

***President Speaks**



AJAY PRAKASH

Dear TAFI'ites,

We were delighted to hear a mention of Tourism in the FM's opening remarks while presenting the Budget. She mentioned Tourism as a major engine of growth & employment generation and that the government intended to move Tourism into "Mission Mode." We hoped that the travel & tourism industry which accounts for over 30 million jobs in the country and contributes 178 billion USD to the economy, as per the 2021 WTTC study, was finally poised to get due recognition and some tangible support from our Government. Therefore, the subsequent announcement of the huge upward revision in the rate of TCS on overseas tour packages from 5% to 20% came as a complete shock!!!. We have written to the Tourism Secretary requesting the intervention of the Ministry of Tourism to help reverse this retrograde step and we have also made an appeal to the Finance Minister.

It is well established that in the Indian tourism industry inbound vs. outbound travellers are in the ratio of 1:2.5 to 2.6 and a majority of our members, and Indian travel agents in general, predominantly sell either outbound or domestic travel. This proposal to increase TCS to 20% will have a huge impact on their survival as more and more Indian travellers shift to booking their overseas travel through foreign operators and on foreign websites – simply because of the huge price difference. We have sought an urgent meeting with the Finance Minister and the Finance Secretary and, along with all the other Associations in FAITH, we hope that we shall be able get justice and relief for our members. We shall keep you posted.

***EASTERN INDIA Chapter conducted Health Camp in their region on 25 Feb'23**

Eastern India Chapter along with TAAI and Interglobe had conducted a Health Camp in their region on 25th Feb 2023. This noble cause was initiated by the Eastern India Chapter Chairman Mr. Anil Punjabi and supported by TAAI, Interglobe and others. Overwhelming response was there, and more than 100 travel agents took part in the camp and underwent Health Checkup. Some pictures....



***Russia approves new visa regime, Indians can now get 6-month tourist visa**



Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin signed a decree approving facilitated visa regime for citizens of 19 countries, including India. Last week, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that Russia was planning to introduce visa-free travel for citizens of up to 11 'friendly' countries as well as ease entry requirements for citizens of six others. Citizens of the specified countries may get a tourist visa for up to six months if they have a hotel reservation, the decree, published on the government portal, read. The countries include India, Bahrain, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Türkiye and the Philippines. "We are working on facilitating a completely visa-free regime with about eleven countries. With six more, including India, Indonesia, we are looking to ease the conditions. Let's not forget that we are working on lifting restrictions on the issuance of electronic visas to many countries, there are about 70 countries, except for unfriendly ones, which stopped issuing visas to us in a simplified manner," state-run TASS quoted him as saying at a government hour in the State Duma. The Russian minister also said that the country is planning to re-start the e-visa scheme it had introduced before Covid struck. "Electronic visas were approved three years ago, then the Covid intervened, then we lifted the Covid restrictions last summer, but given the unfriendly actions of the West, including in issuing visas to Russians, the government was instructed to report before June 1 on the possibility of starting the implementation of the previously adopted decisions on the issuance of electronic visas. I think that there will be no questions for friendly countries," he said.

***Digi Yatra makes air travel a breeze for more than 1.6 lakh travelers.**



More than 1.6 lakh passengers have availed the Digi Yatra facility at the airports from the day of its launch on December 1, 2022, to February 14, 2023, and the numbers are steadily growing, informed the Ministry of Civil Aviation in a formal statement. The total app user base of Digi Yatra on the Android Play Store & iOS Apple App Store now stands at 422K. Among the cities, Varanasi came out to be the most receptive with the number of Digi Yatra users having increased from 0.09 per cent of total passengers on December 1, 2022, to 28 per cent of total passengers on February 13, 2023, with the highest of 37 per cent of total users on February 2. Digi Yatra is being implemented across airports in a phased manner. In its first phase, the facility was introduced at Delhi, Bengaluru, and Varanasi airports by the Minister of Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya M Scindia on December 1. Next, it will be launched at Kolkata, Pune, Vijayawada, and Hyderabad Airports by March 2023. A voluntary facility, Digi Yatra is a biometric boarding system using Facial Recognition Technology to provide a seamless experience for passengers at airports. It eliminates the need for verification of ticket and ID at multiple touchpoints. All the passenger's data is encrypted and stored in the wallet of the passenger's smartphone and shared only for a limited time duration with the airport of travel origin where the passenger's Digi Yatra ID needs to be validated. The data is purged from the system within 24 hours of the flight.

***IndiGo to cancel launch of Bhubaneswar to Dubai direct flight scheduled for March 5**

The much-awaited direct flight from Bhubaneswar to Dubai will miss its preannounced schedule launch on March 5. It will take a couple of months more because of the delay in completion of the international terminal (T2) at the Biju Patnaik International Airport, Bhubaneswar. "We are pondering over a date in the next 3 to 4 months to start the Bhubaneswar-Dubai direct flight. Besides, direct flight from Bhubaneswar to Singapore and Bangkok will also start soon," said Sanjit Bhattacharya, Director (Sales), North and East India, Indigo Airlines. Lack of air connectivity is the major stumbling block for development of tourism in Odisha, said experts during the 5th edition of Odisha Tourism Conclave. However, Bhubaneswar is fast growing as a regional hub in eastern India with a significant increase in air passenger movement, said Prasanna Pradhan, Director of Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), Bhubaneswar. Although Odisha government has declared direct international flights from Biju Patnaik International Airport to Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok, attention needs to be paid for more direct international flight connectivity to all tourism circuits. Domestic flight connectivity to Bodh Gaya, Pune, Udaipur, and Ahmedabad is badly needed in Odisha, said J K Mohanty, chairman, Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) and IATO, Eastern region.

