

MYSTIC EAST

...nuggets galore

A bi-monthly magazine by HRAEI | Vol 1 | Issue 4 | May - June 2015

Odisha Tourism



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MISSION

- ✌ A common voice for hotels, restaurants and associates for unhindered progress of the hospitality industry in the country's Eastern Region.
- ✌ Create value for members by ensuring government policies remain supportive of tourism and the industry.

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May-June 2015



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sudesh Poddar

We are hopeful that the Convention will create opportunities for entrepreneurs to exploit the enormous tourism potential of Odisha

Dear fellow members,

Preparations for the 50th Golden Jubilee Convention are going on in full swing and we are burning midnight oil to make it an unforgettable event. I must take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues in the organizing committee who have lent their valuable time and offered constructive suggestions to make it a fail-safe event.

We are sure that with the support of the Union tourism ministry, the state government of Odisha, various other state governments, our sponsors, partner associations and associates the event will create new benchmarks in event management.

We are hopeful that the Convention will create opportunities for entrepreneurs to exploit the enormous tourism potential of Odisha. It will also allow the state government to hard sell the invaluable tourism assets of the state.

Lot of planning and detailing

have gone into finalizing technical sessions which will feature some of the best minds from trade, industry, government and the media. As a balancing act, we have ensured healthy dose of unalloyed entertainment and post-convention tours. To cap it all, we have a 2 km 'Heritage Walk' on World Tourism Day (September 25) likely to be attended by school children, young and old from all walks of life.

The response, in terms of delegate registrations, suggests that the head count at the Convention will be well over 1000. I request you to register as early as possible and also persuade your friends to register as well.

Here's wishing you all the best.

Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



Pranav Singh

The attractiveness of hotel projects, which have long gestation periods, will only grow with time as the borrowing cost of industry will come down in the next five years

Dear fellow members,

The tourism industry's potential for employment generation and foreign exchange earnings in our country remains largely untapped. The sector can add \$100 billion to GDP by 2024, says research firm Macquarie, if the government sustains its support to the sector. With a contribution of 7%, it is the fourth largest impact sector in India and can easily move up a few notches with investor-friendly policies.

As the external environment is more conducive for investments, the government should now consider introduction of forward-looking policies which will spur capital investments in tourism projects, particularly those which have a public-private-people partnership model.

Some valid suggestions which deserve government attention include inclusion of tourism infrastructure like hotels/resorts/tourist lodges/banquet halls/convention and exhibition centres, etc., for benefits of Section 32 AC of Income Tax

Act 1961 by lowering the minimum threshold investment limit to Rs 5 crore. Similarly,

extension of benefits under Section 35 AD of Income Tax Act 1961 to business concerns, who are making capital investment in setting up smaller category of hotels/guest houses/dharamsalas/tourist hostels/motels/wellness facilities/medical facilities and other associated infrastructure like installation of house boats/adventure and leisure tourism facilities will definitely draw investors into the hospitality business. The attractiveness of hotel projects, which have long gestation periods, will only grow with time as the borrowing cost of industry will come down in the next five years.

Pranav Singh
Secretary, HRAEI



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Assam tourism promotes destination travel in Gujarat



A well-maintained, exquisite club belonging to a tea plantation company

Ahmedabad: Explore the kaleidoscopic beauty of the serene Brahmaputra, walk in the lush tea estates, wander in the majestic Kaziranga or groove to the beats of Rongali Bihu. Visit Assam — the gateway to the northeastern states — and explore the untapped natural treasures. Recently, top officials from the department of tourism, Government of Assam, held interactive sessions to showcase the potential of Assam as an ideal tourist destination. The state’s exotic natural wealth, heritage and culture are being promoted to attract travelers into the state.

Assam, nourished by the Brahmaputra River, is blessed with a rich wildlife stock and vast stretches of greenery. Close to 40 per cent of Assam has a green cover. It has five national parks, of which, two have been declared world heritage sites by UNESCO. The famed Kaziranga National Park is acclaimed as a biodiversity hub.

River cruise on the Brahmaputra is being promoted for nature enthusiasts. Tourists will be taken on a journey to experience the effervescence of Bihu

and Sattriya dance forms typical of Assamese culture. Tracing the heritage of the Kamakhya Temple, a pilgrimage spot atop the Nilachal Hills in west Guwahati, is a must visit for pilgrims and devotees.

“Assamese culture, the state’s wildlife, lush green golf courses, sprawling tea gardens and the majestic Brahmaputra make Assam truly matchless. The place has immense tourism potential both for domestic and overseas travelers. It is well connected and safe. People are warm and hospitable. We invite one and all to visit Assam” said Ashutosh Agnihotri, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Assam.

Mr. Agnihotri further said “Assam Tourism is planning to ink a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Railways to start a tourist train for Assam and this will connect key destinations in the state that a tourist will want to travel to. This experience will be pocket-friendly, yet exotic.”

To tap niche tourism opportunities, Assam, which accounts for about 60

per cent of the national tea production and 80 per cent of the country’s export, will promote its tea estates making way for travelers to enjoy and experience the craft of tea making. Tourists will get to reside in the quintessential British era bungalows within the estates, enjoy their cuppa and delve into the history behind this industry. There are close to 800 major and 60,000 small tea estates spread across 300,000 hectares in Assam employing 17 per cent of the state’s workforce.

An added attraction will be the “tee-tees” or golf courses in tea estates which are a class of their own. There are approximately 20 such zones in Assam. As part of legacy of the British planters of yesteryear, besides very classic clubhouses for post-golf sessions, some estates even house airstrips for tourists to arrive and take off in chartered aircrafts.

During 2014-15, Assam’s domestic inbound tourist flows stood at 45,00,000 while overseas tourist flow was at 25,000. (ToI)

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Mr Dilip K Ray, chairman, FHRAI Convention Organising Committee and Mr Sudesh Poddar, President, HRAEI recently met the Union Minister of State (IC), for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy, Mr Piyush Goyal, and Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Mr Dharmendra Pradhan to apprise them about the forthcoming FHRAI Golden Jubilee Convention in Bhubaneswar and to formally invite them to the event

Assam proposal for Majuli Island to be fast tracked

The Union Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge), Tourism (Independent Charge), & Civil Aviation, Dr. Mahesh Sharma has assured that the Centre will take all possible steps to expedite the proposal of World Heritage site status for Majuli island located in the Brahmaputra river in Assam.

Dr Mahesh Sharma held a meeting recently in New Delhi with the Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvena-

tion, Ms Uma Bharti and Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports, Mr Sarbananda Sonowal in this regard. The Ministry of Culture is already working closely with the state of Assam to assist them in finalising the proposal. The state government will be assisted to overcome all roadblocks, he assured.

Ms Bharti explained the need to conserve the culturally and historically rich island as it is dramatically shrinking in size due to erosion. ASI

must carry out a survey of the ancient artefacts at the island to facilitate the proposal for world heritage site, she added.

Mr Sonowal, who is the MP from the area, explained that the Majuli island is the largest river island in the world and has a population of about two lakh, both tribal as well as non-tribal. He requested Dr Sharma to provide tourism infrastructure at Majuli island like a guest house, an auditorium and a museum.



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Bengal plans first heritage city in Bishnupur



Kolkata: Famous for its medieval terracotta temples and glorious past, Bishnupur town in West Bengal is now being planned as the state’s first heritage city. “Bishnupur is a very small place and not a planned town. We want to make it big by including its outskirts and developing it as West Bengal’s first planned heritage city,” Prabhakar Pal, additional director at West Bengal’s Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, said. He said the Centre had recently accepted the state’s recommendation to declare Bishnupur as a heritage city.

With support from the state’s tourism department and urban development ministry, they are planning a massive integrated project to develop infrastructure like improved road connectivity, museums, parks, hotels, etc. “We will seek funds for this from the 14th Finance Commission which will be used for conservation of heritage sites and infrastructure develop-

ment,” the official said.

Around 150 km away from Kolkata by road, Bishnupur was the seat of power for Malla dynasty, which built the famous terracotta temples during the 17th and 18th centuries. The pre-colonial historical town in Bankura district is full of sculptures and relics from the past. A seat of crafts and culture, Bishnupur attracts tourists for its Balucharisarees, terracotta toys and ethnic symbols like the Bankura horse.

The Malla kings had also patronised music and established the Bishnupur Gharana centuries ago.

The cluster of temples in Bishnupur include Malleshwar temple, Rasmancha, Jorbangla, Radhashyam, ShyamRai, Madan Mohan, Lalji temple, etc. The temples are known for their distinct architecture style of a single tower resting on a square building with the curved roof of a Bengali hut.

Currently, the narrow gauge Dar-

jeeling Himalayan Railway and Sundarbans National Park are two sites in West Bengal which have been declared as UNESCO world heritage sites. “We do not have a heritage city in West Bengal. In the next 3-4 years after we fully develop Bishnupur as a heritage city we will seek UNESCO tag for it. We do not want them to reject our proposal, so we are preparing beforehand,” said another official of the archaeology directorate. The heritage tag from the Centre has already brought the town into India’s tourist map. “Our main focus is to develop heritage and tourism side by side,” Pal said.

In 2012, Rabindranath Tagore’s abode of Santiniketan was India’s official entry for the UNESCO tag but failed to make it to the final nominations. “The case is not yet lost for Santiniketan. There were some mistakes in our proposal due to which we lost at that time, but we will again make a fresh bid,” officials said. (PTI)

Committees formed for facilitating GST rollout from April 1, 2016

Union Finance Minister, Mr Arun Jaitley, has approved the formation of two committees for facilitating implementation of goods and services tax from April 1, 2016.

A steering committee has been formed under the co-chairmanship of additional secretary, department of revenue and member secretary, empowered committee of state finance ministers. This committee has members from department of revenue, Central Board of Excise & Customs, Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) and representatives of state governments. This committee shall monitor the progress of IT preparedness of GSTN/CBEC/tax authorities, finalisation of reports of all the sub-committees constituted on different aspects relating to the mechanics of GST and drafting of CGST, IGST and SGST laws/rules. The committee shall also monitor the progress on consultations with various stakeholders like trade and industry and training of officers.

Another committee has been formed under the chairmanship of the chief economic advisor, ministry of finance to recommend possible tax rates under GST that would be consistent with the present level of revenue collection of Centre and states. While making recommenda-

tions, this committee would take into account expected levels of economic growth, different levels of compliance and broadening of tax base under GST. The committee would also analyse the sector-wise and state-wise impact of GST on the economy. It is expected to give its report within two months.

Meanwhile, progress is underway to finalise various aspects of GST design like business processes, payment systems, matters relating to dual control, threshold, exemptions, place of supply rules and also making of model GST, SGST and IGST laws and rules. This task is being undertaken through various sub-committees formed by the empowered committee which has officers from government of India as well as state governments as members.

GSTN is taking steps for preparing the IT infrastructure for rollout of GST. The IT infrastructure shall enable online registration, filing of returns and getting refunds. Various state governments are also preparing the necessary back-end IT infrastructure for implementation of GST which shall relate to aspects like assessments and audit. Periodic reviews are being held in the department of revenue to monitor the progress of all the above activities. (PIB)

from Guwahati towards Shillong and other parts of the north east. These include Shillong Bypass and four laning of Jorabat-Barapani section of NH-40.

The Shillong Bypass connects NH 40 and NH 44 (New NH 6) and will decongest the traffic in Shillong from trucks and heavy vehicles coming from or moving towards north eastern parts of Assam and Mizoram and Tripura. The 48.76 Km bypass which begins from NH 40 at Umiam in Ribhoi district and ends on NH 44 (new NH 6) at Mawryngkneng in East Khasi Hills district provides a pleasant and a safe driving experience. The bypass was constructed by NHA on BOT (Annuity) mode.

Four laning of Jorabat-Barapani provides robust road connectivity between Guwahati and Shillong. The NHA had awarded this 61.80 km project on design build finance operate & transfer mode on annuity basis. The project stretch traverses mostly through the hilly terrain skirting the major urban areas like Byrnihat and Nongpoh. The project work consists of 4-laning of the existing road including the construction of one grade separator, 1 major bridge, 13 minor bridges and more than 360 cross drainage structures.

Mr Gadkari said government will award Rs. 15000 cr worth of projects to the north eastern states this year. He also highlighted the problem faced by the authorities in getting contractors for the projects. Calling upon the local contractors to come forward, he said that the youth of the region should take advantage of the policies of the government.

The Minister also emphasized upon the use of alternate fuel such as bio-diesel and ethanol. He added that water as mode of transportation is priority of the government and the decision of the Centre to have additional 101 inland waterways as national waterways will greatly help the north eastern region. (PIB)

Nitin Gadkari dedicates to the nation two major highway projects in the north east

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Mr Nitin Gadkari recently dedicated to the nation two

major highway projects in the north east at a function near Shillong. The projects considerably ease the travel

Starwood Hotels to Offer Mobile Event Apps at Its Properties Worldwide



Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. (NYSE: HOT) recently announced its referral partnership with Cvent, a leading cloud-based enterprise event management platform and PSAV, a technology service provider, to offer CrowdCompass by Cvent mobile apps to planners who are booking meetings and events at its properties worldwide.

