

MYSTIC EAST

unexplored horizon

A bi-monthly magazine by HRAEI | Vol 2 | Issue 2 | March - April 2016

COVER STORY

THE FUZZY LOGIC OF DRY DAYS

States impose prohibition on certain days in the name of law and order. Does this work?





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Dear Fellow Members,

Alcohol prohibition was introduced in Bihar on April 1. Prohibition is in force in the states of Gujarat, Nagaland, Lakshadweep and Kerala. Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Mizoram and Tamil Nadu had previously enforced prohibition, but later repealed it.

On the other hand, respective state governments impose 'dry days' on major religious festivals, occasions and election days. The logic is that on holidays the common man will consume too much alcohol and cause law and order problems.

Does prohibition or dry days work? Sample this. Prohibition doesn't prevent smuggling and illicit sale of alcohol in Gujarat or Nagaland. "Folder" is a term used there to refer to a bootlegger who delivers alcohol on-demand. States that repealed prohibition soon realised it was not feasible because of the leakages within the state and from across the borders.

On dry days liquor is available in the black market in all states. It's time someone points out to the government how many crores in revenue it loses every year from taxes not collected in restaurants and hotels on dry days. Hope someone gets the courage to reverse such prohibition.

Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI

“
Bihar CM liberalised
liquour licence in
2007; in 2016 he
announces total
prohibition to appease
women votebank
”

MYSTIC EAST

A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY HRAEI
Vol 2 | Issue 2 | March - April 2016

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SECRETARY'S MESSAGE



“

Hotels can lose up to 30 customers for each bad review. So never compromise on housekeeping

”

Dear fellow members,

A recent survey by Emprise, a leading UK provider of support services, found that despite giant leaps in the field of technology, cleanliness is still the most important feature for 97 per cent guests in a hotel. This factor scores ahead of other areas such as bed and furniture comfort, room lighting, internet access and a customer service focused attitude.

The study also shows 64 per cent of customers use social media to make travel plans, 35 per cent change their choice of hotel after browsing social media and 90 per cent of travellers avoid booking hotels labelled as “dirty” in online reviews. In other words, with the power and reach of social media and online reviews, negative comments can damage a brand and lose customers very quickly. It’s clear that, as cleanliness is a hotel guest’s number one priority, it’s the one area where you can’t afford to take shortcuts.

It’s evident that housekeeping standards and cleanliness have a huge impact on the guest experience, which in turn adds value and revenue in terms of repeat business, referrals and positive online reviews. Although guests might complain about poor service, shabby décor or rude staff, dirty rooms and amenities top the list of reasons why they won’t return. A clean environment might not technically be a revenue generator on its own but it can make a real difference to the bottom line.

Hotels can lose up to 30 customers for each bad review and don’t let housekeeping be the cause. So don’t compromise on housekeeping to cut costs. Make sure your housekeeping team is aligned with your brand values.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pranav Singh'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Pranav Singh
Secretary, HRAEI

26



Cover Story

March - April 2016

THE FUZZY LOGIC OF DRY DAYS

Prohibition on alcohol are imposed in states on particular holidays and election days. The idea is that apparently on holidays the common man consumes too much alcohol and causes law and order problems. But how sound is this moralistic logic?

7

▪ HRAEI Corner

Members meet
Mr Jonathan Ward

8

▪ News

PM Modi, Twitter
and Incredible India

12

FM Arun Jaitley
pins hope on GST

▪ Workplace Hazard



20

Women workers are more
vulnerable to sexual
harassment in the
hospitality sector

32

▪ **Technology**



Must-have guestroom technologies for the new age travellers

36

▪ **Revenue**



Revenue Management System of a hotel helps maximise profitability

51

▪ **State Survey**



42

▪ **Pilgrimage**

Lack of basic infrastructure has failed to promote pilgrimage tourism in the East



47

▪ **Policy**

Licence Raj of the 1990s is still alive and kicking in the sector

Bureaucratic bottlenecks prevent Andaman & Nicobar islands to turn into Bangkok or Bali

HRAEI CORNER

HRAEI members meet US Principal Commercial Officer

Managing Committee Members of HRAEI meet Mr. Jonathan T. Ward, Principal Commercial Officer, U.S. Department of Commerce, to discuss areas for collaboration between the and the HRAEI on April 12 at Everest House, Kolkata 700071



Quantum Jump in the Budget Allocation for North East

THE Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) hailed the quantum jump in the Budget allocation for North East India in Union Budget 2016-17. In a discussion, Mr Sudesh Poddar, President, HRAEI, said the Union Budget 2016-17 increased the annual budget for the Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) from Rs 2334.50 crore to Rs 2,400 crores last year.

According to the Ministry, in addition to other allocations, the most important announcement of exclusive and unique “Organic Value Chain Development” scheme for Rs 115 crore will prove to be a “game-changer” for the entire region. Added Mr Poddar, “Not only will it help in boosting the enormous unexplored potentials of organic entrepreneurship in the region but would also comfort the entire region into a favourite destination for new start ups from across the country to

come to North East.” The emphasis of the current Central Government has been on the promotion of organic farming and North east has become an important destination for. “The state of Sikkim was declared as the first ‘Organic’ state of India by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January.”

Mr Pranav Singh, Secretary, HRAEI, stressed that the main emphasis of the Budget allocated for north east is on the overall development of the region. “The provisions have been made for connectivity in North East region, skill development and organic value chain development among others,” he said.

According to Ministry of DoNER a budget of Rs 33,097.02 crore has been allocated for the North Eastern region across 56 ministries. This is 14% higher than last year’s allocation of Rs 29087.93 crore. The budget allocation for North East Council schemes has been increased from

INR 700 crore to INR 795 cores this year, he added.

However, senior managing committee member Mr T.S. Walia called for revival of the scheme North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIPP) which was stopped abruptly in 2014. He said, “NEIPP, launched in 2007, was supposed to run till 2017. Not just the scheme was stopped, HRAEI members haven’t got benefits due to them.”

NEIPP was introduced to make the region competitive with other parts of the country. Some of the key features of the policy was waiver of excise duty and income tax exemption on finished products in North East. As an FHRAI President (until September 30) Walia said he had “sent several letters and proposals to reinstate NEIPP and help the HRAEI members get the due benefits”, but the issue has yet to be addressed by the Central Government.

When Narendra Modi Pushes For An 'Incredible India', Twitterati follows



UNLIKE the previous Indian Prime Ministers, Narendra Modi makes it a point to regularly connect with his countrymen either via social media or via radio. And the strategy has worked for him. Modi is extremely active on Twitter (followed by 13 million people) and connects with people in the remotest corners of the country via his radio program 'Mann ki Baat'.

In one of his recent radio programs, he urged people to share their photos and travel experiences with him using the #IncredibleIndia hashtag and what happened is no secret: he received countless of them on his timeline.

Taking a cue from this, Ogilvy and Mather, which designed and conceptualized the Incredible India cam-

paign, has launched a film with a montage of mesmerizing tourist locations across India clubbed with Prime Minister's voice-over requesting to share images and experience.

The film also shows his Twitter handle where people are continuously tagging their pictures and Modi is retweeting them.

Speaking to AdAge India, Piyush Pandey, Executive Chairman and Creative Director, Ogilvy & Mather India and South Asia tells that it is a social media only campaign and has been created to inspire people to travel and know more about the mesmerizing locations of the country.

"The idea was drawn from PM's message from 'Mann ki Baat' and aims at showcasing the diversity of

the country and how beautiful it is," he says.

Though the PM made the request via radio on May 31, the video was released only late last week, and till now it has garnered over a million views.

Once again the PM has made an attempt to connect with people as with the advent of the smartphones and affordable cameras, people click more images while they travel. And what more can they ask when they are being asked to tag the pictures directly to the Prime Minister of their country. It is expected that a large number of photographs will be shared.

Modi seems to have given the Incredible India campaign, which was commissioned by Ministry of Tourism and first launched in 2002, a new

voice. He alone has taken this campaign to those heights where celebrities such as Amitabh Bachchan and Aamir Khan (who were earlier the face and voice of the campaign) arguably couldn't. The YouTube channel of Incredible India has videos of famous temples, forts, states, wildlife, sports, lakes and other such touch points across the country.

Incredible?

The primary objective of Incredible India campaign was to create a distinctive identity for the country while establishing it as a high-end tourist destination. The focus had been and still is to increase tourism in the country both domestic and international. And precisely, this is what Tourism Ministry might be expecting from the newly released

video, but will it succeed?

Prathap Suthan, Managing Partner and Chief Creative Officer, Bang In The Middle thinks it will. According to him, this is a great initiative to involve people and not just another tourism film. He says, "It is aimed at domestic population urging them to travel more and see more places. The #IncredibleIndia will be flooded with pictures as people today click a lot of images while they travel, thanks to smartphones."

However, Alok Nanda, Founder and CEO, Alok Nanda and Company, begs to differ. When we asked his views on the video, he dismissively told us that he is finding it difficult to understand the objective of the film. "There will be a lot of noise because PM Modi is socially very active, peo-

ple follow him and there will be a sudden spike in the images shared but it will be short-term," says Nanda.

He further points out that politicians are not the best endorsers for tourism, and hence, does not find it as a long-term campaign.

On the other hand, Emmanuel Upputuru, Founder and Chief Integration Officer, ITSA, finds the film more like a case study. "Narendra Modi has built a fantastic reputation globally. His speeches have been really well written and really well delivered. It's not a bad idea to leverage that. But the film is too fast paced. Why is it 30 seconds only? It is trying to achieve too much in the duration. People will recall a flurry of Indian tourism images interspersed with Modi's image and his voice.

India among top growth markets for Marriott hotels



MARRIOTT International, which will soon be India's leading hotel chain after its merger with Starwood Hotels & Resorts comes through, is witnessing faster growth in the country than many major markets around the world. Improving supply-demand dynamics, demographic dividend and country's growing domestic travel make India an attractive market, said Marriott's Asia Pacific president Craig Smith.

"The US is like a matured cash cow company whereas India is like a young start-up company where the growth is much faster with much more potential," Smith told ET.

Currently, Marriott has 32 operational hotels in the

country and will reach 40 by the end of this year. Globally, India will be the third largest market for the hotel chain post its acquisition of rival Starwood Hotels & Resorts, with a combined portfolio of 100 operating hotels by the end of this year. In India, the Marriott-Starwood entity will be the biggest player in terms of rooms, beating the Tata-group owned Taj Hotels, Resorts & Palaces. "We think there will always be a place in the country for a Taj and Marriott. They (Taj) will keep us on our toes. While we are leading the market with a small margin (room inventory), we are growing at a much faster pace," said Smith. The US-headquartered chain is seeing double digit growth in India.

"Modi may not have made everything happen, but half of his job is to actually induce confidence in the country. So we have seen double digit growth in our hospitality business here and our economic forecast reveals that India's growth will outstrip that of China in the next 10 years," Smith told ET.

"If anyone talked about BRIC countries, Brazil is in massive recession, Russia is in trouble due to the economic crisis, China is doing well but slowing down and India is doing best."

Marriott International is looking to double its revenue from the Indian market over the next three to five years. "Combination of management contracts and conversion of existing properties will help us double our numbers," said Smith.

Source: The Economic Times

Andhra Pradesh eyes Rs 10,000 Cr investments in tourism by 2020



ANDHRA Pradesh Government is hoping to lure a minimum of Rs 10,000 cr investment in the tourism sector in the state by 2020. The government has already prepared and initiated theme based tourism projects worth Rs 36,000 cr for private investments in the state. According to a release by the government, in 2015-16 alone, the state has witnessed investments worth Rs 1500 cr in the tourism sector spread across 160 projects. The state has set a goal of Rs 20,000 cr investment in the tourism sector by 2029.

In a bid to match investor expectations with the state's resoluteness

of intent, the Government's Tourism Policy 2015-20 has announced an array of incentives to investors for taking up tourism infrastructure projects and services such as a fixed land rental of 2% of basic market value for investors, reduction in VAT slabs to 5% for hotels and resorts, and a 3-year tax holiday on luxury and entertainment tax among others.

