

## AP & TS CHAPTER BI MONTHLY MEETING WAS HELD 3RD OCT AT NIZAM CLUB, SAIFABAD

Andhra Pradesh & Telangana State Chapter meeting was held on 03-10-2023 at Nizam Club, Saifabad, Hyderabad. The meeting was proceeded as per the agenda circulated before, main focus of the meeting was to give our chapter members the information about TCS new rules implemented from 01 Oct 2023. The guest speaker was Syed Irfan Ali Chartered Accountant, who explained and clarified the doubts, followed by Dinner. Some photos taken during the meeting.



## MIN. OF TOURISM, GOI INVITED TAFI FOR PATA TRAVEL MART AT NEW DELHI HELD FROM 4-6TH OCT



(L-R) Mr. Suresh Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, Mr. V. V. Subramanian, Secretary, TAFI, Mr. Ananda Veloo, TAFI, and Mr. Subramanian, TAFI.



The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India hosted the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi from **04th to 6th October 2023**. **PATA Travel Mart (PTM)** is Asia Pacific's international travel trade exhibition featuring unparalleled networking and contracting opportunities to help travel and tourism organizations access decision makers, meet new clients, expand their networks, establish new relationships and consolidate existing business partnerships and boost Tourism industry. TAFI was also invited by the Ministry of Tourism for the inaugural dinner of PATA Travel Mart on 4th October 2023 at Convention Hall, The Ashoka, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.

## **KERALA CHAPTER MEETING WAS HELD ON 29 SEP AT 'THE RAVIZ' MAVOOR RD, KOZHIKODE, KERALA**

Kerala Chapter Meetings was held on 29 SEP 2023 at THE RAVIZ, Mavoor Rd, Arayidathupalam, Kozhikode, Kerala. The meeting was conducted by the Chapter Secretary Mr. SRIKRISHNAN CHAKRAPANI as per the agenda sent earlier to the members. Mr. Paulose delivered the key note address to the members and also updated the floor on recently held National Management Committee meetings. Some new members were inducted and introduced to the floor. The meeting was closed followed by dinner and entertainment.



## **PRESIDENT AJAY PRAKASH INVITED AS SPEAKER IN THE UNITY IN DIVERSITY CONFERENCE:**



Dare to Overcome & Team work Arts had organized a conference on Unity in Diversity at Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi on 4th Oct 2023. Dr. Brian Grim, Global Chairman, Dare to Overcome (DTO) and Sanjay K. Roy, MD, Team Work Arts presided over the event. TAFI President and Incoming IIPT President, Mr. Ajay Prakash was invited as speaker. Reception was held in the evening followed by King Hussein Global Business & Intercultural Peace Award was held. TAFI & IIPT, President Ajay Prakash, Nadir Godrej, Chairman Agrovvet, MD, Godrej Industries, Ms. Sangita Jindal, JSW Foundation, Zainab Patel, Lead, Inclusion & Diversity, Pernod Ricard India, Prof. Maurizio Bragagni, Chairman Esharelife Foundation, and Nehme Y. Taouk, CEO & Founder of VALOORES were felicitated with Awards. Unity in Diversity Concert by Global Music Collective, featuring Harpeet & Santur Kundu was held followed by dinner.



## TAFI SIGNS MOU WITH UGANDA ON 9 OCT 2023



TAFI Signs MOU with the High Commission of the republic of Uganda, New Delhi and Honorary Consulate of the republic of Uganda, Mumbai to promote Tourism to Uganda. The MOU was signed by **Mr. Ajay Prakash** for TAFI and **Mr. Madhusudan Agrawal**, Honorary Consul General, Consulate of the republic of Uganda. It has now been forwarded to the Ugandan Attorney General's office in Uganda for ratification."

"**Mr. Bradford Ochieng – Deputy CEO**, Ugandan Tourism Board, presented interesting statistics about the potential of Tourism in Uganda". "The MOU was signed at a function organized for the inauguration of the thrice weekly direct flight of Uganda Airlines to Mumbai.

## TAFI PARTICIPATED IN THE AUCC MEETING HELD ON 9TH OCT



Airport User Consultative Committee (AUCC) was convened on 9th October 2023, at conference hall of **Portmuzziris Airport Hotel**, Nedumbassery, to discuss the Capital Expenditure projects to be implemented at **Cochin International airport** during the AERA third control period.

TAFI was invited and it was represented by National Managing Committee Member **Mr. Paulose K Mathew** who attended AUCC meeting and participated in the deliberation.

## TAFI GUJARAT HELD THEIR MEMBERS MEETING ON 3RD OCT AT DELTIN HOTEL, DAMAN



Chairman  
Ronak Shah



Secretary  
Dilip Masrani



Rajan Bhatia  
On How AI can help Travel Agents?