*Update on processing German Schengen Visa Applications



Some important changes advised by Mumbai German Consulate, Mumbai for Schengen Applicants

1. To further streamline the process the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mumbai has **updated the Checklists**. You may only use the new formats from now onwards. For further details click the following link <https://india.diplo.de/inen/service/-/1908750>

2. One of the most important changes is for **Business Applications**: If the inviting company arranges for accommodation, they should confirm the same in their invitation letter. If the inviting company does so, the applicant may leave out further proof of accommodation.
3. The Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mumbai **restructured the format of sponsor and applicant financial documentation**. Kindly see the new requirements!
4. Please keep in mind that the processing time for Schengen Visa starts **only once the application reaches the Consulate**. This might take up to **SIX working days** depending on the delivery conditions and public holidays. If your travel date is imminent or **lies within two weeks** of application date, please check if you can postpone your trip! the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany **cannot guarantee a last-minute issuance of any visa**. Please note that this information does not pertain to National Visa Applications, the notification said.

*India Signals Its Arrival as a Force in Aviation



A turnaround of India's flag carrier Air India Ltd. could place the country on the global aviation map. The beleaguered airline just kick-started the process with a historic aircraft order. Last week, **Air India ordered 470 jets** from aircraft giants **Boeing Co.** and **Airbus**, marking the largest deal for commercial aircraft in aviation history. The airline also has an option of ordering an

additional 370 planes in the future. The airline, which was once known for good service, is working hard to regain its reputation and make up for lost time. If the plan works, India might have a fighting chance to become **a regional aviation hub**, after losing out to Middle Eastern crossroads such as Dubai for years. **Shukor Yusof**, founder of aviation consulting firm **Endau Analytics**, says the deal exponentially raises the importance of India as a price-maker in the post-Covid aviation sector. India isn't yet nearly as big a market for Boeing and Airbus as China, which Boeing last year forecast could take delivery of over 8,000 passenger jets in the next 20 years. But India's importance could grow after 2030, according to Mr. Yusof. Consulting firm **CAPA Advisory** expects Indian carriers will order an additional 1,000-1,200 planes in the next year or two, starting with purchases by Air India's rival, the low-cost domestic carrier Indigo. Growth numbers are also promising. The challenges remain enormous: not just in terms of scaling up the airline fleet itself, but building new airports, upgrading the supporting infrastructure, training personnel, and pricey jet fuel. India will have to motivate international airlines to fly in and out of India on a much larger scale. And Indian airlines together operate about 700 commercial planes, fewer than some of the largest individual global airlines, according to data from CAPA. Competing with cash rich Gulf airlines such as Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways— or jousting with hubs like Dubai—isn't going to be easy. The mega order by Air India is a critical milestone for India's aviation dreams, but the runway is long.

***Air India and Vistara Focus On Employee Integration For Merger**



Air India has hogged all the limelight in Indian aviation recently, with its massive aircraft order and the proposed merger with Vistara next year. Both airlines under the Tata brand seem to be moving full steam ahead with the merger process, with a new report revealing that the task of employee integration is also underway. As Air India and Vistara gear up for their merger next year, senior executives from both airlines have begun the process of employee integration with the help of consultancy firm

Deloitte. The Economic Times reports that the non-flying staff of Vistara is being assessed for leadership roles through a process called the Hogan Test. The report quotes a person familiar with the matter as saying. Sources had already revealed in January that following interviews with external consultants and internal teams, the best fit among senior to mid-level executives will be retained for the post, and other candidates will be given a different role if available. Another tricky issue to deal with is bringing together the pilots of both airlines to operate the fleet of the merged airline while also keeping in mind the seniority of the cockpit crew. Some Vistara pilots are reportedly anxious about what the merger will mean for their seniority as they become part of a new airline. Getting all the necessary approvals from various authorities is also progressing at full speed. The airlines are taking the help of law firm AZB Partners to take care of all the legal and regulatory compliance. The merger will need the approval of key agencies such as the DGCA, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and the Reserve Bank of India. The competition commissions of both India and Singapore will also have to give the go-ahead, as Vistara is a joint venture of the Tata Group and Singapore Airlines.

***Langkawi's new immersive night attraction to open in May**



Tiara Jacqueline (centre) and her team at the preview of Dream Forest Langkawi

The first phase of the project, Dream Forest Immersive Park, is set to open in May at the foot of Gunung Raya mountain. It will feature a multi-sensory, immersive evening walk through a 1.2km trail in Langkawi's lush rainforest, where local stories and legends of the island come alive through soundscape, illuminations and projection mapping on the trees and the ground. Some spaces are also

interactive. During the day, visitors can take nature walks and at night, the forest transforms into a 6.39 hectare-wide natural theatrical space. At a recent press conference, Tiara said the project was four years in the making. "It started in 2019 as a very different project, designed to be experienced as separate stories told through various mediums of technology in individual pavilions," she said. This was part of a plan to revitalize and reinvigorate the beautiful, former Kampung Buku of Langkawi. We even had plans for a spectacular nightly performance in an outdoor theatre. "By 2020, it was very clear that the tourism industry and attractions like the one we were creating needed to adapt to a new normal in tandem with Industrial Revolution 4.0. The world was changing, the way people travelled and consumed entertainment was changing." Realizing this, Enfiniti Group had to rethink the concept and how the visitor's journey could be enhanced using technology and automation, while being responsible and respectful to the natural forest landscape. The second phase, Dream Forest Book Village, will house an events space, F&B and retail outlets as well as picnic spots. There will also be regularly curated cultural-based pocket performances of music, dance and poetry readings around the gardens or at the 120-seat amphitheater.

