

05

Minister's
Desk



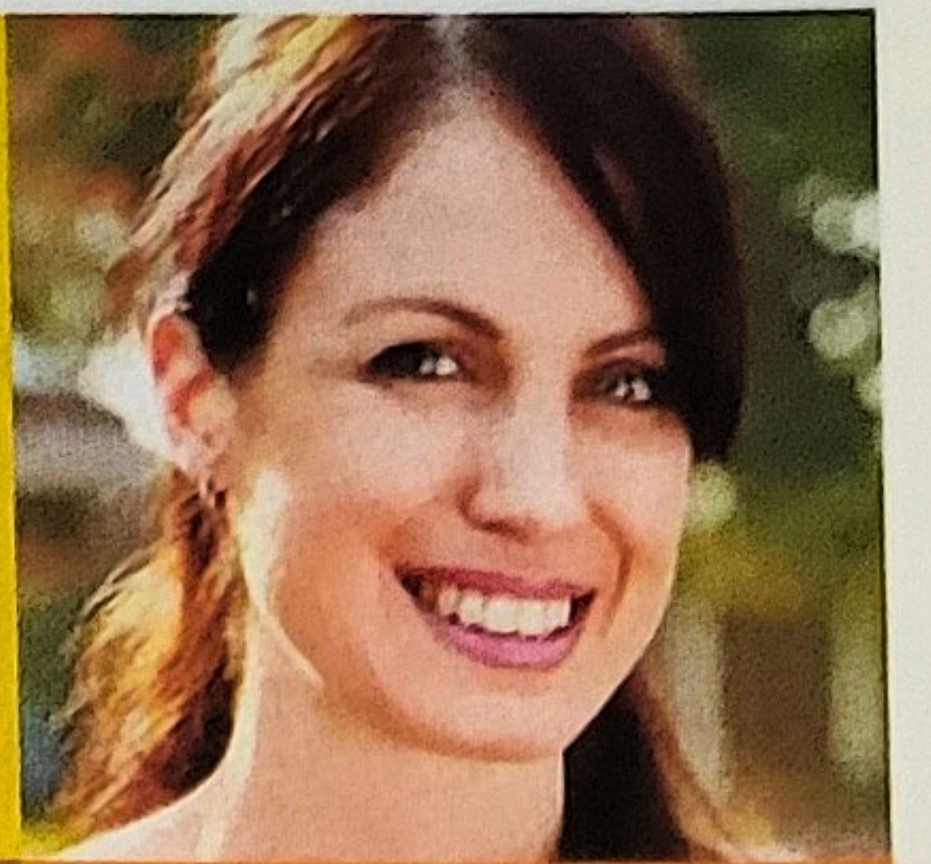
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Outbound
Forecast



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Home
Truths



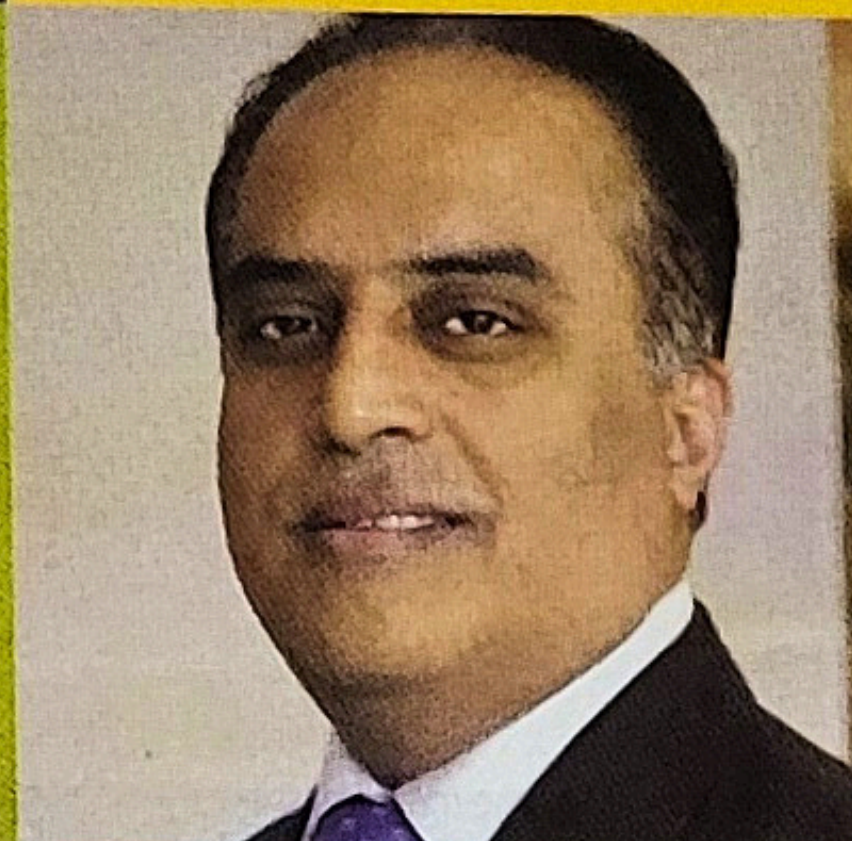
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Branding
Mantras