“We are always looking for new ways to enhance the meetings and event experience at our properties,” said Jonathan Kaplan, Starwood’s Director of Sales, New Business and Digital Programming. “With the option of having a customizable app with CrowdCompass by Cvent, attendees can go paperless and view real-time content like event agendas, speaker bios, presentations and property information right from their mobile device.”



Kaplan continued: “Meeting attendees also may be able to use the app to create personalized schedules, share contact information with other attendees, connect with others via social media and receive push message

communications instantly from on-site meeting planners.”

Since 2013, Cvent and PSAV have partnered to bring CrowdCompass mobile apps to corporate meeting and event planners and hoteliers. “Starwood often leverages technology to enhance their guests’ experience, from using innovative tools such as a smartphone app for checking in and Apple Watch for keyless room entry,” said Matthew Donegan-Ryan, director of mobile strategy at CrowdCompass by Cvent. “Providing CrowdCompass mobile apps is one more way for Starwood to transform the experience and engagement level of meeting attendees at Starwood hotels and resorts across the globe.”

“Mobile apps for events have become an essential tool for bringing content and attendee engagement directly to an individual’s personal device. PSAV is thrilled to be combining our strategic partnerships with both Starwood and CrowdCompass by Cvent to continue offering a best-in-class mobile app to our customers,” said Stewart Young, Vice President, Strategic Accounts at PSAV Presentation Services.

This comes on the heels of Starwood’s ProMeetings app, which allows meetings planners who are SPG or SPG Pro members to submit on-property requests – from an extension cord, coffee service, a change in lighting and everything in between – directly to associates who can fulfill requests in real time. The app, which is expected to fully roll out in 2016, is currently in pilot at several Starwood hotels around the world, including W Singapore - Sentosa Cove, The Westin Singapore, Sheraton Atlanta Airport, W Atlanta Midtown, and The Westin Charlotte.

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TRAVELOGUE

How a 12-Room Hotel Turned a Remote Archipelago Into Chile's Next Big Thing

AS we sailed through the placid channels off Chile's mid-Pacific coast, all was silent. Our wooden ship—painted yellow and blue and built in the style of a traditional fisherman's boat—quietly cut through the sapphire waters between the small, low-lying islands of the Chiloé archipelago. On either side, gray, gravelly shores gave way to green hills beyond and nearly cloudless skies above. Here and there, livestock grazed around ramshackle, corrugated-tin farmhouses. Occasionally, a tuxedoed Magellanic penguin would softly swim by.

Then, suddenly, shouts of excitement erupted from the prow:

"Allí! Aca!" ("Over there! Right here!")

"Mira! Que cuatro, cinco! Que linda!" ("Look! Four of them, five! How beautiful!")

I raced forward and found a school of shiny, gray-and-white dolphins skirting the side of our ship. Slickly weaving in and out of our wake, they swam faster, then slower, and faster again, powerfully pounding their tails to propel themselves through the sea. Just as we thought we'd overtaken them, or they'd grown bored with us, we'd see them again, suddenly 10, 15 yards in front of the ship. With their twisting, full-body jumps out of the water, they almost seemed to be showing off, actively enjoying the attention.

My eight or so fellow passengers and I—all guests of Tierra Chiloé, a contemporary-cool, luxe-adventure lodge nearby—loved sharing their delight.

Almost entirely enclosed by walls of glass, Tierra Chiloé's open-plan lobby, lounge and dining room brings the outside in. Source: Brian Sandstrom via Bloomberg



Having nearly found ourselves lulled to sleep by the low hum of the ship's motor and the glasses of Sauvignon Blanc, served with an onboard lunch of salmon and fresh local oysters, we immediately perked up, ready for whatever further Chiloean adventures the day might hold.

Archipelago Rising

Chiloé is the most charming part of Chile you've probably never heard of. Less bucket-list flashy than Patagonia in the country's south, or the Atacama Desert in the north, this temperate archipelago of over 30 islands holds more subtle pleasures. They're myriad nonetheless, from these delight-filled waters dividing the islands from the mainland to the harsher climes and Jurassic landscapes of the Pacific coast. The archipelago feels like the coast of Maine, the Pacific Northwest, and Northern California—if any of those had been trapped in amber a century ago, rather than bling-ed out with the McMansions of the moneyed and Moncler-wearing. Increasingly, however, just like those sought-after



One would never guess from looking at the Technicolor exterior of the main church in Castro, Chiloé's capital city, that its subtle interior is finished exclusively in warm, richly grained, natural wood. Source: Brian Sandstrom via Bloomberg

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The simple decoration of the hotel's warm and welcoming rooms ensures minimal distraction from the views offered by their large window walls. Source: Tierra Chiloe via Bloomberg

American destinations, Chiloé, too, has started to get trendy.

But even as wealthy folks from Santiago and other South American capitals have begun taking notice and buying property, Chiloé has largely lacked anything approaching a posh place to stay. That's where Tierra Chiloe comes in. In just its first year of operation under the Tierra flag, the hotel has redefined what travel to and on the islands can look like.

When the architecturally avant-garde property opened in 2012 as an independently owned hotel called Refugia, it almost immediately caught the eye of Miguel Purcell, the managing director of Tierra Hotels, which owns and operates similarly minded, design-conscious lodges in Patagonia and the Atacama that have come to define all-inclusive, luxe-adventure in Chile.

Upon his first stay here, he found himself smitten and offered to buy the hotel from its mastermind and general manager, Andrés Bravari Gambino, who amicably demurred. Gambino

eventually came around, however, and agreed to stay on to run the place. Now the hotel is just wrapping up its first season as the newest jewel in the Tierra crown.

Changing Chiloé

"In the last five or six years, you can see Range Rovers and Audis in Chiloé," Gambino told me over a dinner of crab claws and pan-fried conger eel—a sign of the times as weekend home-hunters and real estate prospectors come sniffing around. A new airport cut what was a 7-hour plane-drive-ferry from Santiago into a three-hour direct flight; a controversial bridge, what will be Latin America's longest, is also planned to spur more investment. "Suddenly, it will be another place."

The hotel is both a catalyst for and a sign of that change. It also strives to be a sensitive steward, a gentle protector and intelligent interpreter of its unspoiled landscapes and unique character. "Chiloé is a very natural des-

ination," Gambino said, "not natural just because of its animals and plants, but because it's not for tourists. It's not Disneyland."

When I caught up with him a few weeks later, Tierra's Purcell concurred: "Historically, Chiloé has always been a remote and isolated place, so, by its nature, it has attracted travelers in search of the unexplored: backpackers, those seeking a B&B-style stay." As the archipelago's first luxury accommodation, then, he sees the hotel's vital role as helping "people looking for a more thorough and complete experience in their travels, encouraging guests to share the culture and customs of the locals, taking them to remote and beautiful spots around the islands that they couldn't otherwise reach by themselves."

The challenge through all this is to maintain the hotel's—and by extension, the archipelago's—authenticity. To make sure, as Gambino said, that it doesn't become a Disneyland, even as it becomes an of-the-moment destination for high-flying travelers who like their outdoor adventuring to come wrapped in luxury.

Building a Destination

If anyone can strike that balance, it's Gambino, a former construction executive with a soft voice, a calm, gentle demeanor, and a clear passion for his current project. He and his artist-designer wife first came to live in Chiloé in 2003, giving up hectic lives in Santiago to make the move. Looking around at the hospitality landscape, which consisted of little more than hostels and other backpacker havens, he saw an opportunity to create "a place where you don't have to think about anything."

To guests, that would mean all-inclusive daily menus not just of gourmet local cuisine, but of expert-guided excursions, too. There would be trips to craft markets, seafood empanada stalls, and tours of the islands' doz-

ens of neo-Gothic and Neoclassical wooden churches (16 of them UNESCO World Heritage Sites). Horseback rides would explore the hotel's acreage and beyond, sea kayaks its shores. That private wooden fishing boat would, in Gambino's words, "become an extension of the hotel," enabling guests to explore the waterways of Chiloé as well as they could walk its shores and hike its hills. This is how he would go about bringing luxury hospitality with heart to the pristine archipelago.

Gambino immediately began looking for land to build a lodge, eventually settling on nearly 20 byside acres. At the time, the property served as farmland, with no paved road providing access. He remembers walking in mud for almost half a mile to get to the site, taking in its views of the water and distant Andes. "I came six or seven times," he said. "I told myself, 'Don't be stupid.'" He came to realize that it was something special.

Local Modern

Gambino's former boss in Santiago signed on as an investor, bringing in his son, Columbia University-trained Patricio Browne Salas, as architect. Simultaneously both traditional and highly contemporary, the two-story building he designed sits on a hill set back from the water, raised above the pastureland on huge poured-concrete piles, giving views from its entrance to the horse paddocks and the water behind. Andean-cypress shingles further refer to the architecture of Chiloé's traditional palafitos—shingle-covered fishing houses perched above the water on stilts.

Salas enclosed half of the high-ceilinged ground level entirely in glass, forming a large trapezoid-shaped living and dining area where Shaker-style furniture, sisal rugs, and overstuffed couches piled with pillows await tired guests. Upstairs, 12 loft-like rooms feature similar furnishings, plus almost floor-to-ceiling window-walls

that frame the views. Nearly every surface has been wrapped in local woods, giving the otherwise minimalist-mod place a cozy, atmosphere—like a Swedish sauna or Japanese ryokan—one further warmed by woven textiles, traditional crafts, and vintage farm tools displayed like pieces of abstract metal sculpture.

This combination of high-design aesthetic and high-touch experience won the hotel international attention, and best-of list acclaim. No wonder Purcell wanted in.

In just this first year operating as part of Tierra, Gambino—who employs a team of warm locals, most of them here from Day One—has seen the strength of Tierra's name and reputation increase bookings in a major way. All-inclusive rates start at \$825 per person per night. Private jet tours among the three properties

allow even more bespoke, locally minded adventuring. And, now, with Purcell's backing, Gambino plans to expand to meet demand: the 2016-17 season will bring 10 additional guest rooms and a larger spa, nestling both amid the landscape with minimal intervention. Before all this, though, the hotel will wrap up its current season on May 4, reopening Sept. 1 for the southern hemisphere's warmer months.

As our post-sailing dinner wound down, and, with it, Gambino's story, I asked him if it was hard to sell.

"I think of this hotel as one of my four sons: I have three and then this place," he said philosophically, but with noticeable pride. "I was very happy with the business, with the amount of business. But the boy, he must continue to grow up." (source: BloombergBusiness)



The hotel's elevation above the ground allows for long views to the land- and seascapes beyond. Source: Brian Sandstrom via Bloomberg

About **FHRAI** Convention

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, better known by its acronym: FHRAI, is the apex body of the four regional hotel and restaurant associations-- Eastern (HRAEI), Western (HRAWI), Northern (HRANI), and Southern (SIHRA). Founded in 1955 by the legendary hotelier Rai Bahadur M.S. Oberoi with just 13 members, FHRAI today enjoys a pan India presence with membership strength of 3933 members.

FHRAI is the unified national voice of our industry and enjoys the distinction of being the largest Hotel & Restaurant Industry Association of the Nation and the third largest in the World.

This federation is the interface between the hospitality industry and the political leadership, academics, international associations and other related stakeholders. FHRAI helps Indian hospitality industry grow, prosper and

keep pace with the global hospitality industry.

FHRAI convention is an annual event organised by FHRAI with one of the regional associations playing a pivotal role each year. This year, the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) is privileged to organise the Golden Jubilee Convention of FHRAI in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

The convention is among the most eagerly awaited and widely attended events of the Indian hospitality industry. Our convention serve as a unique platform for our delegates to interact and deliberate with key stakeholders, including dignitaries from the highest echelons of the government, eminent global experts, business icons, media, etc.

The purpose of the event is to identify problems and issues plaguing the hospitality industry and suggest practical solutions.

Bhubaneswar factoids

- The first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had laid the foundation stone of the city on April 13 in 1948.
- Bhubaneswar is supposed to have had over 1000 temples; earning the tag of the Temple City of India.
- German architect Otto Kolenigsberger had prepared the master plan of the city.
- The city has a history of over 3,000 years starting with the Mahamegha-bahana Chedi dynasty (around the 2nd century BCE) which had its capital at Sisupalgarh nearby.
- Bhubaneswar, derived its name from Tribhubaneswar, which literally means the Lord (Eeswar) of the Three Worlds (Tribhuban), which refers to Shiva.
- Bhubaneswar has been known by names such as Toshali, Kalinga Nagari, Nagar Kalinga, Ekamra Kanan, Ekamra Kshetra and Mandira Malini Nagari (“City of Temples”).
- Bhubaneswar replaced Cuttack as the capital in 1948, the year after India gained its independence from Britain.
- Along with Jamshedpur and Chandigarh, it is one of modern India’s earliest planned cities.
- In 2012, Bhubaneswar was ranked third among Indian cities, in terms of starting and operating a business by the World Bank.
- Bhubaneswar is one of the fastest developing cities of the country and an emerging IT and education hub.
- The Department of Industries established four industrial areas in and around Bhubaneswar-in the Rasulgarh, Mancheswar, Chandaka and Bhagabanpur areas.
- Cupertino, California which houses the world famous company Apple is considered the sister city of Bhubaneswar. More details here: Cupertino adds Bhubaneswar, India, to its list of sister cities
- Nandankanan Zoological Park is a 400-hectare (990-acre) zoo and botanical garden in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. Established in 1960, it was opened to the public in 1979 and became the first zoo in India to join World Association of Zoos and Aquariums(WAZA) in 2009.
- Nandankanan is famous for its white tiger population, a species it claims to have produced. In 1980, the first litter of white tigers were born to Deepak and Ganga — both normal tawny tigers. Subsequent litters of white tigers have been distributed to zoos both in India and internationally. Nandankanan is home to over 34 white tigers.
- A world-class convention and trade center is being constructed by Populous. The trade center will house the already operationalized World Trade Center, the 5th such center in India.



