, over **50%** of its indirect bookings used NDC technology

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Pioneered NDC adoption with **exclusive discounts**

NDC bookings **increased by 30%** in 2021 compared to traditional channels

AMERICAN AIRLINES

By 2023, over **40%** of sales processed via NDC

The airline **emphasised exclusive content** for NDC-enabled channels

IATA INDUSTRY DATA

Forecasts that by 2025, 60% of airline bookings will be made through NDC-powered channels

- **Visual representation of offerings:** High-quality images and videos provide a better understanding of seating, amenities and lounges.
- **Transparent fare comparisons:** Travellers can compare flights beyond just price and schedule. For example, comparing Air France and British Airways may involve evaluating lounge access, mileage earnings and comfort features.
- **Improved booking for low-cost carriers:** NDC enables low-cost carriers to sell via travel agents, increasing visibility and access. For instance, a low-cost airline without GDS presence can distribute fares through NDC-enabled agencies.

CHALLENGES & INDUSTRY ADOPTION

Why is everyone not using NDC yet?

- **High implementation costs:** Higher technological investment is required for airlines and travel agencies.
- **Lack of standardisation:** Different versions and levels of NDC exist, making adoption complex.

- **Resistance from GDSs and traditional players:** Some stakeholders are slow to transition due to existing financial structures.
- **Airlines charging GDS surcharges:** Airlines such as Lufthansa, British Airways, Iberia and Air France-KLM have introduced GDS surcharges to incentivise NDC adoption.

NDC enables low-cost carriers to sell via travel agents, increasing visibility and access

FUTURE TRENDS

The continued growth of NDC will be shaped by several trends:

- **Industry-wide adoption:** More airlines, agencies and technology providers will integrate NDC.
- **Retailing evolution:** Airlines will transition towards offer and order management systems, replacing traditional ticketing models.
- **AI-driven personalisation:** AI and big data will enhance NDC's ability to create tailored travel experiences and packages.
- **Hybrid GDS and NDC solutions:** GDS providers will blend traditional distribution with NDC capabilities.
- **Improved standardisation:** IATA and industry stakeholders will refine NDC standards for easier adoption.

As the NDC ecosystem matures, the future of airline distribution will be more dynamic, customer-centric and technologically advanced, shaping the next era of travel retailing. ➔

Sources: Lufthansa Group 2022, phocuswire.com, www.businesstravelnews.com, BA NDC, centreforaviation.com

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)





Tech to propel MICE

Network of Indian MICE Agents' (NIMA) stresses that technology is going to drive industry's growth in India.

By **Surbhi Sharma**

In an exclusive interview with MICE Talk, **Nitin Mittal**, National Coordinator, NIMA, revealed the association's plans to steer the growth of the MICE industry in

India. Sharing his vision for the future, Mittal said, "Technology will play a key role as an enabler, and at NIMA, we are committed to bringing futuristic tools that will empower our members to compete globally. In the coming years, our ambitious plans will focus on

scaling up membership without diluting the quality of our network. We aim to ensure that only serious MICE players are part of our association." Further adding, he said, "The future of MICE in India is incredibly bright. The country's infrastructure is rapidly improving, with new airports and hotels being developed, even in tier II and III cities. We are confident that India will continue to grow as a favoured destination in domestic as well as global market."

Revealing how NIMA has been active in the educational space, signing partnerships with universities across India, he shared, "We are providing students with industry knowledge and placement opportunities through various initiatives." Moving on to the major challenges in the industry, Mittal drew attention at Tax Collected at Source (TCS) on outbound travel. "While the government has its reasons for implementing TCS, we feel that there should be rationalisation, especially for travel sector. Finally, gaining industry status for tourism would open many doors for funding" he opined. ➔

Luxury at its best

ITC Rajputana offers a truly regal style for conventions and celebrations in Jaipur.

With incredible spaces and infinite possibilities, ITC Rajputana offers venues to suit every occasion. Its famed culinary prowess coupled with superlative service ensures the success of every event and meeting.

The banquet spaces are spacious and versatile. Pre-function areas can be put to good use to extend the space available to delegates. The meeting rooms are ideal for high-powered meetings, offering privacy, efficiency and complete business services. Customisation is

key and the team dedicated to each event will ensure that every detail is taken care of.

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The Suryavanshi Mahal is a pillar-less hall accommodates 450 people theatre style and 550 people in a reception. It can be divided by soundproof partitions into three separate halls. Complete audio-visual and communication equipment available. Hawa Mahal, an open-air venue for gathering of up to 550 guests, under a friendly sun or starry sky,



design inspired by City Palace Jaipur.

2. **Planet-Positive Green Banqueting:**

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3. **Responsible Dining:**

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locally and cooked mindfully are some of the measures the hotel takes to reduce its carbon footprint.

4. **Wellness Experience:**

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Unconventional tales of conventions

From luxury accommodations to better connectivity, modern upgrades and enhanced infrastructure are redefining the MICE industry, ensuring world-class event experiences.





By **Janice Alysius**



the travelling industry is eyeing on leveraging the economic benefits of the event industry, convention centres and exhibition venues are evolving with enhanced capacities, global promotions and cutting-edge infrastructure.

Corporates prioritise seamless connectivity, luxury hospitality, high-speed internet and sustainability for hosting their events. These venues address such needs with integrated transport links, state-of-the-art audiovisual technology, eco-friendly initiatives and flexible event spaces, ensuring seamless execution of trade shows, conferences and corporate gatherings.

AVANT GARDE VENUES

Strategically located in Bengaluru, Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC) has been a key player in world-class event infrastructure

for nearly two decades and to highlight the same, **Ubaid Ahmad**, Senior Director, Head, Marketing, BIEC, Bengaluru, shared recent upgrades that have enhanced the venue's appeal. One of the major developments is the newly opened Madavara metro station, which offers a direct connectivity to BIEC. Additionally, BIEC has developed a 6,000 sq. m. open concrete space with integrated trench facilities, accommodating more exhibitors and expanding event capacity. To enhance the visitor experience, the upgraded food court now offers a diverse culinary selection and modern seating arrangements.

Managed by The Leela, one of India's leading 5-star hospitality, Mahatma Mandir Convention



UBAID AHMAD

Senior Director, Head, Marketing, BIEC, Bengaluru

BIEC has developed a 6,000 sq. m. open concrete space with integrated trench facilities, accommodating more exhibitors and expanding event capacity



and Exhibition Centre is among the largest convention venues in the country. Located at just 2-minute drive from The Leela Gandhinagar, the largest 5-star property in Gujarat in terms of inventory, the venue ensures convenience for event organisers and attendees.