Blessed with a long coastline of 974 km and 35,000 sq. km of forests with tiger reserves, wildlife & bird sanctuaries, hill stations etc., Andhra Pradesh has huge tourism potential for investors' right from setting up of aqua based theme parks, amusement parks,

cruises to eco-tourism and leisure tourism. While the state intends to unlock further value from Temple tourism creation of a Buddhist Circuit is another avenue being pursued which is expected to attract both domestic and international tourists alike.

Presence of world-class hospitals and skilled medical professionals makes a strong pitch for medical tourism. The government has also given fillip to various rural tourism schemes with an aim to showcase the rural core competence in art, craft, handloom, textiles and the natural environment.

Among its various other plans to give an impetus to tourism in the state, the government is providing best tourism packages with option of multi-modal transportation for a tourist and is setting up an Indian Culinary Institute at Tirupati in addition to Hospitality Management Institute at Tirupati and Kakinada. To promote MICE tourism in the state, the government plans to develop Mega Convention Centres in Visakhapatnam, Tirupati and Vijayawada.

Speaking on the tourism potential, Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Principal Secretary - Tourism & Culture, Andhra Pradesh, said, "The state is working towards creating 6 tourist hubs – Visakhapatnam; Rajahmundry-Konaseema-Kakinada; Vijayawada-Amaravati; Tirupati; Ananthapuramu-Puttaparthi and Srisailam. With an investment of Rs. 12,000 crores already tracked, development of a sturdy tourism infrastructure is what will give further fillip to the sector."

In year 2015, the State has seen a jump in the tourist footfalls to the tune of 30%, increasing from 93 million in 2014 to 122 million in 2015.

Maharashtra to seek relaxation in CRZ rules for tourism: CM



THE Maharashtra government will seek relaxation in CRZ (Coastal Regulatory Zone) rules to promote tourism, said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis while replying to a discussion on the Konkan region. As part of its efforts towards ease of doing business, he said, the government will list norms for tourism. Also, the Directorate for Tourism will be the nodal agency for granting permissions for tourism-related projects.

The government, he said, has already transferred money to the Sindhudurga collector to acquire 350 acres for the Sea World project. The land size has been reduced from the earlier 1,390 acres. The acquisition will be completed within a year, he said.

The widening of the Mumbai-Goa highway is already underway and 64 kms of the 84 kms will be widened by December 31. "The widening of the remaining 20 kms is delayed as it passes through the Karnala Bird Sanctuary. Now that the Centre has granted permission, tenders will be invited soon," he said.

Source: The Times of India

No Luxury Tax on hotel rooms below Rs 1,500 in Delhi



DELHI government has proposed to increase the threshold limit for Luxury Tax on hotel accommodation from the current Rs 750 to Rs 1,500.

Luxury Tax will not be applicable for hotel rooms charging below Rs 1,500 in the city. The proposal has come in the Aam Admi Party (AAP) government's

second budget for 2016-17 presented in the Delhi Assembly today by the Finance Minister, Manish Sisodia.

The budget proposes self-declaration of luxury tax by establishments. In the tourism front, the Budget proposes major branding campaign for Brand Delhi as a destination. The budget proposed a skywalk connecting Qutab Minar, the heritage structure, with the nearest metro station.

The Budget also proposed a major cut in Value Added Tax (VAT) from 12.5% to 5%. It is yet to be seen how various sectors benefit from the relief.

The Finance Minister also announced major initiative to avoid multiplicity of taxation on same items which create ambiguity and confusion in the minds of traders. The government will simplify and bring them into one entry.

The budget has a total allocation of Rs 46,000 cr with a large focus on education sector.

Source: HBI

Indian hotel industry revenues to grow: Occupancies post strong uptick



ICRA estimates pan India Average Room Rates (ARRs) to remain flat for 2015-16, nevertheless occupancy improvements of 6%-7% supports Revenue per available room (RevPAR) growth of 7%. Room inventory in the premium category is estimated to increase by 8% for 2015-16 as compared to 4% during 2014-15. With deferment in construction, supply addition would be lower than earlier estimates at ~7.7%-8% for 2016-17.

Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) slowed down to 4.4% during Calendar year 2015 (7.1% during 2014); the FTA segment continues to remain far below its true potential. Further, per capita dollar spend by tourists declined sharply in 2015 after remaining stagnant for three years. Given the muted global economic outlook, FTA growth for CY2016 is also expected to be subdued. Domestic travel, going by domestic airline Revenue Passenger Kilometre (RPKM) trends exhibited strong growth during the past 12 months indicating improving consumer confidence.

ICRA estimates the top line growth for the industry to be around 8% during 2015-16, with operating margins expanding by 100 – 150 bps. Growth would improve in 2016-17 to 9%-10% aided by pickup in occupancies and ARR traction in a few markets like Mumbai.

While improving consumer confidence has supported growth in occupancies, ARR also appear to have bottomed out and was marginally down during YTD Dec-2015. Revenues for the industry sample grew by 7% during Q2, 2015-16 majorly due to occupancy driven RevPAR growth, while cost control measures bumped up operating margin by 250 bps to 8.8%.

Hope to pass GST bill this session: Arun Jaitley



THE government hopes to pass the landmark Constitution Amendment Bill for a national Goods and Services Tax (GST) bill in the second half of the Budget session, Arun Jaitley, FM, said recently.

The GST bill has already been

passed by the Lok Sabha and is pending ratification by the Upper House, where the ruling NDA does not have a majority. After it is approved by the Rajya Sabha, the legislation needs to be ratified by half of the 29 states so as to roll out GST possibly by October 1.

“The current session of Parliament has already seen one landmark legislation two days ago. And I do hope to see another two being passed in the second part of the session with regard to the GST,” Jaitley said recently at the Advancing Asia Conference in Delhi.

The Parliament had passed the Aadhaar Bill in mid April, providing statutory backing to the unique identification number for transferring government subsidies and benefits. Also, the Real Estate Bill was approved by the Rajya Sabha. “Once the GST is approved, we will gain a push to the reform process. Exhibiting determination to move on the reform path, India can provide a significant amount of growth to the world”, Jaitley added.

Source: Indian Express

A jazz band consisting of three men in black tuxedos is performing in a hallway. The man on the left has long white hair and is playing a flute. The man in the center is playing a double bass. The man on the right is playing a saxophone. In the foreground, a woman is lying in a white bathtub, wearing a large, ornate, jeweled headdress. The hallway has a red carpet and a large, ornate chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

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New eco-tourism hub planned in Odisha's Manchabandha



MANCHABANDHA, the rich virgin sal forest in Mayurbhanj district, will be soon be turned into an eco-tourism hub, with authorities planning to redevelop the site. Divisional forest officer (Baripada) Sanjay Kumar Swain had sought permission from the wildlife wing of the forest department to develop the facility, re-

ports Times of India.

The principal chief conservator of forest has released Rs INR 5 lakh for this purpose. In 2010, the authorities took an initiative for the first time to make the site an eco-tourism hub but villagers opposed it, citing forest cover depletion. The department had already spent INR 20 lakh. Facilities for the tourist stay will be created at the

site in the 2016-17 financial year. "We have convinced the villagers and they have agreed to support us. Their involvement will mean they will reap the benefits as well," said Swain. "In a month, around 2,000 tourists visit the area for sight-seeing although there is no staying facility. After the development, we expect a footfall of

around 5,000 visitors a month. We are yet to decide tourist packages and other services to be offered," said the senior forest officer.

Manchabandha, four kilometre from Baripada town, plans a nature trail to facilitate tourist treks within the forest. Spread over 110 hectares, only a small patch will be opened up for tourism. There is a natural water body, which needs to be developed for creating boating facilities.

A wildlife officer said development of Manchabandha will help reduce the biotic pressure on the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR), located adjacent to it. Baripada division comes under STR's buffer area. There are four eco-tourism sites in STR, five in Satkosia Tiger Reserve, one in Debrigarh wildlife sanctuary and two in Chandaka wildlife sanctuary, which witness impressive tourist footfall between November and June.

FICCI to encourage travel start-ups and digital tourism

FEDERATION of Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industries (FICCI) will encourage and assist travel start ups, digital tourism, and IT-based infrastructure development of the travel and hospitality sector in the country. The world is moving towards a new business ecosystem enabled by technology. This was informed by Dr Jyotsna Suri, Chairperson of FICCI Tourism Committee while inaugurating the two-day 'Travel & Hospitality Tech Conclave' by FICCI.

Dr Suri said that in future everything will get automated but the challenge was the cost of implemen-

tation of technology, especially for the small scale travel companies and hoteliers. Hence, there was a need to look for economical and innovative solutions.

The conclave would address the technological advancement in the field of travel and hospitality and facilitate communication and exchange of ideas and knowledge between key industry stakeholders, conglomerates, influencers and policy makers.

A knowledge paper on the technology landscape of the travel and hospitality sector prepared jointly by FICCI and RezNext was released at

the conference.

In his brief presentation on the paper, Zubin Bilimoria, Director- Global Sales, RezNext Global Solutions, said that the report provides a quick look at the current pace of technology automation, consumer trends, impact of mobile technology and trends with online hotel distribution.

The rampant internet penetration has transformed the way the travel trade and hotels operate. The mobile boom in bookings is not just restricted to the elite in metros. Opportunities are immense for hoteliers and travel aggregators alike, he said.

Heritage education should be made compulsory in school curricula



I NAUGURATING the third International Conference on Living Heritage in Udaipur, Vinay Sheel Oberoi, Secretary-Education, Government of India suggested that heritage education needed to be made compulsory in school curricula in the country. "Living heritage is linking our past with the present and has the power to shape the future," he said. He appreciated the work on heritage preservation at Udaipur's City Palace Museum.

The conference was organised by Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation, and was attended among others by people from the diplomatic community, government officials, conservationists, officials from UNESCO, scholars, students, among others.

Francois Richier, the Ambassador of France to India, highlighted the numerous projects being undertaken by the French Embassy to help preserve heritage across India. "We will bring senior conservation architects from France to help the heritage preservation projects in Lucknow, Pondicherry," he said. The Ambassador was satisfied with the progress on the partnership agreement between Domaine national de Chambord in France and the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation, Udaipur.

Jean d'Haussonville, General Manager of Domaine national de Chambord, a World Heritage site, drew parallels between Chambord and City Palace of Udaipur. "Chambord and City Palace, Udaipur have many common characteristics and features. Both were established in the 16th century

and have demonstrated perpetual renewal." Chambord is regarded as the 'Mona Lisa of architecture' and a shining example of Renaissance genius. "Just as the City Palace of Udaipur works for sustainable development, Chambord too believes in these modern practices to preserve its heritage," he said.

In his welcome address, Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar, Chairman and Managing Trustee of the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation, acknowledged the power of 'living heritage' to unite people and nations together. "Our city is over 450 years old; the City Palace Museum has crossed 45 years. To state that there is tremendous potential in their development is to state the obvious. I can see an all-round development of Udaipur as a destination for not just tourism but education, the performing arts, spirituality and sports: A veritable power-house for our time and age."

Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, Trustee of the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation, said, "Let us involve the youth of our countries in several activities and programmes of living heritage. They must be awarded fellowships and scholarships to understand the values and power of living heritage."

The Conference will explore and advance in the understanding of various approaches towards the promotion of living heritage and its integration in urban space and structures.

Marriott and Starwood stockholders vote to approve merger



STOCKHOLDERS of both Marriott and Starwood Hotels & Resorts have approved proposals relating to Marriott's acquisition of Starwood, which will create the world's largest hotel company. Holders of over 97 per cent of Marriott shares present and voting at the meeting, representing over 79 per cent of outstanding shares, voted in favour of a proposal to issue shares of Marriott common stock in connection with the transaction, and holders of over 95 per cent of Starwood shares present and voting at the meeting, representing over 63 per cent of outstanding shares, voted in favour of a proposal to approve the transaction.