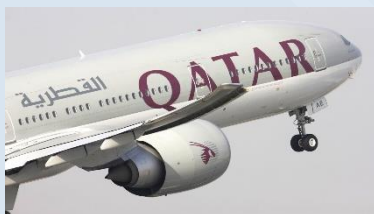
***Thousands of Lufthansa Passengers Stranded after Airline's IT Systems collapsed**



Major IT outage has stranded tens of thousands of Lufthansa passengers around the world after clumsy construction workers accidentally excavated through fibre optic cables close to the German flag carrier's headquarters at Frankfurt Airport. The damaged cables immediately took down key Lufthansa IT systems that not only grounded Lufthansa but also all of the airline's wider group carriers which include Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Eurowings, Eurowings Discover, and SWISS Airlines.

The systems were taken offline earlier on Wednesday when a crew of excavators working on a rail line close to Frankfurt Airport ripped up lines of fibre optic cables. Engineers believe they might be able to restore the lines at some point during Wednesday afternoon. In a brief statement, Lufthansa suggested that despite the mass number of cancellations across its network that it might be possible to "stabilize" flight operations by "early evening". Eyewitnesses claim the airline initially attempted to board planes using pen and paper before mass cancellations started to be auctioned. So far, the airline has only cancelled 123 flights, according to data provided by Flight Aware, although this number is expected to rise significantly over the next few hours. For a brief time, Frankfurt Airport was forced to close to all airlines over fears that the terminals would be overwhelmed, although the airfield has since reopened. The airport operator is warning passengers travelling with other airlines to leave extra time for check-in and to check the status of their flight before setting off for the airport. In a statement, Lufthansa said passengers with domestic flights could switch to Deutsche Bahn until Sunday using their flight ticket. "Due to the system failure, rebooking on other flights is currently limited," the airline warned passengers on Wednesday morning. Flight operations at Munich Airport have also been partially affected but disruption isn't as bad as in Frankfurt, the airline said.

***Qatar Airways Clinches Global Sponsorship Rights For Formula 1 Through 2027**



Qatar Airways has been revealed as the global airline sponsor of Formula 1 for the next five years after the Doha-based carrier managed to outbid regional rival Emirates for the sponsorship rights. The deal was officially announced during a motorsports event organized by Qatar Airways at Lusail Boulevard in Doha on Wednesday evening. Qatar Airways is believed to have clinched the sponsorship rights off Emirates after the

sport's owners, Liberty Media Corporation, demanded Emirates double the fee it paid in 2018 to secure the rights to the sport. Neither Qatar Airways nor Liberty Media has confirmed the cost of the deal, although it's widely believed that Qatar Airways spent in the region of \$50 million to secure the five-year agreement. As well as becoming the official global airline partner of Formula 1, Qatar Airways has also secured the rights to become the headline sponsor of three Grand Prix races in 2023. The first will be the Italian Emilia Romagna Grand Prix between 19th and 21st May, and the second will be the Hungarian Grand Prix between 21st and 23rd July. The third and final race will, of course, be the Qatar Grand Prix which is set to take place between 6th and 8th October. The deal will see Qatar Airways' burgundy branding replace Emirates' distinctive red trackside banners that have been a feature of F1 races for the past 10 years. Qatar Airways will also start offering travel packages to select Grands Prix as part of the deal. "As the pinnacle of motorsport, it makes sense for Formula 1 to partner with a global leader in aviation like Qatar Airways," commented Stefano Domenicali, President & CEO of Formula 1. "We are two brands committed to delivering the best experience to our fans and customers, and our combined reach globally makes this a perfect match," Domenicali continued. Emirates has built up a massive portfolio of sports sponsorship deals which the carrier sees as an integral part of its international growth strategy. The airline learned that it could raise awareness of its brand through premium sponsorship deal aimed at various markets and segments around the world. Qatar Airways has been slowly building up its sports sponsorship portfolio, the most prominent of which is its international relationship with FIFA.