Emphasising the luxury and convenience offered by their venue, **Vikas Sood**, General Manager, The Leela Gandhinagar and The Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre, shared, “Our venue spans 34 acres and features world-class facilities and high-tech audiovisual and IT infrastructure. It is designed to host large-scale conferences, exhibitions and turnkey events with ease.” The venue also provides easy access to 5-star accommodation with up to 2,000 rooms, making it ideal for hosting grand-scale events.

ExpoInn Suites & Convention, situated within the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida, offers a unique blend of luxury accommodations



BARUN GUPTA

General Manager, ExpoInn Suites & Convention

and top-tier event facilities. **Barun Gupta**, General Manager, ExpoInn Suites & Convention, spoke about the venue’s distinctive features that cater to both business and leisure travellers. “We provide 134 elegantly designed rooms and suites, two on-site restaurants—Paprika and Café Amaris, serving diverse cuisines and the Altus Lounge and Bar for relaxation and networking. Additional amenities include a spa, gym, multiple banquet halls and versatile meeting rooms.” said Gupta.

Strategically located, ExpoInn Suites & Convention ensures unparalleled accessibility for attendees, making it a sought-after destination for corporate events, exhibitions and conferences.

On international front, since the grand opening in November 2022, Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB) has gained international recognition as a premier venue for MICE industry. **Sara Ahmed Buhiji**, CEO, Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) and Chairman, EWB, explained, “Our venue is designed to accommodate events



VIKAS SOOD

General Manager, The Leela Gandhinagar & The Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre



of all sizes and budgets, ensuring accessibility for organisers and attendees alike. Bahrain's strategic location offers proximity to key regional cities and easy access to major Asian markets, including India and Southeast Asia."

With convenient access to Bahrain International Airport, over 18,000 hotel rooms and an array of attractions, the venue is perfectly positioned to host high-profile international events. Buhiji further highlighted, "We focus on attracting high-profile

international events by offering versatile spaces tailored to organisers' specific needs," she added.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

Explaining how to select the right convention center for corporate events, **V.S Abdul Kareem**, Chairman & Managing Director, FlyCreative Online Limited, said, "There are so many factors one has to take into consideration while selecting convention centers for corporate events. Connectivity of the location, proximity to airports, railway stations, transportation and parking facilities need to be convenient for logistical arrangements. The convention center should have adequate capacity to accommodate the expected number of delegates and should provide necessary amenities such as high-speed internet and state-of-the-art audiovisual, lighting and digital signage facilities."

Kareem further emphasised the necessity of government subsidies and incentives to promote large-scale MICE events. "For conducting global

{ With over 18,000 hotel rooms and an array of attractions, EWB can host high-profile events }



SARA AHMED BUHIJI
CEO, Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA)
and Chairman, EWB

**V.S. ABDUL KAREEM**

Chairman & Managing Director, FlyCreative Online Limited

**KAMAL KANT VASHISTHA**

Assistant Vice President, Kotak Life Insurance

MICE events, mega cities provide the required infrastructure but may not meet budget constraints. To overcome such issues, government support and international sponsorships are crucial," he added.

He also pointed out that compliance with international regulations is key when organising global MICE events. He stated, "Corporates must ensure compliance with international visa and immigration regulations. Identifying countries that allow visas on arrival or e-visas and facilitating these requirements for foreign delegates is essential for smooth participation."

Meanwhile, **Kamal Kant Vashistha**, Assistant Vice President, Kotak Life Insurance, highlighted the key reasons for choosing The Leela to host their event, "The main factor was that they have the biggest hall with ample room inventory. We also had the flexibility to close one partition if not needed, using it as a pre-function area. Being a renowned brand, The Leela delivers better service with trained professionals managing events seamlessly. However, the only area for improvement is the lunch and

dinner space—if expanded, it could enhance the overall impact. Additionally, serving breakfast in the pre-function area diminishes the 5-star experience. That said, we had no logistical challenges reaching the venue."

EMERGING TRENDS

Highlighting the evolving trends in MICE events, Kareem said, "The evolving trends in corporate MICE events are not restricted to only convention centers. More corporates are exploring alternative venues such as cruises, boutique hotels and resorts with wellness facilities like yoga retreats. There is a growing preference for eco-friendly venues, as there is a notable shift in client expectations influencing venue choices," he added.

While highlighting the increasing demand for convention centers in tier II and III cities he stated, "The improvements in infrastructure in these cities, have made them more appealing along with the cost-effectiveness and unique cultural experiences they offer."

ACCOMMODATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

	Bangalore International Exhibition Centre	Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre	India Expo Centre & Mart	Exhibition World Bahrain
Accommodation	Curated hotel partnerships including luxury to budget options	Along with The Leela Gandhinagar, partnerships with other premium hotels	Along with 134-room Expolnn Suites & Convention hotel, over 14 hotels are available within 10-min radius offering approx. 1318-room	18K hotel rooms, including luxury beachfront resorts and 5-star hotels
Transportation	Airport connectivity: 42 km from Kempegowda International Airport Road connectivity: On NH4 (Bangalore-Mumbai), 18 km from city center via elevated road and NICE Road, with a dedicated underpass	Rail & air access: 2-min drive from Gandhinagar Capital railway station, 30-min from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport Transport Services: Airport pickups and chauffeur-driven services	Airport connectivity: 40 km from Noida International Airport (Jewar) Transport services: Availability of car rentals. Additionally, convention centre has 3 helipads for large helicopters capable of transporting	Airport & regional access: 40-min from Bahrain International Airport, 20-min from Manama Central, 20-min from King Fahad Causeway. Transport Services: Shuttle services, airport transfers and taxis

The Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre can accommodate over 10,000 guests and attendees

Kareem also emphasised the role of MICE operators in supporting these emerging destinations. "MICE operators can collaborate with local vendors, service providers and Destination Management Companies (DMCs) with established track records in these regions. Their expertise helps navigate logistical challenges, ensuring smooth event planning," he explained.

CAPACITY

BIEC offers five state-of-the-art exhibition halls with a total exhibition space of 77,200 sq. m. Ahmad informed, "Our Conference Centre features five halls, capable of accommodating up to 2,500 attendees. Overall, BIEC can host up to 24,000 attendees at a time, making it a top choice for grand-scale events," he said.

Emphasising the capacity of The Mahatma Mandir Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sood said, "Our convention centre can accommodate over 10,000 guests, making it one of the most expansive MICE venues in India."

Gupta highlighted the ExpoInn Suites & Convention's adaptability to different event formats. "Our venue offers versatile event spaces totaling 69,000 sq. ft., including five meeting rooms and outdoor areas. We can accommodate events ranging from intimate gatherings of 50 guests to large-scale functions with 3,000 attendees," he added.

