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News

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By DDP Publications



Telangana Chief Minister EXTENDS SUPPORT TO SIHRA

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Dear Members,

Warm greetings from Bengaluru! The past two months have been eventful and productive as we continue our collective efforts to elevate the hospitality industry across South India. On your behalf, I had the privilege of meeting N. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh, during the investment conclave organised by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. We had a meaningful interaction regarding the immense potential for tourism and hospitality in the state and how our industry can contribute to its growth and development.

I also had the opportunity to meet A. Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister, Telangana, and discuss initiatives to boost the hospitality sector in Telangana. Both leaders responded positively and have graciously accepted our invitation to attend the upcoming 55th FHRAI Annual Convention.

SIHRA is proud to host the 55th FHRAI Convention, which will be held from 18–20 September 2025 at Conrad Bengaluru. With the theme 'FutureScape 2047: Redefining Hospitality for a New India', the Convention is expected to witness the participation of over 1000 delegates from across the country. The FHRAI and SIHRA Executive Committees, along with the dedicated Secretariat teams, are working meticulously to ensure that the convention is both affordable and enriching.

We have secured the best possible rates at hotels around the venue to provide an exceptional hospitality experience. I assure

“SIHRA is proud to host the 55th FHRAI Convention, which will be held from 18-20 September 2025 at Conrad Bengaluru.”

every delegate that their time in Bengaluru will be well spent, with opportunities to engage in high-value networking sessions, gain insights into the latest hospitality trends and enjoy world-class cuisine and camaraderie.

I urge all our members to take advantage of this occasion to interact with industry stalwarts and thought leaders and return with ideas and inspiration to strengthen your businesses.

Continuing the effort and outreach, SIHRA participated at the HoReCa Hospitality Expo 2025 held at Codissia Trade Fair Complex in Coimbatore. With over 3,000 industry visitors and a highly engaging SIHRA Lounge, the event provided a wonderful platform for awareness and engagement with our association.

As we prepare to welcome you to Bengaluru in September, I look forward to seeing strong participation from across South India at this landmark convention.

Best Regards,
K Syama Raju
President
SIHRA

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Driving change through meaningful engagements

SIHRA continues to engage in meaningful conversations with various stakeholders across South India to address the gaps in unleashing the full tourism potential of the region.

As South Indian states intensify efforts to uplift the hospitality sector in the region, the South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA) is actively stepping up by engaging with government bodies and key stakeholders. SIHRA has been tackling pressing industry challenges and identifying strategies to unlock the region's tourism potential.

Here is a roundup of SIHRA's recent initiatives aimed at energising South India's hospitality landscape:

SIHRA MEMBERS MEET UNION TOURISM MINISTER

Recently, members of SIHRA met **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, at the Radisson City Centre Hotel in Chennai, where they discussed the tourism and hospitality opportunities in the South Indian region. The Minister elaborated on the Central Government's plans and strategies for the tourism and aviation sectors. Additionally, he addressed the concerns raised by hoteliers. In this meeting, SIHRA submitted a representation regarding harassment from copyright agencies, the need for infrastructure status for hotels and reducing GST on food served in hotels.



TELANGANA CM TO GRACE 55TH FHRAI CONVENTION

K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, met **A Revanth Reddy**, Chief Minister, Telangana, along with NS Boseraju, Minister for Minor Irrigation and Science & Technology Department, Government of Karnataka and extended an invitation to take part in the 55th FHRAI Convention in Bengaluru. The Chief Minister accepted the invitation and consented to participate.

TNCA HONOURS SIHRA

Sundar Singaram, Director of Operations, SIHRA, participated as the Chief Guest at the Emerging Young Caterer Awards 2025 organised by the Tamil Nadu Caterers Association (TNCA) in Coimbatore. He addressed the gathering and presented the awards. Singaram was honoured by the President and Managing Committee of the Tamil Nadu Caterers Association.

PARTICIPATION AT CII MADURAI VISION 2035

Sundar Singaram, Director of Operations, SIHRA, recently shared his vision at CII Madurai Vision 2035 launch, a landmark initiative aimed at shaping Madurai's future as a resilient, inclusive and sustainable urban centre. As the historic Gateway to the South, Madurai continues to anchor Tamil Nadu's growth across key sectors such as tourism, hospitality, IT/ITeS, manufacturing and textiles. The vision was



unveiled during a collaborative round table meeting, which brought together diverse stakeholders to reimagine urban infrastructure, civic innovation and the aspirations of the next generation.

Dr Palanivel Thiaga Rajan, Minister for IT & Digital Services graced the event as chief guest.

DIALOGUE TO BOOST KANYAKUMARI TOURISM

Sundar Singaram, Director of Operations, SIHRA, met **Alagu Meena**, District Collector, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu for a discussion regarding the launch of guide training and hospitality skill development programmes in the region. He explained how this programme will enhance



the skills of tour guides, making them more effective in delivering accurate information to tourists. The District Collector responded positively and assured full support from the administration to facilitate this initiative. They also discussed ways to attract hospitality investments to the district.

The Collector expressed enthusiasm in showcasing the region's immense tourism potential and invited SIHRA members to explore the opportunities and

growth avenues in Kanyakumari, which can further entice travellers to Tamil Nadu.



HOSPISOURCE INNOVATION HONOURS SIHRA

Sundar Singaram, Director of Operations, SIHRA, participated in the HOSPISOURCE Innovation Awards 2025 at Coimbatore and addressed the gathering, presenting the awards to the winners. SIHRA was honoured by the organisers.

SIHRA SUPPORTS FHRAI FOR ITS 55TH CONVENTION

SIHRA Executive Committee is working in collaboration with FHRAI to host the 55th FHRAI Annual Convention, which will take place from 18–20 September 2025 at Conrad Bengaluru in Karnataka. The theme of this year's convention is 'FutureScape 2047: Redefining Hospitality for a New India'. It is projected that over 1000 delegates will convene from across the country.