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Hospitality
Trends

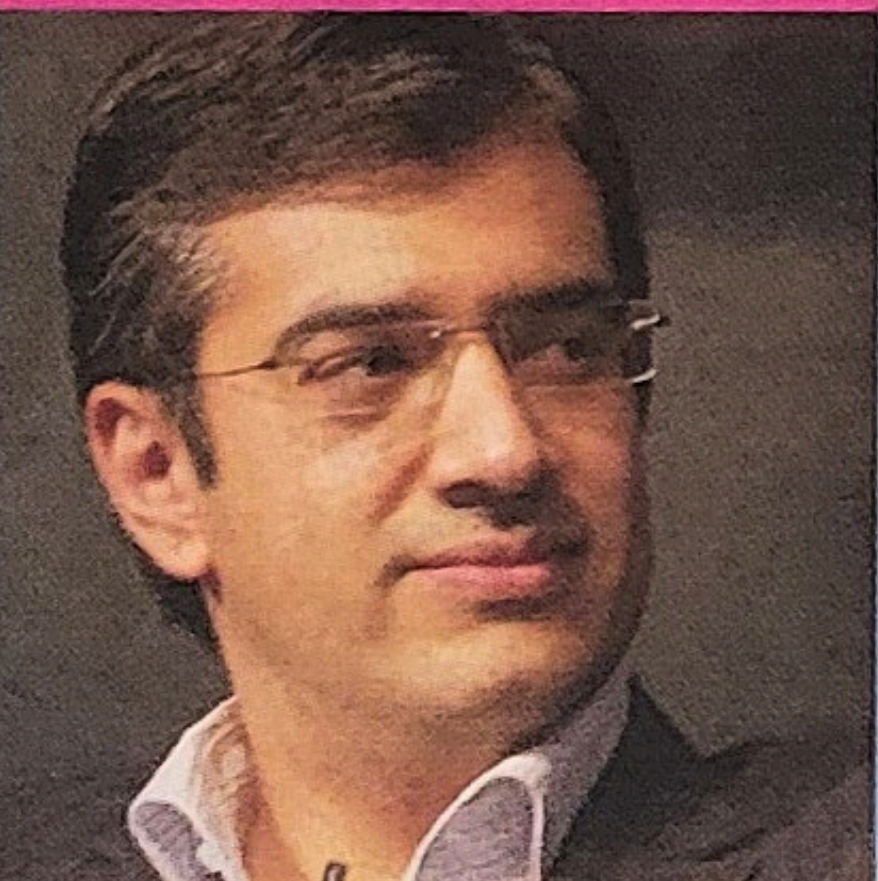


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Development
Snags

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Technology
Rules



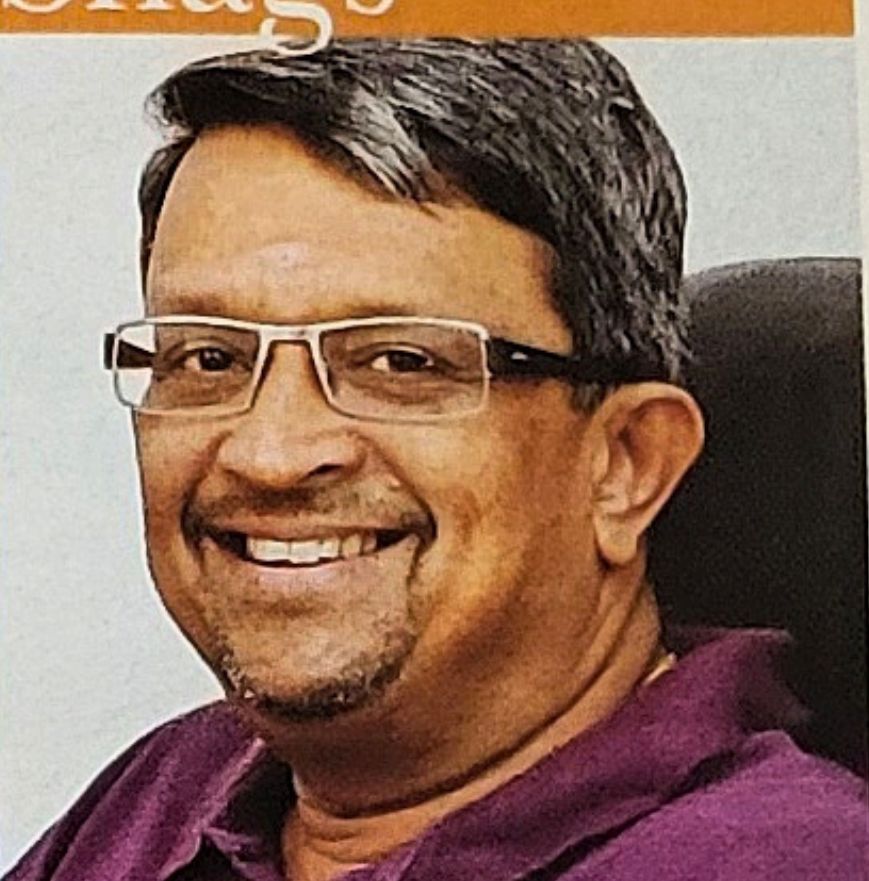
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Aviation
Blues