Buhiji highlighted the scale and flexibility of Bahrain's EWB. "Spanning over 309,000 sq. m., EWB encompasses 10 versatile exhibition halls of different ceiling heights and a total area of 95,000 sqm. Each hall is equipped with essential technical services and storage spaces, with independent exits and entrances," she said. The Convention Centre



at EWB includes an extraordinary Grand Hall with retractable seating for up to 4,000 guests, making it an ideal space for large conferences and corporate launches. The hall's operable walls allow it to be subdivided into up to five separate areas, offering complete flexibility.

EWB's extensive facilities also include 94 meeting rooms of varying sizes, three exclusive VIP Majlis for distinguished guests and three dedicated bridal suites for weddings and cultural events. In-house catering services feature Bahrain's largest fully equipped kitchen, capable of catering for up to 10,000 guests daily.

GLOBAL PROMOTION

BIEC actively collaborates with leading global exhibition and event organisations, including UFI, ICCA, EEMA, and IEIA, reinforcing its presence in the global exhibition industry. "These partnerships enable BIEC to expand its network and attract prestigious events," said Ahmad. Beyond alliances, BIEC maintains a strong global presence through active participation in global trade fairs and networking forums. Similarly, Sood also emphasised that they too participate in global trade shows and industry forums, collaborating with global conferences to promote their Exhibition Centre on

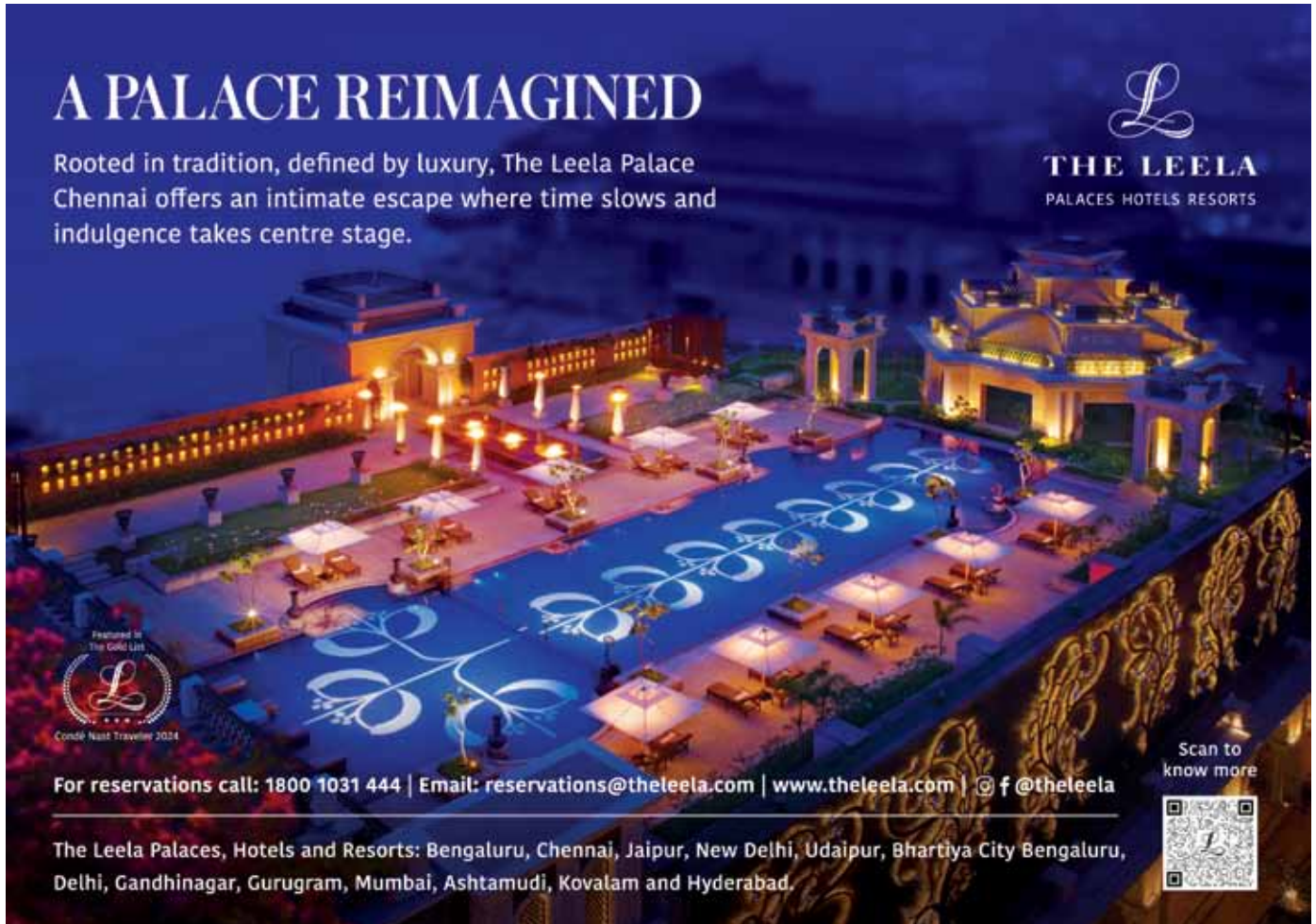
global platforms along with digital campaigns and targeted outreach programmes.

"However, our most powerful marketing tool remains word of mouth—we have established ourselves as the go-to venue for hosting high-profile events attended by world leaders," Sood noted. The Leela also participates in global events and roadshows, such as IMEX Frankfurt, ICCA and ATM for better visibility.

ExpoInn Suites & Convention actively promotes its offerings on international platforms through strategic marketing initiatives. "We participate in global trade shows and collaborate with international hospitality consultants to enhance our global presence," informed Gupta.

ExpoInn's commitment to excellence is further reinforced by its 5-star classification from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. "Our official website and social media channels serve as platforms to showcase our facilities and engage with a global audience," Gupta added.

In case of EWB, Buhiji revealed, "We have participated in the Outbound Travel Mart (OTM) Mumbai 2024) and BTEA's 3-city India Roadshow in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru and Delhi to establish strong relationships with Indian tour operators, event planners and wedding organisers." ➔



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MyTripleE 2.0

fuels business events

To make Malaysia a coveted MICE destination, MyTripleE 2.0 campaign sets the stage for business engagements, offering various attractive incentives.

By Janice Alyosius

Malaysia's MyTripleE 2.0 campaign offers a comprehensive range of incentives designed to attract and support business events in the country. These include financial aid, marketing support and sustainability initiatives.