SIHRA LOUNGE SHINES AT INDIA HORECA EXPO 2025

Sundar Singaram, Director of Operations, SIHRA, formally inaugurated the prestigious India HoReCa Expo 2025 held at the Codissia Trade Fair Complex, Coimbatore. The expo witnessed an impressive display of innovation and excellence, with over 300 leading brands from across the hospitality and food service sectors exhibiting their products and solutions across all five expansive halls of Codissia. Drawing a remarkable turnout, the event welcomed more than 30,000 industry professionals, including hoteliers, restaurateurs, chefs and procurement specialists from across the region.

As a key feature of the expo, the SIHRA Lounge emerged as a vibrant networking hub, serving as a dedicated space for meaningful industry interactions, knowledge sharing, and brand connect. Numerous hoteliers and hospitality stakeholders visited the lounge to engage with the SIHRA team, gain insights into the association's initiatives and explore membership opportunities. The strong response led to a significant number of new memberships, reflecting the growing relevance of SIHRA in South India's hospitality landscape. ♦



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Indian destinations need new marketing pitch

K Syama Raju, President, SIHRA, opines that destination promotion should go beyond attracting tourists — it should be tech driven and initiate a community-led approach.

By DDP Bureau

In a recent conversation, **K Syama Raju**, President, SIHRA, iterated that India's vast cultural diversity, natural beauty, wealth of heritage and spiritual legacy make it one of the most compelling destinations in the world. "As we aim to position India as a global tourism powerhouse by 2047, it is crucial that we move beyond conventional narratives and rethink how we promote our destinations — especially in the context of the rapidly evolving preferences of modern travellers."

According to him, the 'Incredible India' campaign has undoubtedly built strong global brand recognition. However, in today's world of digital storytelling and immersive experiences, traditional promotional methods



need to be complemented by fresh, tech-driven and community-led approaches. "We must move from monolithic, metro-centric promotion strategies to decentralised, hyperlocal narratives that celebrate regional uniqueness — whether it is the

living temples of Tamil Nadu, spice trails of Kerala, coastal heritage of Andhra Pradesh, or coffee plantations of Karnataka."

He also pointed out the immediate need to adopt integrated digital campaigns that leverage data analytics, influencer collaborations and immersive content such as virtual reality experiences and 360-degree tours.

"At SIHRA, we have actively supported numerous initiatives in partnership with government organisations to enhance the visibility of South India as a premiere travel destination. These include the Tamilnadu Travel Expo (TTE), Karnataka International Travel Expo (KITE) and Kerala Travel Mart (KTM), among others."

We must move from monolithic, metro-centric promotion to decentralised, hyperlocal narratives."

His concluding thoughts focused on how India has stories, soul and spirit. "What we need is a bold and dynamic storytelling model that reflects the depth of our destinations. Rethinking how we promote Incredible India is not merely a branding exercise — it is a national mission to ensure tourism becomes an impactful force for social growth as well." ♦

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Tamilnadu Travel Expo returns with its second edition



With the aim to position Tamil Nadu as a state with a potential beyond heritage tourism, TTE 2025 is all set to rewrite the state's evolving narrative in September.

By **DDP Bureau**

The 2nd edition of the Tamilnadu Travel Expo (TTE) is all set to unfold between 26–28 September at the IDA Scudder Auditorium, Madurai. With the tagline 'Explore Beyond Heritage', TTE 2025 will showcase the cultural, wellness and wedding experiences that define the spirit of Tamil Nadu. While heritage remains a proud anchor, this year's edition ventures deeper — inviting attendees to delve into the state's evolving narrative.

It is being organised by Travel Club Madurai and Friends of Hospitality, with support from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Tamil Nadu Tourism; South India Hotels and Restaurants Association (SIHRA); and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). From luxury hotels and tour operators to



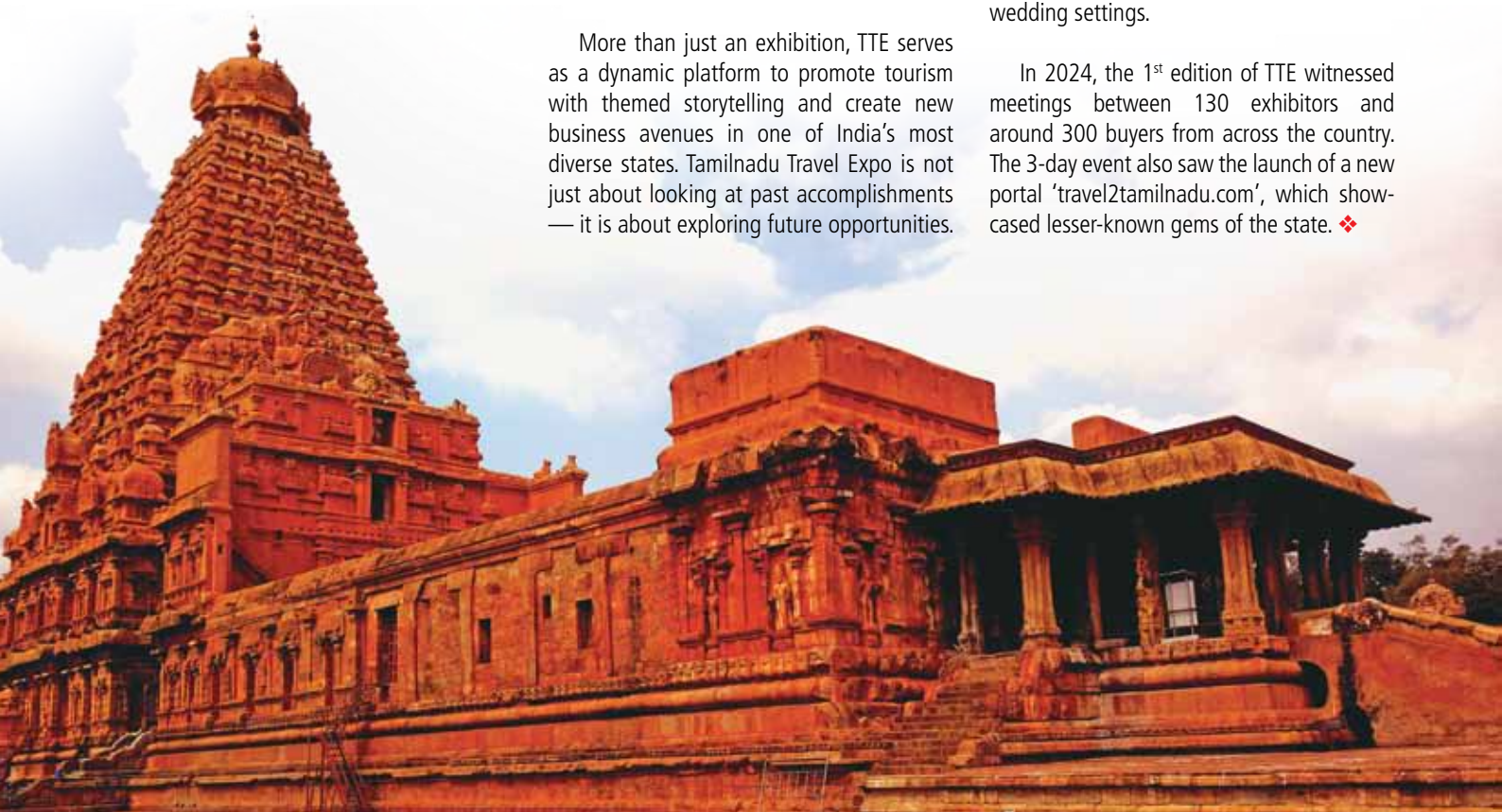
destination curators, wedding planners and décor specialists, the expo brings together key players from across the travel ecosystem.