Q&A

“We are shifting focus to southern, western Odisha”: Ashok Ch. Panda

In Kolkata recently, Ashok Ch. Panda, minister for tourism and culture, Odisha took time out to speak to the Editor, Mystic East, Dheer Kumar Kothari, on immediate plans and how he proposes to take Odisha tourism to the next higher level



What are your priorities for giving a boost to tourism in the state?

We are trying to take it to the next higher level. We are developing a master plan for Chilika and its littoral districts under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project. We are developing the Chilika particularly for adventure sports like snorkeling, kayaking, island hopping and water skiing.

Besides, we are also focusing on the surfing festival which is now an annual feature.

As soon as we get the master plan, being prepared by IPE Global, we will shift our focus to southern and western parts of the state which are lesser developed areas inhabited by tribals. We have firmed plans for eco-tourism and adventure sports, particularly for Chilika, Tampara Lake (in

Ganjam district) and eco-tourism in Satkosia and Bhitarkanika.

Last year, Odisha recorded a footfall of 1.7 crore from the domestic sector while around 60 lakhs from abroad. The state government has allotted Rs 160 crore of total budget for the tourism sector in 2015-16. In this connection, it is worth noting that we have earmarked Rs 7.5 crore for wayside amenities under the ‘Ja-

jabar' scheme for the benefit of tourists.

Air connectivity is still a major roadblock to development of tourism. What are your plans to upgrade air travel to Odisha?

Odisha is giving top priority to air connectivity as it is a prerequisite for healthy growth of travel and tourism industry. We badly need connectivity to South-Asia, South-East Asia, Sri Lanka and also the Middle East. We are trying our best to get some international airlines to operate here. We are also talking to the Centre for more domestic flights to and from Bhubaneswar.

There are obvious gaps in the Buddhist circuit announced by the government of India under its Swadesh Darshan scheme. Your comments

It is unfortunate that not a single site of Buddhist relics in Odisha finds

mention in the Buddhist circuit under Swadesh Darshan. The state government is trying to develop these sites by utilizing its own resources. We receive a lot of tourists regularly at Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri and Udaygiri (in Jajpur district), popularly known as the Diamond Triangle. But due to lack of air connectivity of Bhubaneswar with Varanasi, Bodh Gaya and Sarnath among others we are losing a lot of Buddhist pilgrims (domestic and foreign) who visit these site in UP and Bihar. We also require rail connectivity as the only train on this circuit- the Mahaparinirvan Express- does not have Odisha in its itinerary.

Which are the new and upcoming destinations being promoted by the state tourism department?

The Centre has sanctioned Rs 52 crores under PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmen-

tation Drive) and the amount released to the state so far is Rs 10 crore only. Out of this amount we have already submitted utilization certificate for Rs 8.80 crore for expenses incurred in Centrally-sponsored tourism projects. All the projects being implemented in the state were introduced by the UPA government. The NDA government has not introduced any scheme so far since it came to power in May 2014.

Two new circuits on which work has started are: Koraput-Semiliguda-Gupteswar-Sunabeda (Rs 3 crore received as Central advance) while the other circuit is Nrusinganath-Patara-Harisankar (more than Rs 3 crore released by the Centre). We are taking tourism to the next level by developing attractive destinations in the Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi belt which has large tribal population.

What is the status update on the Shamuka project?

We have decided to implement Shamuka on the lines of Kerala's Bekal project. Our officers recently visited the Bekal site and based on their feedback we have taken this decision.

(A delegation of Odisha Tourism led by the Secretary, DoT Dr.Padhee and officials of OTDC; IDCO and Consultants form the IFC and PWC visited Bekal and Thiruvananthapuram recently and had interactions with relevant officials and stakeholders. They also met Chief Secretary, Kerala, Mr. Jiji Thomson and discussed about possible collaboration between the DoT and Bekal Resorts Development Corporation (BRDC) of Kerala Government. The total area envisaged for development of Shamuka beach project was about 3,000 acres and for Phase-I, 972 acres have already been acquired. The original project had components like 13 luxury hotels, 18-hole golf course and golf villas, residential condominium, high-street bazaar, Gurukul, etc.)



Achievements of **HRAEI** managing committee (2014-15)

- Proactive steps taken whenever members required our intervention like the Hotel Vinayak case in Raiganj
- Membership fee restructured and application forms simplified
- Association's website made more informative and user-friendly
- Active public relations drive resulting in several reports in the print media, both locally and nationally
- HRAEI magazine, Mystic East, published and distributed among all members, chief minister, tourism minister, other cabinet ministers, principal secretaries and other government officials.
- Aggressive membership drive resulting in addition of new members- 100 approx.
- Work on registration of office premises taken up. Work in progress.
- 20% discount cards offered to all HRAEI members
- Highly successful meetings held with Principal Secretary, Tourism and with Tourism Minister, government of India.
- Meetings held with tourism minister, secretary tourism and secretary culture of Odisha in Bhubaneswar.
- Memorandum for expeditious settlement of claims under NEIPP 2007 to Minister of Commerce and Industries of India, PM of India,



- Finance Minister of India, chief ministers and industries & commerce ministers of all north-east states including Sikkim.
- Memorandum with a plea to revoke suspension of NEIPP from December 1, 2014 to Prime Minister, ministers of commerce and industries, government of India, finance minister of India, chief ministers and industries & commerce ministers of all north-east states including Sikkim.
- Organisation and hosting of golden jubilee convention of FHRAI in Bhubaneswar

Interview: Sudesh Poddar

Q&A

The FHRAI Golden Jubilee Convention will be a three-day affair. What value for money propositions do you have to ensure that their interest in the event does not flag during their stay at the venue?

We have planned our event keeping in mind the preferences of delegates, their spouses and kids. No one has been ignored. We have taken special care to make the business sessions interesting and topical. As the attention span of the audience is proverbially short, we have deliberately kept the technical discussions of short duration of 45 minutes to a maximum of one hour.

What are the major themes for the technical sessions and who are the key speakers you have managed to rope in?

On the first day we have the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Mr Rajiv Pratap Rudy, as principal speaker who will expound on "Skill Development in Hospitality Industry". Mr Mandeep Lamba, MD, Jones Lang LaSalle India will moderate a session called "Voice from the top". Among prominent speakers from the hospitality industry who have agreed to participate in this session are Ms Cecilia Oldne, global brand ambassador, Sula Wines; Ms Britta Leick-Milde, GM, Hyatt Regency, Kolkata; Mr Dilip Puri, MD-India & Regional Vice President-South Asia, Starwood Hotels and Resorts; Mr K. Mohanchandran, Area Director- Hyderabad and GM, Taj Krishna; and Mr Zubin Songadwala, GM, ITC Maurya.

We expect the session on September 26 morning on "The Guest is God: Is this the biggest myth of our hospitality industry?" which will be moderated by the self-proclaimed maverick and media specialist, Mr Suhel Seth to be a smash hit. I don't want to kill the suspense but I am certain the other sessions will be equally captivating and keep the audience glued to their seats!

What are the key components of the convention and what will be the role of Odisha government as a partner state?

The convention can be broken into broad segments like: the inaugural ceremony which I believe will be a crowd puller. We have the Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi as the chief guest for this session and several well-known government functionaries from different states.

The heritage walk will be a cultural extravaganza with tableaux, folk dances and musical presentations

Then we have the technical sessions, with room for interactions with the audience. We have lined up some of the finest speakers of our country from the trade and industry, the media and the government.

Running concurrently with the main session will be exclusive programme for spouses It includes a wine tasting session, a cookery show by celebrity chef, Kunal Kapoor and a trip to Ekamra Haat (an ethnic village).

Can you share details of the proposed Heritage Walk and your plans to make it a memorable event?

The highlight of the concluding day, which is coinciding with the World Tourism Day, will be a two-km Heritage Walk organised jointly with the Government of Odisha. The walk will be a cultural extravaganza with tableaux, folk dances and performances. Invitations have been set out to a number of foreign countries and different states in India to participate in the event. The theme of the walk will be 'Tourism Unites the World.'

FHRAI Golden Jubilee Convention mnemonic launched



(From L to R)- Mr Dilip K. Agarwal, Mr Navin Suchanti, Mr T.S.Walia, Mr Dilip Ray and Odisha tourism and culture minister, Mr Ashok Chandra Panda at the launch of FHRAI Golden Jubilee Convention mnemonic in Kolkata recently

Kolkata/Bhubaneswar: The minister of tourism and culture, Odisha, Mr Ashok Chandra Panda, launched the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) Golden Jubilee Convention mnemonic here recently. The convention, scheduled to be held during September 25-27, 2015 in Bhubaneswar, is slated to be one of the biggest hospitality and tourism events to be or-

ganized in recent memory within the country.

The convention theme- Atithi Devo Bhava – is the distilled essence of Indian culture and it means ‘Guest is God’. It will be a high profile event with more than 1000 delegates representing top echelons of the hospitality and tourism industry and other stakeholders likely to participate.

Addressing the media, Mr Panda

said the Odisha government would leave no stone unturned to make the convention a success. On future plans of Odisha Tourism, he said “We are geared up to meet challenges and will take tourism to the next higher level with greater focus on adventure sports, eco-tourism and the western and southern regions of Odisha and the KBK (Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi) belt.”

Dr Arabinda Kumar Padhee, Commissioner-cum-secretary, tourism and culture, government of Odisha hoped that with the successful organization of this convention, Bhubaneswar will emerge as an important MICE destination.”

The inauguration ceremony on September 25 will be followed by a number of technical sessions where industry leaders will discuss, debate and dissect issues related to the hospitality and tourism industry in India.

Folk dances and cultural programmes by well-known artists of the state will be the highlight of the second day (September 26), appropriately called ‘Odisha Day’. Besides, Odisha Tourism will make a presentation showcasing the tourism potential of the state to potential investors who are likely to attend the convention.

On the concluding day, which happens to be ‘World Tourism Day’, a Heritage Walk with a theme- ‘Tourism Unites the World’- has been organized jointly with the state government. It will essentially be a cultural extravaganza with tableaux, folk song and dance performances.

The president of FHRAI, Mr T.S.Walia, said “It is our privilege that Odisha Tourism has agreed to be our convention partner. For the first time in our history, the convention is being held in a tier II city of eastern India. This region has immense tourism potential and we are confident that this even will be a catalyst for the growth of tourism in the east and north-east India.”

Mr Dilip Ray, chairman, Golden Jubilee Convention Committee said: “The tourism sector is a major foreign exchange earner and more importantly generates massive employment opportunities at local level for trained personnel with different skillsets. The industry, therefore, deserves priority sector status and should be allowed the same benefits as infrastructure industry.”



(From L to R) Mr Dilip K. Agarwal, Mr Dilip Ray, Mr Ashok Chandra Panda and Mr T.S.Walia



Odisha tourism and culture minister, Mr Ashok Chandra Panda, addressing the media at The Park, Kolkata recently



Pooja Ray



Alka Sehgal



Smita Raj Parikh

Alka Sehgal on spouses program

What are the major attractions of the spouses' program?

For the first time in the history of FHRAI, we will have a 3-day power-packed program specially designed for spouses & kids with bumper gifts. Film actress Mahima Chaudhry's motivational talk and a solo program by Dance India Dance star will be the show stoppers.

What are the entertainment options for guests and their kids at the convention venue?

DID's Mandakini will perform live. A famous designer will conduct the fashion show with models from Mumbai. Ladies can relax at the spa and have another option of engaging with a top Bollywood makeup artist.

As for cuisine, what special dishes are planned for the 3-day convention?

Famous chef Kunal Kapoor will give latest tips on health foods with live demonstrations and

interactions with spouses so that they learn the latest recipes.

What can visitors expect at Pipli Bazaar and Ekamra Haat?

For the first time we are assembling famous Odia artisans at a venue where hand-woven sarees, ethnic silver jewellery, linen, paintings and carvings will be on sale. We have made special arrangements for visitors to get first-hand experience of Odia art, culture, music and temple architecture and history.

How do you propose to keep kids busy and cheerful during the day?

A specially created play area and swimming zone with Jacuzzi will be there for kids to chill out. Besides, experienced artists will teach sand art. There is a magic show, drawing and painting competition to encourage talent. There will also be an exclusive and live cooking session for children.