GENERAL INCENTIVES

Malaysia provides various incentives to enhance business events including

subsidies and advanced event technologies and aids.

- **Event subsidies:** Financial assistance to support business events
- **Marketing and promotion support:** Enhancing event visibility to attract global attendees
- **Sustainability and technology:** Encouraging eco-friendly and innovative solutions
- **Access to modern venues:** Showcasing Malaysia's diverse cultural offerings along with unique venues

SUPPORT FOR CONVENTIONS

Eligible conventions receive financial backing under the campaign, tech integration support and various forms of incentives and subsidies for sustainability and diversity initiatives.

Eligibility criteria:

- Minimum 250 delegates with at least 10 per cent international participants
- Minimum two full event days
- Must be a paid event and conventions (registration fees collected)





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INCENTIVE TRAVEL GROUPS

Corporate travel groups benefit from financial assistance, cultural experiences and accommodation support to enhance their stay in Malaysia.

Eligibility criteria:

- Open to corporate firms, incentive houses, Destination Management Company (DMC), Corporate Travel Agent (CTA), or Event Management Company (EMC).
- Minimum 50 international delegates
- Minimum two-night stay in a four-star or five-star hotel in Malaysia

Financial support (group-based):

- 50-99 delegates: RM7,920
- 100-249 delegates: RM22,920
- 250-499 delegates: RM49,915

Non-financial support:

- Welcome souvenirs
- Partial support for airport hospitality desk and partial accommodation

Financial support:

- Funding from RM3,000 up to RM20,000
- Meeting package: RM120 per international delegate (up to RM4,000)
- Additional support of RM4,000 per category (maximum multiple categories) for:
 1. **TechReal/event technology:** AI chatbots, VR (virtual reality)/AR (augmented reality) integration
 2. **Sustainability initiatives:** Food donation, waste reduction
 3. **Human capital development:** Grants for young professionals
 4. **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion:** CSR & legacy programmes

SUPPORT FOR EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition organisers can access funding, promotions and logistical support for their events.

Eligibility criteria:

- Open to professional exhibition organisers (PEOs), trade associations, corporate firms and event management companies
- Minimum 1,500 attendees (10 per cent international participation for new exhibitions)

Malaysia's MyTripleE 2.0 campaign presents a compelling opportunity for event organisers, offering significant financial and non-financial incentives

- Minimum 1,000 sqm gross exhibition space and minimum two full days event and conventions

Financial support (package-based):

- Up to RM78,000, depending on space and attendees of the event
- Funding for marketing and promotions on digital platforms
- On-site support includes:
 1. **Hosted buyers and speakers:** Accommodation provisions
 2. **Ground transport:** Shuttle services and pre/post event tours
 3. **Receptions and gala dinners:** Welcome events
 4. **Digital tech integration:** Business matching platforms, event apps, registration kiosks
 5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability initiatives
 6. Booth construction support to the event organisers

AVAILING SUPPORT

Organisers must adhere to application deadlines, documentation requirements and budget limitations to qualify for these incentives.

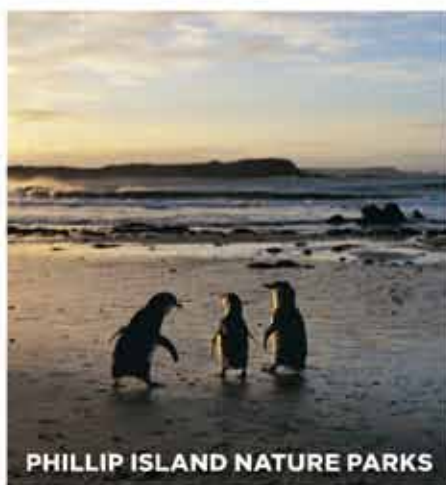
- Applications must be submitted 60-90 working days before the event
 - Not valid with other Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) campaigns
 - Support can be claimed after the event upon full documentation
 - Available for events to be held until 31 December 2026, subject to budget
- Malaysia's MyTripleE 2.0 campaign presents a compelling opportunity for event organisers, offering significant financial and non-financial incentives to enhance the business events landscape. With its focus on sustainability, innovation and cultural integration, Malaysia continues to position itself as a premier MICE destination. ➔

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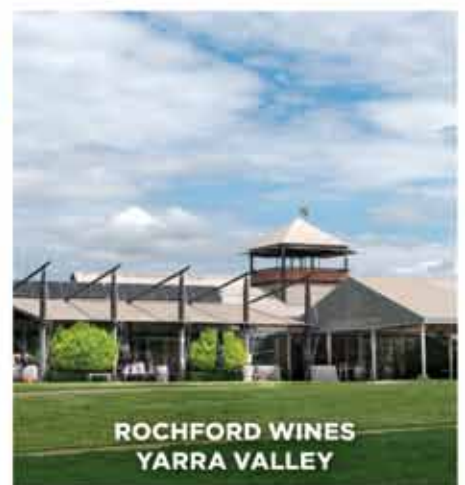
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India's outbound to sway global MICE markets

Fuelled by growing economy, robust infrastructure and corporate tax reforms, India's MICE outbound tourism is on a remarkable growth trajectory.



By Janice Alysius

India's outbound tourism and MICE sector is witnessing an unprecedented boom, fuelled by rapid economic growth and evolving travel trends. **Naveen Kundu**, Managing Director, Ebix Travel, shed light on India's rising prominence in global tourism and its significant impact on the MICE industry.



NAVEEN KUNDU
Managing Director, Ebix Travel

"Companies are investing more in rewards and recognition programmes, influencing MICE spending."

ECONOMIC POWER DRIVING TOURISM

Kundu emphasised that India's transformation into a global economic powerhouse is a key driver of tourism growth. "India is currently the 5th largest economy in the world, and we are set to become the third largest between 2027 and 2030. While the official GDP growth rate is stated as 6.5 per cent, in reality, India is growing at 7 to 8 per cent annually, supported by a robust parallel economy," he explained.

India's foreign exchange reserves have grown from less than US\$30 billion in 1998 to a staggering US\$638.2 billion today, with remittances, IT exports and manufacturing playing crucial roles, Kundu said, noting, "Every third company in the world is led by an Indian CEO and India is the largest exporter of pharmaceuticals and IT services. This economic strength translates into increased travel and higher MICE spending."

RAPID INFRA DEVELOPMENT

Kundu also highlighted India's fast-paced infrastructure development, which is bolstering MICE opportunities. "We are constructing 38 kilometres of roads and laying 1.9 kilometres of railway tracks every day. The government has also



SECTORS DRIVING INDIA'S OUTBOUND

BANKING

Banking industry's net income was **US\$331 billion** in FY 2023 and is expected to reach **US\$338 billion** by 2024.