Comittee Member  
Chirag Patel



Comittee Member  
Rajineesh Bhatnagar

TAFI Gujarat Chapter held their members meeting at Deltin Hotel Daman on 3rd Oct 2023. About 50 members from all over Gujarat attended the meeting. The Chairman Ronak Shah Welcomed the members and the Secretary Dilip Masrani conducted the meeting as per the agenda send earlier to the members. Secretary Dilip Masrani presented the activities undertaken after the AGM and proudly announced that those members undertook the FAM had donated a library at Sasan Gir for rural welfare. About 9 new members were introduced to the floor. The floor was opened for Q & A Session and many trade related issues were deliberated. The Chairman proposed farewell and felicitate Mr. Jigar Dudakiya who had contributed and served at various positions in both Chapter and National level. The floor showers praise on Jigar who was the immediate past National Committee Member and Deputy Chairman of the Kuching Convention Committee which was a runaway successful Convention. The meeting concluded followed by dinner.





## INDIA TOURISM TO ATTRACT 20 BN DOMESTIC, 100 MN FOREIGN TOURISTS BY 2046: PATA

Expressing confidence in India's booming tourism industry, **Peter Semone**, Chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (**PATA**), spoke about the vision for India's burgeoning tourism sector. Semone disclosed that India is steadfastly aiming to attract **20 billion domestic tourists and 100 million foreign tourists by 2046**, adding that the country has immense potential in the tourism space. Semone expressed optimism regarding India's rapid expansion in the tourism sector, stating, "Tourism in India is big now and going forward, it is going to be even bigger. The ambition of 20 billion domestic visitors seems massive, given the size of India," While foreign tourists contribute to the India tourism sector's growth, their share remains relatively limited when compared to leading global destinations. To increase the share in that space, Semone emphasized the need to showcase India's diversity to the world. "For the people who still don't know India well, there is actually a need to understand its vast diversity. But as the lure of India's tourism catches on, the inbound market will continue to increase as well," he shared. In the wake of the pandemic, Semone also shed light on the evolving preferences of Indian travellers, particularly the increasing spending power of the country's burgeoning middle class. "Only about 4 per cent of Indians actually travel domestically and internationally. This **4 per cent of 1.6 billion is a lot**. But imagine if it gets up to 50 per cent or 60 per cent, India's ambition to get target footfalls will be an easy to-achieve goal," he commented. While expressing his unwavering trust in the Indian market, Semone urged Indian travellers to exhibit patience and responsibility towards both the destination and the locals. "Now that Indians are going all-out and about and also taking up serious sustainability talks, there is a need for them to become **responsible travelers**," he said. Semone was speaking on the sidelines of the **46th edition of PATA Travel Mart in Delhi** where he also praised the **Travel for Life Programme**, describing it as a great initiative worth replicating worldwide.

## KERALA OFFERING TECH & EXPERTISE TO 1000 SMES TO HELP EACH TOUCH RS 100 CR. TURNOVER



The government of Kerala is aiming to help 1000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) achieve an annual turnover of Rs 100 crore within three years through technology adoption. The program, called Mission 1000, will involve the government providing support to SMEs to modernize and adopt global best practices. Incentives, such as capital incentives and 50% interest subvention for working capital loans, will be offered to promote rapid growth. **Kerala Industries Minister, P. Rajeev** said that the state government has set up a target to scale up 1,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and turn them into Rs 100 crore turnover companies in the next three years, as per a report by the Knowledge and News Network (KNN). The minister was addressing the attendees during the inauguration of the B2B summit – Exploring Business Alliance – between the state and the central PSUs organised by the Industrial Department at Kochi. "Now we have plans to strengthen the MSME sector in Kerala. Our goal was to establish one lakh enterprises in the current financial year," he added. "As part of promoting enterprises, we recruited, 1153 qualified persons and used them at local bodies – one for one panchayat, two for municipalities and one for 20 divisions of a corporation. We could achieve the goal within eight months," informed the minister. Meanwhile, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in March said the target was to create 300,000 – 500,000 jobs in the MSME sector. It added that the government is also observing **2023-24** as the '**year of enterprises**'. The state had registered **17,300 MSMEs** in last financial year.





## SEVERAL AIRLINES INCLUDING AIR INDIA SUSPEND FLIGHTS TO ISRAEL AMIDST ESCALATING CONFLICT

Several international air carriers have taken the precautionary measure of suspending flight services to Tel Aviv in response to the recent Hamas militant attack on Israel. These airlines are awaiting improved safety conditions before resuming operations. Hamas's militants conducted a devastating attack on Saturday, resulting in the tragic loss of 700 lives and the abduction of numerous individuals. In retaliation, Israel launched strikes on the Gaza Strip. Air India, in response to the ongoing Hamas offensive, has suspended its operations to and from Delhi-Tel Aviv until October 14. An Air India spokesperson stated, "Our flights to and from Tel Aviv will remain suspended until **October 14, 2023**, in the interest of the safety of our passengers and crew." In light of the situation, Minister of State for External Affairs, **V. Muraleedharan**, reassured Indian citizens in Israel that they can contact the Indian embassy for any assistance they may require. Additionally, US-based air carriers United Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and American Airlines announced the suspension of their direct flights to Tel Aviv, as did **Air France**. These airlines typically operate direct services from major US cities, including New York, Chicago, Washington, DC, and Miami. **United Airlines**. However, services have been suspended "until conditions allow them to resume." Delta Air Lines indicated that flights "have been cancelled into this week". **Hainan Airlines**, the sole Chinese airline providing flights between China and Israel, cancelled its Tel Aviv Shanghai and Beijing and Tel Aviv flights, as well as between Shenzhen and Tel Aviv. **Cathay Pacific** also cancelled its flight between Hong Kong and Tel Aviv on Tuesday. **Korean Air** cancelled its Monday flight between the port city of Incheon and Tel Aviv.