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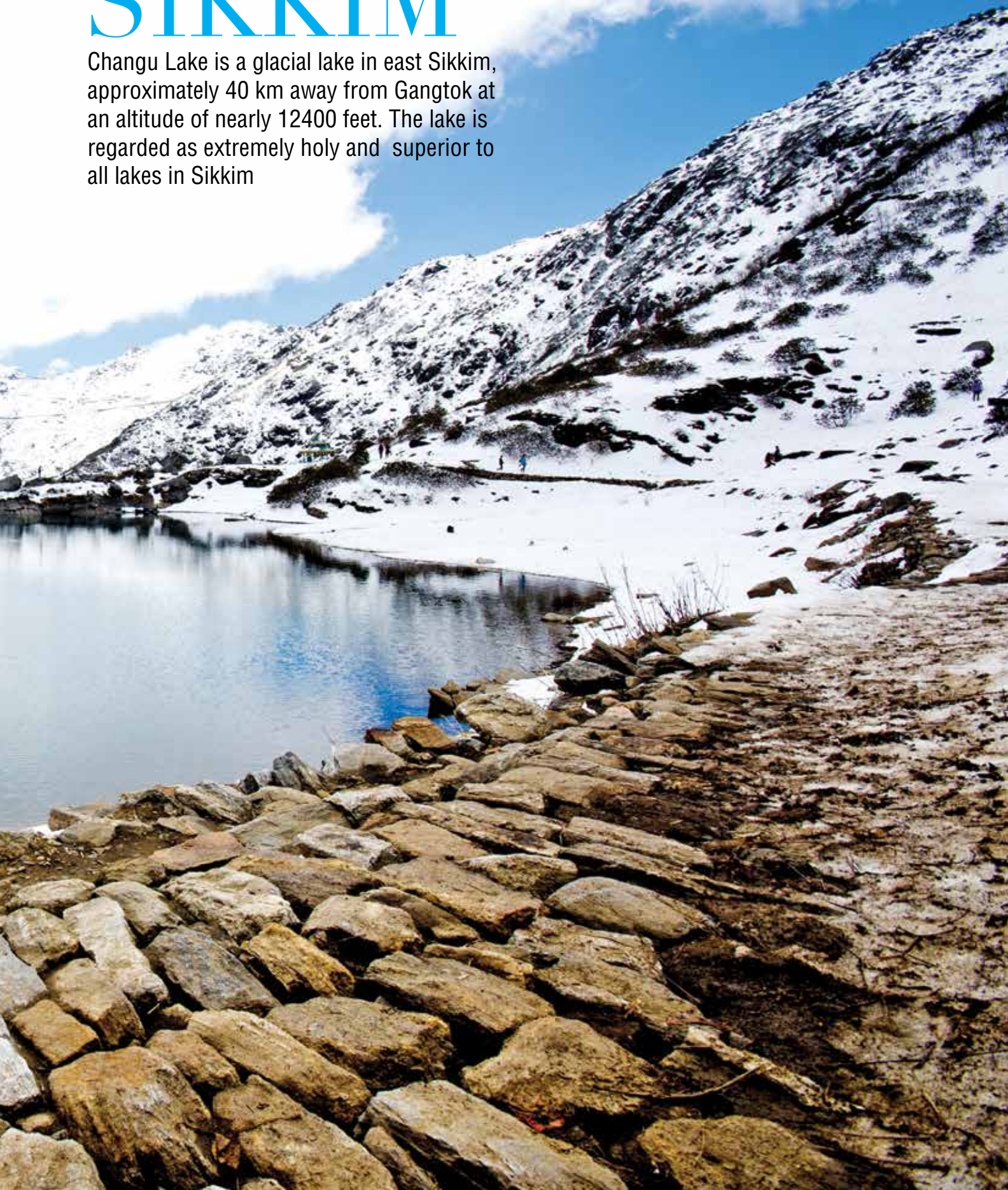
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TOURIST HOT SPOT OF SIKKIM

Changu Lake is a glacial lake in east Sikkim, approximately 40 km away from Gangtok at an altitude of nearly 12400 feet. The lake is regarded as extremely holy and superior to all lakes in Sikkim



GROWING THROUGH SHOCKS

THE rise of travel and tourism has shown significant resilience globally. Despite slow economic growth in advanced economies and geopolitical tensions in some regions, the T&T sector still accounts for a large part of the global economy (estimated to be approximately 9% of global GDP or US\$ 7 trillion) and employment, while the number of international travellers continues to increase. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the T&T sector is forecast to continue growing at 4% annually—faster than financial services, transport and manufacturing.

The theme of year's Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report is "Growing through Shocks." The Report analyzes the performance of 141 economies through the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) and explores how the T&T sector has responded to economic, security and health shocks over recent decades.

First compiled in 2007, the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) measures "the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the Travel &



The WTTC report analyzes the performance of 141 economies through the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) and explores how the T&T sector has responded to economic, security and health shocks over recent decades

Tourism sector, which in turn, contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country". The index has been developed in the context of the World Economic Forum's Industry Partnership Programme for Aviation & Travel, and in close collaboration with our strategic design partner Strategy& and our data partners Bloom consulting, Deloitte, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the UNWTO and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). We have also received important feedback from industry partners including AirAsia, Ana Holdings, The Bahrain Economic Development Board, Embraer, Emirates, Etihad Airways, HNA Group, Hilton Worldwide, IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group), Jet Airways, Jumeirah Group, Lockheed Martin, Marriott International, Safran, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Swiss International Air Lines and Visa.

Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region is extensive and very heterogeneous, though in general several countries share a high level of commitment to T&T. The region's most developed areas—includ-

ing Oceania, the Asian Tigers and Japan—all have world-class transport infrastructure, high degrees of ICT readiness and openness, and outstanding human resources. However, the best performers stand out by better valuing their natural and cultural resources and better protecting their environment. South-East Asia is where international arrivals have grown the most recently, thanks in part to being highly price competitive and rich in natural capital, and helped also by the rapid expansion of the middle class in surrounding areas. Policymakers have understood the potential multiplier effect of offering a larger, cross-border set of itinerary options, including through cooperation on visa policy. ASEAN countries have already started to work on pilots to implement visa facilitation, aiming in the coming years for holders of a visa for any ASEAN country being able to travel freely in all 25 member states. According to the UNWTO, this could ultimately lead to an increase of up to 10 million visitors in ASEAN countries.

Despite remarkable progress, cooperation is needed on common aspects that still limit T&T development in South-East Asia. Efforts to bridge the significant divides in digital connectivity and infrastructure between the region's most and least advanced countries—including through public-private partnerships—would play a significant role in complementing the development of a regional visa policy.

Arguably, however, the main priority is to restrain rampant environmental degradation. Rapid urbanization and industrialization are significantly impacting air quality and forest and ocean ecosystems: for example, Forest Watch Indonesia reports that Indonesia lost 990,000 hectares of forest between 2010 and 2013, and a World Resource Institute Report estimates that 45% of coral reefs in the



region's "Coral Triangle" face a high level of threat.⁴ The issue needs to remain high on the political agenda, with initiatives and policy guidelines by such organizations as the IUCN, FAO, UNEP and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, offering potentially useful models for the necessary multi-stakeholder partnerships.⁵ Australia ranks 7th overall and top in the Asia-Pacific region, and has identified tourism as one of four national investment priorities. With attractions from the Great Barrier Reef to Kangaroo Island and the largest number of World Heritage natural sites, it ranks 2nd globally on natural resources. It is also one of the top three destinations for leisure and entertainment, according to digital demand. Australia has made significant progress on visa requirements (49th), including an expansion of the online visa application system and self-processing border entry facilities

for U.S. and U.K. e-passport holders. It remains strong in its openness of bilateral air service agreements (5th) and air transport infrastructure (4th), though it needs further investment in ground and port infrastructure (57th) and tourism infrastructure (29th) to reach its potential. The country should also consider tackling issues related to price competitiveness (138th) and human resources (49th), where access to the international talent pool is limited (134th) and hiring and firing practices are somewhat rigid (133rd).

Japan is ranked 9th globally and 2nd in the AsiaPacific. It welcomed over 10 million foreign tourists in 2013, a new record, bouncing back from a drop in arrivals in 2011. Japan's success can be attributed to its rich cultural resources (6th) with unique cultural heritage (2nd) and efficient ground (17th) and air transport (19th) infrastructure. It has also

SPECIAL FEATURE

built impressive ICT readiness (9th), launching a paid wireless internet service with access points across the country, which is appreciated by visitors and supports the business operations of firms. Japan's human resources (15th) are highly qualified and excel in terms of treatment of customers, where Japan is ranked 1st globally. The country can rely on a strong business travel component, and is geographically situated in an area where neighboring countries' middle classes are growing significantly. On a less positive note, Japan is not a price-competitive destination (119th).

Singapore ranks 11th globally in this TTCI edition. Its excellent business environment (1st) and high-quality human resources (3rd) are extremely conducive to the development of its Travel & Tourism industry, which is also a high national priority (4th). Singapore has taken the necessary measures related to international openness (1st) to ensure the seamless arrival of international visitors, and has strong ground (2nd) and air (6th) transport infrastructure. The country has experienced an increase in spending on sightseeing, entertainment and gaming, and ranks top for entertainment in terms of online searches. Similarly to other advanced economies, however, Singapore is not a very price-competitive destination (116th). It should also dedicate more efforts to environmental sustainability (51st), notably high water stress (128th) and damage to coastal ecosystems.

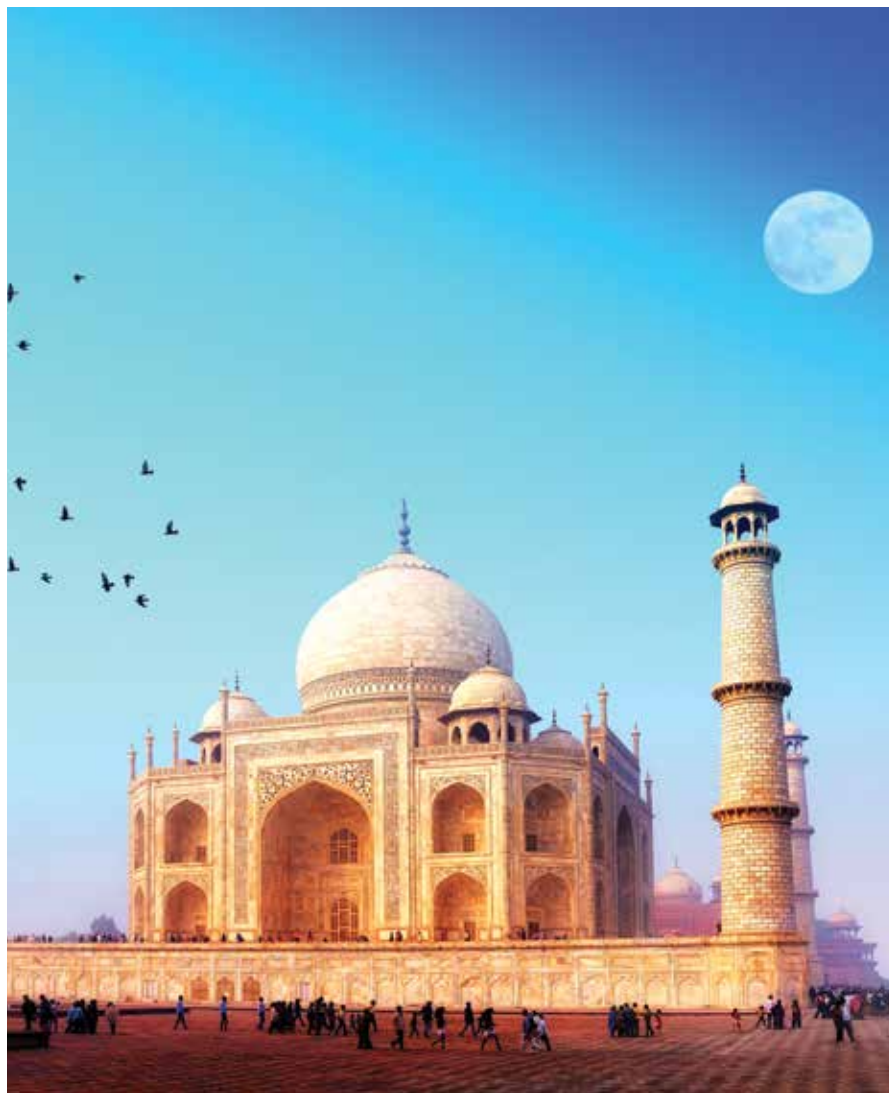
China ranks 6th regionally and 17th globally. Thanks to its size and its increased relevance for businesses, it welcomed over 55 million international visitors in 2013. Tourists are attracted to the country's incredible cultural resources (4th) and natural resources (the country ranks third in World Heritage natural sites), while several international association meetings every year draw business

Country/ Economy	TTCI INDEX		Enabling Environment Pillars, values				
	Regional rank	Global rank	Business Environment	Safety and Security	Health and Hygiene	Human Resources and Labour Market	ICT Readiness
SOUTH-EAST AND SOUTHERN ASIA							
Singapore	3	11	6.13	6.40	5.44	5.49	5.98
Malaysia	7	25	5.60	5.79	5.18	4.98	4.52
Thailand	10	35	4.78	75	4.87	4.98	4.34
Indonesia	11	50	4.48	5.16	4.24	4.70	3.73
India	12	52	4.02	3.82	4.32	4.03	2.83
Sri Lanka	13	63	4.59	5.58	5.24	4.33	3.49
Philippines	14	74	4.54	3.84	4.79	4.59	3.71
Vietnam	15	75	4.45	5.31	4.99	4.68	3.37
Bhutan	16	87	4.56	6.02	4.57	4.26	3.51
Lao PDR	17	96	4.58	5.51	4.25	4.50	3.09
Nepal	19	102	3.98	4.52	4.90	4.22	2.36
Cambodia	20	105	3.56	4.96	3.92	4.48	3.19
Pakistan	21	125	4.19	3.04	4.39	3.07	2.54
Bangladesh	22	127	4.06	4.43	4.2	3.85	2.70
Myanmar	23	134	3.20	4.04	4.41	3.85	1.60
South-East and Southern Asia average			4.45	4.81	4.66	4.40	3.40
South-East and Southern Asia standard deviation			0.72	0.98	0.44	0.58	1.04
Asia-Pacific average			4.65	5.20	5.14	4.62	4.06
Best performer (global)			6.13	6.70	6.97	5.64	6.37

visitors. China continues to invest in its infrastructure, especially with further planned improvements in air infrastructure (25th) including new and expanded airports. Ground infrastructure remains somewhat less developed (53rd), while tourism service infrastructure offers significant opportunities for future development, especially in terms of available hotel rooms (112th). To continue building on its successes and improve the industry's competitiveness, the country should focus on policies that would further enable the business environment (80th) and increase international openness (96th). Future demand for natural tourism also depends on China addressing questions of environmental sustainability (137th) and the falling quality of its natural environment (121st).