More than just an exhibition, TTE serves as a dynamic platform to promote tourism with themed storytelling and create new business avenues in one of India's most diverse states. Tamilnadu Travel Expo is not just about looking at past accomplishments — it is about exploring future opportunities.

TTE 2024

Tamil Nadu continues to attract travellers in search of authentic cultural experiences and wedding settings.

In 2024, the 1st edition of TTE witnessed meetings between 130 exhibitors and around 300 buyers from across the country. The 3-day event also saw the launch of a new portal 'travel2tamilnadu.com', which showcased lesser-known gems of the state. ❖





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EXCLUSIVE

Puducherry: More than just a weekend getaway

With a target of welcoming over 30 lakh tourists by 2030, Puducherry is ramping up its tourism infrastructure and enhancing connectivity.

K. Lakshminarayanan, Minister of Tourism, Government of Puducherry talks about his government's plans for the UT.

By Amita Pandey

With its timeless French elegance, Puducherry continues to cast its spell on travellers. Known as the 'Window to French Culture,' the Union Territory (UT) is the perfect blend of French architecture and South Indian heritage, offering a compelling setting for not only domestic tourists but also for European visitors. Whether you are wandering through quaint boulevards lined with French-era buildings, soaking in the spirituality of its temples, or unwinding on sun-soaked beaches and tranquil backwaters, Puducherry is a mosaic of contrasts. From wellness retreats to architectural gems, it caters to every kind of traveller — the culturally curious, the spiritu-

ally inclined and the luxury seeker. For those chasing a destination steeped in history and diversity, Puducherry is not just a getaway — it is a dream come true.

However, as Puducherry's tourist clientele evolves, the UT's government is focused on transforming its tourism landscape with multiple initiatives such as developing tourism zones and activities, conservation of beaches, subsidies for private investors and collaboration with travel agents and associations to meet the ever-changing needs of travellers.



K. Lakshminarayanan
Minister of Tourism
Government of Puducherry





K. Lakshminarayanan, Minister of Tourism, Government of Puducherry, highlighted the UT's recent strides and future plans to position itself as a year-round travel and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) destination. "Puducherry is targeting an ambitious target of 30 lakh tourists annually by 2030. Currently, Puducherry witnesses approximately 19 lakh domestic and 1 lakh international tourist arrivals annually." The growth in tourist footfall is expected to significantly impact the economy of the UT as it currently accounts for 25 per cent of its GST collections — highlighting its influence in its overall growth.

To further capitalise on its coastal charm, the government is planning to develop multiple beachside resorts and promote private investment through infrastructure schemes such as the Grant of Financial Incentives for Hotels, Resorts and Tourism Projects,

Puducherry witnesses approximately 19 lakh domestic and 1 lakh international tourist arrivals annually."

originally introduced in 2004. The government has also sanctioned the development of home stays in the UT. "Hotel occupancy in the UT remains robust at 80 per cent, including luxury and high-end accommodations," Lakshminarayanan added, suggesting that a surge in visitors will require more options of accommodations.

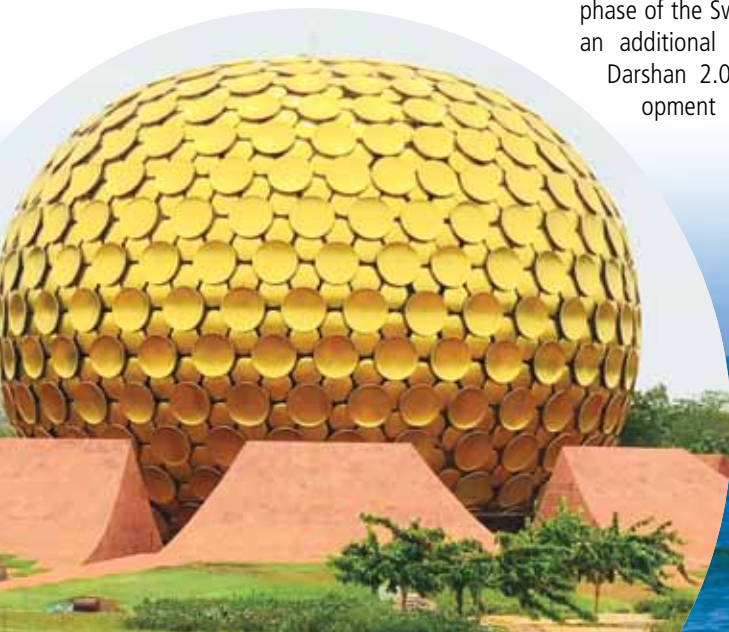
On the infrastructure front, Lakshminarayanan said, "The UT has effectively utilised ₹124 crore under the first phase of the Swadesh Darshan scheme and an additional ₹80 crore under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 for various tourism development projects including better

public amenities." A further 100 acres of land has been earmarked for a Special Tourism Zone under the public-private partnership (PPP) model, opening up fresh opportunities for development and investment. The tourism zone is expected to feature an upmarket hotel, a conference hall and an amusement park. "In a move to expand its coastal tourism, Puducherry is now welcoming Cordelia Cruises twice a month starting July, adding a new dimension to its marine offerings."