## NEW ECO-TOURISM PROJECTS IN HIMACHAL TO BOOST RURAL TOURISM

To bolster rural tourism and sustainable development in Himachal Pradesh, the state government has given the green light to two new eco-tourism projects. These projects, worth INR 16.67 crore, are slated to be developed in Hareta Gram Panchayat in the Nadaun block of Hamirpur district and Kamyana Hilltop in the Mashobra block of Shimla district. To ensure the success of these projects, the Tourism Development Society and Self-Help Groups from the respective areas will actively participate in promoting sustainable eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation. A collaborative effort involving the Panchayati Raj, Forest, Tourism, and Rural Development Departments will be essential to facilitate the execution of these projects. At Hareta Gram Panchayat, the basic amenities and infrastructure enhancements are in the pipeline. These include the development of grasslands, tree houses for night camping, walking and nature trails, a cafeteria, children's park, solar-powered lighting facilities, and the cultivation of herbal medicinal plants. This project will cover an area of 1.2 hectares and engage approximately 60 Self-Help Groups. Meanwhile, at Kamyana Hilltop, the project will create attractions to entice tourists, such as tree-top accommodations, a cafeteria, various landscape zones, a children's garden, adventure activities, cycling trails, a deodar zone, a cactus garden, and a butterfly garden. These features are designed to draw more visitors to the area and stimulate local economic growth. For this, a total of 24 Self-Help Groups will actively participate in this project. The aim of these projects, as stated by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, is not just promoting eco-friendly tourism but also simultaneously creating employment opportunities for the local youth.



## **SIKKIM FLASH FLOODS: STATE TELLS TOURISTS TO VISIT WEST & SOUTH OF SIKKIM INSTEAD**

With tourist bookings across Sikkim during Durga Puja being cancelled in the aftermath of the Teesta flash floods, that has left large parts of North Sikkim devastated and separated from the rest of the state, the Sikkim state tourism department issued an advisory on October 8 urging the tourists to visit the western and southern parts, stressing they were safe. "Tourists willing to visit Sikkim can visit the western and southern parts of Sikkim, which are considered safe. They can visit these regions via Darjeeling and Kalimpong in West Bengal," the advisory signed by the secretary of the tourism and civil aviation department stated. The earlier advisory to avoid North Sikkim, stands, it said. Sikkim Tourism sector is staring at huge losses during the Durga Puja season as vacationers from Bengal have started to cancel and reschedule bookings in the aftermath of the flash floods in River Teesta. Sikkim's loss turned out to be Bengal's gain as many tourists who cancelled or scheduled their trips to North Sikkim during the Pujas were now going for holiday bookings in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dooars and other areas in north Bengal. Norgay Lachungpa, president of Travel Agents Association of Sikkim, said all hotels and homestays in North Sikkim had 75%-80% bookings on Puja days and the rest of the puja vacation. "It's a big loss to our industry. We are asking our members to suggest tourists to head to south or west Sikkim if the situation doesn't get better by the Pujas," he said.

## **VISITORS THROUG FAMOUS WATERFALLS OF JHARKHAND**



The famous waterfalls of Jharkhand – Hundru, Jonha, Lodh, Dassam, Sita, Panchghag and Hirni – are brimming with visitors ahead of the festive season. The waterfalls famous for their scenic natural beauty and rolling down of water from high altitude have turned major attraction for tourists, who are coming from different parts of the state as well as other parts of the country, mostly West Bengal, a tourism official said. The scenic beauty, hills and huge quantity of water falling from a height of about 150 feet is magical. If there was a staying facility here, it would have one of the best places in the world." Located around 40 km from the capital Ranchi, Jonha has been a place of tourist attraction owing to its natural beauty. Visitors enjoy the mesmerizing waterfall by stepping down around 700 stairs. Not only Jonha, but other falls in and around Ranchi are also witnessing a huge influx of visitors. On an average 10,000 tourists from different parts of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar are visiting seven falls Hundru, Jonha, Lodh, Dassam, Sita, Panchghag and Hirni-per day, Jharkhand Pryatan Suraksha Samiti (JPSS) president Rajkishore Prasad said. JPSS, a wing of the Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation (JTDC), manages and maintains the major waterfalls of Jharkhand. As many as 110 'Prayatak Mitra' (Tourist's Friend) are working for JPSS in the water bodies. The inflow of visitors would continue till February next year, he said. The government can earn huge revenue from tourism and generate employment if the tourism sites were promoted properly."