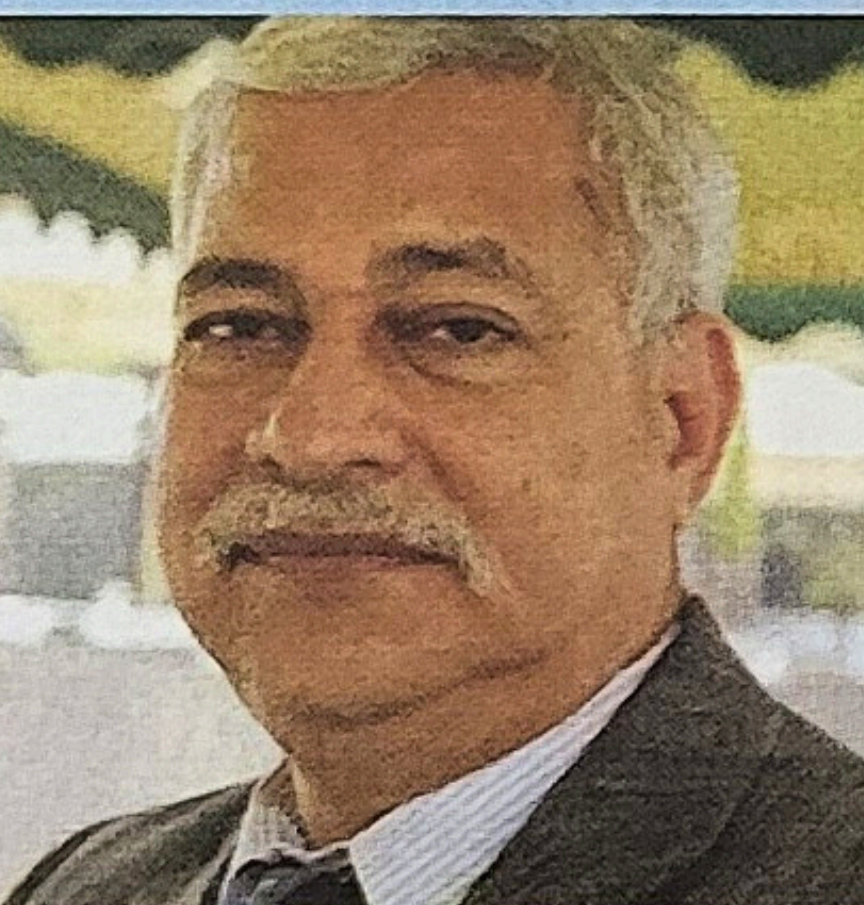
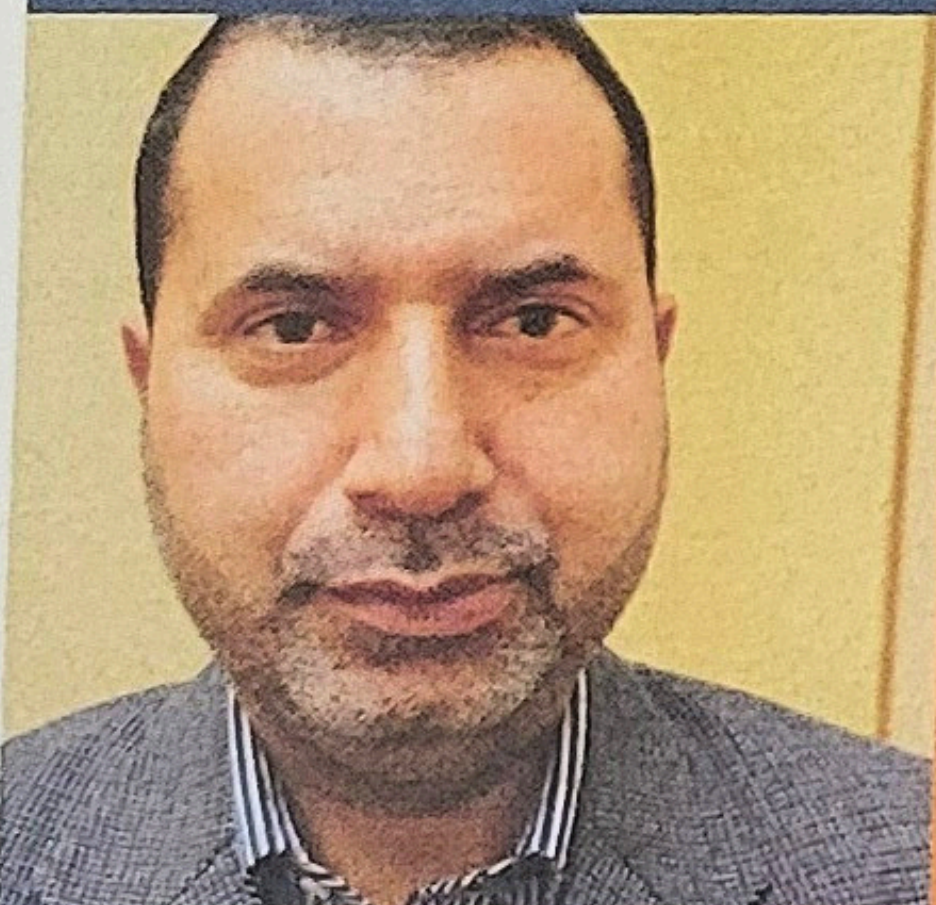
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Great
Concepts