WEEK-LONG DESTINATION

The Minister also noted a shift in tourist behaviour. "Puducherry is no longer just a weekend escape. With rising interest from leisure and MICE travellers, it is increasingly becoming a week-long tourist destination as visitors choose to extend their stays." The average stay of any MICE traveller to the UT is at least 3 days, which sometimes gets converted into an extended trip with family.

"With the presence of premium institutions like JIPMER and pharmaceutical companies choosing Puducherry as the preferred destination for organising their events, the





UT witnesses more than 150 events and conferences annually.” This booming MICE activity complements the UT’s larger goal of becoming a hub for business and medical tourism with the presence of multiple convention centres and accommodation options.

CONNECTIVITY

Puducherry’s connectivity is another key area of focus. The UT currently offers direct flights to Bengaluru and Hyderabad, both of which serve as gateways to international destinations.

“The UT is in dialogue with the Central government regarding upgradation and extension of the airport’s runway, which will open opportunities for long-haul flights and will connect the UT to international destinations directly, further boosting tourism potential. With around one lakh Puducherry natives living in France, improving international air connectivity is expected to enhance diaspora tourism as well.”

SOURCE MARKET & PROMOTION

Commenting on Puducherry’s evolving tourism strategy, Lakshminarayanan spoke

“In a move to expand its coastal tourism, Puducherry is now welcoming Cordelia Cruises twice a month starting July.”

about how the UT’s timeless French allure continues to resonate with travellers from France, Spain, South America and Dubai. “These markets remain central to our international outreach and we will continue to strengthen our presence there.” On the domestic front, a key highlight is an upcoming promotional roadshow in Rajasthan aimed at drawing more domestic tourists to explore Puducherry. Additionally, the government is forging deeper ties with hospitality bodies like SIHRA to collectively tackle on-ground challenges and unlock the region’s full tourism potential. When asked about how they are collaborating

with travel agents to sell the destination, the minister mentioned that the government and other stakeholders in the UT are currently offering customised options of subsidies/incentives as per their requirement. In addition, multiple familiarisation trips have been organised for travel agents to educate them about newly created tourist attractions. ♦



All eyes on Kerala

With over six million users and more than 15 million page views, Kerala goes viral among all state tourism websites in India and stands second in international ranking.

By **DDP Bureau**

As per analytics company, Similar Web, Kerala Tourism recently witnessed the highest traffic on its website. It secured the top place among all state tourism websites in India for 2024-25, surpassing the Union government's 'Incredible India' website that occupied the second place.

In addition to that, globally, keralatourism.org ranked second among travel as well as tourism sites. However, Thailand Tourism website emerged first in all three global rankings. Vietnam, Incredible India and Indonesia occupy the third, fourth and fifth positions, respectively.

According to Google Analytics, six million users made 7.9 million visits to the Kerala Tourism website during 2024-25. Together, they viewed more than 15 million web pages.

Speaking on the importance of digital promotion in tourism development and the design of the Kerala tourism website, **PA Mohamed Riyas**, Minister of Tourism & PWD, Government of Kerala, said, "Kerala



Tourism is implementing innovative projects and products by catering to the changing preferences of travellers. The attractively-designed website provides comprehensive information about tourism activities in the state."

VIEW'S SOURCE

Around 5.8 million customers reached the Kerala Tourism site through search. More than one million people reached the site by

Over one million people reached the site by typing keralatourism.org, while close to nearly one million visitors arrived through advertisements

typing keralatourism.org, while close to one million visitors arrived through advertisements. Visitors from about 200 countries visit the website. Apart from the home page, many visit pages such as accommodation facilities, tourist destinations, tour packages, heli-tourism, wedding destinations, festival calendar, Theyyam calendar and yoga.

Available in more than 20 languages, the Kerala Tourism website is a comprehensive digital guide along with multiple interactive videos, covering the state's unique attractions, culture and travel. ❖





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South India's ethos thrives in Tamara's vision

Rooted in purpose and powered by innovation, Tamara Leisure Experiences is reimagining hospitality as it expands across India through a thoughtful, asset-light approach.

By Somya Deep



Deeply inspired by the soul of South India, Tamara Leisure Experiences is redefining Indian hospitality with a mindful blend of sustainability and wellness. With a finger on the pulse of evolving travel trends, the brand's innovative business models and sharp strategies have not only set it apart but also earned it enduring love from guests and trade partners alike.

TRENDS

In an exclusive conversation, **Shruti Shibulal**, Executive Vice Chair, Tamara Leisure Experiences, shared valuable insights into the changing travel landscape in South India. "We are seeing a clear shift in traveller



Shruti Shibulal
Executive Vice Chair
Tamara Leisure Experiences

“Inbound travellers tend to seek deeper, slower journeys anchored in wellness, spiritual exploration and cultural richness.”

preferences,” she noted, pointing out “Domestic travellers increasingly seek short, meaningful breaks that blend leisure, flexibility and experiential dining. However, inbound travellers tend

to seek deeper, slower journeys anchored in wellness, spiritual exploration and cultural richness. This duality informs how we design our offerings — balancing comfort and discovery.”



When asked about destinations in South India that are currently witnessing high traction among their clientele, she replied, "Alleppey, Coorg, Kodaikanal, Trivandrum, Coimbatore and Kumbakonam are currently witnessing high demand, while Guruvayur is gaining momentum."