## STAR AIR ANNOUNCES RCS FLIGHTS BETWEEN KOLHAPUR AND MUMBAI

Star Air on Monday 9th Oct, announced the expansion of its flight services with the introduction of new daily flights connecting Kolhapur and Mumbai under the Government of India's RCS – UDAN scheme. This significant enhancement of our flight network will make travel between these two key cities more convenient and accessible for our valued passengers, airline officials said. Starting October 15, the airline will operate daily flights between Kolhapur's Chhatrapati Rajaram Maharaj Airport and Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. With this addition, Star Air will now offer flights seven days a week on this popular route, providing passengers with greater flexibility and choice in their travel plans, airline officials added. The new route will significantly reduce travel time between the two cities, making it an ideal choice for both business and leisure travelers. Passengers can enjoy the journey in our modern and comfortable Embraer EMB145 and EMB-175 regional jet, designed for a smooth and pleasant travel experience. Sanjay Ghodawat Chairman of Star Air, said, "We are pleased to announce the addition of daily flights between Kolhapur and Mumbai. This step aligns with our commitment to providing convenient and comfortable air travel options to our passengers. We believe this route will not only serve the business community but also tourists and residents who wish to explore the beauty and culture of both Kolhapur and Mumbai." The airline continues to explore opportunities to expand its network and enhance its services, making air travel more accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

## VIRGIN AUSTRALIA CLOCKS FIRST PROFIT IN 11 YEARS AS TRAVEL DEMAND RECOVERS



Bain Capital-owned Virgin Australia said on Tuesday that the airline returned to a profit for the first time in 11 years for fiscal 2023, buoyed by a strong recovery in travel demand following the COVID-19 pandemic. The carrier reported a statutory net profit after tax of A\$129 million (\$82.93 million) for the full year ended June 30, 2023, compared with a loss of A\$565.5 million in 2022. U.S. private equity firm Bain is targeting an A\$1 billion listing of Virgin on the Australian Securities Exchange next month, Reuters reported in May, citing a source with direct knowledge of the matter. At that size, it would be the largest new share sale since GQG Partners raised A\$1.18 billion in its listing in October 2021. In January, Bain said it was exploring re-listing the carrier that it bought for A\$3.5 billion including liabilities in 2020 after it was placed in voluntary administration, the closest Australian equivalent to Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Virgin Australia now has a considerably stronger balance sheet with continued significant improvement in its cost base, **CFO Race Strauss** said in a statement. The group revenue more than doubled to A\$5 billion. "Our balance sheet is now considerably stronger and the cost base of the business has significantly improved from recent years. Future transformation plans put us in a good position to manage cost headwinds and continue to improve our business," Strauss added. Airlines globally have posted robust profits in recent months after flights returned to full capacity on surging post-pandemic travel demand after the industry slid to a near halt when COVID-19 kept most carriers within closed borders in early 2020. Virgin was upbeat on its capital position, reporting total debt including leases of A\$2.3 billion and over A\$1 billion of cash on the balance sheet.





## INDIGO TO LAUNCH DIRECT FLIGHTS TO AND FROM SALEM IN OCTOBER 29

**IndiGo** would strengthen its network with the launch of three new direct routes to and from Salem in later this month, the country's largest airliner said on Tuesday, 10 Oct. The air carrier would launch direct flights connecting Salem to Chennai from **October 29**, to **Hyderabad and Bengaluru from October 30**. Salem now proudly stands as the 82nd domestic and 114th overall destination in the 6E network. These new connections are poised to significantly bolster interstate connectivity and advance regional accessibility, aligning with the regional connectivity scheme's objectives, IndiGo said in a statement. "We are thrilled to introduce these new routes from Salem to the vibrant cities of Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. These direct routes not only provide convenient and cost-effective travel choices between these cities but also significantly reduce travel time," IndiGo, **Head of Global Sales, Vinay Malhotra** said. "As we venture into new skies, connecting people with their favored destinations, we remain committed to delivering our promise of providing affordable, on-time, courteous, and hassle-free travel experiences across our extensive network," he said in a statement. The introduction of new direct flights would offer travelers more convenient travel options, enhance connectivity, and promote tourism in these regions.

## QANTAS CHAIRMAN TO EXIT LATE 2024 AS AIRLINE WORKS TO RESTORE REPUTATION



**Australia's Qantas Airways** said that its chairman **Richard Goyder** will step down in **late 2024**, as the embattled airline renews its board in an effort to restore trust among investors and fix its battered reputation. The Australian flag carrier has been beset with both legal and regulatory actions, that have led to growing calls from a number of unhappy investors for Goyder's resignation. Goyder, who became chairman in 2018, has previously fought against pressure to resign, including from the airline's pilots, saying that he had followed high ethics throughout his career. "As a board, we acknowledge the significant reputational and customer service issues facing the group and recognize that accountability is required to restore trust," Goyder said in a statement announcing that he will retire prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in late 2024. Qantas announced in May that the non-executive director **Michael L'Estrange** will retire at this year's AGM on Nov 3. To facilitate further renewal, **Jacqueline Hey** and **Maxine Brenner** will retire at the Qantas half-year results in February 2024 after 10 years of service, the statement said. Qantas has been facing challenges in recent times, with the High Court of Australia in September dismissing its appeal against a judgement which found the airline had cut jobs unlawfully. The ruling came days after Australia's competition regulator sued the carrier over selling fake seats. "If the new team Qantas are forming can bring a more diplomatic approach to worker relations while also improving customer experience and beating away intensifying competitors with more competitive fares, investors will be able to breathe a sigh of relief," added Josh