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Offbeat
Travel



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Island
Review

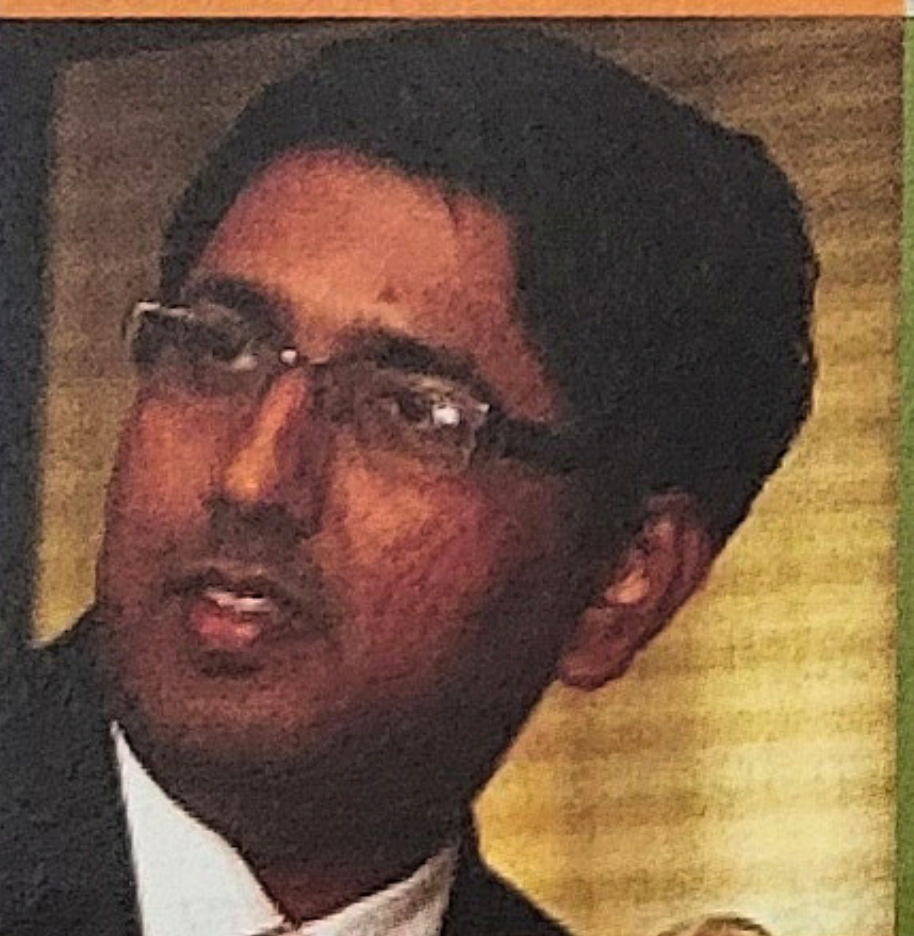


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State
Focus