Expanding on the region's potential, she added, "Tier II destinations in South India are evolving into highly valuable segments for niche travel. While connectivity is a consideration in some tier II markets, the growing demand for authenticity, privacy and curated experiences continues to shift momentum in their favour. With the right positioning and partnerships, these destinations reshape the expectations of modern weddings and corporate travel alike."

GLOBAL PROMOTIONS

What sets Tamara Leisure Experiences apart is its blend of responsible hospitality and wellness programmes. At its core lies a conscious balance of People, Planet, and Profit — woven seamlessly into every aspect of its operations. Each property under the Tamara umbrella is a tribute to its South Indian roots, thoughtfully designed to mirror the region's cultural richness, architectural legacy and ecological essence.

Firmly believing that wellness will anchor the future of travel, Shibulal added, "We are witnessing consistent interest in this segment from global travelers aged 30 to 60, particularly at Amal Tamara in Alleppey, our NABH-accredited Ayurvedic wellness retreat. Guests seek structured, evidence-based healing programmes rooted in classical Ayurveda spanning personalised diagnostics, authentic treatments, holistic nutrition and immersive therapeutic routines in tranquil, non-commercial settings."

In fact, to draw more inbound tourists to their properties and to position South India as a compelling year-round destination for experiential travel globally, the brand recently partnered with Karnataka Tourism for the Karnataka International Travel Expo (KITE), where they hosted international tour operators from key source markets including Italy, Brazil, Australia and the UK at The Tamara Coorg.

"We also maintain a strong presence at global trade shows such as ATM Dubai and GITB Jaipur, which is instrumental in building inbound demand and for showcasing South India's appeal to the larger audience," Shibulal noted.

For digital promotion, she said, "Our digital marketing is



“We offer exclusive rates or tiered commissions with mutually favourable terms for the trade. Agents benefit from marketing campaigns, product training, and relationship management.”

in-house and outcome-focused — built to reduce OTA dependence and grow direct channels. Most importantly, we bring stability, agility, and skin in the game — especially valued during volatile cycles.”

INCENTIVES FOR TRADE

Perceiving travel agents as strategic partners in creating personalised, high-value journeys for guests, Shibulal, shared, "Our engagement with the trade goes beyond transactional benefits. We offer exclusive rates or tiered commissions with mutually favourable terms. Agents also benefit from co-branded marketing campaigns, tailored product training and dedicated relationship management to enhance their ability to present our offerings with depth and confidence."

EXPANSION PLANS

Although Tamara will continue to address specific market segments such as leisure, business and pilgrimage travel in 2025, the brand is confident about the long-term potential of India's hospitality landscape. "Tamara Leisure Experiences is





accelerating its national footprint through an asset-light strategy. Over the next 12–18 months, we are launching new hotels across India. Together, they reflect our strategic expansion across tier II and tier III cities through sustainable, performance-led partnerships.”

BUSINESS MODELS

As Tamara Leisure Experiences continues to scale through an asset-light strategy, for hotel owners it makes the brand unique in the competitive space of hospitality partnerships. “We bring the mindset of an owner to every hotel we manage,” said Shibulal, underscoring what sets Tamara apart. “Unlike traditional fee-first models, our focus is firmly on operational excellence and shared success.”

Each partnership is meticulously tailored — evaluated

“Over the next 12–18 months, we are launching new hotels across India.”

against metrics like projected GOP, breakeven timelines, and working capital needs. This pragmatic, performance-driven approach has also guided the successful growth of Lilac Hotels, reaffirming Tamara’s ability to combine strategic rigour with value-driven collaboration.

To hotel owners looking to collaborate with Tamara, Shibulal said, “We offer three flexible formats — management contracts, lease models and revenue-sharing agreements, with scope for minimum guarantees

TIER II PROPERTIES IN FOCUS

- **The Tamara Coorg:**

A premier address for strategic offsites, CXO conclaves and leadership retreats. Its serene milieu and privacy make it an preferred choice for MICE engagements.

- **The Tamara Kodai:**

Offers an elevated setting for destination weddings and corporate gatherings. It continues to grow as a venue of choice for clients seeking bespoke, hill-side celebrations.

- **O by Tamara Coimbatore:**

Just 2.5 km away from

the CODISSIA Trade Fair Complex. It a natural hub for exhibitions, conferences and business events.

- **O by Tamara Trivandrum:**

A 10–15-minute drive from the Travancore International Convention Centre, allows it to serve corporate, medical and government-led events with ease.

- **Lilac Hotels in Guruvayur and Kumbakonam:**

Well-suited for small-scale weddings and religious ceremonies, in proximity to iconic temples.

where appropriate. Each model is shaped around the asset’s life-cycle, location and owner objectives. Our engagement includes pre-opening support, full brand onboarding and structured operational rollout — with every scope transparently defined and priced.”

NON-OWNED HOTELS

Underlining how they operate non-owned hotels, she said, “We bring the same discipline and rigour to non-owned hotels as we do to our owned portfolio. Our proprietary ERP platform offers real-time visibility across all departments — operations, revenue, guest experience and compliance. Performance is monitored through daily revenue calls, quarterly scorecards and property-wise NPS and CSAT. Our system is actively developed by over 35 in-house engineers at our sister company giving us a unified, agile system few hotel groups can match.”

USPs

Tamara’s strategic approach not only defines its uniqueness, it firmly distinguishes the brand from larger hotel chains. Its institutional strength and unwavering long-term vision offer a compel-

ling proposition for partners. “We have built successful hotels from the ground up and continue to operate them ourselves,” said Shibulal. “That deep operational insight helps us understand what owners truly need — especially when entering 20–30 year partnerships. Unlike franchise models, we directly manage each property, which ensures brand consistency and faster ROI.”

With these strategies and business models, Tamara’s South Indian properties are all set to surpass 70 per cent average occupancy in the coming quarters. The current occupancy rate stands at 60 per cent. This positive trajectory is driven by growing demand in wellness and luxury travel, increased traction in corporate offsites and destination weddings and a rising wave of millennial and Gen Z travellers seeking curated leisure experiences. “Internally, our investments in advanced revenue management systems, dynamic pricing, regional content strategy and CRM-led personalisation are enabling us to drive both market share and guest lifetime value,” concluded Shibulal.