India takes 52nd place overall. T&T already accounts for 5% of India's employment and its huge potential for further growth is made visible by comparing the country's 7 million international visitors to China's 55 million. The country's natural resources (17th) are vast and diverse and its cultural resources (10th) include a unique intangible heritage (8th), sports events and a large entertainment offer. India's relevance as business travel destination is increasing along with its economic growth, it remains a price-competitive destination (8th) and recent changes in its visa regime: not yet reflected in the data rankings—have the potential to boost international arrivals. However, long-standing infrastructure gaps remain, especially in tourism-specific infrastructure (109th) and the quality of roads. Despite some uneven progress, India also lags on health and hygiene (106th) and ICT readiness (114th). The safety and security situation is unsettling, with a perceived increase in the impact of crime and violence (97th), and India ranks only 139th for environmental sustainability.

India moves up to 52nd position on global travel tourism list



Geneva: India has moved up 13 notches to 52nd position on a global list of countries in terms of their travel and tourism competitiveness, but ranks worse than its emerging market peers like China, Brazil, Russia and South Africa.

While India fares much better as a business destination, the infrastructure gaps, concerns on health, hygiene and environment sustainability, and its “unsettling” safety and security situation has dragged down the overall ranking.

The list has been topped by Spain, which is followed by France, Germany, US, UK, Switzerland, Australia, Italy, Japan and Canada in the top ten.

Of the large emerging markets, China (17th) and Brazil (28th) made it into the top 30, whereas Russia, South Africa and India ranked 45th, 48th and 52nd, respectively.

Releasing the biennial list, the World Economic Forum (WEF) said India's relevance as business travel destination is increasing along with its economic growth and it remains a highly price-competitive destination (with 8th position globally on this parameter) and recent changes in its visa regime have the potential to boost the international arrivals.

In the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) 2013 India was ranked 65th out of 140 countries covered in its study. The 2015 report ranks 141 countries across 14 separate dimensions, revealing how well countries could deliver sustainable economic and societal benefits through their travel and tourism sector.

Long-standing infrastructure gaps remain, especially in tourism-specific infrastructure (where India is ranked 109th) and the quality of roads.

India also lags on health and hygiene (106th) and Information, Communications and Technology readiness (114th). The safety and security situation is unsettling, with a perceived increase in the impact of crime and violence (97th), and India ranks only 139th for environmental sustainability.

"The diversity in the top 30 shows that a country does not have to be wealthy to have a flourishing tourism sector," World Economic Forum Economist Roberto Crotti said.

Crotti added: "Many countries should still do more to tackle travel and tourism challenges, including visa policies, better promotion of cultural heritage, environmental protection and ICT readiness." (PTI)

Seven Transformations that May Change the Travel and Tourism Sector - A Business Perspective

ALTHOUGH the T&T sector globally is growing more quickly than many other sectors, seven transformations currently taking place could have significant implications if not addressed in an appropriate and timely manner:

1. Administrative barriers are hindering the movement of people. The huge growth potential of travel and tourism is being held back by the outdated practices of visas and border controls. While in other areas great emphasis is placed on the benefits of globalization and free trade, often we forget to think of tourism as an export, and overlook restrictions on the movement of travellers. Progress is being made—according to a UNWTO study, the proportion of global travellers having to apply for a visa declined from 77% in 2008 to 62% in 2014 (UNWTO, 2014). However, much more could be done. Research estimates that removing travel visas at the bilateral level would more than triple travel flows between countries. Indeed, improving visa processes alone could generate an estimated \$89 billion in additional international tourism receipts and 2.6 million extra jobs in APEC countries by 2016 (UNWTO, 2013). The private sector is proactively engaging with national governments to highlight the economic case for travel facilitation, urging collaborative efforts among all relevant public and private stakeholders and proposing a fully integrated model to facilitate Smart Travel.

2. Perceptions of instability are increasingly influencing tourist flows. Despite its resilience to shocks, ultimately the travel and tourism industry's growth and survival is entirely

dependent on people's ability to have a safe travel experience. Advances made in the last decade could be undone by factors including current geopolitical tensions, from the Middle East to Ukraine; the growing terrorism threat from ISIS; and the risk of pandemics, as exemplified by the Ebola outbreak. Whatever the root causes, the impact for the affected destination is the same: a decrease in the number of tourists and amount in revenues, which may be temporary but are nonetheless significant. In high-risk times, the natural instinct of nation states is to re-evaluate their borders and immigration policies. But closing down borders is not a viable solution—it will not resolve security challenges, and will lead to further significant economic losses. To mitigate these risks, it is critical to implement technological advances and innovative processes that can increase both the efficiency and security of travel. There is a need to consider how to implement improvements in early warning systems, risk profiling and scenario planning, visa systems, data sharing and passenger profiling at airports. The key challenge is to generate the necessary levels of collaboration among international institutions, governments and the private sector.

3. Increasing difficulties in attracting top talent. Research shows that for every 30 new tourists to a destination, one new job is created. The aviation and travel sector is already the second-largest employer in the world, with huge potential for further job creation—travel and tourism is forecast to employ 338 million people by 2023, and aviation and aerospace

an additional 58 million people. Yet the industry has difficulties in attracting top talent, both for technical and managerial positions. According to the WTTC, the total global impact of talent gaps could cost the global economy nearly 14 million jobs and \$630 billion GDP loss, with China, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States suffering most. The public and private sector need to collaborate closely to update university and training programmes to ensure they keep up with market needs and technological advancements.

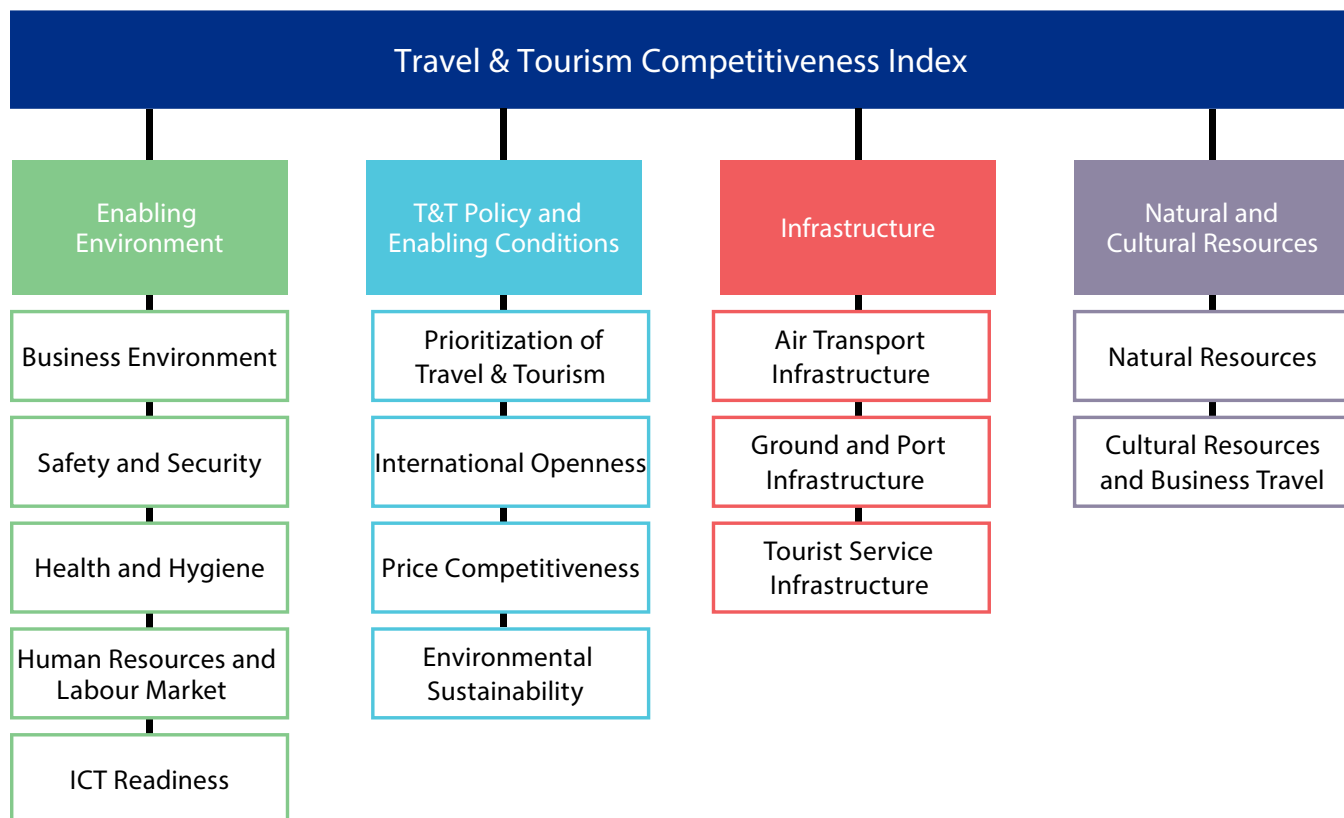
4. Changes in the composition of tourist demand will define business strategies. As described above, the industry will need to deeply understand and cater their product offerings to the needs of new travellers (such as millennials and the new middle classes coming from emerging countries)



The increase in tourism may also impact local destinations through an increase in waste, water usage and the possible deterioration of cultural and world heritage sites

and segments where demand is growing (such as senior travellers) to capitalize on shifting demographics.

5. Increasing attention to reduce carbon footprint. Passenger air traffic is forecast to increase by 31% by 2017, with environmental implications including a projected 20% increase in energy demand. Given targets to decrease carbon emissions, the industry is working to reduce oil dependency by improving aircraft and airport operations, aircraft design and material use and considering alternative sources of energy. The increase in tourism may also impact local destinations through an increase in waste, water usage and the possible deterioration of cultural and world heritage sites. While global climate agreements are still a work in progress, the travel and tourism industry has taken active steps to reduce its environmental footprint and



plans to continue to do so, including by implementing better measurement tools. International organizations and institutions—including ICAO, IATA, UNWTO, WTTC, ITP and the Forum—have brought leaders from the sector together to advance the dialogue on these issues and help set standards and targets for the industry.

6. Investments in infrastructure increasingly lag behind industry growth. While the tourism industry is growing strongly, infrastructure investments—airport development, road and rail, and communication technologies—are lagging behind, leading to significant bottlenecks. These will worsen if not addressed, given that cities are likely to triple in size in the next 20 years. There is a need for dialogue between the public and private sectors, including airlines and airports, to ensure an integrated infrastructure strategy and alignment on issues such as investment, regulation, sustainability, security, safety and corruption. Airports are not destinations in themselves—people do not go to airports to shop or dine, but to move quickly and seamlessly on to their destinations. They will choose alternative destinations when access is difficult.