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New
Drive



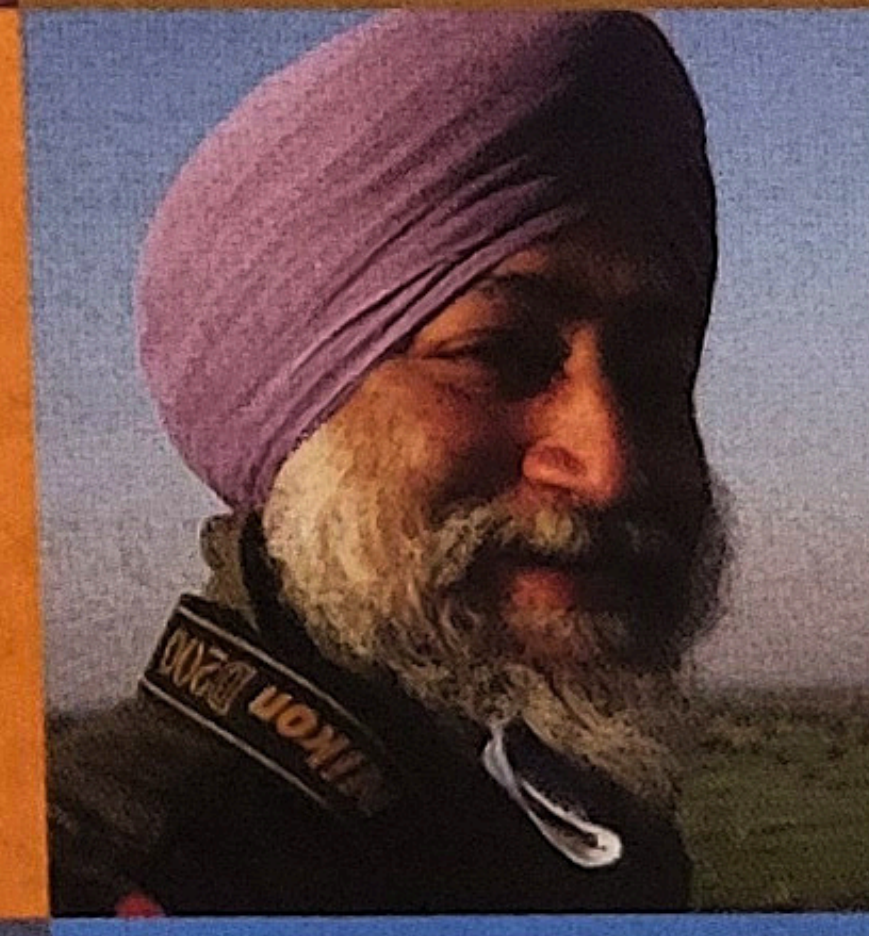
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Must
Visit



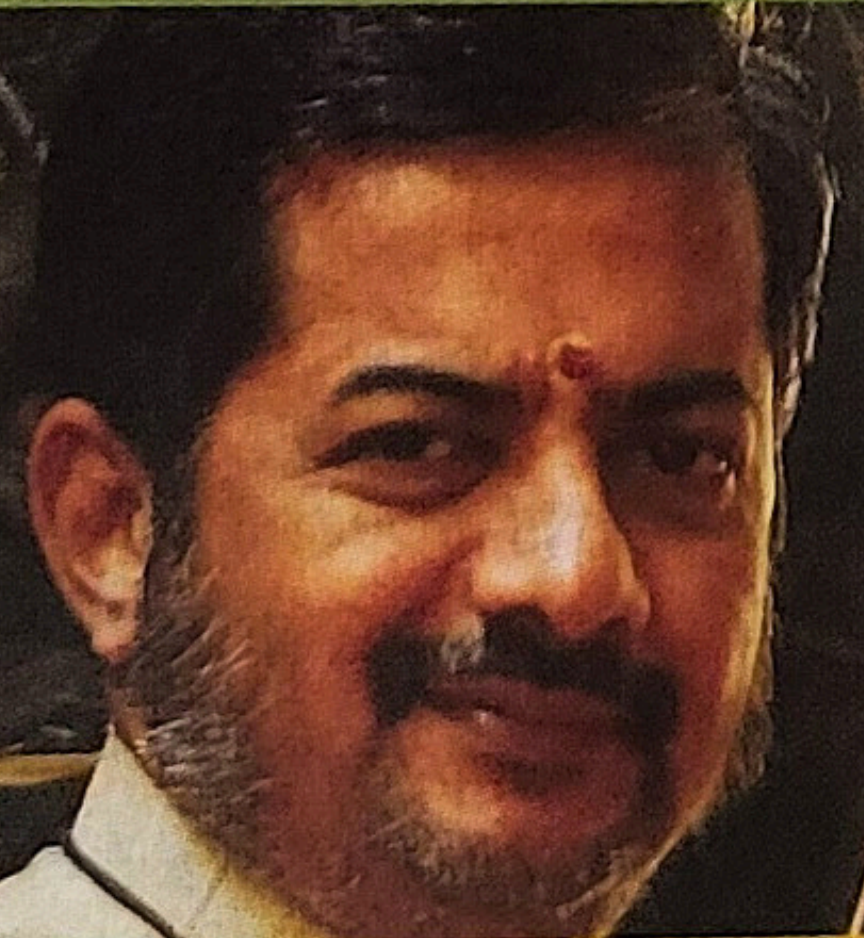
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Greater
Good