Arne Sorenson, president and CEO, Marriott, said, "With this successful stockholder approval milestone, we are much closer to completing our transaction. Our teams continue to plan the integration of our two companies, and we are committed to a timely and smooth transition. We appreciate the stockholders' vote of confidence in our ability to drive long-term value and opportunity as a combined company."

At closing, Starwood stockholders will receive 0.8 shares of Marriott common stock plus US\$ 21 in cash for each share of Starwood common stock.

MoU signed to promote tourism to Andaman & Nicobar Islands



THE profile of Andaman and Nicobar islands will be promoted internationally to attract tourists and investment with the signing of an MoU between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Union Territory administration.

"Today, it's very historic and important that we have signed this MoU with the Andaman-Nicobar administration to ensure that the sides come together to coordinate, collaborate, optimise efforts in enhancing international profile of the islands as it seeks to attract tourists, investment, technology and tap markets," told C Rajasekhar, Director General, ICCR.

As part of the MoU, which Rajasekhar signed with Andaman and Nicobar Secretary (Art and Culture) Ankita Mishra Bundela, ICCR will also arrange for international cultural troupes/ groups/performers/artists to visit the islands and vice versa. During the event, the two sides also decided to organise literature workshops in the UT for international



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exposure. This decision was taken after Bundela made a suggestion to this regard.

"What we are looking at is that international writers of eminence to come and stay at picturesque places like Andaman. They can spend some time there, organise some workshops, interact with people and also write, which will further enhance the tourist pull of that place," Rajasekhar said. "The international writers of eminence can come and stay at picturesque places like Andaman. They can spend some time there, organise some workshops, interact with people and also write, which will further enhance the tourist pull of that place," he added.

Bundela said the tie-up will help the UT to get foreign tourists and also offer a "wider" platform for the island people to showcase their talents to the world. "And, we think it is also an opportunity for us to showcase the hid-

den talent and cultural aspect that we have in the Andaman. And I am very sure, the MoU will take us forward in that direction," she said.

The ICCR has executed MoUs with 10 state governments/UTs - Puducherry, Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Assam, Odisha, Dadara and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

"We intend to include every state, especially north-eastern states, and every Union Territory because while they are important parts of India, they are much bigger than many independent countries and also the talent they have is quite enormous," Rajasekhar said.

For more information see State Survey on Page 44

(Source: PTI)

IHC may spend Rs. 2000 crore to open 10 properties under brand Vivanta



01 Apr 2015 By IHR Staff O Comments IHC, the Tata Group-owned hospitality chain is in plans to spend around Rs. 2000 crore to open 10 new properties under its upscale

luxury brand Vivanta in the next five years. This will include two hotels in Guwahati and Amritsar with approximately 150 rooms each and one in Dubai.

"There is not set number of investment, but it typically costs a crore for a room," Vijay Veer Singh, chief operating officer (COO), Vivanta Hotels and Resorts said while speaking on the sidelines of the launch of a new Vivanta by Taj property in Dwarka, New Delhi. "We have 6,000 rooms in our 40 hotels at present and we will add 2,000 rooms globally over the next five years," he said.

"At present, we have 30 Vivanta by Taj and 10 other hotels which we run as strategic business units (SBUs) under the company, but they have not been christened as Vivanta as yet," Singh said.

The company, which has Vivanta by Taj resorts in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Malaysia, also plans to enter West Asia and Africa.

"We will be opening one Vivanta property in Dubai in the next three years," said Singh, adding, "we are actively looking at the African market to expand."

The Vivanta by Taj brand was launched by the Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces in September 2010 with 19 hotels in the portfolio. The number of properties under the brand grew to 27 in 2013.

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WORKPLACE HAZARD

DEALING WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The implementation of the law against sexual harassment of women is essential in the hospitality sector. But this is a tough task as working hours are odd and relationships with customers can be a double-edged sword



► **Harassment is a widespread problem in room service**

THE inherent characteristics of hospitality and service organisations create a prime breeding ground for sexual harassment. By its nature, the service production process is inextricably linked to the close involvement of the customer, and behavioural norms are often set around satisfying a customer's expectations; preferably exceeding those expectations.

In addition to the intra-organisational strains resulting from the "normal" conflicts between different hierarchical levels and departments, the service organisation has to deal with three categories of workers: backstage staff, front-line personnel, and participating customers. The constant interaction between these groups is therefore a constant source of stress and conflict.

The service workplace is largely populated by women, especially at the lower levels. Service employees tend to be young and have little formal education. Their position in the workplace is often weak: young women are less confident when dealing with people in authority, and feel less important than any other group of employees in the work place. Due to the lack of legitimate, coercive, reward, or expert power, the service worker may have to rely on referent power; that is, to be socially attractive and friendly with the customer.

Besides, the hospitality industry may be particularly susceptible to incidents of sexual harassment due to the ambiguity of "hospitality service", the unusual hours and conditions of work, the interaction of persons in the delivery of service, and the impor-

tance placed on appearance – which focuses attention on people as sexual beings.

Whereas an employee in the manufacturing sector rarely comes into contact with non-employees, in hotels, airlines and restaurants, the staff interact more with customers than their own colleagues. In addition to this, there are many other factors that make it more challenging for an employer in the hospitality industry to limit instances of sexual harassment. One such factor is the work culture and relationship with customers—a substantial portion of the front-end staff in hotels and airlines are relatively young and dressed to impress. Moreover, guests are required to be treated in a friendly and courteous manner, which may incite some guests to make inappropriate overtures.



► **Front desk to cleaning room, women are vulnerable**

Many employees tend to accept this as part of their job and do not report instances unless they are of a serious nature. Another factor is the hectic schedule that employees in the hospitality industry keep, working both day and night shifts. The nature of their work requires constant interaction with others at close quarters, sometimes in secluded areas. Even those working behind the scenes are forced to work closely with others in restricted workspaces, making them vulnerable to harassment by customers and colleagues, alike. While many employers in this industry take strict action against such harassers, employees may fear making complaints in case it affects their future career growth and prospects.

Although sexual harassment at the workplace has been a highly discussed subject in India over the last two years—especially since the enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Preven-

tion, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013—the implementation of the law in the hospitality sector is more complex because of the work culture and relationships with customers.

Despite the law, number of incidents of harassment hasn't decreased in all spheres of work. Over 80 per cent of working women in India face sexual harassment, but less than 0.1 per cent of these instances are reported. This is because of a lack of awareness regarding the scope of the term 'sexual harassment', as well as an understanding of what steps can be taken in case an incident occurs.

As per the 2013 Act, sexual harassment can be any act or behaviour (whether direct or implied) as long as it is unwelcome to the recipient. Physical, verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment are all covered under this law. However, the general and incorrect perception is that sexual harassment must be overt and direct, and usually includes physical acts. It

INTERNAL COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE (ICC)

- Constituted by the employer
- Conducts an inquiry into the complaint and against false/malicious complaints or testimony.
- Has the powers of a civil court.

Members trained and equipped to deal with issues relating to sexual harassment. Inquiry has to be completed within 90 days.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- If found guilty, employer may award: Written apology, warning, reprimand, censure, suspension, with-holding of promotion, with-holding of pay raise, termination from service/ enrollment into counselling, community service and compensation
- If the aggrieved woman files complaint under the IPC (S.354A), respondent could face imprisonment from 1-3 years or fine or both.

QUILD PRO QUO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Implied/explicit promise of preferential treatment in job.
- Threat of detrimental nature & threat to job.
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is for this reason that the 2013 Act makes it mandatory for employers to conduct workshops for employee awareness and capacity and skill building exercises for the members of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) who deal with such complaints.

These awareness sessions help employees distinguish between different forms of harassment, understand procedures for filing complaints and also the repercussions of filing false or malicious complaints. Contrary to what many employers believe, instead of increasing the number of frivolous complaints, these awareness sessions tend to make employees conscious of their behaviour with co-workers and, therefore, reduce instances of sexual harassment amongst colleagues.

While the compliance measures under the 2013 Act are mandatory for all types of government or private companies and associations, the implementation of this law is more essential and complex in the services sector than any other, since employees interact mainly with outsiders. The ICC can take disciplinary action against employees (including termination from employment or payment of compensation to the victim), it does not have jurisdiction over third parties.

However, the 2013 Act requires an employer to protect its employees from sexual harassment at the workplace, irrespective of who the harasser is. Therefore, when the harasser is an outsider, the only option with an employer is to file a police complaint, which is not always practical. In order to avoid such situations from occurring often, implementing measures for the prevention of sexual harassment becomes more essential in the hospitality industry than the redressal of such complaints.

These measures give confidence to employees enabling them to ap-

■ **HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

- Creating an intimidating work environment & humiliating treatment that affect health/safety of an employee
- A pervasive sexual harassment that makes the work environment 'hostile'
- Sexist remarks, spreading rumours, display of pornography or sexist/obscene graffiti, physical contact/brushing against women create hostile work environment

■ **WHAT TO DO**

- Prevention is the key.
- Sustained efforts required.
- Sensitization and awareness are the essence.
- Treat all complaints seriously, investigate them thoroughly, and document the efforts completely.

Bottomline: Sexual harassment violates the rights of the individual and if employer does not do everything possible to prevent it and remedy it once it occurs, employer can be held liable for damages and also the reputation of the organisation will be at stake.

proach their employer knowing that they will be supported, and helps in informing guests who may otherwise overstep boundaries (believing that they could get away with certain behaviour), that the employer follows a zero tolerance policy. Also, when the reverse occurs (guest feeling harassed by an employee), the existence of such mechanisms show an employer's commitment towards taking action against the accused employee even after the guest leaves.

Like any young legislation, the 2013 Act also has flaws that will gradually be corrected through judicial and legislative interference. In the meantime however, it is the responsibility of each employer to make the best use of these provisions and protect their employees. While many organisations have established procedures for dealing with sexual harassment complaints, unless steps are taken to spread awareness, this law will not be effective. Ultimately, the only alternative left to victims with unsupportive employers is to quit and join another organisation, while the perpetrator enjoys status quo.



► **Employers can also turn into predators**



Study: Hotel Housekeepers are at great risk for Sexual Assault from guests

WHEN Dominique Strauss-Kahn was accused of assaulting Nafissatou Diallo, the maid who was sent to clean his hotel room, hospitality workers thought the story seemed all-too-plausible. In a New York Times op-ed, Jacob Tomsky, a veteran of the hotel industry, wrote that housekeepers are assaulted by guests “more often than you’d think,” and that their employers don’t offer much protection. In a recent account on xoJane, an anonymous woman describes a decade’s worth of sexual harassment in different parts of the hotel industry—from working the front desk to cleaning rooms. It’s so systemic, she says, that the women developed coordinated strategies to cope with it—like enlisting other housekeepers to stay with them when they’re assigned to clean the room of a “known pervert.”

These anecdotes are alarming—and now, new empirical research paints a truly dire picture of the lives of female hotel workers. For a new paper in the journal *Gender, Work & Organization*, a team of researchers from the De-

"Woman ... bedroom: [some guests] don't think beyond that", said a hotel attendant in her forties

partment of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management at Griffith University in Australia, interviewed female hotel workers employed by 5-star hotels on the Gold Coast, a city in Queensland. Of the 46 women who participated in the study, 44 had experienced some kind of inappropriate advance from a male guest—ranging from jokes to propositions to assaults. Sanrda Kensbock, the study’s lead author, wasn’t able to give me a breakdown by type of incident, but it’s safe to say that—whatever form it takes—harassment a widespread problem. “We found guest-initiated sexual harassment to be pervasive and

normalized within the hotel workplace,” she wrote. “The low status of hospitality workers renders them particularly vulnerable, with the power held by the instigator being a critical component of sexual harassment.”

Women described men who insisted they close the door while cleaning, grabbed their hands as they handed over change and asked where they could “find a girl.” Kensbock and her colleagues identified a few factors that put women in the hotel industry at a heightened risk for sexual harassment, including the “gendered” nature of their work as housekeepers and their lack of power relative to the guests. Many of the attendants also complained that they felt their uniforms were sexualizing, and that they did not suit their age. (Most of them were in their forties or older.) “You feel like an old-fashioned parlor maid in these uniforms,” one woman said. Others pointed out that dresses are not the most practical attire for the physically demanding work they do.