***Air India to offer two highly synergized full-service, low-cost carriers post integration.**

After integrating its full-service carriers Air India and Vistara and low-cost carriers Air India Express and AirAsia India under its ambitious Vihaan.AI transformation programme, the Air India group will exclusively be operating with two airline brands, Air India and Air India Express. The step is essential to ensure full-service and low-cost services of the two low-cost airlines for the highly synergized operations of the entire group, Air India officials told Business Today. "We have got two concurrent integrations. One between the two low-cost airlines, Air India Express and AirAsia India), and the other between the two full-service airlines - Air India and Vistara. We will end up with one full-service and one low-cost airline group," an Air India official told Business Today. The carrier is looking at serving a significant part of the domestic market with the low-cost Air India Express. The airline is going to provide onward connections on domestic routes to international passengers arriving by the full-service Air India. Similarly, Air India Express passengers taking an overseas flight will be offered connections on Air India's routes. "Ultimately we want the group to operate as one network, distribution and sales platform so that we can provide the rest in terms of the best cost structure and the product for the relevant markets that will take advantage of the economies of scale and breadth and the reach of the group as a whole," informed officials. In the past, India has had a checkered history with airline mergers. The 2007 integration of Air India and Indian Airlines and the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines and Deccan Air threw up enormous challenges. Air India officials, however, claimed that in their case, the complementarities of the four group airlines would help in ensuring a smooth integration. "Air India Express and AirAsia India are very complementary. The former has an international footprint, and the latter has a domestic footprint. Bringing the two together brings scale and network opportunities. And given the more modern platform of AirAsia India it allows us to support the future LCC's growth," said officials. The same also holds in the case of Air India and Vistara, they averred. "Air India was on relatively old IT systems. They have been progressively modernized to be like what Vistara has. Again, there is integration, where their domestic strength and domestic product can uplift Air India and vice versa," said officials.

***Full emergency declared at Thiruvananthapuram International airport on 24 Feb:**

A full Emergency was declared at the Thiruvananthapuram International airport in Kerala on Friday, (24th Feb) after a Dammam bound Air India flight from Calicut was diverted due to technical failure. The flight was diverted to Thiruvananthapuram, and it landed at the airport around 12:15 pm, news agency ANI reported. The tail part of the Air India Express IX 385 – which was carrying 168 passengers – hit the runway during take-off this morning. The flight took off around 9:44 am from the Calicut airport and flew for around two hours before landing. The airport management declared a full emergency for the landing of this flight, as per sources. Air India Express sources told news agency ANI, "Air India Express flight IX 385 on Calicut-Dammam with 168 passengers was diverted due to suspected tail strike during take-off. The aircraft made a normal safe landing at Thiruvananthapuram at 1215 hours and passengers deplaned." The sources further stated that arrangements are being made to send passengers to Dammam via an alternate flight scheduled to take off from the Thiruvananthapuram airport at around 3:30 pm today. This, however, is not the first time that an Air India flight has been diverted or has made an emergency landing. Last week, an Air India New York to Delhi flight was diverted to London. The flight arrived at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport at around 11:25 pm on the same day. The flight was headed towards Norway when it decided to turn towards the UK, as per its tracking data. In another instance, Air India Express flight from Dubai sought assistance from the airport after the pilot felt uneasy after landing. India Today quoted sources as saying, "The pilot felt something uneasy during landing and sought assistance from the ATC. It was a normal landing at the scheduled arrival time of 6:30 am. No emergency was declared by the pilot."

***SpiceJet reports profit in Q3 FY2023, operating revenue increases by 19%**

Budget carrier SpiceJet has reported a net profit of INR 107 Crore (INR 221 Crore excluding forex adjustment) for the quarter ending December 31, 2022, as compared to a net profit of INR 23.28 crore (INR 20 crore excluding forex adjustment) in the quarter ending December 31, 2021. Operating revenue also increased by 19 per cent QoQ to INR 2,315 crore. In comparison to the same quarter last year, SpiceJet's ancillary revenue increased by 1 per cent while Pax RASK increased by 27 per cent, ASKM increased by 5 per cent and yield improvement of 21 per cent resulted in increase of passenger revenue by 33 per cent. The total revenue for the reported quarter was INR 2,794 crore as against INR 2,679 crore in the same quarter of the previous year. For the same comparative period, operating expenses were INR 2,687 crore as against INR 2,579 crore. The airline said that despite a big jump in passenger traffic, business continued to be impacted by high fuel prices and depreciating rupee. One significant highlight for SpiceJet has been the high load factor. The airline reported 91 per cent domestic load factor, highest among all the airlines having domestic operations. Commenting on the results, Ajay Singh, CMD, SpiceJet, said, "I am happy that SpiceJet has reported a profit in Q3 FY2023. We exceeded our operational targets and continued with our unmatched performance clocking the highest load factor for every single month in 2022. The profits have been driven by a strong performance in both our passenger and cargo businesses. There are renewed signs of recovery and some very positive developments and restructuring initiatives in the immediate offing that would significantly strengthen and deleverage our balance sheet." "Air travel has come roaring back touching newer heights and giving a glimpse of the huge potential of the Indian aviation market, and we look forward to a robust and exciting 2023," Singh added.

***Two-day snow carnival begins in Jammu and Kashmir's Baderwah:**

Jammu Amid snow-capped mountains, a winter carnival began in Jaie Ghati in Jammu and Kashmir to boost tourism in the resort town. Jointly organized by the army, the Doda district administration and the department of tourism, the carnival besides cultural programs, and art and craft exhibitions, also has a snow cricket competition and stick fighting and snow wrestling displays by tribals. The festival was inaugurated by General Officer Commanding (GoC) Major Gen Ajay Kumar and Doda Deputy Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan. Mahajan said the festival

is being organized to revive the tourism sector, which was affected by the Covid pandemic. It will also promote the popular resort for the winter season, he said. Local and tourists, some from Australia, attended performances by renowned singer Kabul Bukhari and local folk artistes, and participated in adventure sports on the inaugural day of the carnival. According to data issued by authorities, around 5,000 visitors converged at Jaie meadow on the first day of the two-day snow festival. "We are promoting Baderwah as world class winter destination, offering tourists a slice of its meadows, sports, cuisine, and culture. In short, we are offering a Switzerland like experience at an affordable cost," Mahajan said. The festival includes an exhibition of crafts and tapestries from villages as well as stalls selling local cuisine and fruits. Speaking on the occasion, Joint Director Tourism, Jammu, Sunaina Mehta said the festival is a part of the department's initiative to promote Baderwah as a winter destination and display rural flavor to the visitors.