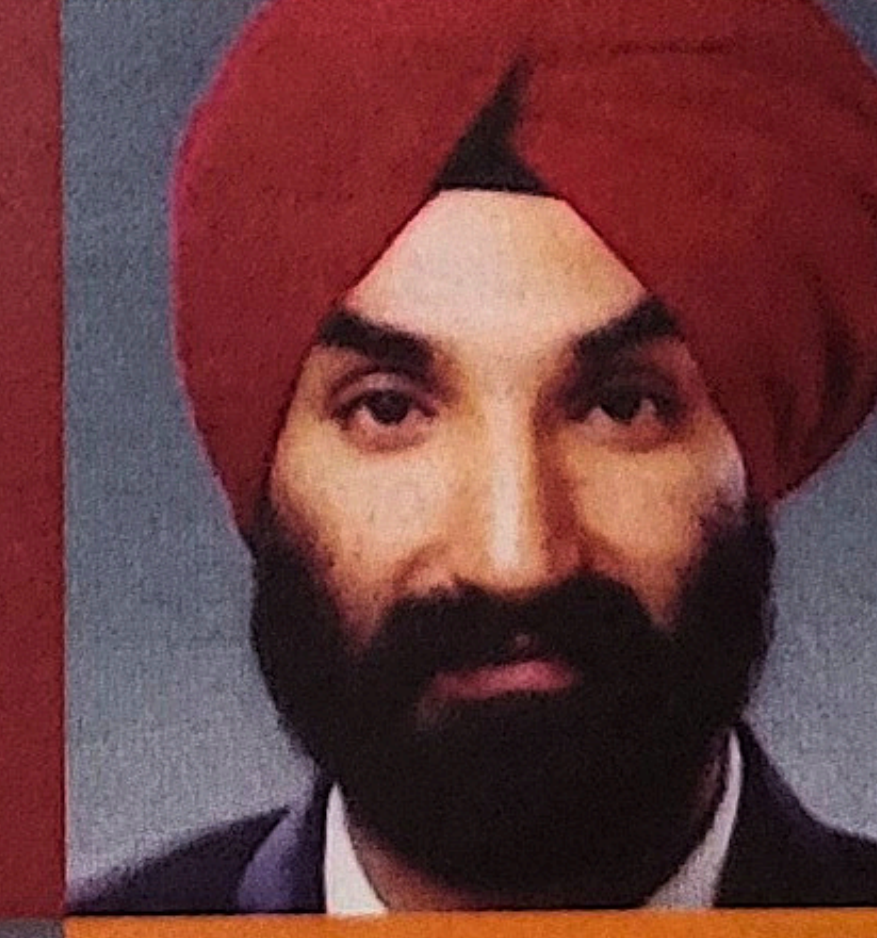
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Culture
Connect