## AIR INDIA REBRANDING: NEW UNIFORMS BY MANISH MALHOTRA & ACQUISITION OF INDIA'S FIRST A350

Air India is set to redefine its image both in the sky and on the ground. In two major developments, the airline has partnered with renowned fashion designer **Manish Malhotra** to create new uniforms for its employees. Manish Malhotra to redesign **Air India uniforms** Air India is embarking on a transformation journey, and a key aspect of this evolution is the creation of new uniforms for its frontline staff, which includes cabin crew, cockpit crew, ground personnel, and security staff. To achieve this, Air India has collaborated with the celebrated fashion designer Manish Malhotra, known for his iconic designs and impeccable style. The airline aims to roll out the new uniforms for its 10,000-plus employees by the end of 2023. **Campbell Wilson, CEO & MD of Air India**, expressed his excitement about this collaboration, stating, "Air India is delighted to be collaborating with Manish Malhotra to realize our shared ambition of representing the very best of a vibrant, bold, and progressive India on the world stage." Malhotra, shared his enthusiasm, saying, "Reimagining their uniforms is the onset of a journey of joy and collaboration, and I am excited to embark on it. In another groundbreaking move, Air India has successfully acquired India's first **Airbus A350-900** aircraft through a finance lease transaction with **HSBC**. This acquisition marks Air India's first financing transaction from its record-setting orders for 470 aircraft, signifying a major milestone for the airline. What makes this transaction even more remarkable is that Air India becomes the first scheduled carrier to acquire an aircraft from an entity registered in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City). **Nipun Aggarwal**, Chief Commercial & Transformation Officer of Air India, highlighted the significance of this transaction, stating, "This landmark transaction marks the beginning of our aircraft leasing business from GIFT IFSC, as AIFS will be the primary Air India Group entity for widebody aircraft financing, playing a pivotal role in the future aircraft financing strategy for us and our subsidiaries."

## SITA, KL SENTRAL STATION RENEW PARTNERSHIP TO ENHANCE PASSENGER AIRPORT EXPERIENCE



**Express Rail Link (ERL)** has signed a service agreement with aviation technology provider **SITA** to equip ERL with SITA Check-in Kiosks and SITA **Self Bag Drop (SBD)** services at KL City Air Terminal in KL Sentral. Expected to be installed and operational by 2Q2024, passengers will be able to check in faster and drop their bags off within 30 seconds at the train station prior to taking the KLIA Ekspres train to the airport. The hardware is a next-generation platform, supported by SITA Flex, that enables smooth and efficient passenger processing at the airport. Under the new five-year contract, SITA will provide four self-check-in kiosks and two SBD kiosks initially and this set-up can be easily scaled up to match growing demand in the future. **ERL's CEO Noormah Mohd Noor** said: "Our renewed partnership with SITA aims to modernize our in-town check-in process and enhance passenger experience. Self-check-in and self-bag drop facilities can potentially provide cost efficiencies for airlines while offering added convenience for passengers. The self-check-in kiosks are identical to those at the KL International Airport and every airline that currently allows their passengers to do kiosk check-in at the airport can automatically extend this convenience to KL Sentral." **Sumesh Patel, president, Asia-Pacific, SITA** commented: "Whatever the form of travel, there's the need for safe, automated, smarter, and more efficient journeys. Across the travel industry, we face similar issues and there is a need to tackle these together through common and shared approaches – be that for air travel, cruises, or railways."



## RESORTS WORLD CRUISES ADDS VIETNAM AND PHILIPPINES TO SAILINGS

Resorts World Cruises has **added Vietnam and the Philippines** to Resorts World One's five-night cruises itinerary departing from Hong Kong. The new destinations will complement the current five-night **Okinawa cruise**, and the five-night **Nha Trang–Danang cruise**, as well as the five-night **Boracay–Manila cruise** which starts on January 21 next year. "Our five-night cruises from Hong Kong aboard the Resorts World One offer travellers an alternative leisure and travel option that is convenient and comfortable to visit multiple destinations within a country. The inclusion of these new destinations will help cast a wider net to rejuvenate the cruise tourism industry across the region," said **Michael Goh**, president of Resorts World Cruises. Highlights in Vietnam include beaches, such as Long Beach that is home to surfing spots and seafood joints, mud baths, hot springs, island hopping, street food dining, and visiting sights like the 78-foot-tall Buddha statue, centuries-old Po Nagar Cham Towers, and Marble Mountains. In the Philippines, attractions comprise rich heritage sites from the old Hispanic Fort Santiago to the Baluarte de San Diego tower and various iconic landmarks, churches and cathedrals. In addition, foodies can go on a street-food escapade when in Manila.