***House boats to soon run in lakes of Himachal: Tourism department**

House boats will soon become a tourist attraction in Himachal Pradesh with the state government deciding to introduce them in the dams and lakes, officials said. A decision in this regard has been taken and Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has directed the tourism department to do the needful, a spokesperson of the state government said. Sukhu has asked the officers to prepare a new policy to promote Chamera, Pong, Bhakra and Koldam from a tourism point of view. The tourism department is working on a new scheme under which the department will soon run houseboats and high-end cruises in Chamera, Pong, Bhakra and Koldam. The government is preparing to promote tourism along with power generation by these major dams of Himachal. This effort of the government and the tourism department will be full of thrill for the people of Himachal as well as for the tourists visiting here. Principal Secretary Tourism Devesh Kumar said that following orders from the Chief Minister, preparations are being made to run houseboats and cruises in Chamera, Pong, Bhakra and Koldam. The officers of the Tourism department have been instructed to prepare a draft policy, he said.

*Tourism Authority of Thailand gears up for 'Amazing Thailand Festival 2023' in Mumbai



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Mumbai Office is set to organize **The Amazing Thailand Festival 2023** from **March 24 - 26, 2023** at **Jio World Garden** – BKC, Mumbai, is aimed towards increasing the brand awareness of Thailand in India and upscaling its tourist arrivals. “The people of India (Mumbai) have a special place for Thailand in their hearts. Thousands of Mumbaikars travel to Thailand every year to witness its unique culture, indulge themselves in the local cuisine, and explore its scenic wonders. We are elated to bring true ‘Thainess’ to them in Mumbai through the Amazing Thailand Festival 2023. We hope that this festival will help in demonstrating the abounding diversity and innate essence of Thai culture and convince people to travel and experience Thailand in the coming months,” said Isada Saovaros, Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) – Mumbai Office. The three-day mega event will largely promote the 5 F’s of Thailand, that is Food, Film, Fashion, Fight and Festival.

*Taiwan’s USD 82 million plan to boost travel includes cash incentives for tourists



Taiwan will offer 500,000 tourists a cash or discount incentive this year as it tries to shore up its post-pandemic travel industry and boost spending. The incentives, worth TWD 5,000 (USD 165) each, were announced Thursday as part of a TWD 5.3 billion package to attract international tourists. The total value of the perks comes to TWD 2.5 billion (USD 82.4 million). A spokesperson for the Ministry of Transportation and Communications said at a press conference held recently that tourists would have a chance to obtain the perk, with a

rollout plan to be determined at an “appropriate” time. Possible ways to distribute the perk include through lucky draw or via airlines. The money may be handed out electronically or as discounts for accommodation, transport or other purchases, officials said. “We hope to accelerate and expand efforts for international tourists to come to Taiwan,” Lin Fu-shan, department director of the transportation ministry, said at a separate press briefing. The spending plan also included a proposal to offer travel agencies TWD 10,000 each for groups of at least eight tourists, and TWD 20,000 each for groups of at least 15 tourists. Taiwan is looking for ways to boost its economy after removing Covid curbs last year. Growth is expected to slow in 2023 as the trade-dependent island struggles with a drop-off in exports, making it more important to spur activity through domestic demand and tourism. Before the pandemic, tourism accounted for about 4 per cent of Taiwan’s gross domestic product, according to Taiwan’s Tourism Bureau. After reopening last October, Taiwan attracted nearly 900,000 tourists in 2022, according to a statement from Taiwan’s Transportation Ministry. The tourism announcement was part of a larger, TWD 380 stimulus package that was approved via a special act by lawmakers this week. Lawmakers still need to sign off on where all the funds are used specifically. Other parts of that plan - paid for using surplus tax revenue - include allocating funds for use by the state-owned Taiwan Power Company and health insurance system. After reopening last October, Taiwan attracted nearly 900,000 tourists in 2022, according to a statement from Taiwan’s Transportation Ministry.

*AirAsia India to launch flights from Terminal 2 at CSM International Airport from March 1



Air Asia India has planned to launch flights from Terminal 2 at Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport from March 1, 2023. “We are happy to announce that AirAsia India will be moving to Terminal 2 at Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport from March 1, 2023. Mumbai is one of our key hubs and this move will allow us to provide our guests with a seamless and more convenient travel and transfer experience. We look forward to welcoming our guests at Terminal 2 with the quintessential warmth and

superior service experience that AirAsia India is known for,” said Alope Singh, President, AirAsia India, commenting on the launch. The airline also offers special International Connecting Baggage (ICB) fees for guests connecting from or to AirAsia India domestic flights to international flights on other airlines with savings on standard excess baggage charges on domestic flights.