With inputs from: Amita Pandey ❖



GRT promotes Madurai as MICE hub



GRT Hotels & Resorts recently celebrated their success with their travel trade partners along with promoting their summer packages in full swing.

By **Amita Pandey**

Emerging as one of the South's best hospitality junction, GRT Hotels & Resorts marked its success in the capital with tour operators and Destination Management Companies (DMCs) to celebrate their efforts and collaborations.

On the occasion, appreciating GRT's travel trade partners, **Jit Bose**, Vice President, Commercial Sales, GRT Hotels & Resorts, expressed, "Travel trade partners are very important to

our hotels. We own and operate 22 hotels across South India, and a large number of them cater to leisure tourists."

TRACTION

While speaking about their business traction from travel agents and DMCs, he revealed, "GRT's business from the DMCs has been very strong for the last six months and in winter. Additionally, as the domestic market is currently doing extremely well, we are offering



Jit Bose
VP, Commercial Sales
GRT Hotels & Resorts

GRT's business from DMCs has been very strong for the last 6 months. As the domestic market is doing extremely well, we are offering exclusive deals."



exclusive summer getaway deals to tour operators for our key resort destinations, which we recently launched.”

Building on Bose’s insights, **Shubhangi N**, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, GRT Hotels & Resorts, offered a closer look at the destinations driving the brand’s inbound business from tour operators. “When we map the pulse of our properties, Chennai continues to lead the pack, closely followed by the heritage-rich corridors of Mahabalipuram and Puducherry. We have also made a strong mark in Madurai, where we now have two hotels — the newest addition, The Grand Madurai, has also earned the favour of tour operators. Tanjore (Thanjavur) is steadily gaining momentum, while Coimbatore, too, contributes a healthy slice of inbound business. We discovered there is a growing potential at Wayanad in Kerala, which was a pleasant surprise.” She added, “Currently, inbound business contributes around 20–25 per cent of our overall revenue.”

LUXURY SEGMENT

Bose revealed that GRT has witnessed a robust post-COVID rebound in the leisure travel segment specially in domestic market, with bookings surpassing

Chennai continues to lead the pack, closely followed by the heritage-rich corridors of Mahabalipuram and Puducherry.”

pre-pandemic levels in 2024 and a strong summer start this year driven by longer holidays and rising demand for meetings.

Agreeing with Bose’s claim, Shubhangi added that the definition of luxury in hospitality is shifting from product-centric to experience-driven travel. “Luxury today is about stories, emotions and immersion.” Guests now seek not just a stay, but a story — both within the resort and beyond.

MICE

Discussing MICE trend in South India, Bose said, “In case of MICE business for GRT Hotels, Mahabalipuram remains a top choice, where their hotel has an expansive beachfront ballroom and proximity to UNESCO heritage sites.” He added, “Chennai

and Puducherry are also seeing strong demand.”

Notably, Puducherry’s appeal has soared post-COVID, with renewed air connectivity — daily direct flights from Hyderabad and Bengaluru transforming it into a seamless, experience-rich destination for corporate gatherings.”

Shubhangi added that the ‘GReaT Trail’ properties of GRT in Wayanad, Kodaikanal and Yercaud serve smaller, high-impact corporate gatherings. “These 40-room resorts offer the perfect setting for intimate MICE experiences — blending nature, comfort and connectivity. Additionally, we are focusing to transform Madurai into a thriving MICE destination.”



She also noted a strong post-COVID resurgence in this segment while stating, “Business has not only bounced back, it has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, revenues are up with a win-win for everyone.” ♦



Cornell champions 'Make in India'

The quality of hospitality equipment manufactured by Cornell is a testament to the idea that India has the potential to reach global benchmarks.

By Somya Deep



India is committed to the 'Make in India' initiative but there are not many companies who take tangible steps in manufacturing within India. Although in the same landscape, there are a few brands that religiously promote this initiative through impactful actions, which aims to make India a global manufacturing leader. With the same vision Cornell India stands firm on its motto, 'Why Not India?'

"At Cornell, 'Why Not India?' is our belief in India's potential to manufacture world-class hospitality equipment," said **Oommen Mathew**, Founder, Cornell India. However, manufacturing in India poses challenges. "The challenges we see include infrastructure gaps and inconsistent supply chains. There is also the perception challenge, where imported equipment is often assumed superior." Cornell tackles these



or exceed global benchmarks," affirmed Mathew.

Mathew emphasised that leading hotel chains recommend Cornell's equipment. "We are proud in setting a new benchmark for quality and reliability in Indian manufacturing. The fact that we are receiving global enquiries organically without any promotional push speaks volumes and it is rewarding to see our progress is motivating Indian competitors to upgrade their own products."

"'Why Not India?' is our belief in India's potential to manufacture world-class hospitality equipment."



challenges by investing in quality control, innovation and service reliability. "We motivate our suppliers to never compromise and deliver the best. In addition, every piece of equipment we build is a testament to the idea that India can match

With a focus on mastering their core before expanding aggressively, Cornell has a few innovative products in the pipeline, slated for launch over the next year. They are also entering into global markets gradually, building their export business. ♦

India HoReCa Expo 2025

exhibits pioneer brands

As India HoReCa Expo 2025 focuses on innovative trends emerging in the hospitality industry, 300 exhibitors showcased their products transforming the sector.



Telangana targets global events with new policy

With a sharp focus on MICE tourism, Telangana's new tourism policy is set to significantly boost the state's appeal for global events.

By DDP Bureau

The newly launched Telangana Tourism Policy 2025–2030 envisions transforming the state into 'India's Most Preferred Destination' by integrating heritage, spirituality, adventure, wellness and eco-tourism with local empowerment.

With attractive incentives and a push to infrastructure, it aims to bring in ₹15,000 crore investments, generate three lakh jobs and boost tourism's GDP share to 10 per cent. As a key highlight, the policy aspires to position Telangana among the top five states in domestic and international tourist arrivals.