INSURANCE

India's insurance market is projected to reach **US\$222 billion** by 2026, making it the **world's 6th largest**.

REAL ESTATE

Contributing **70%** to GDP, this sector is booming, with India's cement capacity set to hit **850 million tonnes** by 2030.

PHARMA

Currently valued at **US\$50 billion**, India's pharma industry is projected to reach **US\$130 billion** by 2030.

FMCG

As India's **4th largest** employer, this sector is growing at **4.5% CAGR** and is projected to grow at **6.5%** by 2030.

CONSUMER DURABLE

With a **US\$13.6 billion** market size, this sector is growing at **5.5% CAGR**, expected to reach **10% CAGR** by 2030.

IT

Generating **US\$253 million** in revenues, the IT sector is growing at **3.8%** and is expected to reach **US\$275 million** by 2026.

announced 50 new airports under the UDAN scheme. All of this makes travel more accessible and convenient," he ascertained.

Besides, he praised India's digital revolution, particularly the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which has transformed financial transactions. "With this system, Indian travellers can seamlessly make payments worldwide, eliminating the need for foreign exchange and boosting travel," he said.

PROMISING FUTURE

Looking ahead, Kundu projected that India's upper middle class will reach 50 million by 2030, with a significant chunk travelling globally. He averred, "MICE is the fastest-growing segment in India. Companies are investing more in rewards and recognition programmes, influencing MICE spending. The corporate tax reduction from 35 to 25 per cent has allowed businesses to allocate more funds for incentives."

Kundu further added, "Currently, the potential for outbound MICE travel from India is growing exponentially. Travel agents and service providers must be prepared to meet the increasing demand from Indian corporate and leisure travellers." ➔



year, but I hope they will return next year,” she said.

On the buyer front, India remained well-represented. “We had a lot of buyers from India. I believe we had around 30 this year,” Calder added.

KEY TRENDS

Emerging trends played a significant role in shaping the event this year, particularly in the realm of technology. “We have been working with our AI platform for nearly four years now, improving it every year in collaboration with our partner, Grip,” said Calder. “We focused on ensuring that meetings were valuable and that AI found the right matches. This will only strengthen with the rise of AI, not just in this industry but for everyday users as well,” she added.

Beyond technology, AIME prioritised personal and professional development. “We had two major keynotes, a global insights panel and 20 breakout sessions.

“We have been working with our AI platform for nearly four years now, improving it every year in collaboration with our partner, Grip.”



SILKE CALDER
Event Director, AIME

Strengthening connections with Asia-Pacific

While Indian buyer participation remained strong at AIME 2025, **Silke Calder**, Event Director, expressed optimism about return of Indian pavilion next year.

By **Janice Alyosius**

The Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) 2025 successfully reinforced its position as a premier platform for the MICE industry, bringing together suppliers and buyers from across the region. With a strong emphasis on innovation and engagement, this year’s edition marked significant milestones. **Silke Calder**, Event Director, AIME,

shared key insights into the event’s success, impact and future aspirations.

BRIDGE TO INDIAN MARKET

India has been an important market for AIME, with dedicated pavilions and strong buyer participation in previous editions. However, Calder acknowledged a shift this year due to the absence of Indian pavilion. “Last year, we were delighted to welcome an Indian pavilion. Unfortunately, we did not have one this

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There was definitely high demand for both professional and personal development and I hope we managed to offer something for everyone,” Calder shared enthusiastically.

AIME 2025

Over three days, AIME 2025 hosted

more than 640 buyers from around the world, welcomed over 4,500 attendees and featured 675 exhibitors from various business event sectors across Asia-Pacific and beyond. Nearly 20,000 meetings took place at AIME, including more than 15,000 pre-scheduled meetings between highly vetted buyers

and matched exhibitors, making the expanded show floor a hub for business in the region.

In terms of sustainability, the venue itself was a key part of AIME’s strategy. “The venue is a six-star facility, the world’s first of its kind. Another convention centre is set to open in July 2026, but it is not big enough to host AIME,” Calder clarified.

LOOKING AHEAD

Reflecting on AIME’s legacy, Calder emphasised its long-standing success. “AIME is the longest-running show in the Asia-Pacific region-32 years! Over the last three years, we have proven our strength and when AIME was named the best trade show in Australia, it confirmed that we are doing something right,” she said.

Encouraging greater Indian participation, she added, “If you have any connections with Indian tourism bureaus, please speak to them. We would love to welcome India back to this fantastic venue. Apart from India and the Philippines, all other major Asia-Pacific countries were represented on the show floor. We would love to see Indian exhibitors return.” ➔



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Sarovar hotels

Where leisure meets luxury

With its new properties in South Goa, Sarovar Hotels, is emerging as a top choice for business travellers and weddings, delivering exceptional services.

By **Surbhi Sharma**

Goa, renowned for its sun-kissed beaches and vibrant culture, is not only a top destination for leisure, solace and rejuvenation, but it has been emerging as a popular choice for weddings and corporate events as well. Sarovar Hotels, with their 5-star and 4-star properties, 'Cloud9 Sarovar Premiere' in Palolem and 'Sea Breeze Sarovar Portico Varca' respectively, are redefining destination weddings and MICE in South Goa.

PALOLEM'S PARADISE

Located in the heart of Palolem, South Goa, where the Talpone River meets the Arabian Sea and is set against the Shyadri Mountain range, Cloud 9 Sarovar Premiere offers diverse



brehtaking views. Based on a coastal theme, the property features 160 elegantly designed rooms and suites with all modern amenities. It has a swimming pool and a kid's pool, Elysium- Fitness Centre, Hebe- Spa, Little Spartan- Kids play area.

WEDDING & MICE DESTINATION

In an exclusive interview, **Sonuraj KR**, General Manager, Cloud9 Sarovar Premiere, Palolem, Goa shared details about the property and said, "The property sets itself apart with its focus on delivering bespoke wedding and MICE

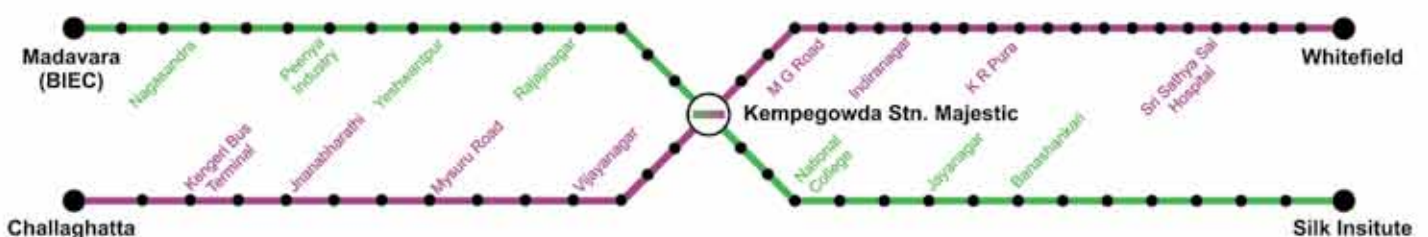


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SONURAJ KR
GM, Cloud9 Sarovar Premiere, Palolem



experiences. The property's breathtaking beachfront location, coupled with custom-made packages, offers an unparalleled setting for events."