*Nok Air to now connect Hyderabad and Bangkok



February 21, the airline commenced its operations from Bangkok to Hyderabad, while the first flight from Hyderabad to Bangkok departed on February 22. The airline will operate **three weekly non-stop flights** from its hub **Don Mueang International Airport (DMK)** in Bangkok to Hyderabad in the Winter 2023 schedule and increase frequency to four weekly non-stop flights in the Summer 2023 schedule. The new route will be operated by state-of-the-art Boeing 737-800 with 189 Economy Class seats, the airline informed. Currently, Nok Air serves in India from only one

location – Hyderabad. The new route will link Bangkok with over 20 locations in Thailand, including Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai, as well as with international locations like Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) and Yangon (Myanmar). “Hyderabad is one of the safest and the fastest growing city in India. This city has a lot of potential. So, taking this as an opportunity, we have welcomed NOK Air here. We expect to grow the sectors daily,” said V Srinivas Goud, Minister for Prohibition & Excise, Sports & Youth Services, Tourism & Culture and Archaeology Government of Telangana. “Our first flight departed from Don Mueang to Hyderabad on February 21. We are very pleased that the flight was received with so much fondness and the reviews from the passengers have been very encouraging. We wish to be able to continue to offer this promising country, more connections, great service, and many more memorable holidays. We hope Hyderabad might serve as a springboard for more growth in India this year,” said Wutthiphum Jurangkool, CEO, Nok Air.

*British Airways parent IAG flies back into annual profit



IAG, owner of British Airways and Spanish carrier Iberia, announced a return to profit in 2022 as the global aviation sector reopened from Covid lockdowns. Net profit came in at 431 million euros (USD 457 million) last year compared with a loss after tax of 2.9 billion euros in 2021, IAG said in a statement. “2022 was a year of strong recovery, driven by sustained leisure demand and markets reopening,” said IAG Chief Executive Luis Gallego. “At this point of the year we continue to see robust forward-bookings, while also remaining conscious of global macro-economic uncertainties.” Gallego added that IAG would look to return to much higher pre-Covid profit levels “within the next few years”. The group has restored

87 per cent of its 2019 flying capacity. IAG, whose airlines also include small European carriers Aer Lingus and Vueling, announced Thursday the acquisition of Air Europa for EUR 500 million from the Spanish company Globalia. “With the acquisition of Air Europa now agreed but subject to regulatory and other approvals which could take around 18 months, we are intending to welcome another leading airline to the group,” Gallego said Friday. “This acquisition will enable us to grow Madrid as a hub, offering a gateway to Latin America and beyond, with benefits for customers, employees and shareholders.” IAG collapsed into annual losses in 2020 and 2021 as Covid grounded planes, forcing BA and its peers to slash thousands of jobs. That has left airlines and airports struggling to recruit enough staff as travel demand recovers strongly. “Compared to recent years, IAG is flying high as the return to normality continues apace,” said Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor. “However, the path to full recovery is a long-haul journey,” stated Hunter. Hunter added that IAG “has a major task in repairing its balance sheet after the pandemic tore through revenues and forced the group into substantial borrowings”.

*Maharashtra Government to soon start Savarkar Tourism Circuit:



Maharashtra’s Eknath Shinde government has decided to start a tourism circuit linked to Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha has announced that the tourism department will start the circuit to spread awareness about Savarkar’s achievements. Lodha announced that the state will observe Savarkar’s death anniversary on February 26 in Nashik’s Bhagur, his birthplace. “We will take out a padayatra from Nutan Vidyalaya to Savarkar wada (Savarkar’s residence). We will also take out a procession of the Ashtabhuja Devi mandir at Bagur. We are inviting several of his followers, social and cultural organizations, historians, and others who would read out his works,” Lodha said on Friday, adding those who have worked to propagate

Savarkar’s thoughts would be felicitated. The Maharashtra government’s move could help create a discord between the Uddhav Thackeray group of Shiv Sena and Congress as the latter is bound to oppose the circuit.

*Flying from Chennai airport set to be breeze



Airport delays are set to reduce, and passengers may not have to wait in long queues for check in and security check as **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** will introduce a new system for better use of space, check in counters, aircraft parking bays at Chennai airport from Tuesday. **Airport Collaborative Decision Making (A-CDM)** which will bring together airlines, airport staff, air traffic controllers, ground handlers and others for better decision making will help the airport to cut delays, long queues, reduce turnaround time of flights and improve travel experience of passengers. The system is

already available in private airports. It is a common information sharing platform developed and introduced by AAI in-house team to process timely and accurate information for quick and precise decision making. The agencies working in the airport will be able to share information more effectively so that they will be able to resolve issues like congestion and delays better. It will also reduce operating cost attributed to fuel, said a statement. A-CDM also reduces congestion at holding point at the runway, helps reduce fuel consumption, improve carbon emission and reduce taxi time of the aircraft. Airport director Sharad Kumar said that it will help reduce congestion and delays at the terminals and on the airside of the airport. The system will consider expected time of arrival of an aircraft, target time of departures, runway-in-use and the handling capacity of the runway and determines the arrival and departure sequence. Based on the sequence and the parking position, it calculates the target take-off time and target start up time of departures and target time for arrivals. Implementation of ACDM helps air traffic control officers to reduce workload and ensuring safe and orderly flow of aircraft. With air traffic at Chennai expected to go up in coming months (35 movements per hour to 45 movements per hour) A-CDM will be pivotal in reducing congestion. AAI took up first A-CDM project development for Mumbai airport. The project activities like software development, network design, hardware planning, live testing, implementation, and software maintenance were done by an in-house team.