MICE STRATEGY

On the MICE front, the policy focuses on developing new infrastructure with private sector participation by offering appropriate incentives. The state will be aggressively promoted for attracting global events, especially during the lean tourist seasons. New locations will be identified for MICE tourism and destination weddings at proposed Special Tourism Areas (STAs) with world-class event venues and accommodations.

Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau (HCVB) will be strengthened for marketing and promotion of Telangana as the preferred destination for MICE.

Appreciating the MICE strategy in the state policy, **Prithvi Anand**, Director of Sales and Marketing, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) & HICC said, "Telangana's



Prithvi Anand,
Director of Sales & Marketing,
NHCC & HICC

Tourism Policy 2025–2030 creates a powerful tailwind for our unparalleled MICE offering. Our 65,000 sq ft pillarless main hall with the capacity to accommodate 6,000 delegates and 287-rooms eco-certified Novotel



(hotel) form a high-capacity MICE ecosystem at the heart of Hyderabad's IT Pharma corridor. Aligned with the policy's infrastructure subsidies and lean season promotion, we are scaling international summits, leveraging our

hybrid-event tech and sustainable credentials. Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC plans to synergise with government and HCVB, cementing Hyderabad as a permanent fixture on the global MICE calendar, where unmatched scale, sustainability and seamless service converge."

With high enthusiasm from industry stakeholders after the policy came into effect, Telangana's Tourism Policy 2025–2030 is expected to drive sustainable tourism with incentives, ESG-aligned frameworks and eco-friendly practices to foster investment and environmental stewardship. ❖

POLICY'S FOCUS

- Develop new MICE infra under PPP model by offering incentives.
- Promote Telangana for global events, especially during lean seasons.
- Identify new MICE destination at proposed STAs.
- Strengthen Hyderabad Convention Visitors Bureau for promotion.

One-stop solution for smart catering



RATIONAL India presents innovative professional kitchen and intelligent cooking systems for the continuously evolving hospitality sector in South India.

RATIONAL India is revolutionising South India's catering landscape with its advanced duo of iCombi Pro and iVario Pro systems, designed for exceptional kitchen efficiency. These intelligent cooking solutions were featured at the India HoReCa Expo this year and can also be experienced live at RATIONAL's South India Experience Centres in Bengaluru, Chennai, Kerala and Hyderabad.

Speaking about these systems, **Vishal Raman**, Managing Director, RATIONAL India, said, "The iCombi Pro combines steam and convection with intelligence. It automatically adjusts settings for perfect results, while the customisable MyDisplay simplifies operations for staff across skill levels. Plus, with interim cleaning taking less than 15 minutes, it ensures peak hygiene and uptime." He further added, "We are looking forward to inviting visitors to experience the live cooking and its delicious result at our Experience Centres."

In combination with the multifunctional iVario Pro cooking system, caterers can cover almost 90 per cent of all cooking applications, empowering kitchens to deliver superior quality with reduced complexity. "The iVario Pro is a game-changer, replacing multiple traditional kitchen appliances. It impresses with its powerful heating system, using 40 per cent less energy than conventional kitchen technology, and offers versatile modes from sautéing to pressure cooking," explained **Ashish Shukla**, Business Development Director, iVario.



The iCombi Pro combines steam and convection with intelligence

For an overview of upcoming live events, register, or for more information on iCombi Pro and iVario Pro, please visit RATIONAL-online.com. ♦

Kerala to host 1st Wedding & MICE show



Kerala is all set to witness its first Wedding and MICE Conclave from 14–16 August 2025 with the aim to showcase the state's untapped potential in these segments.

By **DDP Bureau**

Long hailed as a pioneer in India's tourism landscape, Kerala is ready to script yet another transformative chapter this August. In a landmark move, the state will promote the potential of two booming segments of global travel — destination weddings and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) with the launch of its first-ever Wedding and MICE Conclave.

Spearheaded by the Kerala Travel Mart Society (KTM) in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, the 3-day conclave will unfold from 14–16 August 2025, kicking off with an opulent opening at the Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, followed by intensive business sessions at Le Meridien, Kochi. With the theme,

'Center Stage Kerala', the event aims to establish the state as a premium hub for experiential and high-value tourism bringing together global industry leaders, planners and stakeholders.

The conclave's format includes curated B2B meetings, destination familiarisation tours, expert-led workshops and an expansive exhibition space featuring MICE infrastructure, wedding services and local creative industries. The goal is to build bridges between international as well as domestic buyers and Kerala's tourism ecosystem.

The event is expected to witness more than 360 buyers from India, 40 from abroad and 65 sellers from MICE and wedding sectors.



Speaking about the event, **PA Mohamed Riyas**, Minister for Tourism and PWD, Government of Kerala, said, "This is more than a trade event — it is a turning point. Kerala has the vision and the assets to emerge as a



global leader in wedding and MICE tourism. Long celebrated for its serene backwaters, palm-fringed beaches, Kerala has primarily drawn leisure travellers and nature enthusiasts but with the global demand rising for event destinations, Kerala sees an opportunity to pivot — without compromising its cultural soul. Our efforts saw success as an estimated 1,000 destination weddings were conducted across Kerala in the last year alone."

"From the highlands of Wayanad to the luxury lakeside properties in Kumarakom, our venues are versatile and compelling, so, it is time we narrate that story to a global audience," noted **K. Biju**, Tourism Secretary, Government of Kerala.

CULTURAL ETHOS

Much more than just a business fair, the event will serve as a multisensory showcase of Kerala's cultural choices as its value proposition. Attendees will be treated to its varied cultural performances and cuisine that traverses the spice routes of Malabar and Travancore (Thiruvananthapuram).

HIGH-IMPACT ECOSYSTEM

One of the conclave's standout features is its focus on local supplier integration, ensuring

The goal is to build bridges between international as well as domestic buyers and Kerala's tourism ecosystem

every part of the event value chain is represented. "This is a catalyst for structured growth," said **Jose Pradeep**, President, KTM Society. Speaking about how this event will promote sustainable growth in the state, **S Swaminathan**, Secretary, KTM, said, "Kerala is not just entering this space — we are elevating it. We are setting the stage for world-class events that respect place, people and purpose."