It doesn’t help that their work takes place in bedrooms—spaces that, for the guests, are “intimate, personal and potentially eroticized,” Kensbock says. “‘Woman ...bedroom’: [some guests] don’t think beyond that,” said Bianca, a hotel attendant in her forties. “I think it’s a male thing,” said Jane, a hotel worker in her sixties. “They see [a] bed, and what do you do in bed?”

The isolated nature of their work can be problematic, too. As Tomsky wrote in the Times, “They’re often alone on a floor, cleaning a vacant room, back to the door, the vacuum’s drone silencing all sound. A perfect setup for a horror movie.”

Most of the women in Kensbock’s study coped with harassment using passive strategies, like humor or deflection. Though the hotel management had protocols they could follow to report inappropriate behavior, women—fearing guests would retaliate by leaving negative surveys—rarely complained.

Source: New Republic Daily





THE FUZZY LOGIC OF DRY DAYS

Prohibition on alcohol are imposed in states on particular holidays and election days. The idea is that apparently on holidays the common man consumes too much alcohol and causes law and order problems. But how sound is this moralistic logic?

RECENTLY HRAEI's appeal cut down a prolonged liquor ban in Kolkata during Assembly elections. Thanks to a concerted effort by the the Hotel and Restaurants Association of Eastern India (HRAEI), the state excise department of West Bengal lifted a 10-day prohibition on liquor in the heart of Kolkata.

In an earlier order, the central part of the city—the area with largest concentration of bars and restaurants—had been declared dry for 10 days, between April 19 and 30 owing to the State Assembly Elections. According to the Election Commission order, liquor sale had been prohibited in poll-bound areas not just on election days, but during the preceding 48 hours as well. The ban was supposed to extend to the neighbouring constituency of the one in which polling is being held.

The order set panic among city bar owners after the state excise department issued the order on April 7. "Since summer is the peak season for restaurants liquor prohibition for 10 days at a stretch would have led to to a 80 per cent drop in sales. Many of the restaurants owners might have to shut down as it's not viable to operate without serving liquor," said Sudesh Poddar, president of HRAEI. He made an appeal through letters to the collector of excise, the Election Commission and the chief minister seeking a reprieve.

The members heaved a sigh of relief on April 11 as the state excise department effect-



► Dry days encourage consumers to procure booze from illegal sources

ed a 'partial modification' of its earlier order and lifted the ban on liquor sale in constituencies adjoining those in which polls are to be held.

This is not the first time that boozers in Bengal had to pass through a long period of dry days. Last year the state excise department had asked all restaurants and bars not to serve alcoholic beverages all through 21 – 24 October. Business across restaurants in Kolkata dipped to an all-time low during the puja, thanks to four consecutive dry days. Without liquor, most found it hard to attract patrons.

While footfall didn't slide dramatically, volume of sales dropped by 15%-20%.

The move was aimed at reducing the number of accidents and brawls that are largely contributed by alcoholic beverages due to irresponsible drinking on festive and holidays. But neither the liquor shop owners nor the boozers seem to be worried by the embargo. Those people who have plans to drink and party will stock up well before the embargo comes into effect.

Restaurant owners are worried

about the next pujas. Puja outings are planned in advance so if the dry period continues to be long, revellers will be inclined to omit their eating out plans. Mr Poddar argued that restaurants should be kept out of the purview of dry days during festivals. "People who are likely to create trouble never visit upscale restaurants. They would prefer to buy liquor from off-shops," he reasoned. "Every year the state goes through several numbers of dry days. This hardly helps the law and order situation or prevent drunken brawls," says Poddar.

The enforced dry days are meaningless when it is not illegal to consume alcohol on these days; it is illegal only to sell alcohol. Weddings are postponed or shifted to a 'wet' state – because the consumption needs to be legal. What of those who do not care about the legality?

For the common citizen, liquor is available on dry days – it's just more expensive. In the 'dry' state of Gujarat, liquor is available in plenty – all you need to know is a number to call. Sometimes, the hunt for alcohol can lead to tragedy, as it did when more than 100 people died due to consumption of illegal alcohol in 2009.

Over the years, no one has ever been able to decode the logic of these alcohol-free days. You could possibly understand Gandhi Jayanti being one in deference to the Mahatma's well publicised aversion to the bottle. But other holidays? And election days? The government thinking on this – if we can call such a muddle-headed activity 'thinking' – apparently is that on holidays the common man will consume too much alcohol and cause law and order problems, while on election days political parties will ply the poorer voter with alcohol in order to put him 'under the influence'. This is ridiculous.

Dry Days are fixed by the State Government. Most Indian States observe dry days on major religious festivals/



► **Prohibition was a miserable failure in the US in early 1930s**

occasions, depending on the popularity of the festival in that region. National holidays such as Republic Day (January 26), Independence Day (August 15) and Gandhi Jayanti (October 2) are usually dry days throughout India.

If experience over the years has identified election day as a problem, surely the government can take a

pragmatic view. Like saying that all liquor shops will be shut on those days but three-star and above hotels and Class I restaurants can keep their bars open as on other days. Someone in government should do a quick calculation to see how much revenue it loses every year from taxes not collected in restaurants and hotels on

dry days. It's bound to be several hundred crores of rupees. And why this loss? Because some minister took a decision to declare dry days years ago and no one now has the courage to reverse it.

In the past, many Indian States and even some other countries have tried to ban alcohol consumption. Almost all of them failed. On the contrary, prohibition led many people to drink more 'legitimate' alcohol, such as patent medicines (which contained high concentrations of alcohol), medicinal alcohol, and sacramental alcohol.

This was true in the US as well. Between 1920 and 1933, the American Government prohibited alcohol nationally with a view to reduce crime and corruption, solve social problems, reduce the tax burden created by prisons and poorhouses, and improve health and hygiene.

The results of that experiment clearly indicated that it was a miserable failure on all counts. According to one analyst, "Men were drinking defiantly, with a sense of high purpose, a kind of dedicated drinking that you don't see much of today... There were 10 times more places one could get a drink during Prohibition than there had been before".

Another setback for prohibitionists was their loss of control over the location of drinking establishments. Before Prohibition, social activists and prohibitionists had used local ordinances and taxes, licensing laws and regulations, and local-option laws to prevent, regulate or discourage the sale of alcohol in the city centre, near churches and schools, on Sundays and election days, and in their neighbourhoods.

Prohibition eliminated those political tools. Instead, consumption of alcohol spread through speakeasy restaurants, in business districts, middle-class neighbourhoods, and other locations that were formerly dry, or gave the appearance of being dry.



► Dry days are too frequent in the capital city

Prohibition also led many people to drink more 'legitimate' alcohol, such as patent medicines (which contained high concentrations of alcohol), medicinal alcohol, and sacramental alcohol. The amount of alcoholic liquors sold by physicians and hospitals doubled between 1923 and 1931. The amount of medicinal alcohol (95 per cent pure alcohol) sold increased by 400 per cent during the same time. Those increases occurred despite many rigorous regulations.

At the beginning of Prohibition in the US, a priest stirred audiences with this optimistic prediction that, "The reign of tears is over. The slums will soon be a memory. We will turn our prisons into factories and our jails

So prohibition is an off and on policy in our country. It is about enforcing morality. Prohibition does not mean that people will stop drinking. They will merely find other avenues to do so



into storehouses and corncribs. Men will walk upright now, women will smile and children will laugh. Hell will be forever for rent".

But unfortunately, none of these expectations were realised. The policy of blaming liquor for everything, from diseases to crime to poverty and broken homes, was an absolute failure. In fact, America had experienced a gradual decline in the rate of serious crimes over much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. That trend was reversed by Prohibition.

Now Prohibition is being brought back to India. Kerala, with the highest per capita consumers of liquor, is implementing Prohibition in a phased manner. Populism has inspired Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to introduce prohibition in Bihar.

But states like Tamil Nadu, Mizoram, Haryana, Nagaland Manipur and Karnataka have imposed and relaxed Prohibition in the country often with disastrous consequences for State revenue. Nowhere in the world has legislating morality succeeded. Sinners cannot become saints because the law says that everybody should become a saint or have saintly traits. The job of the Government is to govern, not to tell an individual as to what is good or bad for him. If somebody still commits foolishness, social scientists and activists can seek to help him or her out of the mess.

So prohibition is an off and on policy in our country. It is about enforcing morality. Prohibition does not mean that people will stop drinking. They will merely find other avenues to do so, like going to neighbouring States for binge drinking and storing alcohol in bottles meant for non-alcoholic drinks. Enforcing Prohibition is a waste of manpower. If anything, it will only open another avenue for corruption. The Government should bear in mind that, "Morality has become the best of all devices to lead the people by nose."

Bihar prohibition: Why liquor ban is bad economics and risky politics

Nitish Kumar may have the political will but is the administrative machinery, not known to be very efficient and upright in the state anyway, equal to the task

SOCIALIST leader Ram Manohar Lohia, political guru of Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar and his ally and Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad Yadav, is known more for his Pichare Paye Sau Mein Saath (60% for backwards) slogan. But his strong advocacy of women's empowerment was far ahead of times. In decades immediately following Independence, he saw no wrong in unmarried motherhood and spoke in favour of the right of women to choose their life partners even if that meant breaking caste barriers.

But his idea of a broad coalition of backward classes is something that seems to have appealed to Nitish Kumar the most. According to Lo-

hia, nearly 90 per cent of the people suffered from some form of injustice. And the suffering group included women, Dalits, scheduled tribes and depressed sections of Muslims and

Christians, according to him.

Following in the footsteps of Lohia, Nitish has been working on a broad coalition of backward classes with women at the forefront. And to good effect. Even in the recently concluded assembly elections, an overwhelming majority of women voted for Nitish-led Mahagathbandhan, according to Cen-

tre for the Study of Developing Societies data.

And the latest liquor ban in Bihar is perhaps an attempt by Nitish Kumar to consolidate that gain. Some of his other decisions—free cycle for school

girls and reserving 50 per cent seats in local bodies—were steps in that direction. But there is a limit to how much consolidation is possible especially when it is a known fact that enforcing total prohibition is easier said than done.

The United States experimented with the prohibition way back in 1920. It soon found out that more people were drinking alcohol than before. The country suffered revenue loss and the cost of enforcing ban was quite high. There was a well-developed black market of liquor and the number of people indulging in “illegal trade” just skyrocketed.

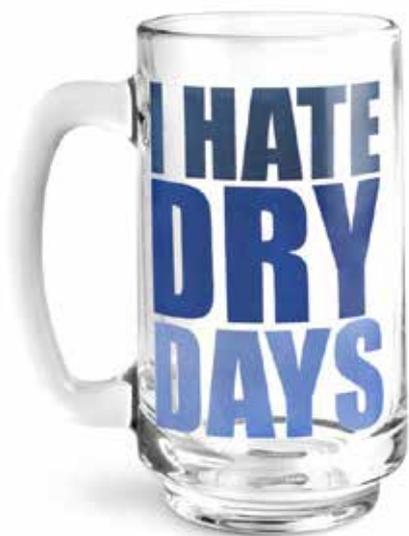
And contrary to expectations, other business activities too took a hit. According to an Encyclopaedia Britannica entry, “the Prohibition era also is remembered as a period of gangsterism, characterized by competition and violent turf battles between criminal gangs.”

It is unlikely that we will see a different result in Bihar of today. Nitish Kumar may have the political will to enforce the liquor ban. But is the administrative machinery, not known to be very efficient and upright in the state anyway, equal to the task. There is a danger that shoddily enforced prohibition may have adverse political implications. Don't forget that other than sharing porous border with Nepal, Bihar is surrounded by states where liquor is going to be available.

The Bihar government has indicated that it will work with civil society and self-help groups to enforce total prohibition. Theoretically it seems a good idea. But the administration is not known to have inclination to share power with social groups, even if for limited objective.

Nitish Kumar has taken a big risk with this decision. The reward, if any, is going to be very limited. Most likely lower than what he expects.