7. New technologies and innovations are revolutionizing the industry. As described above, new technologies and innovations, such as GPS-enabled smartphones and growing trust in on-line transactions, are reshaping parts of the travel industry and requiring businesses to rethink how to deliver services. There is also a growing need for the public sector to redefine regulatory frameworks in response to the rise of the sharing economy—people are letting out their property as and when it suits them, acting as an ad hoc taxi service and even starting to crowd-source charter flights. The consumer peer-to-peer rental market is worth an estimated \$26 billion, with Airbnb alone having more than 600,000 listings across 160 countries.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMPETITIVE RANKING/VALUE

Rank	Country/Economy	Value	Rank	Country/Economy	Value
1	Spain	5.31	71	Georgia	3.68
2	France	5.24	72	Israel	3.66
3	Germany	5.22	73	Uruguay	3.65
4	United States	5.12	74	Philippines	3.63
5	United Kingdom	5.12	75	Vietnam	3.60
6	Switzerland	4.99	76	Jamaica	3.59
7	Australia	4.98	77	Jordan	3.59
8	Italy	4.98	78	Kenya	3.58
9	Japan	4.94	79	Tunisia	3.54
10	Canada	4.92	80	Guatemala	3.51
11	Singapore	4.86	81	Dominican Republic	3.50
12	Austria	4.82	82	Macedonia, FYR	3.50
13	Hong Kong SAR	4.68	83	Egypt	3.49
14	Netherlands	4.67	84	Azerbaijan	3.48
15	Portugal	4.64	85	Kazakhstan	3.48
16	New Zealand	4.64	86	Cape Verde	3.46
17	China	4.54	87	Bhutan	3.44
18	Iceland	4.54	88	Botswana	3.42
19	Ireland	4.53	89	Armenia	3.42
20	Norway	4.52	90	Honduras	3.41
21	Belgium	4.51	91	El Salvador	3.41
22	Finland	4.47	92	Nicaragua	3.37
23	Sweden	4.45	93	Tanzania	3.35
24	United Arab Emirates	4.43	94	Lebanon	3.35
25	Malaysia	4.41	95	Serbia	3.34
26	Luxembourg	4.38	96	Lao PDR	3.33
27	Denmark	4.38	97	Iran, Islamic Rep.	3.32
28	Brazil	4.37	98	Rwanda	3.32
29	Korea, Rep.	4.37	99	Mongolia	3.31
30	Mexico	4.36	100	Bolivia	3.29
31	Greece	4.36	101	Suriname	3.28
32	Taiwan, China	4.35	102	Nepal	3.27
33	Croatia	4.30	103	Kuwait	3.26
34	Panama	4.28	104	Guyana	3.26
35	Thailand	4.26	105	Cambodia	3.24
36	Cyprus	4.25	106	Albania	3.22
37	Czech Republic	4.22	107	Zambia	3.22
38	Estonia	4.22	108	Swaziland	3.20
39	Slovenia	4.17	109	Gambia, The	3.20
40	Malta	4.16	110	Venezuela	3.18
41	Hungary	4.14	111	Moldova	3.16
42	Costa Rica	4.10	112	Senegal	3.14
43	Qatar	4.09	113	Paraguay	3.11
44	Turkey	4.08	114	Uganda	3.11
45	Russian Federation	4.08	115	Zimbabwe	3.09
46	Barbados	4.08	116	Kyrgyz Republic	3.08
47	Poland	4.08	117	Côte d'Ivoire	3.05
48	South Africa	4.08	118	Ethiopia	3.03
49	Bulgaria	4.05	119	Tajikistan	3.03
50	Indonesia	4.04	120	Ghana	3.01
51	Chile	4.04	121	Madagascar	2.99
52	India	4.02	122	Cameroon	2.95
53	Latvia	4.01	123	Algeria	2.93
54	Seychelles	4.00	124	Gabon	2.92
55	Puerto Rico	3.91	125	Pakistan	2.92
56	Mauritius	3.90	126	Malawi	2.90
57	Argentina	3.90	127	Bangladesh	2.90
58	Peru	3.88	128	Mali	2.87
59	Lithuania	3.88	129	Lesotho	2.82
60	Bahrain	3.85	130	Mozambique	2.81
61	Slovak Republic	3.84	131	Nigeria	2.79
62	Morocco	3.81	132	Sierra Leone	2.77
63	Sri Lanka	3.80	133	Haiti	2.75
64	Saudi Arabia	3.80	134	Myanmar	2.72
65	Oman	3.79	135	Burundi	2.70
66	Romania	3.78	136	Burkina Faso	2.67
67	Montenegro	3.75	137	Mauritania	2.64
68	Colombia	3.73	138	Yemen	2.62
69	Trinidad and Tobago	3.71	139	Angola	2.60
70	Namibia	3.69	140	Guinea	2.58
			141	Chad	2.43



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Rajrappa Temple

STATE SURVEY

Jharkhand's potential largely untapped

Jharkhand's cultural heritage is priceless. It is endowed with bounties of nature but its potential remains largely untapped. The state is an eclectic mix of luxuriant forests, captivating wildlife, enthralling waterfalls, exquisite handicrafts, sprawling water bodies, enchanting folk dances and music and above all hospitable and peace-loving people. With immense bio-diversity, moderate climate, rich cultural and historical heritage, religious places of wor-

ship and strikingly ethnic aspects, the state offers many must-see destinations for tourists.

The state government is fully aware that development of tourism sector would not only generate immense employment opportunities directly or indirectly, but also contribute to accelerated economic development. Showcasing its rich traditional and cultural heritage is an integral tourism promotion initiative which would have a cascading effect on de-

velopment of other sectors. Rightfully, tourism has been accorded the status of industry in Jharkhand.

The state's tourism policy of 2014, however, has made it clear by way of abundant caution that "There is a dire need for the state of Jharkhand to accelerate tourism development and promotion in the background of lost opportunities and non-realization of its vast tourism potential."

Other important priorities of the Jharkhand state tourism department are listed below:

Tourism infrastructure

Infrastructure is the most critical component for ensuring total tourism development. Accordingly, the government is taking all possible steps to provide an appropriate framework for private sector participation in infrastructure development in the state so as to supplement the efforts made by the government in this regard.

The state government actively en-

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The Scintillating Patratu Valley in Jharkhand

courages Indian and foreign private investment/ participation in tourism infrastructure projects. The government is also amenable to participation in joint ventures for such infrastructure development projects.

The government is taking specific measures for the development of various tourist destinations, taking into account the need of the tourists and the infrastructural requirements. The state government accords highest priority to establishment of world class infrastructure facilities. In order to do this, special efforts will be made to mobilize institutional resources and private sector investment and participation.

Land

Land identified for promoting tourism development activities would be constituted into a tourism land bank under the control of the department of tourism. The identified government land would be transferred to

Land identified for promoting tourism development activities would be constituted into a tourism land bank under the control of the department of tourism

the department of tourism free of cost, while the requisite compensation for any acquisition of private land would be paid for by the department of tourism.

To promote private sector participation, the government would formulate and announce a Tourism Promotion Land Policy, which would enable setting up of a transparent mechanism for allotting various categories of land under the control of the department of tourism.

In case of land acquisition, the department of tourism would as far as possible, take appropriate steps to provide employment opportunities to such affected people, who are found suitable and trained accordingly.

In case of tourism development on government land, efforts would be made to generate maximum employment opportunities to the local youth by appropriate training and providing requisite exposure.



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 A MEMBER OF DESIGN HOTELS

The district collectors would be authorized to release up to 10 acres of government land for tourism purpose to the department of tourism. Government land in excess of 10 acres would be transferred to the department of tourism by the district collector with the approval of the department of revenue and land reforms.

Accommodation

Special efforts will be made to develop and upgrade tourism accommodation at important tourist centres in the state keeping in view the requirements and income levels of different categories of visiting tourists.

Apart from the accommodation provided by the state government agencies and organized private sector, a Home Stay Scheme on the pattern of Bed and Breakfast Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India would be launched in the state to encourage the local inhabitants to come forward and offer their additional accommodation having basic minimum standards, which would be categorized in Silver, Gold and Platinum categories as per the facilities offered.

Private tourism zones

The government would encourage establishment of private tourism zones by acquiring and making available such land as per the Tourism Promotion Land Policy of the government. The extent of such private tourism zones shall not be less than 20 acres.

The government will also strive to provide required supporting infrastructural facilities, such as water, electricity and road at the door steps of such Private Tourism Zones.

Foreign direct investment

In view of large investments required in the tourism sector and the need for maintaining high quality standards in services, hotels and tourism related industries have been included in

the priority list of industries for foreign investment.

Export house status has been accorded to hotels, travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators vide notification 33 (RE-98) 1997 – 2002 dated 26/11/1998 of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

The state government would extend all possible assistance and support to attract foreign direct investment in building up and maintaining the tourism infrastructure and facilities in the state.

Foreign investments and technological collaborations by overseas corporate bodies (OCBs) and NRIs would be encouraged in tourism sector, which shall be given overriding priority while granting clearances and providing assistance.

Mining tourism

The state of Jharkhand is the largest

repository of mineral reserves, which accounts for about 37% of the total national mineral resources. A large number of mineral-based industries are located in the state and large-scale mining operations are being carried out in the state.

Promotion of mining tourism is a unique and thrilling concept in the country, though it is a very popular sector in certain other mineral rich countries, such as, South Africa, Japan, Germany, Brazil etc.

The department of tourism would take all steps to provide financial support to encourage tourism activities in the mining sector by providing a comprehensive package to promote the growth of mining tourism in the state.

Convention tourism

Hoteliers, industrial/ business houses and other private entrepreneurs will be encouraged to establish and

CAPITAL INVESTMENT INCENTIVE			
The details of capital investment incentive, admissible to new tourism units, are:			
Incentive	Maximum Incentive	Financial Limit	Special Benefits
Capital Investment Incentive	30%	Rs 30 lakhs	Additional 5% incentive over and above with a cap of Rs.5.00 lakhs for SC/ST Entrepreneurs, Women Entrepreneurs, Handicapped persons and Ex-servicemen shall be admissible

CAPTIVE POWER GENERATING SUBSIDY			
The details of captive power generating subsidy, admissible to new tourism units, are:			
Incentive	Maximum Incentive	Financial Limit	Special Benefits
Captive power generating subsidy	30%	Rs 5 lakhs	Additional 5% incentive over and above with a cap of Rs 0.75 lakh to SC/ST entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, handicapped persons and ex-servicemen shall be admissible

INTEREST SUBSIDY		
<p>The objective of providing this subsidy is to bring down interest cost of tourism unit for the period such a venture is most hard pressed. This subsidy is intended to encourage such ventures to become profitable rather than stagnate and contribute its share of prosperity to the state. The interest subsidy admissible to new tourism unit shall be admissible in the following manner on the interest actually paid to be financial institutions / banks on loans taken by such new tourism units:</p>		
Incentive	Maximum Incentive	Financial Limited (Lakhs)
Interest Subsidy	50%	The subsidy shall be limited to a sum of Rs.100 lakhs per annum provided the total interest subsidy shall not exceed 15% of the total turnover made in the State of Jharkhand. This subsidy shall be admissible for a period of 8 years from the date of commercial operation.

maintain convention centres of national/ international standards providing quality services in order to attract national and international meetings conferences and cultural events.

A large convention complex will be set up at Ranchi and efforts will be made to establish quality convention facilities at other important locations in the state.

Heritage accommodation

The government will make all efforts for the utilisation of old mansions and heritage buildings, built prior to 1950 and lying unutilized or underutilized to provide quality accommodation to tourists. All possible assistance will be provided to such owners of heritage buildings by the government.

The inspection bungalows, rest houses, circuit houses belonging to the revenue and land reforms department, road construction department, rural development department, forest and environment department, department of water resources and



A large convention complex will be set up at Ranchi and efforts will be made to establish quality convention facilities at other important locations in the state

local bodies etc. located at various tourist destinations, tourist circuits would be developed preferably through private-public partnership so as to provide comfortable and quality accommodation to tourists.

Fiscal incentives for tourism-related activities

The following tourism-related activities will be entitled to all incentives admissible to new tourism units:

1. Setting up of new hotels/ motels/ heritage hotels /golf courses/ ropeways and wayside amenities centres satisfying the norms/ conditions stipulated by the state government.
2. Transport facilities with air-conditioned car/coaches with a minimum capital investment of Rs.50 lakhs, operating in travel circuits notified by the department of tourism.
3. Motor launches etc operating at water sports centres notified by the department of tourism with minimum investment of Rs.20 lakhs.
4. Aero sports centres developed at places notified by the department of tourism with minimum investment of Rs.20 lakhs.
5. New amusement parks with minimum investment of Rs. 25 lakhs and operated at tourist centres notified by the department of tourism.
6. Health resorts established at places like hot springs, etc notified by the department of tourism with a minimum investment of Rs. 20 lakhs.
7. Tourist camps and camping sites having minimum capacity of accommodating not less than 20 tourists in the camp to be set up at places notified by the department of tourism.
8. Rural tourism sites, having minimum capacity of accommodating not less than 10 tourists in the village, set up at places notified by the department of tourism. All the above tourism-related activities (existing & new) will be entitled to have power at industrial and not commercial rate of tariff.



Black buck at Bhagwan Birsa Biological Park in Ranchi



Johna Falls in Ranchi

Incentive for airlines operators

Such airline companies, which start new airlines services within Jharkhand connecting various destinations would be provided a guarantee of minimum 50% load factor (Total seat capacity of such aircraft) during the first year of operation.

Incentives for new integrated multiplex complexes

(a) Development of Integrated Multiplex Complex having at least two cinema halls with total minimum capacity of 300 seats, set up in an area of 4000 sq meters or above with minimum investment of Rs.12 crores consisting of cinema halls, restaurant, fast food outlets, video games parlour, pubs, bowling alleys, health spa/centre and recreational activities will be given the status of Industry.

(b) The following concessions will be given to such complexes:

1. 100% entertainment tax exemption for first five years.
2. Existing cinema halls shall also be entitled to 100% entertainment tax exemption for first five years.