As Kerala boldly courts the global event circuit, this conclave marks the beginning of a broader redefinition. No longer just a leisure destination, Kerala is laying claim to a multifarious identity — one rooted in hosting, not just welcoming. ❖





Narahari Rao
CEO, MRG Group
Bengaluru

MRG Group has elevated Narahari Rao to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Rao, who has served as the group's Chief Financial Officer, brings over two decades of deep expertise in financial strategy, business planning and cross-functional leadership. At MRG, he has played a critical role in institutionalising financial systems, driving cost optimisation, strengthening governance frameworks and aligning capital strategies with business priorities. With this promotion, Rao is expected to lead the group with fresh vision and strategies and drive its growth further with better business frameworks and innovative ideas.



Nibu Mathew
General Manager,
Hyatt Regency Trivandrum

Hyatt Regency Trivandrum has appointed Nibu Mathew as the General Manager. The move is expected to infuse fresh energy and strategic vision into the hotel's operations as it builds on its position as one of Kerala's premier urban luxury destinations. With over 20 years of cross-continental experience in the hospitality sector, Mathew brings with him an impressive portfolio of leadership assignments across some of the world's most iconic hotel brands, including Hyatt, Marriott, Starwood, Shangri-La and IHG. In his new role, he is expected to lead the property in elevating the guest experience with innovative ideas and strategies.



Faiyaz Ansari
General Manager
Priya Living, Hyderabad

Faiyaz Ansari has been appointed as the General Manager of Priya Living. With over two decades of experience across leading global brands, including Marriott International, Jumeirah Group, Viceroy, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Radisson Blu, Six Senses, Taj, Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, The Oberoi and The Imperial Delhi, Ansari brings deep expertise in hotel operations, pre-openings and guest experience strategy. Known for his leadership in launching and scaling operations across India and the Middle East, he has consistently delivered excellence in service innovation, team development and profitability across brands.



Meena Rewari
Director, Sales & Marketing
Shangri-La Bengaluru

Meena Rewari has been appointed as the new Director of Sales and Marketing by Shangri-La Bengaluru. Rewari has expertise in sales strategy, diplomatic engagement and market expansion. Having led transformative sales and marketing initiatives at luxury properties such as JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, Park Hyatt Chennai and Hyatt Regency Delhi, she is recognised for her deep market insight and her ability to foster meaningful relationships across diverse customer segments, including the diplomatic and corporate communities. Her track record reflects a strategic vision that aligns with Shangri-La's legacy of luxury Asian hospitality.



Raghavendra Kollipara
Financial Controller
NHCC & HICC

Raghavendra Kollipara has been appointed by Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre (NHCC) & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) as the Financial Controller. With a background in finance and strategic management, Kollipara brings a wealth of experience to the role. He will be responsible for overseeing financial planning, risk management, budgeting and compliance to drive operational excellence and sustainable growth for the brand. His strategic leadership in this role will further enhance the financial success for the Novotel hotel and the Convention Centre, along with eliminating any hindrance to the same.



Nidhi Berry
Commercial Director, Four
Seasons Hotel Bengaluru

Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru has appointed Nidhi Berry as the Commercial Director. With over two decades of distinguished experience across India's premier hospitality brands, Berry brings a nuanced understanding of the country's travel landscape, coupled with strategic commercial acumen and an empathetic, people-centric leadership style. Her appointment marks a significant step forward in the luxury major's journey, perfectly mirroring the brand's ethos of intuitive luxury. In her new role, she is expected to strengthen the growth of the hotel with innovative strategies and new commercial ideation, while maintaining the brand's ethos.



Prasanna Venkatesh
Director of Operations,
NHCC & HICC

Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC) has appointed Prasanna Venkatesh as its new Director of Operations. A seasoned professional with over 20 years of global hospitality experience, Venkatesh has a proven record of driving operational excellence and delivering exceptional guest experiences. His journey spans renowned hospitality brands such as Westin, Hilton and Accor as well as Dubai Expo 2020. His expertise in strategic planning, budgeting and operational efficiency has led to increased profitability across diverse properties, including luxury resorts in Maldives and the Middle East.



Pattabiraman A
Director, Food & Beverage
The Ritz-Carlton, Bengaluru

The Ritz-Carlton has appointed Pattabiraman A as its Director of Food & Beverage. With over two decades of experience in hotel administration and F&B operations, Pattabiraman brings exceptional expertise in driving revenue growth, enhancing customer satisfaction and elevating employee engagement across leading hospitality properties in Middle Eastern countries and India. In his new role at The Ritz-Carlton, Bengaluru, Pattabiraman will oversee all food and beverage operations with a focus on culinary innovation, service excellence and strategic growth, which will help the brand in achieving its goals towards guest satisfaction and overall growth.



Kanish Kaul
Food & Beverage Manager,
JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru

JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru has appointed Kanish Kaul as the Food & Beverage Manager. With over a decade of rich and diverse experience across premium brands, Kaul brings with him a dynamic approach to elevating food and beverage operations, guest experiences and service innovation. A passionate and motivated leader, Kaul began his career in hospitality in 2012 and steadily rose through the ranks, most recently serving as the Assistant Director of Events at The Ritz-Carlton, Pune. In his new role, he is expected to elevate the culinaryscape of the brand and help the brand reach its goals towards business growth.



Uttaran Acharya
Front Office Manager
ibis Styles Mysuru

ibis Styles Mysuru has appointed Uttaran Acharya as its Front Office Manager. With a career spanning over a decade in the hospitality industry, Acharya has held key positions at renowned hospitality brands including Radisson Bengaluru City Center, Royal Orchid Central, The Lalit Great Eastern Kolkata, and Le Meridien Kochi. In his new role at ibis Styles Mysuru, he will lead the front office team with a focus on guest experience, service excellence and operational efficiency. His understanding of customer service, team development and process optimisation is expected to further strengthen the hotel's commitment to providing exceptional hospitality. ❖



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