Source: Business Standard



Must-Have Guestroom Technologies

With so many disruptive technologies hoteliers face significant challenges in selecting guest room entertainment infrastructure and content that delivers the guest experience they're looking for, now and into the uncertain future



► Guestroom technology eats up a large pie of the investment in new-age hotels

AS consumer technology continues to advance, hotel guests are becoming harder to please. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, guests are often armed with at least two devices — be it a smartphone, tablet or laptop — and not only expect to stay connected wherever they are, but also demand the luxuries found in their own homes.

The biggest thing that business and leisure guests want is to be able to stay on their routine when they travel. They have huge expectations, like a flat-panel television with streaming movies, that wasn't there two or three years ago.

Guestroom technology is the largest portion of the tech budget for hotel operators, according to a study called "Lodging Technology Study" by Hospitality Technology, the only media brand dedicated exclusively to covering technology trends and solutions in both the lodging and foodservice industries. Enhancing guest services, including flat-panel and high definition televisions, which many report as part of this year's plan, ranks No. 2 in a list of important business goals, and 83.7 percent of respondents report guestroom technology projects as important to their company.

Hospitality Technology reviewed industry research and spoke to hotel executives to identify five technology trends to watch for in the guestroom.

Interactive Television

When it comes to television, it's out with the tube and in with the flat screen. More than 60 percent of hotel operators reported offering a flat-screen, according to the HT survey. But, offering a flat screen is just the beginning. Consumers are looking to use a hotel room television the same way they use it in their home, which means watching a high-definition picture with the ability to rewind, pause and record a program.



► Young guests love to multitask with tech gadgets in a hotel room

Consumers are looking to use a hotel room television the same way they use it in their home, which means watching a high-definition picture with the ability to rewind, pause and record a program

There's a significant trend of guest dissatisfaction when they don't have a flat panel television, so many hotel authorities have replaced their televisions despite budget constraints. Some high-end hotels are even looking into the option of IPTV (Internet Protocol Television). Many guests expect it and are used to the faster response and using a DVR to record programming. The IPTV give them more high-definition selections too.

Devices like NetFlix and DishFlix HD plug and play technology to allow guests to stream music, video or games through their television set.

Bandwidth Boost

Multiple devices mean the need for more bandwidth, and many hotels are looking to provide it in the next two years. Looking at HT's study, 28 percent of hotel operators plan to upgrade and increase bandwidth to guest rooms in the next 6 months, and 21 percent will do so in the next 12 to 24 months.

HT conducted a custom research surveys, and a couple of years ago they asked both business and leisure guests about what in-room technology satisfies them or what disappoints them if they don't have it, and high speed Internet access was top on the list.

Increasing bandwidth costs money, and one option is to offer Internet access for free up to a certain amount, and then offer tiered pricing. Three years ago maybe 50 percent of the population had a notebook computer. Now, 100 percent have some type of portable device, so we have been making significant investments and talking with partners for both cellular and Wi-Fi.

There are different options to boost bandwidth depending on the infrastructure and when the next major upgrade is planned. Some hotels are undergoing a complete renovation, which include category 5 cabling and fibre to offer Ethernet in guestrooms. However, at some luxury hotels a category 3 cable is in place and upgrades are not scheduled



► **Many of the top property went live with mobile apps**

for at least 10 years. As a result, the company chose a VDSL service from that could carry a heavy bandwidth.

“It gave us one-hundred megabytes wired and can go up to 300,” one executive explained. “For properties with renovations happening sooner, we are using a sophisticated powerbrand switch from Motorola T3, which is an excellent product that will get us by for the five or six years until an upgrade.”

Mobile Madness

With the increase in mobile devices available on the market, consumers are doing more on-the-go, and hotel operators are capitalizing on the trend. Not only are mobile apps being utilized for making hotel reservations, but also for meeting guest needs while staying at the property.

Many of the top property went live with mobile apps, allowing guests to use a smartphone to book a spa appointment, ask housekeeping for ad-

ditional towels or order room service from the ski slope.

“As guests become more tech savvy, it becomes part of their life,” notes a director director of operations at a high-end spa. “Hotels need to allow guests to create their own service experience on their schedule, not the hotel schedule.”

The app runs on a sophisticated platform from, and requests are sent to the property’s service express area computer where someone monitors and executes them. “Right now it’s a novelty, but in a year it will be more of an expected service,” she notes.

This offering followed the property’s first mobile app, which allowed guests to book reservations. “We noticed that 30 percent of our traffic to the website was coming from Safari this year, where last year it was only five percent, so we know more people are using their mobile phones and tablets,” the director explains.

Another mid-range hotel launched

■ **TOP FIVE MOST DESIRED HOLIDAY 'COMFORTS'**

1. A nice view
2. Wi-fi access
3. Clean hotel
4. Good mattress
5. Great hotel restaurant

Source: Pixmania.com

a mobile app a year and a half ago and already has seen “hundreds of thousands of downloads across 80 countries.” The company is now looking into offering an interactive touchscreen in the lobby area as a virtual concierge for new builds.

More Than a Door Lock

Magstripe technology has been the choice for door locks at the majority of hotels in the past, but the next generation is RFID, the apparent successor to magstripe. It's a simple technology and proven to work. It's more expensive, but very reliable, and if you centralize them, you can build in intelligence.”

In some properties, the RFID door locks are integrated with network technology, so when a guest enters the room there is a welcome scene. The drapery opens, the television turns on, music plays and the lights turn on, says Lowes.

At checkout the lights are turned off, and is made sure the television is off and the drapery is closed. RFID technology is quickly replacing magstripe. Most recently, lock manufacturers are reporting that about 50 percent of the locks going out the door are RFID.

Energy Management

The ROI for installing an energy management system is often worth the initial cost. This is another area many hotel operators are looking to invest for 2012.

The ROI on this type of technology is huge, and this has got energy management controls that allow us to control the guest rooms remotely. If you have a hotel room sitting empty, the cost of having it at 68 degrees compared to what a guest would keep it at is a big difference.

Some hotels in Europe and South East Asia are even more sophisticated, as many hotels only activate heat, water and other energy controls when a guest unlocks the door.

Wifi more important than room with a view for Brits on holiday



ONCE upon a time, the most important requirements for an enjoyable holiday were a decent book and good weather.

But now, it seems, the true holiday must-include for British holidaymakers is not so much the things that can help them to switch off as the little extras that ensure they can stay switched on.

According to a new survey, Britons cannot disconnect from life at home when they go on holiday - and rank the ability to stay in touch with loved ones via smartphones and social media as a modern essential.

One in three of us now places access to wi-fi as the most desired 'comfort' while on a foreign break.

Research suggests that connectivity beats cleanliness for the majority of holidaymakers, although both come behind the desire for a room with a nice view (43 per cent).

The poll of 2,000 people for online retailer Pixmania revealed that 31 per cent of Britons regard access to wi-fi as the second most desired 'comfort' while on holiday, ahead of having a clean room.

With the World Cup about to kick off in Brazil, access to the internet is considered more important than ever for those travelling abroad.

However, despite the desire to catch the big games at all costs, more than half the people polled in the survey (56 per cent) admitted to having previously been told off by a partner on holiday for spending too much time engrossed in their gadgets.

Social networks Facebook (23 per cent) and Twitter (23 per cent) are the most commonly used websites while abroad, followed by celebrity gossip sites (20 per cent), sports news portals (18 per cent) and work email servers (16 per cent), suggesting that many people are unable to fully switch off even while away.

It seems Britons also prone to bad manners while dining out abroad, with 54 per cent admitting to asking if a restaurant has wi-fi before opting to eat there.

Christophe Reinling, of Pixmania.com, said: 'While we know that everyone likes to check social media or catch up on the news when on holiday, it's still surprising to discover how just many Britons now place having wi-fi as a priority when away.'

'It appears that our smartphones and tablets are now the first things to make it into the suitcase. Just don't forget to pack your charger.'

Source: The Daily Mail

The revenue revolution

The competitive, dynamic and often unpredictable Indian market has brought revenue management to the forefront



► Revenue management system optimises inventory and maximises profitability

RAPID development and the emergence of major international hotel operators in all the sectors have created a very different business environment. If the rules of the game have changed then hoteliers need to implement new disciplines and methodologies to retain their market share. Therefore, the need for robust revenue management strategies is greater than ever before.

Revenue management is about optimising your available inventory in

the best possible manner so that it maximises your profitability. As revenue management has developed, it has become more disciplined and technical in using a variety of analytics to predict consumer demand through automation.

Automation & Big Data

Global trends, pace of economic growth and infrastructural developments can really affect demand levels. Historical data and trends will always

help the revenue managers (RMs) to understand the pattern of booking, pace and booking windows by different channels. Clear data from the revenue management systems certainly helps the property RMs to foresee the demand and potential opportunities thus helping them to decide on pricing and other pricing-related decisions. These decisions can be both tactical as well as strategic.

Data is the key to analysis and this is what derives trends that the

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► RMS delivers more at a cheaper price

marketing department follows with the RMs. Next-gen revenue management tools can quickly churn out vast amount of data and provide key insights across pricing, customer segmentation, channel mix and overall performance for the distribution strategy. RMs need action-oriented intelligence that responds to the market dynamics available to them easily. Technology automation is not just limited to providing analytics, it can also perform a very important task – that of rate and inventory adjustments. This task directly impacts the RevPAR and occupancy and requires speed and agile adjustments that is difficult to manage manually,” says Mike Kistner, CEO, RezNext, one of the leading revenue management sys-

Next-gen revenue management tools can quickly churn out vast amount of data and provide key insights across pricing, customer segmentation and overall performance for the distribution strategy



tem (RMS) providers to the industry globally.

Four Big Data strategies used in the industry today are: Performance Management, Data Exploration, Social Analytics and Decision Science.

Hospitality industry has increased investment on sophisticated technology that captures data and creates a compelling MIS but the success lies in correct interpretation along with the homogenous business situations which gives a holistic picture. Big Data analytics enables hoteliers to slice and dice data and understand market and business dynamics better. But the critical part is that they are able to prioritise on what data is important/needed. Big Data is useful not just to power the pricing function



► **Big data provides deep insights into customer behaviour**

but is also extremely important in providing deep insights into customer behaviour and purchase patterns.

Revenue Management Systems

Effective revenue management is the key to maximising profitability for any hotel business; ensuring rates are optimised as per the seasonal peaks and valleys for meaningful occupancy figures. RMs are increasingly turning to automated RMS to get this balance right. Automated systems can also be

managed across chains to push targeted segments into sites that are experiencing a fall in demand and identify market changes on a much more immediate level enabling the entire business to adapt quicker and remain competitive. RMS have brought about automation in daily revenue management tasks, but RM as a significant role player has only been introduced into Indian hospitality in the last 10 years, hence hoteliers are still getting used to RMS.

RMS works on algorithms based on revenue management principles directly communicating with performance management systems and extracting, calculating, formulating data for decision making / recommendation. Indian industry depended a lot on manual data as direct benefits of RMS were not understood till the time multinational chains displayed the same. Indian hotel industry has been slow in integrating systems with RMS mainly due to concerns related to high investment and inexperienced handling, hence very low perceived ROI.

Today's RMs need much more than forecasting and pricing. RMS should have big data capabilities, it should incorporate price sensitivity of demand and analyse impact of online reviews and competition rates on pricing. RezNext offers an advanced revenue management solution – ReV powered by Maxim – that eliminates countless hours of tedious work, adopts the principles of big data analytics helping RMs adopt speedy and accurate responses to competitive actions and changes in demand. ReV also optimises the rates and availability controls to maximise revenues and profits and automatically sends the optimal rates, controls and booking limits to all electronic distribution channels. Apart from being a cost effective solution, it facilitates better control and accessibility.

Yet why has the industry been a little slow in adopting and integrating RMS within their systems? The concept of revenue management arrived in India after it was adopted successfully in the west. Initially, there wasn't much significance given to revenue management. Coupled with the fact that the cost of employing an RMS can be quite high, the industry was a little slow in adopting it.