*Air India to hire 4200 cabin crew and 900 pilots in 2023:



TATA Group-owned Air India has announced plans to hire over 4200 cabin crew trainees and 900 pilots in 2023 as the airline adds new aircraft and rapidly expands its domestic and international operations. Earlier this month, Air India announced a mega order to purchase 470 aircraft from Boeing and Airbus to support its growth plans. It has already announced plans to lease 36 aircraft of which two B 777-200 LR have already joined the fleet. The cabin crew, who will be recruited from around the country, will undergo

a 15-week Programme imparting safety and service skills, and will be coached to exemplify the best of Indian hospitality and Tata group culture. The training program will include extensive classroom and in-flight training at the airline's training facility in Mumbai as well as familiarization flights. Notably, between May 2022-February 2023, Air India has hired over 1900 cabin crew. Over 1,100 cabin crew have been trained in the last seven months (between July'22-January'23), and in the past three months, approximately 500 cabin crew have been released for flying by the airline. Commenting on the hiring plans, Sandeep Verma, Head - Inflight Services said, "With a sizeable aircraft order that was announced earlier in the month, more flights on international and domestic networks, and re-alignment of domestic routes with AIX connect, cabin crew will play a decisive role in shaping the present and future of the Air India group. Addition of fresh talent will also accelerate the pace of cultural transformation at Air India, which is an integral part of our Vihaan.AI transformation program. We are also looking to step up hiring of more pilots and maintenance engineers."

Govt. of Sikkim Advisory to public

In an advisory, The govt. Of Sikkim cautioned the General Public that, while booking tours online, they might check the authenticity, of the agencies they are booking with. As the Tourism & Civil Aviation Dept., has received numerous complaints against online travel agencies that are operating fraudulently. Further, it is advised that tours to Sikkim may be booked through travel agencies registered with Tourism & Civil Aviation Dept Govt. of Sikkim to avoid such complication. The names of registered travel agents are available in the Departmental website: www.sikkimtourism.gov.in ---By order Special Secretary.

*The Seaport, The Culture Tree and South St, Seaport Museum partner to host Holi event.



The Seaport has partnered with **The Culture Tree** and **South Street, Seaport Museum**, to conduct its annual **Holi event on Saturday, March 18**.

“The Seaport would not be the same without the people and events that nurture inclusivity, promote creativity and deepen cultural understanding,” said Ellie Chamberland, Vice President of Marketing at the Howard Hughes Corporation. “We are grateful for our relationship with The Culture Tree and the opportunity to host an annual Holi celebration with our neighbours,” added

Chamberland. The color throwing will begin at 1 pm on Fulton and Front streets and the colours may be purchased from vendors at the event. Visitors can also sample traditional Indian cuisine enjoyed during this annual holiday and shop at the outdoor Indian market on Front Street featuring nearly a dozen Indian-owned businesses, including Tagmo, the Seaport’s own Indian restaurant.

*Australia celebrates fortnight-long ‘Sydney World Pride.’



Australia is celebrating one of its flagship Pride celebrations- 23rd edition of Sydney WorldPride and will continue the celebrations until March 5, 2023. The event serves as a platform to unite LGBT community from around the world for 2 weeks of inclusivity and celebration of queer culture. Here are some of the most sought-after experiences for celebrating and showing support for LGBT community: Marri Madung Butbut: First Nations Gathering Space (February 23-28) Paying homage to the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and global First Nation LGBTQIA+SB (Sistergirls

and Brotherboys), Marri Madung Butbut is the rainbow heart of the world’s oldest surviving cultures. Gadigal land erupts with First Nations creativity via free exhibitions, theatre, food, and drag performances. Sunderella (March 1) Staying true to telling diverse narratives, Sunderella is a queer Bollywood twist to the classic tale of Cinderella that is slated to be a real treat for people who have an affinity for Bollywood, fairy tales and queer romance. From dramatic scenes and sweeping dance sequences, comic characters and foot-tapping music, Sunderella is a heartrending story of love and acceptance, directed by Bali Padda at ARA Darling Quarter Theatre. Off the back of three sold-out years, Laugh Out Proud is one of the most sought-after tickets of the festival calendar at the Sydney World Pride. Taking place at the Enmore Theatre, Sydney’s oldest and longest running live theatre, this queer comedy gala is a guaranteed night full of laughs, featuring Drag Race Down Under Season 2 winner Spankie Jackzon, Rosie Delaney, Bob Downe, Dazza and Keif and Rudy-Lee Taurua. This year, Sydney WorldPride is visited by the most colorful dragon on water. The first ever Pride-themed regatta which will see groups of dragon boat clubs across Sydney, corporate dragon boat crews as well as community groups and individuals participate. The race culminates on March 4th at Cockle Bay Wharf, Darling Harbour after a monthlong practice and training. The 17-day-long celebration ends with a highly anticipated seven hour closing concert. Aptly titled The Rainbow Republic, the concert has a megamix of foreign and local acts, including exclusive performances from Ava Max, and Kim Petras - the first transgender woman who won a Grammy, G Flip, Alter Boy and many more. The Rainbow Republic closing concert will be held at The Domain on March 5 from 3 pm onwards.