He added, "For weddings, we offer fully customisable packages, whether it is a traditional Indian wedding or a destination beach ceremony. The venue boasts stunning spaces, from expansive lawns to poolside setups and elegant banquet halls, ensuring each wedding is unique and unforgettable." However, "For corporate events, the hotel provides flexible conference rooms equipped with high-speed internet, Audio/Visual equipment and on-site catering. Corporate guests can enjoy tailored wellness activities and team-building exercises, making their stay productive and relaxing," he explained.

VIBRANT VARCA

Known for its Portuguese-inspired architecture, and delectable Goan seafood, Varca, where Sea Breeze Sarovar Portico is located in a picturesque retreat

{ Cloud9 Sarovar Premiere, Palolem & Sea Breeze Sarovar Portico Varca, are redefining weddings & MICE in Goa- }

of South Goa. **Allan Pachaco**, General Manager, Sea Breeze Sarovar Portico Varca, Goa, said, "This hotel boasts an impressive 116-room inventory, making it ideal for large wedding parties. Our banquet halls can accommodate up to 350 guests, offering expansive spaces for grand celebrations. Our dedicated team of professionals ensures every event is creatively planned. Despite its size, we specialise in creating intimate and personalised wedding experiences."

He noted, "For MICE events, we offer cutting-edge technology, including video conferencing, live streaming and immersive experiences through drones and LED shows."



ALLAN PACHACO
GM, Sea Breeze Sarovar Portico Varca



NOTICEABLE GROWTH

During the peak holiday season, Cloud9 Sarovar Premiere achieved an impressive occupancy rate of 76 per cent, with over 659 room nights booked and total revenue exceeding ₹78 lakh. The hotel's occupancy surged to 100 per cent on several key dates in December.

Sustainability is another crucial aspect of these properties' operations. Explaining how Sea Breeze Sarovar Portico Varca is committed to balancing luxury with sustainability, Pachaco, said, "The property uses renewable materials and sources locally produced goods. Energy-efficient LED lighting and high-efficiency HVAC systems are employed to minimise the environmental impact of events." ➔



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Supporting Partners



Osaka set to host Expo 2025

Osaka, Kansai in Japan is gearing up to host Expo 2025, set to take place on Yumeshima Island from 13 April to 13 October.

By Hazel Jain

Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai will feature numerous Signature Pavilions and dedicated Private Sector Pavilions, each showcasing cutting-edge advancements and visionary concepts. With participation from over 160 countries, the Expo promises to be a melting pot of technology, culture and global cooperation.

Matsuda Hirokazu, Deputy Director, Japanese Association for the 2025 World Exposition, explained, “The theme of

“The Expo will showcase advancements in AI, robotics, and renewable energy.”



GMATSUDA HIROKAZU

Deputy Director
Japan Association for 2025 World Exposition

the Expo encapsulates a vision for a sustainable, inclusive and technologically advanced society that enhances human overall well-being. This theme will manifest through various pavilions, exhibitions and interactive experiences that showcase cutting-edge solutions in healthcare, digital transformation and sustainable development.”

The Expo will showcase advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, biotechnology and renewable energy. Hirokazu added, “Visitors can expect demonstrations of autonomous mobility, next-gen healthcare solutions and AI-driven urban planning models. Exhibits will feature real-world applications of smart city technologies such as intelligent transport systems, IoT-enabled infrastructure and

holographic communication.” It will also feature interactive installations, futuristic pavilions and cultural performances. Visitors will also have the chance to experience augmented reality-guided tours and workshops.

Hirokazu shared, “India is a crucial market for us given its growing economic influence and strong cultural ties with Japan. Targeted outreach efforts include promotional campaigns, collaborations with Indian businesses and pavilions showcasing Indo-Japanese technological and cultural synergies.”

He added, “The Expo will also highlight India’s contributions to sectors such as renewable energy, healthcare innovation, and digital ecosystems, fostering new opportunities for bilateral ties and partnerships.” ➔





Where Business Meets Grandeur

Sahara Star makes sure that your events are meticulously designed and adorned with their thoughtful hospitality.

“At Sahara Star, we believe that the right venue can elevate an event from good to extraordinary. Our goal is not just to provide a space, but to create experiences that perfectly blend luxury and functionality. Located just minutes from Mumbai’s domestic airport, our venue offers an ideal environment, where ideas flourish, partnerships are strengthened and milestones are celebrated in style,” shared **Romie Dutt**, Executive Director, Sahara Star and Aamby Valley City.

With over 1,00,000 sq. ft. of flexible banqueting space, Sahara Star is equipped to host a wide range of events. Their Sapphire Grand Ballroom, a 55,000 sq. ft. pillarless venue, is ideal for large-scale events, while the Ruby and Jade Ballrooms



ROMIE DUTT
Executive Director
Sahara Star and Aamby Valley City

provide a more intimate yet equally luxurious setting. They also offer smaller breakout rooms designed for focused meetings or high-level strategy sessions.

What truly sets Sahara Star apart is its commitment to personalised hospitality. “We know that each event is unique and we pride ourselves on crafting tailored experiences that reflect the essence of the occasion. An event is more than just the venue—it is about creating a seamless experience, from the moment you step in,” said Dutt. Their culinary offerings are designed to leave a lasting

impression. Whether it is a power-packed breakfast, a bespoke chef’s table for VIP delegates, or an elaborate gala dinner, they offer everything from live counters to customised menus.

Understanding that wellness is a key part of the business experience, they offer spa and wellness centre for guests to unwind. Guests can also enjoy a workout in the state-of-the-art gym. For those looking for something more active, the pickleball and paddle courts offer a refreshing way to relax.

With 354 rooms, including 25 suites, Sahara Star ensures that business travellers have a comfortable and peaceful retreat to rejuvenate. “At Sahara Star, we do not just host events—we create experiences that make a lasting impression. From seamless execution to luxurious touches, we are committed to ensuring that every detail exceeds expectations,” added Dutt. ➔





Decoding India's business travel future

At 2nd edition of FCM Corporate Travel Summit experts from corporate realm shared insights on issues affecting India's business travel, while delving into global practices.