The Indian hospitality companies still rely on traditional Human Intensive Sales Structures and multiple



► **RMS and their integration at a property level is capital intensive**

levels and channels to do business. Profitability has not been the essence of their existence and accountability may have been fragmented till recently. RMS and their integration at a property level is capital intensive as well.

In India, revenue management tools have been restricted to mostly high end 4- and 5-star properties because of the implementation bandwidth and the cost involved. Also, the associated complexity in deploying RMS and employing skilled personnel to maintain and utilise it has also added to its low adoption among mid-market hoteliers. Hoteliers in popular destinations have an expected occupancy level that they achieve year on year. Hence they fail to rec-

In India, revenue management tools have been restricted to mostly high end 4- and 5-star properties because of the implementation bandwidth and the cost involved

ognise the opportunity that a RMS can provide them in terms of improving their RevPAR. Other factors that have contributed to the slow adoption of revenue management are lack of trained manpower, limited service providers, lack of knowledge, need for upskilling, integration challenges.

New Technology

Essentially, a successful revenue management strategy is characterised by how dynamically an organisation can interact and interpret market data from four sources: market segmentation, forecasting, pricing and inventory allocation. Some of the solutions in the market offer a standard functionality across all hotel segments. Mid-market hotels do not

need the full-fledged functionality and reporting features that a five-star hotel chain may need and hence they do not see it as a fit from a functionality and price perspective.

RezNext understands these challenges and offers a ReV lite version for smaller hotels with customised functionality. They are demystifying revenue management for the mid-market hoteliers and showcasing the merit in scientific data analysis and helping them achieve the right balance between occupancy and profitability through right LOS promotions and controls in place. One of their large clients has seen considerable increase in the RevPAR and occupancy using ReV. They are also able to balance the revenue generated during peak and non-peak seasons to maximise on their profitability over the year. While there are other solutions in the market, ReV's uniqueness is its patented Marginal Value Engine (MVE) that analyses historical and current trends quickly to churn out recommendations that deliver the highest profits.

LOS recommendations and restrictions that the system automatically passes on to the distribution channels is growing in demand. An advanced revenue management can also pass on dynamic packages real-time to the channels through the distribution platform. Advanced analytics that provide actionable intelligence is another development in RMS. Also revenue management is now expanding beyond rooms to look at all outlets in the hotel, restaurant, meeting and event spaces. A tighter integration between reputation function and pricing is another new and advanced technology feature for revenue management.

The Human Touch

Revenue management has grown and evolved in the hotel industry during the past years. As part of this evolution, the role of a revenue manager

has become a necessity. Whether a dedicated revenue manager, multi-property shared resource or a paid consultant, most properties have invested in some sort of revenue management support. Although revenue management has become an accepted practice, the role of the revenue manager can vary dramatically from strategy maker to number provider. Behind all technology is a good manager. Technological solutions are simply tools, powerful though they may be, to inform the decision making process of a dedicated and accountable revenue manager. Their business acumen and ability to drive proactive change throughout the organization is integral to the success of any strategy.

A revenue manager is an integral part of a sales team today as some of the most profitable business is transacted on the channels that come under their purview. With a constantly evolving market, the RM plays the role of monitoring the changes and implementing new strategies. It is, therefore, essential to have a trained

RM with a keen mind and sharp excellent skills to optimise the use of automation. The RM needs to keep a track of market segments, pick up and comprehend changes in market behaviour to use them effectively for accurate forecasting which is where automation plays a key role. In the past, hotel authorities often made a person with a reservations background as the RM. But today, it is important to understand his orientation on the internet, savviness with technology and capability for embracing the social platform.

The need for talented managers behind the technology and good corporate awareness of the discipline has not escaped the attention of the solution providers. It is critical that a revenue management team can drive action, not just analysis, and have the ability to turn data into recommendations. Also, the strategy needs to be given time – it needs to be long term strategy supported by short-term tactics. It would be hard to achieve all of this without an engaged and motivated team.



► With a constantly evolving market, the RM plays key role

Children of a lesser God?

Lack of basic infrastructure and paucity of good hotels are deterrent for tourism growth in pilgrimages in Eastern India. Except some focus on the Buddhist circuit in Bodhgaya, a lot needs to be done to promote religious tourism in this region by both central and state governments



► Tarapith in West Bengal needs robust tourism infrastructure

LAST year the Union tourism and culture ministry approved a proposal for a spiritual circuit, comprising sites in Bihar, Jharkhand and Bengal, under the Centre's Swadesh Darshan scheme. The approval acknowledges 11 places in Bihar and the neighbouring states. The Swadesh Darshan scheme is aimed at developing circuits with tourist potential in a planned manner.

Bihar

Ministry of Tourism proposed to offer Rs. 600 Crore for tourism development activities in Bihar, as Jain, Ramayana and Mahatma Gandhi Circuits are among those to be developed. Just Rs 50 crore was allocated for Patna Sahib.

Keeping in view the vast tourism potential of the State of Bihar, the Ministry of Tourism decided to consider seven tourism circuits, namely, Vaishali and Bodhgaya development along with other places in Buddhist Circuit including Vikramshila (Rs 200 Crore); Sultanganj to Deoghar project (Rs 50 Crore); Patna Sahib (Rs 50 Crore); Mahatma Gandhi Circuit (Rs 50 Crore); Ramayana Circuit (Rs 100 Crore); Jain Circuit including Champapuri & Pawapuri (Rs 50 Crore); Circuit for Mandar Hills and Ang Kshetra (Rs 50 Crore). Their development would be carried out through appropriate circuits/cities identified by the Ministry of Tourism under plan schemes of Swadesh Darshan and Prasad.

In addition, based on the findings of the study conducted by the Ministry to assess the potential of Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management (IITTM) Chapter in Bihar, Ministry of Tourism announced in-principle approval of a Centre of IITTM in Bihar with budgetary provision of Rs 50 Crore under Incredible India.

Jharkhand

The Tourism Ministry of Bihar pre-



► Only Bodhgaya gets the deserved attention from the Central schemes

sented proposal 11 places - Deoghar town, Trikut mountain (Deoghar), Basukinath (Dumka), Parasnath (all in Jharkhand), Tarapith in Birbhum district of Bengal along with Vikramshila, Karangadhi, Bateswar Sthan, Champapuri, Sultanganj (all in Bhagalpur) and Mandar Hills (in Banka). The proposed spiritual circuit would not only help increase tourist flow in these places but also develop the basic infrastructure, paving the way for more income generation among the residents.

Both Swadesh Darshan and Prasad has allocated crores for pilgrimages in Bihar (such as the famed Buddhist circuits in and around Bodhgaya), but West Bengal doesn't find any mention of the central schemes.

Tarapith, West Bengal

Among the 51 Sati Shakti Peethas--a place of worship believed to have

originated due to the falling of body parts of the corpse of Sati Devi, when Lord Shiva carried it and wandered in sorrow--Kamakhyā received adequate fund from the central Ministry of Tourism, but Tarapith and a few other peethas close to it hardly received any mention.

The small temple town near Rampurhat in Birbhum district, known for its Tantric temple and its adjoining cremation (Maha Smashan) grounds where sādhanā (tantric rituals) are performed. The Tantric Hindu temple is dedicated to the goddess Tara, a fearsome Tantric aspect of the Devi, the chief temples of Shaktism. Tarapith derives its name from its association as the most important centre of Tara worship and her cult. According to the legend, the Lord Buddha had a vision of Tarapith as an ideal location for enshrining the image of Tara in a temple there.



► Some central schemes ignore Odisha's Buddhist tourist circuit

Even though Tarapith is such an important destination most tourists visit the place for day-out tours. Except a few hotels most are not upto the mark for family tours. In most places, rooms are dinghy and facilities are basic.

With proper infrastructural development Tarapith can be developed into a pilgrimage that can draw many more tourists.

Buddhist Circuit, Odisha

Swadesh Darshan has also important omissions from Odisha. Chief Minister of Odisha Shri Naveen Patnaik recently said urged the Centre to include the Buddhist circuit of the state in the list announced by Union Tourism Ministry under "Swadesh Darshan" scheme. The state has a huge potential of Buddhist tourism in Odisha with more than 200 sites.

"I would like to draw your attention to the huge potential of Buddhist

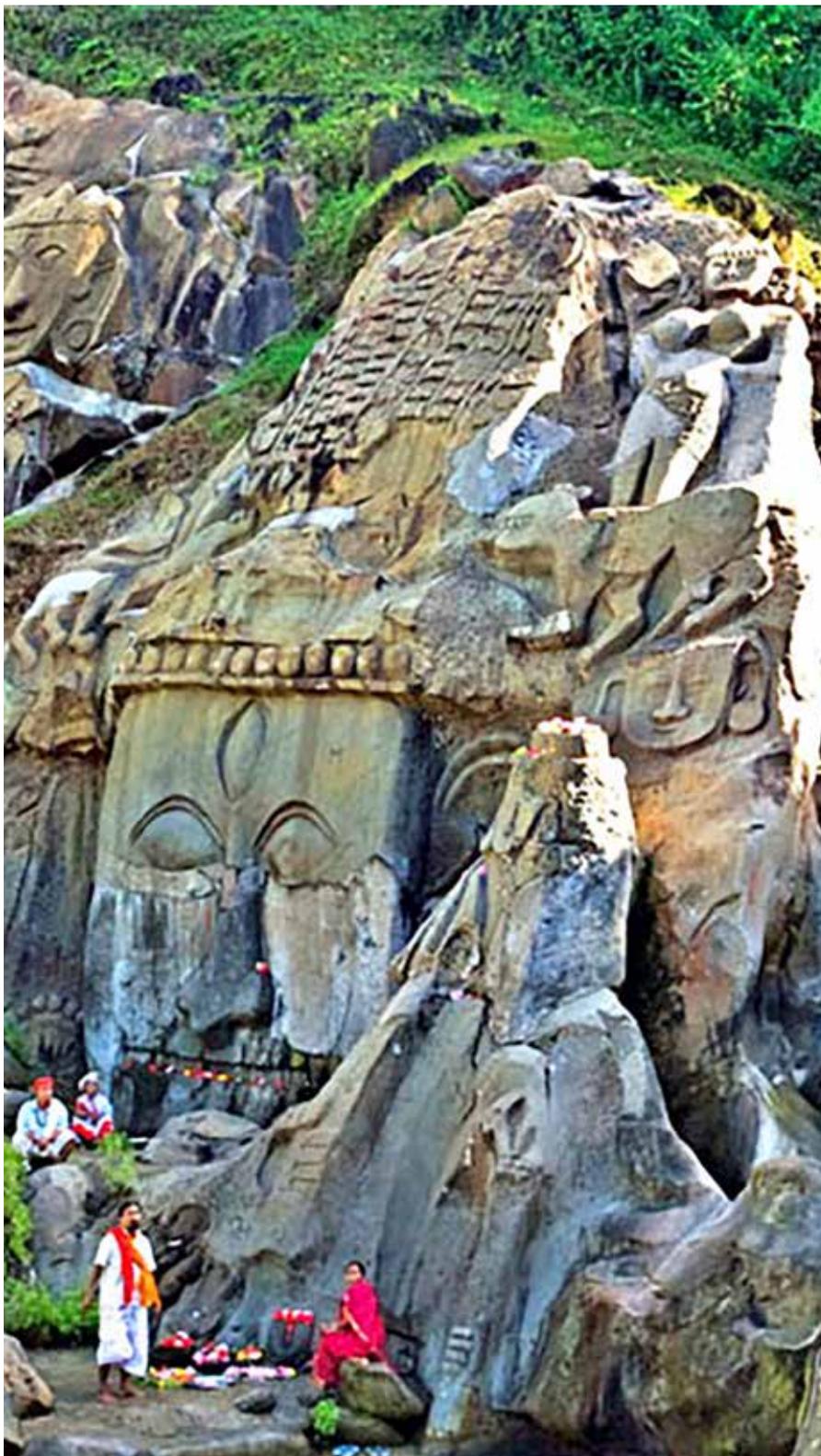
Buddhist remains in the form of chaityas, stupas and monasteries found in Odisha can be aptly established as a Circuit on par with other major sites in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

tourism of Odisha. Archaeological exploration and excavations have established more than 200 Buddhist sites across the state," Patnaik said a few months ago.