3. Liberty to fix the ticket rates for various services/facilities by the owners/operator.

4. Power tariff rates as applicable to industry.

5. No registration fee except stamp duty shall be leviable on first sale of the shopping area.

Rationalization of tax structure

The taxation and tax rate for tourism projects are to be fixed keeping in view the long term perspective. Under the above circumstances, the state government will extend certain special incentives to the new tourism-related projects. The following would be the tax regime for various tourism projects in the State:

Luxury tax

The luxury tax shall be applicable to various hotels operating in the State at the following rates:

S.No.	Room Rent (per day)	Rate
1	up to 1000/-	Nil
2	1000-2500/-	5%
3	More than 2500/-	7%

New hotels would be exempted from the luxury tax for a period of

seven (7) years from the date of commercial operation.

Entertainment tax

New tourism projects, like amusement park etc. would be exempted from entertainment tax for a period of 7 years from the date of commercial operation.

Commercial tax

New tourism units would be charged VAT at the lowest rate for a period of 10 years from the date of commercial operations.

Bar licence fee

Bar Licence fee is payable by hotels, restaurant and bar licence holders, which is decided by Board of Revenue from time to time.

Electricity duty

Exemption from electricity duty would be admissible to new tourism units for a period of 10 years from the date of commercial operations.

Stamp duty

New tourism units would be entitled to register purchase/lease of land or building with 2% stamp duty for a

period of 3 years from the effective date.

Road tax

(a) To promote private sector investment in transportation sector, relaxation of 50 % of road tax on the existing rate would be extended to such new vehicles for a period of five (5) years, which are operating as tourist coaches and whose capacity is not more than 35+1

(b) Such relaxation of road tax would also be applicable to all the tourist transport coaches operating under Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation Ltd.

Road permit

Tourist coaches, whose capacity is

not more than 35+1 would be eligible for relaxation of 25% of the charges payable for obtaining road permit. These relaxations would be admissible to all such tour operators, who are registered with any tourism department of any state holding all-India tourist permit.

Holding tax

No holding tax will be charged for first five years for the following new tourism projects:

1. Classified hotel and restaurants with an investment of more than Rs. 1 crore.
2. Projects of amusement parks with an investment of more than Rs. 2 crores.

The government will coordinate

with the tourism departments of the neighbouring states and the tourism development corporations of the neighbouring states like West Bengal, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to promote package tours on reciprocal basis and take up relevant common issues of tourism promotion and development.

Performance of tourism units will be evaluated every year and on the basis of objective evaluation criteria, suitable awards will be distributed by the state government for outstanding achievement in providing tourism facilities, innovative services, promoting rural tourism, promoting adventure tourism, maintaining best resorts, tourism publicity etc.



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Elephant Falls



Stunning Meghalaya





MEGHALAYA, also known as “Abode of the Clouds”, has its unique cultural flavor

in the form of its festivals, cuisine and pulsating music which runs in the veins of their lively people. Acknowledged as “one of the world’s rare matrilineal societies” it is home to the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia tribes who have preserved their unique culture and way of life over the centuries; it’s the land of folklore and myriad traditions. In this state, you will be buffeted with different dialects within short distances, have close encounters with people who communicate through their musical compositions and discover the charms of age-old fossils.

The New York Times has described Mawlynnong, one of its remote but exotic village in such flowing terms: “Most come to see Mawlynnong’s drop-dead gorgeousness: its tropical gardens, waterfalls and ancient living root bridges, not to mention sweeping mountain views, landscaped cobblestone streets and thatched-roof cottages. Travel articles bolster its nickname, ‘God’s Own Garden,’ calling it ‘the pride of India’ and ‘the cleanest village in Asia.’

Meghalaya’s ‘ahimsa’ tradition of sericulture (where the silk worm is not killed in the process of extracting erisilk from cocoons) continues to this day. Its wild orange honey and rare organic teas from the Khasi and Garo Hills can be relished in quaint tea estates while its exotic local cuisine can be savored sitting around a hearth in a village household.

Tourism in Meghalaya

The vision of the state tourism de-

partment is to harness the potential of tourism as an organized industry which will go a long way to promote livelihood and gainful employment opportunities and improve rural economy.

The broad objectives of this mission are:

- To organize tourism as an industry.
- To facilitate the promotion of ecological hotspots as tourism destinations.
- To promote traditional arts and culture of the state.
- To facilitate marketing of the indigenous produces and products of the state.
- To provide opportunity for livelihood and employment through tourism.

The Tourism Mission aims at projecting Meghalaya, as the most preferred tourist destination within the country and abroad.

Tourism sector has a great potential for employment generation provided the right skill-building is done. The training partners for the department under the mission are IL&FS Education, B-ABLE, Avenues, ETPL India, and IHM & FCI etc.

Inadequate facilities for stay and accommodation is impeding the growth of the sector hence the scheme “Meghalaya Tourism Development and Investment Promotion Scheme 2012” which provides assistance to entrepreneurs for creation of home-stays and resorts to the tune of 30% of project cost of Rs 16.00 Lakhs and Rs 100.00 Lakhs respectively.

The mission also focuses on brand building and convergence with other departments. After the successful convergence with the horticulture department for Ghasura Park in



Cherrapunjee

south west Garo Hills, similar convergence projects are being undertaken at Kongthong Village with the cooperation department.

Ghasura Park, Ampati, South-West Garo Hills

Ghasura Park is located at South-West Garo Hills, Ampati. It is based on a Japanese Zen garden concept. The project was initiated by the Department of Tourism, Meghalaya in the beginning of 2012, which constructed the infrastructure, tree house and suspension bridge, gazebo, pebble walk, compound etc. The horticulture department decided to join hands with the tourism department in May 2012. This convergence of both the departments makes the park distinct. The place is dotted with various species of bamboos and deciduous trees which attracts numerous

birds like robins, doves, mynas, kingfishers, etc. This garden also adds to the natural beauty of Ampati.

A. TRAVEL CIRCUITS – INTRA AND INTER STATE CIRCUITS

Interstate Travel Circuits:

Shillong, in Meghalaya state, forms an integral part of the most visited tourist circuits (other than Sikkim circuit) of north-east India. According to a TCS report, these intra-state circuits are:

- Guwahati- Shillong- Kaziranga with different variations like
- Guwahati- Shillong- Kaziranga- Tawang or
- Guwahati- Shillong- Kaziranga- Majuli
- Guwahati- Shillong- Tezpur- Bhalukpong- Tawang- Kaziranga - Majuli- Sibsagar- Kohima and others.

The circuits recommended by

Meghalaya tourism are:

- Kaziranga-Guwahati-Shillong-Cherrapunjee-Shillong
- Shillong- Mawphlang- Wei- loi-Mawsynram-Shillong
- Shillong-Smit-Nartiang-Thadlaskein-Jowai-ThluUmwi-Shillong
- Guwahati-Dudanai-Bajaengdoba-Angore-Tura-Barergapara-Baghmara-Siju-Balpakram-Shillong

Intrastate Travel Circuits:

The existing tourist circuits within the state are:

- Shillong (Day Trip)
- Shillong-Barapani-Shillong (Day Trip)
- Shillong-Sohra-Shillong (Day Trip)
- Shillong-Sohra-Laitkynsew-Shillong (Day Trip)
- Shillong-Mawphlang-Mawsynram-Shillong (Day Trip)
- Shillong-Smit-Thadlaskein-Nar-

tiang-Shillong (Day Trip)

- Jowai-Nartiang-Syndai-Jowai (Day Trip)
- Tura-Babadam-Nokrek-Tura (Day Trip or a 3 day trek)
- Tura-Siju-Balpakram-Baghmara-Tura (Approx. a week)

Outstanding tourist resources of Meghalaya

Smit-The cultural village

Smit, the cultural centre of the Khasi Hills, is situated 11 km away from the capital city of Meghalaya, Shillong on the ShillongJowai Road. The nearest airport and railway station is Guwahati, 104 km away. It is also connected by metaled road and Meghalaya Road Transport provides regular services inter-connecting Smit and Shillong.

Smit of Meghalaya is a pollution-free and pleasant village on the outskirts of the capital city. The natural beauty of the place is a treat to the eye. The farmers of Smit practice Jhum cultivation. Spices cultivated in the village are mainly exported. Smit at Meghalaya is also a site for mining. Kaolinised rocks are found in isolated purchase which stretches over an area of 0.5 km and its average thickness is 2.7. This kaolin adds to the resources of the state as it is suitable for the manufacture of white-wares.

Smit has acclaimed wide recognition for the celebration of KapomblangNongkrem. Celebrated during autumn, it commemorates the evolution of Khasi democratic states (HIMA), held in November, it is a five-day long thanksgiving ceremony to Goddess KaBleiSynshar for a rich harvest. Pomblang Ceremony is the most important ritual of the event, where people offer goats to the 'Syiem' of Khyrem, the administrative head of the Hima (Khasi Hills).

Mawlynnong Village-Asia's Cleanest Village

Mawlynnong is situated 90 kms from Shillong. Mawlynnong is famous as

Asia's cleanest village. This "picture perfect" village has over 80 houses and to earn the distinction of being the cleanest village, the villagers voluntarily performed civic duties like sweeping the roads, watering the plants in public areas and cleaning the drains along with their daily schedule of farming and cultivating broomsticks. Throughout the village, there are bamboo dustbins. The pathways are cemented and every house in the village is surrounded by gardens. Locals regularly plant trees for ensuring that the forest remains untouched and at the same time stocked up with trees. Mawlynnong village is over hundred years old.

Mawphlang

The renowned sacred forests of Meghalaya located in Mawphlang, a half-hour's drive from Shillong& are also called as 'Nature's own museum'. The Mawphang Sacred Grove is 75 hectare in area and has been since time immemorial been set-aside as a sacred site and strictly protected by customary laws, beliefs and enforced by taboos. The Grove is revered for purposes such as preservation of watercourses

and sacred plants and as abodes for traditional deities. This has inadvertently assisted the protection of rivers and streams, rare species of plants and animals, fragile ecosystems, and the prime forest. The Sacred Grove dates back to the 4th century when it was established. The 75 hectare Grove is a remnant dry semi-deciduous and savannah-transition zone forest and a treasure house of plants species. An estimated 400 species of plants which comprise of tree species, shrubs, ferns, herbs, pteridophytes and epiphytes is found within these 75 hectares of Forest. 45 species of plants that are rare and threatened are found only in Sacred Grove. Of the 75 ha, the Sacred Grove or Law Kyntang' is about 40 ha, the 'Law Raij' or Community Forest is 5 ha and the 'KsehLangblah' or Langblah Clan Forest constitutes about 20 ha.

Nongkhnum Island

Nongkhnum Island is the largest river island in Meghalaya and the second largest in Asia, after Majuli Island in Assam. Spanning an area of 25 sq km, the island was formed by the bifurcation of the Kynshi Riv-



Uiam Lake, Meghalaya



Shillong golf link

er into the Phanliang and Namliang rivers. Located about 14 Kms from Nongstoin, the district hq of West Khasi Hills, it is 25 sq. kms in area. Travelling on foot from Nongstoin through the villages of Lawse, Mawduh and Mawthar, it takes about two and half-hours to reach the Island. The Phanliang River forms a beautiful lake adjacent to the sandy beach.

Dawki Bridge

Dawki is located on the Indo-Bangla Frontier at the end of the Guwahati-Shillong-Dawki Road. i.e. N.H-40. As one crosses the international frontiers at Dawki, one steps on to Tamabil to converge onto the Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka Highway of Bangladesh. Very close to the Dawki customs check post flows the Dawki River with Jaintia Hills District on one side and East Khasi Hills District on the other. An eye-catching motorable suspension bridge spans the Dawki River to complete the missing link of NH-40.

Tura Peak

A beautiful and majestic hill stands on the eastern side of Tura at a height of 872 m above sea level overlooking the town of Tura. Local legend has it that the peak provides a sacred shelter or abode to the 'Gods' and it is also

claimed that Tura was traditionally known as Dura, but due to mispronunciation by the British gave it the present name of Tura. The Tura range has been declared a reserve forest with an observatory, a Cinchona plantation and a tourist bungalow located at its vicinity. A magnificent view of the lower Brahmaputra valley as well as the golden yellow plains of Bangladesh can be seen all year round from the peak.

Nokrek Hill

About 40 kms, via Asanangiri and Sasatgiri but just 2 kms from Tura peak and teeming with wild life, Nokrek Hill is the home of a very rare species of citrus locally known as MemangNarang orange of the spirits. This MemangNarang is considered to be the most primitive and progenitor of all other varieties of citrus plants in the world. With a view to preserve this rare species of citrus indica, the first gene sanctuary of the world has been established here.

Balpakram

The literal meaning of Balpakram is the "land of perpetual winds". Gorge of Balpakram is popularly compared to the Grand Canyon of U.S.A. It is believed that here, the spirits of the dead dwell temporarily before em-

barking on the final journey. Balpakram is sacred to the Garos as the abode of the dead spirits. Balpakram has many mysterious and unnatural phenomena. Some of these mysterious sites are Boldakmatchukaram, Chidimak, Matchru, Arengpatal, Goncho Dare, Dikini ring, RongsaljongAgal, RongsobokRongkol. It is believed that in Balpakram when Laxman was seriously injured during the war with Ravana and a very rare life-saving herb was required, Hanuman found it here but not knowing which to take and also in his haste to return, broke the top of the hills and carried it away. The missing portion of that hill became a deep awning canyon. Balpakram has been declared a National Park some years ago. This place is about 220 sqkms in area and is 67 kms from Tura. This place is not only of mythological importance but also the natural habitat for many rare and exotic animals and plant life. It is also believed to be the original home of the rare citrus plant Me-mangNarang. Balpakram is exquisitely beautiful when ground orchids are in bloom. The best time to visit the area is November to March. There is the guest house at Hattisil at the entrance to Balpakram run by the forest department.