## AKASA AIR REPORTEDLY GRANTED FLYING RIGHTS TO SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR, AND KUWAIT

Since its inception, India's budget carrier **Akasa Air** has always maintained that it would fly internationally as soon as it meets regulatory conditions. With 20 aircraft in its fleet, it has fulfilled one of the Indian government's conditions for overseas flights. And now, the carrier has reportedly also been given the nod to fly to some destinations in the Middle East. Indian low-cost carrier Akasa Air has been given permission by Indian authorities to operate flights to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. The India–Dubai market is one of the most lucrative sectors for airlines operating on the route. With a substantial Indian population in the UAE, airlines from both countries want an increasing share of the seats allocated for this sector. However, it seems that the current bilateral agreement for flights between India and Dubai has been completely exhausted, and Akasa will have to wait until further changes to the agreement are announced. The agreement that currently allows 66,000 seats per week to both nations was signed in 2014. Emirates, which is based in Dubai, has supported the UAE's request to the Indian government to expand the current allocation, allowing an additional 50,000 seats. But Indian authorities aren't too keen on adding more capacity, arguing that this would hurt Indian airlines, particularly as Air India tries to reshape its global offering. To put things in perspective, in the month of October, there are more than 4,700 return flights between India and Dubai, per data from Cirium. They are operated by IndiGo, Air India, Emirates, flydubai, Air India Express, SpiceJet, and Vistara. Akasa has not confirmed anything yet, these latest reports do align with its strategy of international expansion. The airline now has 20 aircraft in its fleet, which is the minimum number of planes required by Indian authorities to grant international flying rights. Akasa will also need the status of being a designated airline of India from the government, following which it can ask other countries to give it access to flying rights and, ultimately, airport slots. With Akasa wanting to start international operations close to the end of this year, if some announcements are made in the coming weeks or months





## **FINLAND ISSUED 18,000 VISAS IN INDIA LAST YEAR, AMBASSADOR HOPEFUL OF RECOVERY TO PRE-COVID**

Finnish Ambassador to India Kimmo Lahdevirta expressed optimism about growth of tourism between the two countries. Noting that visa applications from India to Finland have nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels, the Ambassador said he expects numbers to surpass 2019 levels next year. He cited India's growing affluence and passport ownership as factors enabling more Indians to travel abroad. Ambassador Lahdevirta said the average waiting time for a Finnish visa application from India is currently within two weeks. He hopes this will make Finland an attractive Schengen destination for Indian travellers seeking shorter visa processing times compared to countries like the US. He said that tourism prospects between India and Finland are very good. "Now, of course, the pandemic caused a slump in the tourism industry as well. But now we have already reached almost the level of 2019, for example, in visa applications, and I think that's indicative that the number of people who are travelling is increasing. And, of course, Finland is an interesting destination. And it's not perhaps always the cheapest destination. But certainly, the interesting one. I am confident that number of Finnish tourists in India will continue to rise," he said. Talking about challenges, the Ambassador said, "One of the challenges we have had is that India is not that well known in Finland. But I think Finland is not that well known in India either. So, we certainly want to continue the efforts to put Finland on the map of India and India on the map of Finland. So that's an ongoing project," he mentioned. He highlighted several top places for Indians to visit in Finland, including Helsinki, the Lake District and Lapland's winter landscapes.

## **TAMIL NADU'S NAGAPATTINAM TO SRI LANKA PASSENGER FERRY SERVICE POSTPONED AGAIN**



The passenger ferry service between Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka has been postponed for the second time due to some internal issues, the officials said on Wednesday. The ferry service, which was supposed to depart tomorrow, October 12, 2023, has been postponed until October 14, 2023. After a gap of 40 years, the passenger transportation ship was first scheduled to depart on October 10, 2023, but was postponed till October 12, 2023, following an administrative problem. The trial run for the ferry was completed on October 8 during which the officials examined and ensured the comfort and safety of the passengers travelling by sea. Regular service on the 111-km stretch will be covered in three hours. The discussions on strengthening of connectivity and resumption of ferry services between the two countries were held virtually by the India-Sri Lanka Joint Committee on July 14 this year, a press release by the High Commission of India, Colombo. The India-Sri Lanka Joint Committee was established under MOU on Passenger Transportation by Sea. The productive discussions focused on the resumption of ferry services between the two countries connecting mutually agreed points. Both sides agreed that resumption of ferry services will boost regional trade and tourism and promote stronger people-to-people ties.



## UK VISA FEE HIKE EFFECTIVE THIS WEEK: HOW WILL IT IMPACT INDIANS?

A proposed **visa fee hike by the British government** will be in effect from Wednesday, making travelling to the UK expensive for people around the world, including Indians. With this, a visit visa under six months would cost **GBP 15** more and a student visa would cost **GBP 127** more. The fee hike will raise the price of the visit visa under six months to **GBP 115** and that of applying for student visa to **GBP 490**. Home Office spokesperson said, "It is right and fair to increase visa application fees so we can fund vital public services and allow wider funding to contribute to public sector pay." It follows the July announcement by **British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak** that the fees and health surcharge paid by visa applicants toward the UK's state-funded **National Health Service (NHS)** would "significantly" increase in order to keep up with the nation's public sector salary hike. "We are going to increase the charges that we have for migrants who are coming to this country when they apply for visas and indeed something called the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS), which is the levy that they pay to access the NHS," Sunak had said at the time. "All of those fees are going to go up and that will raise over GBP 1 billion, so across the board visa application fees are going to go up significantly and similarly for the HIS." The Home Office reported that the majority of work and visit visas would cost 15% more, and priority visas, study visas, and sponsorship certificates would cost at least 20% more. Criticizing the fee hike as "divisive", the UK's Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants said, "Increasing visa fees for people making their home in the UK is unfair, divisive and dangerous, during a cost-of-living crisis that is making life tougher for all of us. High visa costs are already leaving families without cash for essentials, living month to month just to save for a visa." Later in the year, a proposed rise to the IHS for funds allocated to the NHS is expected to be implemented.