By **Namita Gupta**

The 2nd edition of the FCM Corporate Travel Summit, powered by the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) concluded recently at The Leela Palace in Bengaluru. Industry bigwigs, travel agents, corporate travel managers and other professionals from the travel industry gathered under one roof to share, absorb and reflect over the latest business travel trends. The delegates mulled over how tech is empowering business travellers, evolving traveller



SUNNY SODHI
Managing Director, FCM Travel India

behaviour, building sustainable business travel programmes and learning about exciting new meetings and events spaces.

Sunny Sodhi, Managing Director, FCM Travel India, said, "With this event, we created a forum for key stakeholders from our clients and corporate sector to exchange ideas, discuss industry trends and collaborate on the theme, 'Customer Experience Redefined: Tech Driven, People Focused.' The event uncovered key insights that will be instrumental in enhancing customer service. Events like the FCM Summit are an important platform for all the stakeholders to come together and discuss high-value growth strategies and I am proud of the fact that we as a travel management company were able to host such an impactful gathering here."

s Travel

Customer Experience

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Corporate Sales -
East, and Africa
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Rahul Agarwal
Senior Director - India Operations
Boston Consulting Group

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The event was graced by **Dr. Sanjay Pai**, Vice President, Facilities, Corporate Travel, Hospitality and Director Aviation, Larsen & Toubro as the Guest of Honour.

INDIA SHINING

Sharing the business travel trends, insights and forecasts for 2025, Sodhi stated, “Hotel occupancies in the organised sector are at record levels, reaching almost 68 per cent with Average Room Rates (ARRs) hitting US\$100. This positivity is largely driven by strong economic growth and performance across most industries.”

Elle Ng-Darmawan, Regional Director, APAC, GBTA, quoted their Business Travel Index (BTI) report, and revealed that business travel spending in India stands at an estimated US\$38.3

bn, making India the 8th largest market in the world for travel spending in 2024 and the 4th largest market for APAC representing 6.2 per cent of business travel spending in the region. “India is currently in an exciting phase. The economy is robust, corporate earnings are strong, and there is a growing demand for face-to-face meetings. Domestic capacity has increased by nearly 13 per cent, a significant change from the past year,” she said.

A WORLD VIEW

She added, “Transformational change will continue to influence how we travel for work around the world. While 2024 spending was forecast to reach a record of US\$1.48 trillion, the 2025 figures are estimated to reach new highs of US\$1.63 trillion owing to post-

pandemic stabilisation, relative economic stability and lingering pent-up demand.”

Speaking about the Global Business Traveller’s point of view, she explained further, “The top reasons for business travel were seminars, training, conventions and conferences. Maximising comfort and minimising cost remained top priority while travelling for work. Around 56 per cent people blend business and personal travel more often. In 2024, the business travel spends grew 21.8 per cent and is



ELLE NG-DARMAWAN
Regional Director, APAC, GBTA





BERTRAND SAILLET
Managing Director, FCM Travel Asia

expected to reach pre-2019 spending levels by 2025 and 138 per cent by the year 2027.”

Bertrand Saillet, Managing Director, FCM Travel Asia, added, “We are observing significant growth coming from national markets and the Small and Medium Enterprises segment, which has been a major driver of regional expansion. The meetings and events sector is also robust in India, clearly showing steady growth.” Since



India is the 8th largest market in the world for travel spending in 2024 and the 4th largest market for APAC representing 6.2% of business travel spending in the region

technology has been at the forefront, Bertrand added on how Flight Centre Travel Group has established an AI Centre of Excellence, dedicated to advancing Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities. He said this would empower their people to deliver superior service, while enhancing the traveller experience by providing timely, relevant information and ensuring traveller engagement. Even a recent GBTA survey stated that 63 per cent of APAC buyers revealed AI was their top priority for 2025, the highest globally.

TECHNOLOGY IS KING

Simone Seiler, Global Leader, FCM Meetings & Events, said, “When considering return on investment,



SIMONE SEILER
Global Leader, FCM Meetings & Events

it is essential to recognise the role of technology and tools in driving engagement with content. These resources deliver personalised experience, helping attendees stay engaged with the event’s objectives throughout the entire customer journey.”

There were panel discussions on ‘The Power of Content in Corporate Travel Programme’ which was moderated by **Siddharth Mehta**, Vice President, Supply, FCM Travel India. **Megha Ajgaonkar**, Vice President, Sales, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts, **Robyn Cheng King**, Manager Karnataka and Telangana, Singapore Airlines and **RS Prahallad**, Head, Financial Operations Transformation, Titan Company were the panelists of this interesting thought-provoking discussion. Another session on ‘AI in Business Travel, transforming the end-to-end customer experience’ was led by **Deepesh Jethwani**, Senior Director, Strategy Operations, FCM Travel Asia, where experts from diverse domains shared their profound thoughts on the indispensable role of AI and technology in the business travel realm, affirming how stakeholders can make the most of the evolving trends. ➔

DISCOVER BHOPAL'S *offbeat side*

Dive into the remarkable convergence of lake-studded tranquility, culture and heritage of Bhopal, the true star of Madhya Pradesh's tourism kaleidoscope.

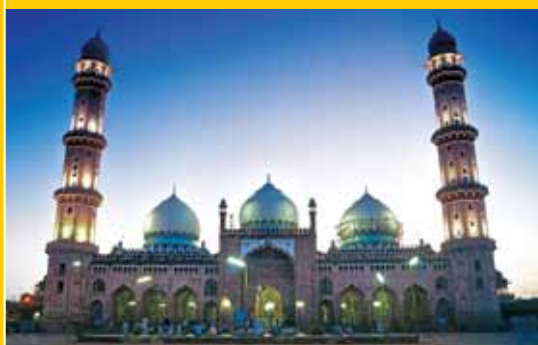
From the grandeur of age-old temples and the serenity of majestic mosques to the opulent beauty of palaces and the imposing presence of museums, Madhya Pradesh's architectural marvels offer a captivating glimpse into its rich heritage.

Shining amongst all its jewels is Bhopal, the 'City of Lakes,' the soul of Madhya Pradesh. Nestled amidst stunning lakes, this 'City of Royals' beckons to experience long, imperative history and a significant architectural and cultural legacy.