The Buddhist Triangle – popularly known as the Diamond Triangle of Odisha comprising Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri and Udayagiri, which is about 100 km from the state capital – is now a major tourist attraction, he said, adding Buddhism flourished in these places from 3rd Century BC to 15th Century AD.

"The Buddhist remains in the form of Chaityas, Stupas, Monasteries and the tooth relic in Golden Casket found here aptly establish this Circuit on par with other major sites in India," Patnaik said.

Noting that socio-cultural life of early medieval Odisha is reflected in the cultural act of these Buddhist monuments, Patnaik said, "it is a well established fact that Buddhism



► Unakoti, Tripura

spread to the rest of the world after the Great Kalinga War from these places of present day Odisha by Emperor Ashoka.”

Thus, Dhauli-Ratnagiri-Lalitgiri-Udayagiri-Langudi circuit in Odisha deserves to be included in the list of Buddhist Circuits under the ‘Swadesh Darshan’ Scheme so that these destinations are improved with adequate tourism infrastructure and facilities, the chief minister said.

“In view of above, I would request you to include the Buddhist Circuit of Odisha in the list of Buddhist Circuits announced by the Ministry of Tourism under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme,” Patnaik reasoned.

Tripura

About 178 km from the state capital Agartala, Unakoti is a Shaiva pilgrimage in Tripura that boasts of thousands of Shiva sculptures. Precisely, the number is one less than a crore, or 99,99,999. It is a Shaiva pilgrimage spot unlike anything you’ll find in India. In a sense, it is not completely unlike Macchu Picchu in Peru. Enter through the stone gate, and you’re transported to another era. Massive idols of Lord Shiva — chiselled out of the hill — greet visitors. Arguably dating back to the 8th-9th centuries, these sculptures have some interesting tales associated with them. Two of them stand out.

Whatever be the story behind these carvings, the logistics of how they were made is quite a mystery. Most of the bas-relief sculptures are 30-40 feet high and have a rawness that is more akin to a tribal style than to the classical Indian style. I found it to be similar to statuettes from the Aztec civilization — especially the way the eyes, teeth and headdresses have been depicted. Several still grace the hillside — while some have given in to the ravages of time — others apparently are buried and need to be excavated. I counted around 130 of



► Deoghar in Jharkhand needs infrastructural support to draw more pilgrims

them. There's one with three Ganeshas, which appears to have a rivulet flowing atop it — making it seem as if he's bathing.

Unakoti, historically, was considered a Shaiva Tirtha during the Pal era (8-12th century). Some archaeologists have proposed that Unakoti may have even been a Buddhist meditation centre. It's a shame that the Archaeological Survey of India is yet to carry out detailed research work in the region.

Unakoti, Tripura

Walking across the serpentine stone bridges — most of them broken — it's easy to imagine kings and mystics praying to their gods. As we navigated our way through the staircases and bridges joining the two hills over which the statuettes are now scat-

tered, I felt as if I'd chanced upon a world hidden from prying eyes — a secret domain where entry had to be earned. One could see signs of springs and rivulets criss-crossing through the area and I couldn't help but imagine how beautiful the place would have looked centuries ago with the streams, verdant hills, incense smells and sounds of the temple bells — the mind wanders further.

The one and only Pilgrimage the state concerned with stone sculptures of lord Shiva at Unakoti is being neglected around the year except the time of two festivals organized there. It is well known that Unakoti gets importance during the festival of Ashokastami and Poush Sankranti. Repair and maintenance work of Unakoti goes on at full swing before the time of the festivals.

Unakoti loses its importance all over the year after spending fund for Unakoti during the season of festival.

Meanwhile UNESCO announced Unakoti as the Best Archeological sight in India. In spite of such a favourable situation the pilgrimage of Lord Shiva is not getting due importance as it deserves. But many assets of Unakoti have been lost by the forest thieves and smugglers. Many valuable stone idols were stolen by international smugglers from the historical site.

The tourist spots also are not well connected with the rest of the state and the country. There are hardly any good place to stay here. It's a tragedy that such a historical site finds any mention in any of the central government schemes meant for pilgrimage development.

POLICY

Long Live Licence Raj!

Licence Raj of the pre-1990s India is still alive and kicking in the hospitality sector. For a country that seeks to be a global power, encourage entrepreneurship and investment, there is still a huge amount of red tape in the sector



HOTEL and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) said that it finds the legal procedure of acquiring multiple licences to enter the market by a prospective hotelier or restaurant as a 'legalized extortion' leading to 'corrupt practices.'

MR SUDESH PODDAR, president HRAEI, said, "We doubt if oil refineries or nuclear power plants require so many licences. They result in legalised extortion and corrupt practices."

A recent newspaper report said that that dance bars require more than 40 licenses and some of the laws are archaic. For instance, one has to get permission and pay fees for putting up a name-plate (neon sign), and separate licences have to be obtained for liquor selling and maintaining an eating house. "This clutch of licences is the reason people are giving up the business," he maintained.

T.S. WALIA, vice-president of HRAEI, said, "Let alone dance bars, even for a small permit room or AC bar, we need more than 40 licences. If the area of the establishment is more than 250 sq meters, one has to get more permissions". Walia said it was time associations such as HRAEI approached the SC to obtain a one-window clearance.

"The government should end this inspector raj, otherwise, despite the SC verdict declaring dance bars legal, getting licences will remain a headache," said Poddar.

PRANAV SINGH, general secretary, said over 32 types of major licences were to be procured from a city corporation in most cities, the police, the excise department and local housing societies.

Industry insiders say this encourages corruption and are demanding a single-window clearance so that processes are swift and the scope for graft minimal.

Some of the laws governing the opening of eating establishments in

India date back almost 100 years and are completely archaic. Add to that the boatload of approvals needed just to open shop in a Metro -- and most cities across India -- and it's tempting just to ditch the idea of having a restaurant before you begin.

But the more things change, the more they stay the same. For a country that seeks to be a global power, encourage entrepreneurship and investment, there is still a huge amount of red tape. It is an added cost of doing business in India.

First, you get a "No Objection" certificate from the Fire Department which is followed by a Health license from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Then you need three different police clearances -- one from the police station in the area where the restaurant is located, the next from the police station in the area where the restaurant manager lives, and then another one from the police licensing department.

Next, you apply for Tourism & Excise licenses. The Excise license is issued only after approval from the

Tourism department and state excise department. Inspectors check out the premises and paste a notice at the restaurant inviting objections from the neighborhood regarding the sale of alcohol in that area.

Says RAVINDRA KASHUKA, managing committee member, HRAEI, "Maintaining this huge portfolio of licences requires a considerable amount of expense to the hotelier which ends up in increased room and food rates thus contributing to making India as a tourist destination uncompetitive. Further, this is a major deterrent to budget and small businesses who wants to venture into the hospitality industry."

Let's have a look at the key licences and registrations required for hotel and restaurant business in India. Many of the licences and registrations must be obtained prior to starting the hotel and renewed while the hotel is operational. Further, most licences require the hotel to meet certain rules or criteria's for maintaining validity.

A lot of license requirements depend on the type of hotel, star rating,



► Some laws governing the opening of a new hotel are archaic



► **List of key licences can be over 30 in some states in India**

amenities and the location of the hotel. Further, the rules and regulations to obtain license for hotel industry differ according to the states.

Building Permit

The National Building Code of India was prepared by the Bureau of Indian Standards to unify the building regulations throughout the country. The National Building Code is adopted by all Government Departments, Municipal Bodies and other Construction Agencies. As per the National Building Code, no person shall carry out any development, erect, re-erect or , or make alterations or demolish any building or cause the same to be done without first obtaining a separate permit for each such development/building from the Authority. Therefore, all hotels must have a proper building permit as per the relevant Town Planning Act or Development Act or Mu-

nicipal Act or any other applicable statutes for layout, building plans, water supply, sewerage, drainage, electrification etc.

Fire Safety Permit

A fire safety certificate or permit is required for the Fire Department is a must for operating a hotel business. Fire safety certificate is usually provided if the building has incorporated proper fire prevention and fire safety measures as required under the relevant fire safety rules and regulations.

Police Licence for Hotel

Hotels are public places that are monitored closely by the Police Department. Therefore, all hotels must maintain proper log of all guests who have stayed at the hotel, follow relevant regulations and maintain a valid permit from the Police Department. Police licences for hotels usually falls

under the power of licensing of Places of Public Entertainment held by Commissioner or Additional Commissioner of Police.

Health Trade Licence or Trade Licence

A health trade licence is usually required from the local health department for restaurants and hotels. Health trade licences are usually issued by the Municipal Corporation. This is required for businesses that have a direct impact on public health. Compliance with the relevant hygiene and safety norms, which are important for public health is a prerequisite for issuance of a health trade licence.

Business Registration

It is recommended that a hotel be setup under an artificial legal entity like company or LLP. By operating a company under an artificial legal entity, the liability of the promoters with respect to business can be limited and the business as a going concern could easily be transferred to another person.

Esi Registration

ESI is an autonomous corporation under Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India. Employee's State Insurance (ESI) registration is mandatory in India for Businesses that employ 10 or more employees. To maintain compliance with the ESI regulations, the employer must contribute 4.75 per cent of the wages for all employees earning Rs 15,000 or less toward ESI employer dues. The employee is required to contribute 1.75 per cent of his/her wages as ESI dues.

PF Registration

An employee Provident Fund (PF) registration is required for any establishment that employs more than 20 persons in India. The PF board administers a contributory provident

fund, pension scheme and an insurance scheme for the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India.

Bar Licence

If the hotel operates a bar or serves alcohol in the restaurants, a Bar licence will be required from the relevant authorities. Bar licence is usually provided by departments operating under the State Government. Hence, the requirement for bar licence varies from state to state.

Fssai Food Business Licence

A FSSAI food business licence under the Food Safety and Standard Act is required for operating a restaurant in India. The FSSAI food business licence is usually provided for one year and is renewed at the end of each year. FSSAI licences for restaurants are managed by the local FSSAI office. FSSAI licences for restaurants don't fall under the purview of the Central Government (see the side story for details).

Service Tax Registration

Service tax is applicable on the accommodation services provided by the hotel and food services provided by a restaurant in the hotel. Therefore, hotels must obtain and maintain service tax registration. Hotels having room tariff of Rs 1000 and above have to pay service tax on 60 per cent of room tariff at 14 per cent (the net rate of service tax comes to 8.4 per cent). For restaurants, the service tax is applicable on 40 per cent of the Food and Beverages bill at 14 per cent (the net rate of service tax comes to 9.8 per cent).

Vat Registration

Value added tax is applicable on the food served by a restaurant in a hotel. Therefore, hotels must obtain VAT registration to comply with VAT regulations. Since VAT falls under the purview of State Governments, VAT regulations and procedure for registration changes from state to state.

Maharashtra shows the way

IN an effort to cut down the number of licences for the hotel and hospitality industry under the 'Ease of doing business' initiative, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has decided to do away with need to obtain five licences related to the home department.

"The decision will bring down the number of licences or certificates needed to start a hotel to 39 and is expected to help boost the hospitality industry across the state," a senior CMO official told FPJ on Saturday.

Under the 'Ease of doing business' initiative, number of licences needed to start a business have been reduced almost to half in the past year. The major departments like the Industries, Urban Development and Environment have already reduced the number of permissions related to them. Now, the Home department too has started contributing to the initiative.

In a recent meeting of top home department officials, Chief Minister Fadnavis had directed the officials to work in the direction of reducing the number of permissions. Accordingly, the home department has now exempted the hotel and hospitality establishments from obtaining food registration certificate, swimming pool licence, two types of phonographic performance licences (PPL) needed for performance at a public place and the presentation licence, the CMO official said.

This would help the entrepreneurs willing to start hotels as the decision will cut down the time to obtain the permissions and licences and also reduce the burden to present various kinds of papers at various places. Now, the hospitality industry will have to obtain licences only from the respective municipal corporations and the state excise department, the official said.