## 11 TRAVEL AGENTS HELD FOR CHEATING PASSENGERS ON PRETEXT OF FACILITATING FOREIGN TRIP



The Delhi Police on Friday said it has arrested at least 11 people for allegedly duping people on the pretext of sending them to foreign countries. The matter came to fore on September 3 at the IGI Airport where a team of security officials caught a passenger – Deepak Verma – who had travelled to London on someone else's passport and returned to India. On being questioned, Verma disclosed that his journey was arranged by a travel agent, Barinder Singh from Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib, on payment of INR 17 lakh. He was sent to the UK in 2021. A case under sections 419 (cheating by impersonation) and 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code and provisions of the Passports Act was registered at the IGI Airport and a team was formed to nab Singh. The Delhi Police said it has arrested at least 11 people for allegedly duping people on the pretext of sending them to foreign countries. The matter came to fore on September 3 at the IGI Airport where a team of security officials caught a passenger – Deepak Verma – who had travelled to London on someone else's passport and returned to India. On September 5, Singh was arrested from Capitol Hills Hotel in Greater Kailash, by a team from the IGI police station. Singh disclosed that he used to send people abroad through illegal means and took money for them for the same. He came in contact with Deepak Verma in 2021 and offered to send him to the UK and took a total Rs 17 lakh from him. Following this case, the IGI Airport police conducted a drive and subsequently, arrested around 10 other such agents, who are allegedly involved in immigration frauds, in the last 30 days. According to a police officer, Satnam Singh alias Jaggi, Jaskaran Singh, Gurdeep Singh alias Bitto, Sushil Kumar Kaushik, Sandeep Singh, Randeep Singh, Pishora Singh, Sumit Kumar Yadav, Mohammad Suhail, and Anjali were further arrested on separate occasions for sending the passengers to various countries fraudulently.



## TRIPURA CM TO FLAG OFF LOKMANYA TILAK EXPRESS FROM AGARTALA ON OCT 15

**Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha** will flag off the Mumbai-bound Lokmanya Tilak Express from Agartala railway station on October 15, an official said. **The Lokmanya Tilak Kamakhya Express** used to run between Guwahati and Mumbai. It will run from **Agartala to Mumbai** from October 15, the official said. A three-member team of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) led by general manager **Chetan Kumar Srivastava** met the chief minister and invited him to flag off Mumbai-bound Lokmanya Tilak Express, said Tripura Transport secretary **UK Chakma**. The chief minister will also flag off one new Demu train from **Agartala to Sabroom** in South Tripura district on October 15. He will inaugurate a newly installed escalator at Agartala railway station. "The NFR team informed the CM that the railway has set a target to take **Kanchanjunga express** up to **Sabroom** by November," the transport secretary said. Chakma said the NRF has set a target to complete the electrification work up to Sabroom by March 2024. He said the CM urged the NFR team to increase the intercity train service between Agartala and Guwahati and to complete the **Agartala-Gangasagar** railway project at the earliest as it will ensure free movement from Agartala.

## FINANCIAL WOES GROUND MALAYSIAN BUDGET CARRIER MYAIRLINE ABRUPTLY



Malaysia's Transport Minister Anthony Loke on Thursday (Oct 12) criticised the "sudden decision" by MYAirline to suspend all operations with immediate effect, with the budget carrier citing financial problems. The shock announcement, coming barely a year after the airline was launched amid much fanfare, was posted on its Facebook page at about 5.30 am. The carrier described the move as an "extremely painful" one that had to be made because of significant financial pressures. Operations will be ceased until further notice, pending the completion of shareholder restructuring and a recapitalisation of the company. The carrier's board of directors said in a statement: "We have worked tirelessly to explore various partnerships and capital-raising options to prevent this suspension. Unfortunately, the constraints of time have left us with no alternative but to take this decision. "We deeply regret and apologise for having to make this decision, as we understand the impact it will have on our loyal passengers, dedicated employees and partners." That did not stop Loke from hitting out at MYAirline and its management at a press conference on Thursday (Oct 12) evening.