Ascend the Gauhar Mahal for breathtaking panoramic views. Sail at the magnificent Upper Lake, admiring the iconic Taj-ul-Masajid. Explore the opulent Shaukat Mahal, wander through the

vibrant markets of Chowk Bazaar and New Market and unwind by the serene Lower Lake. Do visit Bharat Bhavan showcasing the best of Indian art and literature. The State Museum and Indira

Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (National Museum of Mankind) are marvels to explore. The Tribal Museum immerses its visitors into the lives of the region's indigenous. The Mrignaynee Emporium in Bhopal offers exquisite Chanderi and Maheshwari weaves, tribal jewellery and handcrafted artifacts. Also explore the Jari Jardozi embroidery with its delicate gold and silver thread work. Discover the stunning Jagdishpur, experience serenity at the Moti Masjid and experience serenity at Van Vihar National Park. Seek a tranquil escape and authentic rural experiences at Khari village. ➔



EXPERIENCES AROUND BHOPAL

The Great Stupa of Sanchi

Udaygiri Caves

Bhojeshwar Temple

Bhimbetka

Ratapani Tiger Reserve

Pachmarhi – Satpura Tiger Reserve & Narmadapuram



Uniting 50 nations for tourism

The SATTE 2025 attracted over 2,000 exhibitors, with participants from 50+ countries and 28 state tourism boards, fostering global collaborations and industry growth.

By MT Bureau

The 32nd edition of SATTE concluded at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, setting the stage for global collaborations and industry advancements. With over 2,000 exhibitors and an impressive footfall of over 40,000 visitors, the event reaffirmed its significance in shaping the future of travel and tourism.

Under the theme 'Tourism 2025: Fostering Global Collaboration for Mutual Growth,' SATTE 2025 brought together key industry stakeholders, policymakers and global tourism leaders.

In his inaugural address, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Minister of Tourism & Culture, Government of India, underscored the country's growing potential as a leading travel destination. "India is no longer just a destination but an emerging tourism market. The government has invested in 40 new destinations, enhanced infrastructure and supported the expansion of MICE tourism. With domestic trade on the rise



GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT,
Minister of Tourism & Culture, GoI

"With domestic trade on the rise and the tourism sector projected to grow at a CAGR of 24%, the future looks promising."

and the tourism sector projected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 24 per cent, the future looks promising," he remarked. The key trends explored throughout the event:

- **MICE growth:** Experts estimated the sector's expansion from US\$3.3 billion to US\$10.5 billion by 2030.
- **Tourism vision 2047:** Tourism roadmap for India's centennial year of independence and its execution.

- **State tourism development:** Ministers from Goa, Nagaland and Kerala shared insights on leveraging regional attractions.
- **Wedding tourism boom:** With India's wedding tourism valued at ₹5 lakh crore (US\$67 billion) and growing at a CAGR of 15-20 per cent, discussions focused on digitalisation, luxury services and sustainability trends. ➔



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MOVEMENTS



VINEET MISHRA

Vice President, Operations
India & South Asia, Accor

Accor has appointed Vineet Mishra as Vice President of Operations, India & South Asia. With an extensive experience in the hospitality industry, Mishra will oversee Accor's operational strategies across its diverse portfolio reinforcing the brand's presence in the region. He is renowned for his strong business acumen and operational strategies as well as his distinctive 'team first' leadership approach. Most recently Mishra has served as the Complex General Manager for Pullman and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity.



MUKESH PAREWA

General Manager
Chomu Palace, Jaipur

Mukesh Parewa has been appointed as the General Manager of Chomu Palace, Jaipur, by Dangayach Group of Hotels. As a seasoned hotelier, he has been associated with renowned international hospitality brands including Hilton, Radisson and IHG. His strategic vision and commitment to excellence have consistently driven exceptional guest experiences and operational success. In his new role, he is expected to blend tradition with contemporary hospitality while creating memorable stays and world-class events.



VIVEK BATRA

General Manager
Taj Cidade de Goa Horizon

IHCL has appointed Vivek Batra as the General Manager of Taj Cidade de Goa Horizon. With extensive experience across the luxury collection of ITC Hotels, Batra initially joined the organisation as Director of Food & Beverage at Taj Bangalore. Later, demonstrating his leadership skills as Hotel Manager at Taj Cidade de Goa Heritage, he earned recognition for his exceptional operational acumen, leadership capabilities and a good understanding of the hospitality landscape in Goa.



AJINKYA KULKARNI

General Manager
Hyatt Regency Amritsar

Hyatt Regency Amritsar has appointed Ajinkya Kulkarni as its new General Manager. In this new capacity, he will be bringing exceptional expertise in operations, and sales and marketing. In his previous roles, Kulkarni has been known for managing large-scale operations and developing strategic business initiatives. Previously, Kulkarni has served as Director of Operations at Park Hyatt Hyderabad, where he led multiple departments, optimised cost control strategies and drove high customer satisfaction.



RAJESH GOPALAKRISHNAN

General Manager
The Leela Hyderabad

Rajesh Gopalakrishnan has been appointed as the General Manager of The Leela Hyderabad. He has a proven track record in steering luxury hotels to new heights. His experience spans managing operations, business development, guest experience and sustainability initiatives in both established and emerging markets. His previous roles include General Manager at Radisson Hotel Group, Novotel Visakhapatnam as well as senior leadership positions with Accor and Greenpark Hotels & Resorts.



PREETI MAKHIJA

General Manager
The Leela Palace New Delhi

The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts has appointed Preeti Makhija as the General Manager of The Leela Palace New Delhi. Makhija has been an integral part of The Leela group since 2011, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to excellence and operational expertise. Her journey with The Leela Palace New Delhi began during the pre-opening phase when she joined as a Duty Manager. Upon stepping into the role of Hotel Manager in 2024, she took charge of the hotel's overall operations.



SANTOSH SINGH

Hotel Manager
Sahara Star

Sahara Star has promoted Santosh Singh to the role of Hotel Manager. Previously, serving as Head of Procurement for Sahara Star & Aamby Valley City, he played a pivotal role in streamlining operations, optimising costs and driving efficiency. With expertise in strategic planning, sales and marketing and business expansion, Singh has led new business ventures. His process-oriented approach and analytical acumen are expected to elevate Sahara Star's operational excellence and overall brand growth.

Form IV

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper MICEtalk to be published in the first issue every year after the last day of February

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Place of publication | : 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001 |
| 2. Periodicity of its publication | : Quarterly |
| 3. Printer's Name | : SanJeet |
| Nationality | : Indian |
| Address | : 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001 |
| 4. Publisher's Name | : SanJeet |
| Nationality | : Indian |
| Address | : 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001 |
| 5. Editor's Name | : SanJeet |
| Nationality | : Indian |
| Address | : 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001 |
| 6. Name and address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one percent of the total capital | : SanJeet, 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110001 |

I, SanJeet, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
Date : 01/03/2025

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SanJeet
Signature of the Publisher

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