*Indonesia’s tourism ministry digitalizes with Traveloka’s support



Indonesia’s Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MoTCE) and Traveloka have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to focus on strengthening digitalization, promoting tourist destinations, and organizing events in order to attract the Gen Z audience. For villages that won the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI), Traveloka will provide training on digitalization, such as uploading village tour packages onto its platform. In addition, Traveloka will also support MoTCE’s

marketing and event programmes in Indonesia. Ni Made Ayu Marthini, deputy for marketing of MoTCE, shared that the focus of the collaboration is to enable Gen Z travellers to “work everywhere and travel anywhere”. Traveloka’s co-founder Albert stated they will support MoTCE’s development and implementation of innovative collaborative programmes, particularly in promoting the five Super Priority Tourism Destinations. He added that the Kharisma Event Nusantara (KEN) will also be on the Traveloka platform to encourage domestic and foreign tourists to travel to the best events in Indonesia curated by the MoTCE.

***KNOWLEDGE SERIES – INCOME TAX – By H.M. Talha Rahaman, Chartered Accountant, Consultant IT Matters**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the series of articles explaining the basics of Indian Income Tax laws. Income Tax is a direct tax levied by the Government of India on the income earned by individuals, businesses, and other entities. It is one of the primary sources of revenue for the government and is used to fund various developmental projects and welfare schemes for the citizens. Understanding the basics of Indian Income Tax laws is essential for every taxpayer, whether you are an individual earning a salary or a business owner running a company. It helps you comply with the tax laws and avoid penalties for non-compliance. Through this series of articles, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Indian Income Tax laws, including the various types of income, deductions, exemptions, and other relevant aspects. We will also cover important aspects such as filing income tax returns, advance tax, TDS (Tax Deducted at Source), TCS (Tax Collected at Source) etc. We hope that these articles will be helpful for both novice and experienced taxpayers, as well as anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of Indian Income Tax laws. So, let's begin our journey towards mastering the basics of Indian Income Tax laws.

PART – 1: Income Tax Act, 1961

The Income Tax Act, 1961, is a comprehensive legislation that lays down the framework for the levy, collection, and administration of income tax in India. The Act provides for various aspects of income tax, such as the definition of income, computation of taxable income, tax rates, deductions, exemptions, penalties, and appeals.

The Income Tax Act, 1961, is regularly amended to keep up with the changing economic and social conditions of the country. It is enforced by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), which is responsible for the administration of direct taxes in India. Understanding the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961, is crucial for every taxpayer, as non-compliance can result in penalties and legal consequences.

In this series of articles, we will cover the basics of the Income Tax Act, 1961, including its key provisions **with regard to "Profits and Gains of Business or Profession"** and their implications for taxpayers.

PART – 2: Sources of Income

Under the Income Tax Act, 1961, income is broadly categorized into five heads, which are:

1. **Income from Salary:** This includes the salary or wages received by an individual from an employer, including any bonuses, allowances, and perquisites. It also includes any pension received by a retired individual.
2. **Income from House Property:** This includes the rental income earned by a person from a property that they own. The annual value of the property is calculated based on the rent received or the potential rent that could be earned.
3. **Profits and Gains of Business or Profession:** This includes the income earned by a person from a business or profession that they are engaged in. It includes any income earned from the sale of goods or services, as well as any profits or gains earned from any other business or profession.
4. **Capital Gains:** This includes any income earned from the sale of capital assets, such as property, shares, or mutual funds. The income is categorized as either short-term or long-term capital gains, depending on the period for which the asset was held.
5. **Income from Other Sources:** This includes any income that does not fall under the previous four categories, such as interest earned on savings accounts, fixed deposits, or bonds, as well as any income from lottery winnings or gifts etc.

It is important to note that any income earned by an individual, whether in India or abroad, is subject to taxation in India, provided that the individual is a resident of India for tax purposes. Non-residents are only taxed on the income earned in India. The tax rates and exemptions vary based on the type and amount of income earned, as well as the age and residential status of the individual.

PART – 3: Exempted Income:

Under the Income Tax Act, 1961, certain types of income are exempt from taxation. This means that these types of income are not included in the total income of the taxpayer and are therefore not subject to income tax. The following are some of the major types of income that are exempt from taxation under the Income Tax Act, 1961:

1. **Agricultural income:** Any income earned from agricultural operations, including income from the sale of agricultural produce, is exempt from income tax.
2. **Long-term capital gains from sale of listed equity shares or equity-oriented mutual funds:** Any long-term capital gains arising from the sale of listed equity shares or equity-oriented mutual funds that are sold on or after April 1, 2018, and on which Securities Transaction Tax (STT) has been paid, are exempt from income tax up to Rs. 1 lakh in a financial year.
3. **Interest income:** Certain types of interest income, such as interest earned on savings bank accounts up to Rs. 10,000 (Rs. 50,000 for Senior Citizens) in a financial year, interest earned on tax-free bonds, and interest earned on certain provident funds, are exempt from income tax.
4. **HRA (House Rent Allowance):** HRA is a component of salary paid by employers to employees to meet their rent expenses. A portion of the HRA received by employees is exempt from income tax, subject to certain conditions.
5. **Leave Travel Allowance (LTA):** LTA is an allowance paid by employers to employees to cover their travel expenses when they take leave. LTA is exempt from income tax, subject to certain conditions.
6. **Gratuity:** Gratuity is a payment made by an employer to an employee as a reward for long and meritorious service. Gratuity received by an employee up to a certain limit is exempt from income tax.

It is important to note that the exemption limit and conditions for each type of exempt income may vary, and taxpayers should consult a tax expert or refer to the Income Tax Act, 1961, for detailed information. (to be Continued next issue....)