As an effect of the decision, the Mumbai Police commissioner, in an order released on Jan 20, 2016, has quashed the Greater Bombay Eateries Registration Certificate Rules, 1969; the Greater Bombay Swimming Pool (licensing and controlling) rules, 1972 and Rules regarding entertainment at public places, 1953.

Source: The Free Press Journal

Under the 'Ease of doing business' initiative, number of licences needed to start a business have been reduced almost to half in the past year in Maharashtra



STATE SURVEY: ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Paradise Rediscovered

Andaman islands can easily rival the splendours of South East Asia, provided some bottlenecks are removed

THE Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) islands are an archipelago of 572 islands (of which 38 are inhabited) in the Bay of Bengal stretching over 700 Kms from North to South. The islands lie 1200 kms. east of Chennai and 250 kms south of Kolkata, and is in close proximity to Burma and other South East Asian countries (especially Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia). The islands are spread over a total area of 8249 sq. Kms (Andaman - 6408 sq. kms & Nicobar -1841 sq. kms). Only 16.64 sq. kms fall under urban area.

The A&N islands have a unique combination of rich beaches, rising hinterland and dense equatorial forests. The heavy rainfall and location account for forest cover over 92 per cent of the land (with nearly 86 per

cent being reserved and protected forests). More than 50 per cent of the forest area are Tribal Reserves, National Parks and Wild life sanctuaries.

Flora & Fauna: Nearly, 11 per cent of the territory is occupied by mangroves (amongst the richest in the world). The dense forest and vast seas house a variety of flora and fauna, with more than 150 species endemic to the islands. There are over 1200 species of fishes, 246 varieties of birds (39 endemic) including the Megapod, Hornbill, Surfet and Nicobari Pigeon and 10 per cent of the known varieties of Indian orchids present. Nesting of certain rare species of turtle is common to the islands. Coral life is found in abundance with 179 species belonging to 61 genera being reported.

The eco-diversity and richness of

A&N are its core strength. Any development activity in the islands including tourism has to be sensitive to their fragility.

Climate: The tropical location of A&N provide uniform temperatures throughout the year with marginal monthly or seasonal variations. This suits the need of the European and US tourists seeking warmth and sunshine.

The islands are however subject to both south-west and north-east monsoons (May – October, spill-over in November / December). With an average annual rainfall of over 3000 mm, the islands experience heavy rainfall especially between May – October (90 per cent of annual rainfall).

Heavy rainfall, strong winds and high humidity levels, contribute to



► Desolate beaches can attract sunbathers

the 'not so ideal' conditions during the period and render tourism seasonal.

Importance of Tourism to A&N: A&N is largely dependent on direct and derived activities in forestry, logging, quarrying and downstream manufacturing. However, the primary sector (contributing over 55 per cent to the State Domestic Product) which has been slowing down. So the growing population has to seek other economic drivers.

Tourism with its low capital high output ratio, high economic output and employment potential is an attractive option and one adopted by many small island economies as their mainstay.

Tourist traffic trends: According to

figures presented by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2,38,699 domestic tourists and 17,538 foreign tourists visited the islands during the year 2012, as compared to the visits of 2,02,221 and 15,814 respectively during the year 2011. According to a figure quoted in The Andaman Chronicle the overall figure crossed 3 lakhs in 2014.

However, a large section of the visiting tourists are Indians, and among them most from the "LTC" segment. Foreign visitors, largely comprise the "back packer" category. Both segments are not large contributors to revenues.

Traffic to existing destinations is uneven with a few locations experiencing concentrated tourist activity while others are poorly visited / unexplored.

Economic Contribution from Tourism: Currently, tourism related services (trade, hotels and restaurants) contribute 17% of the tertiary sector and 6% of State Domestic Product (SDP). This is far lower than the 18-36% of GDP contributed by tourism in small island economies. With the foreseeable drop in other forms of economic activity due to the ban on forest based activities, tourism and fishing will have to play key roles in supporting the economy.

Globally, tourism is acknowledged as a high economic contributor with many small island economies internationally having adopted tourism as their mainstay. For instance, Maldives in the Indian Ocean earns nearly 27.4 per cent and

Factors impeding the tourism growth: Andaman & Nicobar, by virtue of their location hold security considerations for the country. Naval security already imposes restrictions on entry and movement of foreigners. The proposal to set up the Strategic Nuclear Command (SNC) and base all air and sea submarines at A&N islands would take A&N into the

Strict naval security, poor connectivity and restrictions on commercial construction are the main bottlenecks for tourism growth

‘critical security zone’ and impact the entry of both domestic and foreign tourists.

The Supreme Court Ruling banning tree felling and touching on a variety of related aspects will similarly limit avenues of tourism development and / or usage of the basic infrastructure which underpins tourism. Banning of felling of trees in A&N—except in designated and used forest areas and that too for local consumption—impedes development work (roads, resorts etc.). Availability of raw material for tourism infrastructure without encroachment of forest land and prohibition of commercial plantations in forest land are also hurdles. Besides, availability of land for tourism development (as such only 8% is revenue land) is also quite meagre. (853)

No concrete or permanent infrastructure for tourism are allowed in many of the islands. There is also regulation on entry and movement of people through relevant restrictions

and other provisions of Environment Protection Act. In short, development of basic and other tourism infrastructure is a big challenge for development.

Connectivity: Tourist hubs like Rangat, Mayabunder & Diglipur are poorly connected. Reliance only on ferry services (lack of frequency, regularity etc.) and problem in access during monsoon months (when ferry services are disrupted) are also big hindrances. Poor connectivity increases cost of transport, power, water and telecommunication for tourist visitors.

One of the critical aspects of tourism in A&N is the “seasonality” of the industry. A&N witness both south-west and north-east monsoon. Heavy annual rainfall over 3000 mm limits the tourism season to mainly for 5 to 6 months a year - November - April. Off-season options are required to iron out the peaks and troughs.

The domestic tourists have 2 peak

The typical profile and the itineraries of both domestic and foreign tourists are provided below

Domestic

- Currently A & N is dominated by domestic tourists (nearly 95% of the tourists flow into A & N)
- (Based on the information compiled by the DIP&T) majority of the domestic tourists originated from East and South (Chennai and Kolkata being the two main connectivity points)
- Majority of the tourists come under the LTA category and hence travel with families
- Pre-dominantly middle aged, the tourists fall under the ‘budget conscious’, ‘value for money’ segment
- Around 65 % of the tourists travel by air, with the remaining 35 % by ship
- Domestic tourists seem to focus on a ‘general holiday’ with the need for variety
- Average length of stay is around 4 to 5 days
- Average expenditure of Rs.500 per day per person

Inbound Tourists

- Currently A & N attracts a low proportion of foreign tourists (5 % of the total tourists in 2000- 2001)
- The foreign tourists originate from a variety of countries including Europe and Australia
- Large proportion of low spending “back packers”
- Beaches and scuba diving seem to be the main attractions
- Average length of stay is around 15 to 20 days (while some stay on to the full permissible 30 days)
- This category is focused on a specific end use- beach / scuba diving



► Cruise tourism can draw many more foreign tourists

STATE SURVEY: ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS



► Havelock islands can rival any South East Asian beach destination

periods - December and April (combining with the annual school vacations). The international tourists however, tend to spread over through the year.

The Andamans' Department of Tourism wants to develop the islands travel industry without compromising their beauty, so formal definitions of eco-tourism should be taught and standards that reflect the definitions brought in.

The opening up of the Andamans to international flights would increase regional tourism through gateways in Thailand, bringing in the same type of leisure traveller who would also be visiting Indonesia and Malaysia.

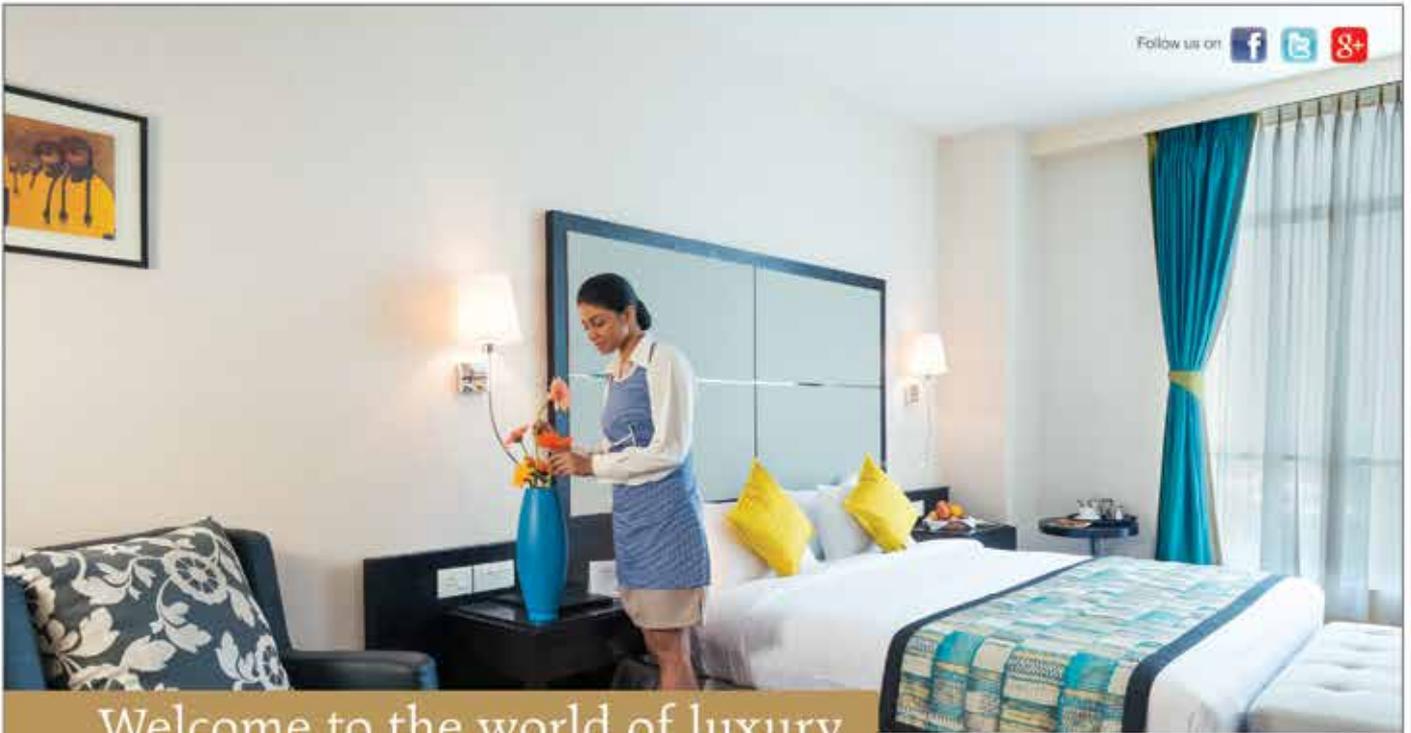
Ecologically conscious guest houses like Barefoot Lodge on Havelock have

set a high standard for how the Andaman's tourism industry can attract environmentally and socially conscious tourists who are willing to pay high-end prices. If further development follows this example the Andamans could increase the quality of the offered tourist product and by doing so increase the quality of the tourists coming to the islands.

Cruise control: The global cruise industry is worth \$29 billion and employs 559,000 people. India's underdeveloped cruise industry accounts for only 1% of the global worth. Although India has plenty of coastline, its ports are mainly used for shipping and trade. The cruise industry is one of the tourism's most lucrative sectors and with increased facts

and reports coming in, India could capitalise on the business available (Tourism Review, 2007). Because of the Andaman's island status, an increase in Indian cruise tourism would have obvious implications for the region.

The tourism industry in the Andaman Islands has plenty of room to grow as it is still in its early years. If proper values regarding the native people and environment are followed and infrastructure is put in place before the expansion of the superstructure the industry may grow in a healthy way. By the same token if things are not done ethically and in proper sequence the Andaman Islands stand to lose their biggest attractions.



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