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Learning
Curve

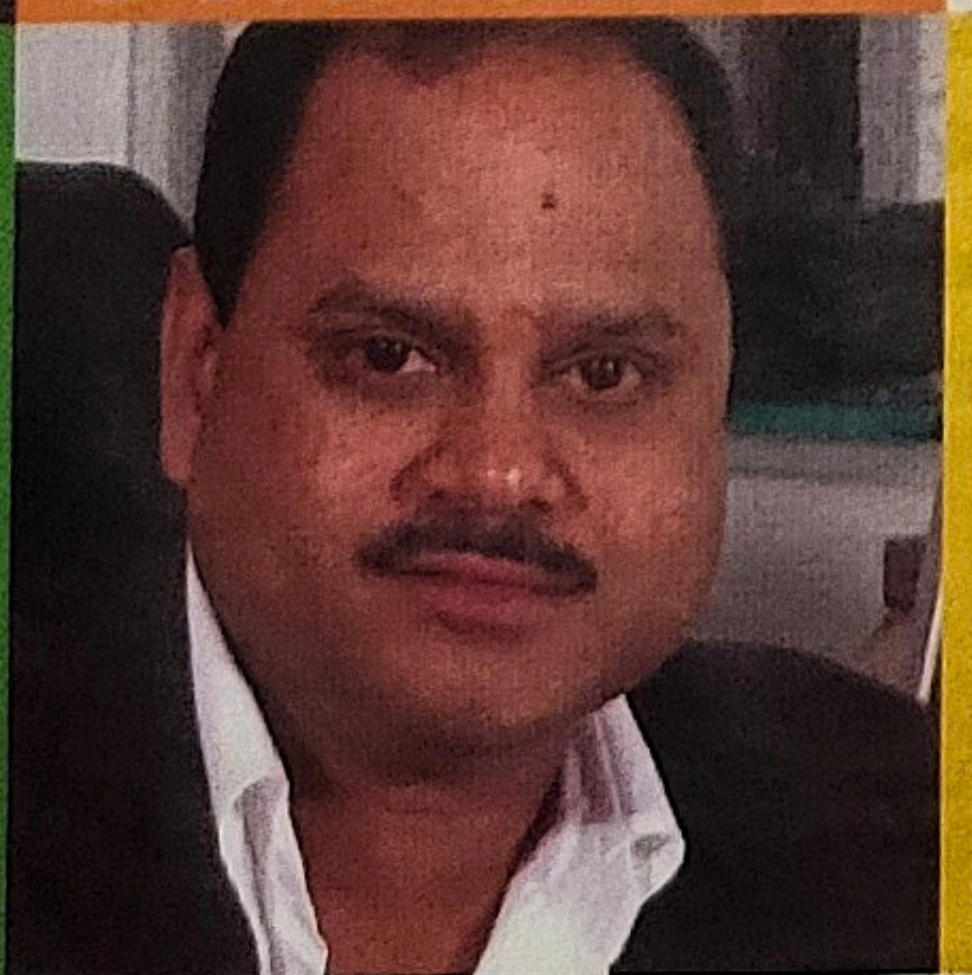


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Uphill
Task

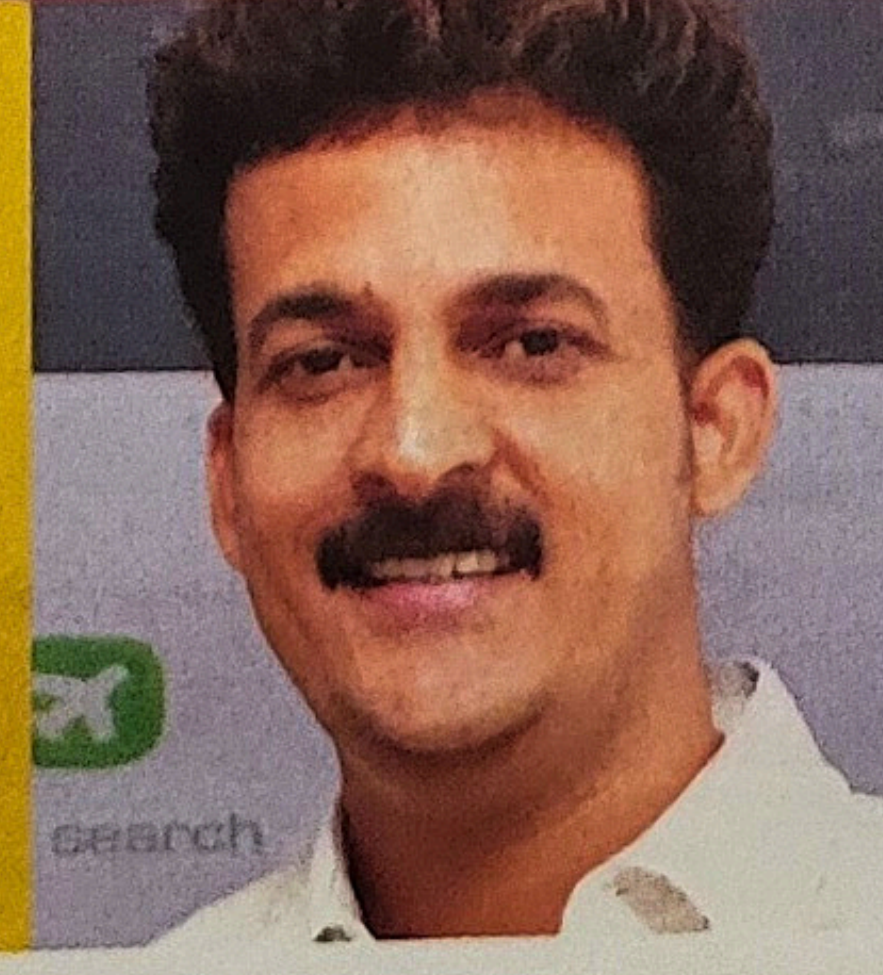
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Future
Ready