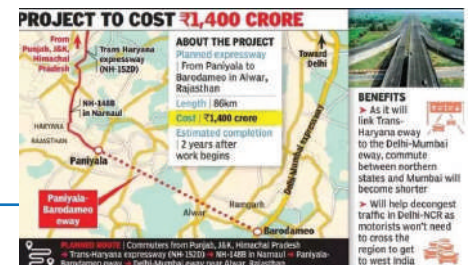




## MALDIVIAN TO START WEEKLY BENGALURU FLIGHTS FROM OCT 30

Maldivian, the national airline of the Maldives, has announced the launch of new flights to Bengaluru, India. Starting October 30, 2023, the airline will operate two weekly flights on every Mondays and Thursdays using its Airbus A320 aircraft. The Male-Bengaluru flight will leave from Velana International Airport at 9:35 and fly down to KIA at 12:15. The flight flying from Bengaluru will leave KIA at 13:15 and reach Male at 14:50. The new route will provide travellers with a direct connection between the Maldives and Bangalore, one of India's major cities. This service is part of Maldivian's ongoing efforts to expand its network and provide its customers with more travel options. Travellers from the Indian city can also connect to onward destinations within the Maldives using Maldivian domestic network consisting of 17 destinations. "Bangalore is one of India's leading markets for high-quality leisure travel to the island nation of the Maldives. The Maldivian with its high-quality service and perfect scheduling will further help to bring in more tourists from India to Maldives and vice-versa," said Mohamed Mihad, Managing Director – Maldivian. As a full-service carrier, Maldivian will offer 138 economy class seats and 14 premium economy class seats. Tickets for the flights went live for sales from August 16, 2023. As per the airline, the schedule has been designed to cater to the needs of both leisure and business travellers, providing options for mid-week and weekend trips. Maldivian held the route launch event in Bengaluru's Chancery Pavilion Hotel on October 9, attended by over 100 travel trade professionals across India.

## NEW HARYANA EXPRESSWAY SET TO CUT TRAVEL TIME BETWEEN NORTH AND WEST INDIA



The Trans-Haryana Expressway will be connected to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway through an 86km road – also an expressway- the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will build, giving traffic between north and west India a faster route and also reducing vehicular pressure on Delhi-NCR. The new six-lane greenfield expressway will be constructed from Paniyala to Alwar in Rajasthan and cost Rs 1,400 crore. Commuters from J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab will be able to take the Trans-Haryana Expressway (NH152D) before turning to NH-148B in Narnaul. It will lead them to Paniyala on the Haryana-Rajasthan border, where the proposed access-controlled road will directly connect with the Delhi-Mumbai expressway at Barodameo in Alwar. With the completion of this expressway and the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, vehicles coming from Punjab and other northern states won't have to cross Delhi-NCR to reach Mumbai," said Mukesh Kumar Meena, project director, NHAI. The KMP Expressway does act as a bypass for Delhi at present but with growing industrialisation along it and the urban areas of NCR expanding fast, longer term decongestion plans are important. The new road will also give easier access to the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway to more Haryana districts besides reducing the distance from Chandigarh to Jaipur, also decongesting NH-44 (Srinagar to Kanyakumari).

## **KNOWLEDGE SERIES – GST BY CA. H.M. TALHA RAHAMAN, CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT- TAFI CONSULTANT**



### **PART 5 – E-INVOICE**

E-invoicing (Electronic Invoicing) is a digital mechanism introduced under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system in India to simplify and standardize the process of generating and reporting invoices for businesses. E-invoicing is aimed at reducing tax evasion, enhancing transparency, and streamlining the compliance process. Here's an overview of e-invoicing under GST:

#### **Applicability:**

E-invoicing is applicable to businesses with a certain turnover threshold, as notified by the government. Initially, it was applicable to businesses with a turnover above Rs. 500 crore annually, but this threshold has been periodically lowered to Rs. 5 Crores to cover more businesses.

#### **Generation of E-invoices:**

Businesses subject to e-invoicing must generate invoices electronically using a standardized format, which follows the Invoice Reference Number (IRN) and Quick Response (QR) code guidelines.

Invoices are generated on the government's Invoice Registration Portal (IRP) or through third-party accounting and billing software that is integrated with the IRP.

#### **Invoice Reference Number (IRN):**

Every e-invoice is assigned a unique Invoice Reference Number (IRN) by the IRP, which is based on certain parameters like the GSTIN of the supplier, invoice number, and invoice date.

The IRN acts as a digital signature for the invoice, ensuring its authenticity.

#### **QR Code:**

E-invoices must contain a QR code that contains essential details of the invoice.

The QR code can be scanned to verify the invoice's authenticity.

#### **Reporting to the GST Network (GSTN):**

After generating an e-invoice, businesses must report it to the GSTN using the IRN.

This information is shared with both the government and the taxpayer.

#### **Validation and Authentication:**

The GSTN validates the details in the e-invoice and issues an acknowledgment along with the digitally signed e-invoice.

The digitally signed e-invoice is sent back to the taxpayer.

#### **Integration with GSTR-1:**

The data from e-invoices is automatically populated into the GST return form GSTR1.

This integration reduces the risk of errors and mismatches in GST returns.

#### **Exemptions and Exceptions:**

Certain types of businesses, such as exporters, are exempt from e-invoicing.

There are provisions for the cancellation, amendment, and reporting of e-invoices.

#### **Benefits:**

E-invoicing reduces the chances of tax evasion, as all transactions are digitally recorded and tracked.

It simplifies compliance by eliminating the need for manual data entry in GST returns.

E-invoices are easily accessible and retrievable, making audits and reconciliations more straightforward.

**E-invoicing is part of the government's efforts to modernize and digitize the tax system in India. It has been implemented in phases to cover a wider range of businesses and sectors gradually. Businesses subject to e-invoicing must ensure they comply with the prescribed guidelines and integrate their invoicing systems with the government's IRP or use compliant third-party software to generate e-invoices.**