Shillong to hold India's first cherry blossom festival

As a precursor for holding India's first Cherry Blossom Festival in the State, the Avenue Cherry Tree Plantation was launched by the Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma in the presence of Minister for Forest & Environment Prestone Tynsong at Ward's Lake, in Shillong recently.

The plantation was organized by the Department of Forest & Environment in collaboration with Institute of Bio-resources & Sustainable Development (IBSD), Government of India and Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA) to have an avenue plantation of cherry plants and give Shillong a unique and distinct look.

The plantation of cherry trees was carried out by the dignitaries, officials of the department and others in the Ward's Lake premises, in front of State Convention Centre and other sites in the city some of which were identified by the Chief Minister himself.

Launching the plantation in a brief but impressive function, the Chief Minister said, "as we move ahead with the concept of Green Meghalaya, we should do it in a more scientific way so that it is in sync with our objective of Destination Meghalaya" and expressed his happiness to have the "convergence of thoughts and minds" in this initiative. Stating that Shillong has the fame of being one of the most beautiful hill stations in the country, he said that we need to ensure that it keeps up its name and fame futuristically and based on this, the government has come up with the concept of making Meghalaya a destination.

"When we build or plan our roads, our localities, our habitations, the



aesthetic part is very important" he said. When we talk of making Meghalaya as the most liveable State there are many things that need to be done and this is just one part of it, he added.

Forest & Environment Minister Prestone Tynsong, who spoke briefly on the occasion, expressed his hope that with this designed avenue plantation of cherry trees there will be increased visitors and tourists coming to the State.

Earlier, the Director of IBSD, Manipur, Prof. D. Sahoo, in his introductory address, said that this idea was born after he saw wild cherry trees being grown in a haphazard manner in Shillong. The state has a lot of potential in terms of eco-tourism and employment generation and we can utilize this unique bio-resource with

a proper design so that "after Japan when people talk of cherry blossoms they will talk about India, they will talk about Shillong", he said.

The Institute of Bio-resources and Sustainable Development (IBSD) has identified Meghalaya's capital as the perfect place to plant over 10,000 saplings of cherry trees. He also said that the saplings will be planted in an area identified by the institution which is near Pinewood Hotel. Informing that 5000 sapling will be planted in the first phase of the project, Sahoo said that these will be planted from Barapani onwards towards Shillong. "This will be done in a systematic manner to ensure that the trees are of the same heights and bloom at the same time," he said.

Stating that Japan is the only country which celebrate the cherry blossom festival, Prof Sahoo said, "With the completion of the project, Shillong in will become the second place to have such a festival." The Director also said that concept of the festival is linked with the idea of promoting the tourism industry of the state. "The festival will no doubt attract many people from across the world and this will to a great extent contribute to the state's exchequer and solve problem of unemployment," he asserted. "IBSD will fully sponsor the programme and for this project it has also sanctioned an amount of Rs 10 lakhs," he informed while adding, "We have also requested the forest department to assist in post plantation maintenance, which is the most crucial part." With regard to the time frame of the project, Sahoo said, "If we start planting the saplings from this year, by 2018-19, we are ready for the cherry blossom festival." He also informed that IBSD has proposed to the government exploration of the possibility of having a Jacaranda festival here.

(source: Meghalaya Basin Development Authority)

Ark of Taste

The Ark of Taste is a listing of endangered food species, stretching across the globe. It highlights unique food items that are neglected today due to the industrialisation of our food production and the marginalization of small-scale food producers. The Ark of Taste is part of the Slow Food foundation for Biodiversity. Today the international list includes over 1,100 products from more than 50 countries. Through the Ark of Taste, NESFAS aims at the rediscovery, cataloguing, description and promotion of foods that have been forgotten with time. In 2012, three Ark of Taste products entered the Ark of Taste as 'passengers'.

Presidia

Presidia, a Latin word for 'Stronghold', symbolizes the defending and promotion of agro biodiversity products by showcasing them as well-established quality produce and linking them to ethical market value chains.

Khasi Mandarin: Acknowledging its uniqueness, cultural significance and potential for creation of livelihood opportunities, NESFAS, along with the community of Khasi Hills, nominated the Khasi Mandarin for a Presidia project.

In the southern belt of Meghalaya, home to the War and War-Jaintia tribes, the soil

has a high limestone content which neutralizes the PH, as opposed to an acidic terroir that would result in less aromatic fruits. In addition, the low altitudes are favourable as they provide a hotter climate to develop the sweetest fruits for the trees. Interestingly, the flowers of these terroir-bound orange trees also provide sweet nectar for local bees, which explains why the honey is most famous and popular from these areas. Both orange and honey production have long been sustainable livelihoods of the Khasi and Jaintia people.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN MEGHALAYA

	Project Name	Type	Sector	Sub-Sector	State	Project Authority	Status	Total Project Cost (in Rs Crore)	Date Of Award
1	Two Laning of Shillong Bypass Section Road	PPP	Transport	Roads and bridges	Meghalaya	National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)	Under Construction	226.12	11-May-2010
2	Road Upgradation (Shillong) Project	PPP	Transport	Roads and bridges	Meghalaya	National Highways Authority of India	Completed	226.11	Not Available
3	Road Upgradation (Jowai-Assam/ Meghalaya Border) Project	PPP	Transport	Roads and bridges	Meghalaya	National Highways Authority of India	Under Construction	390.00	Not Available
4	Road Upgradation (Jowai -Meghalaya/ Assam Border NH-44) Project	PPP	Transport	Roads and bridges	Meghalaya	National Highways Authority of India	Terminated	440.00	Not Available
5	Jorabat-Shillong NH-40 Road Project	PPP	Transport	Roads and bridges	Meghalaya	National Highways Authority of India	Completed	824.00	Not Available
6	Ganol Hydel Power Project	Non PPP	Energy	Renewable energy (grid)	Meghalaya	Meghalaya Energy Corp. Ltd.	Under Construction	350.00	Not Available
7	Four laning of Jorabat - Shillong Section Road	PPP	Transport	Roads and bridges	Meghalaya	National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)	Under Construction	536.00	20-May-2010
8	Byrnihat-Shillong Railway Line Project	Non PPP	Transport	Railway track, tunnel, viaducts, bridges	Meghalaya	Northeast Frontier Railway	Under Construction	4,083.00	Not Available
9	Buildings For Ph-I & II (Shillong)	Non PPP	Social and Commercial Infrastructure	Education	Meghalaya	Central Public Works Department-North Eastern Zone - I Shillong	Others	0.00	Not Available
10	Azra-Byrnihat BG Railway Line Project	Non PPP	Transport	Railway track, tunnel, viaducts, bridges	Meghalaya	North Eastern Railway	Under Construction	546.47	Not Available
11	Airport (Umroi) Project	Non PPP	Transport	Airports	Meghalaya	Airports Authority of India	Completed	125.00	Not Available
12	Academic Cum Residential Campus (Shillong)	Non PPP	Social and Commercial Infrastructure	Education	Meghalaya	Central Public Works Department-North Eastern Zone - I Shillong	Under Construction		

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B Thiagarajan, Executive Director & President - Airconditioning & Refrigeration Products Business, Blue Star Limited

VRF market in India expected to grow at CAGR of 15%: Blue Star

The market for 100% inverter variable refrigerant flow (VRF) airconditioning systems in India is expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of at least 15 per cent over the next few years,” Blue Star ED and President (AC&R Products Business) B Thiaga-

rajan told reporters here recently.

The domestic air-conditioning market is estimated to be around Rs 15,000 crore and of this VRFs accounted for six per cent while room ACs account for nearly 67%. The global airconditioning market, which includes chillers, VRF systems, packaged/ducted systems as well as room ACs, stands at a cumulative value of \$90 billion. .

Mr Thiagarajan said the company was reducing its dependence on the construction sector as it stepped up its participation in the growing demand from the middle class in small towns which would generate 60% of its sales by 2018. He added that by 2018, 50% of the market would be taken up by inverter ACs.

He pointed out that the introduction of inverter ACs is a landmark event due to its high performance ability in peak ambient climatic conditions (it works without breakdowns even at 54 degree Celsius and will be sold aggressively in the Middle East market). With this product, the company hopes to become a “formidable” player in the rapidly growing VRF segment catering to the commercial airconditioning market both in India and abroad.

PTI adds: He further said Blue Star is expanding its distribution network in non-metro markets as it feels that it needs to tie in the product appropriately besides getting the pricing right for these markets.

The company has also started advertising heavily in the vernacular media to open up the market further and has already earmarked Rs 35 crore for the current year, he added.

The company’s sales stood at over Rs 3,100 crore in FY 2015 and is aiming to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 20 per cent over the next three years.

The firm plans to sell 3.6 lakh ACs this year compared to 3 lakh units last year, he said.

Conservation, Preservation and Maintenance of Monuments

There are 3,686 centrally protected monuments/sites in the country under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India.

The amount spent by the Archaeological Survey of India on conservation, preservation and maintenance of centrally protected monuments/sites in the country during the last two years, is as under:

Rupees in lakhs	
2013-14	Rs.16963.86
2014-15	Rs.23551.95

The Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for protection, conservation and maintenance of monuments, archaeological sites and remains in the country which have been declared as of National importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. Besides this, development of environs in and around centrally protected monuments/sites, providing basic facilities/amenities (e.g. drinking water, toilet blocks, facilities for physically challenged, pathways, cultural notice boards/signage, vehicle parking, cloak rooms, etc.) to the tourists visiting centrally protected monuments are the other activities which the Archaeological Survey of India undertakes, as per need and resources. Further, improvement and up gradation of these public amenities is a continuous process. This information was given by The Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge), Culture (Independent Charge) and Civil Aviation, Dr. Mahesh Sharma in reply to an unstarred question in the RAJYA SABHA recently.



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4 HHI	●	₹ 4,500
5 The Crown	₹ 3,500	₹ 4,000
6 Mayfair Convention	₹ 3,500	₹ 3,750
7 Sandy Tower	₹ 3,750	₹ 4,000
8 New Marrion	₹ 3,000	₹ 3,250
9 Pal Heights	₹ 3,000	₹ 3,500
10 Suryansh	₹ 3,000	₹ 3,500
11 Ginger	₹ 2,500	₹ 3,000
12 Hotel Keshari	₹ 1,800	₹ 2,000
13 Swosti Grand	₹ 2,800	₹ 3,300
14 Empire	₹ 3,500	₹ 4,000
15 Excellency	₹ 2,750	₹ 3,000

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2 Mayfair Waves	●	₹ 6,000
3 Hans Coco Palm	●	₹ 4,000
4 Holiday Resort	●	₹ 1,600
5 Shakti International	₹ 2000	₹ 2,500

I/ We do not require Hotel Accommodation. I will manage my own accommodation.
(Please tick box if applicable)

* Tariff mentioned above are inclusive of complimentary breakfast and all taxes.

* Selected hotel will be tentatively booked. The delegate may please contact the hotel directly for final confirmation with the delegate registration acknowledgement letter.

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* In the event of your preferred choice of hotel accommodation not being available, the next available hotel will be allotted.

* The hotel rates are valid for stay from 24th – 28th September 2015.



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Delegate fee includes lunch and
 dinner on 25th, 26th and 27th
 September 2015.

Cheque/DD of the requisite amount
 favouring 'FHRAI CONVENTION
 2015' must be sent along with the
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 form to the convention secretariat
 office at Delhi.

Online payments can also be made
 at www.fhrai.com

Registration fee doesn't include hotel
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Every delegate must fill the delegate
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 guests and media persons.

Acknowledgement letter will be given
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 hotel accommodation at a special
 rate as well as for collecting
 identification badge from the delegate
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Registration will be confirmed only
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Please book my Hotel accommodation at (mention hotel name)

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DECLARATION

I / we will be settling all hotel bills including all extra room-night charges, extra services consumed, if any, directly with the hotel and I / we also agree to pay for hotel's retention charges in the event of a "no show" or cancellation as per the hotel's policy.

Signature

Delegate's name

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Date ____ / ____ / ____ Time _____

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**Note : Registration will be confirmed only upon receipt of full payment*



CANCELLATION POLICY

75% of the delegate fee will be refunded on cancellation received till 17th August, 2015 up to 1600 hrs by means of letter, fax or e-mail, to the convention secretariat. No refund request will be honoured after the above mentioned date and time.

DELEGATE FACILITIES

Transport

Courtesy to & fro transfers will be provided for the delegates from the airport / railway station to the respective hotels from 24th to 28th September 2015.

Delegates will be provided to & fro transport from their hotels to the Convention Venue as per designated time schedule only.

Identification Badge

Please collect the same from the registration desk.

The badge must be worn at all times during the convention.

Spouse Activity

Local sightseeing and indoor/ outdoor activities are planned for the spouse. Details will be available at the Delegate registration desk.

CONTACT

Convention Office

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