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Destination
Combat



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Sound
Advice



5 Challenges hindering the growth of luxury travel

Indian Hospitality stands for luxury and grandeur. Since time immemorial India has been associated with palaces, Maharajas, lavish grandeur, opulence and style. Our history, combined with our rich cultural heritage is testimony to the fact that India has the potential to offer a composite luxury experience to visitors. However, one cannot ignore certain challenges that have been hindering progress in the luxury travel segment. Though the hospitality service and standards are almost at par with the world, there is a lot that can be done to make the experience more hassle free and seamless. The roads, airports and also the railways have witnessed considerable improvement over the years but the demand for quality infrastructure is fast exceeding the pace of development. The demand for luxury travel is definitely there, hence one needs to move fast to provide further impetus to this growth.

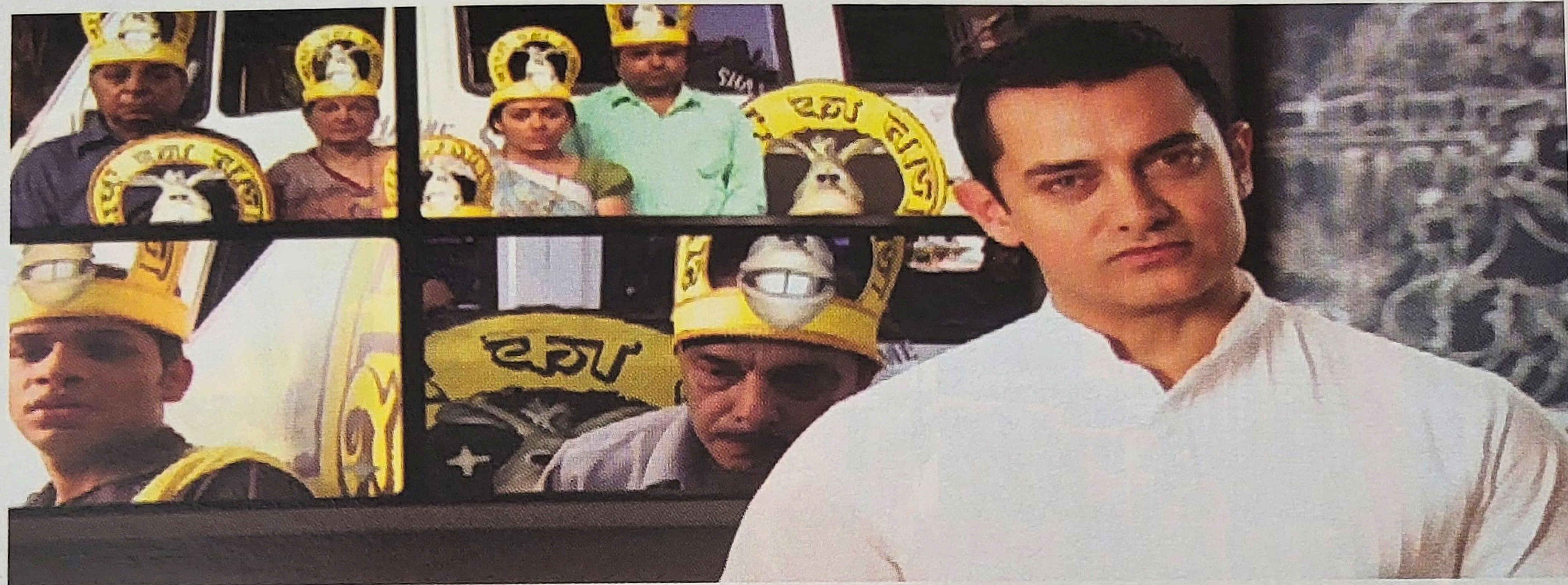
1 Amenities at tourist locations

basic amenities such as well maintained and clean waiting rooms and toilets, first aid and wayside amenities, such as lounge, cafeteria, and parking facilities, need to be improved. India scores poorly in terms of availability of these infrastructure facilities. Inadequate infrastructure facilities affect inbound tourism and also could lead to an increase in the outflow of domestic tourists from India to other competitive neighboring countries.

In addition to tour operators and hotel staff, tourists interact with persons from different backgrounds, occupations and experience. Such people include staff at bus/railway station, immigration staff at airports, taxi/coach operators, ticketing/travel agencies, small hotels, dhabas/roadside eateries, staff at heritage sites, and tour guides, among others. The degree of service offered by these various stakeholders has a significant impact on determining the tourist's overall experience of India as a tourist destination.

Hawkers and beggars near monuments are another menace. They are a major annoyance and also disturbing for the tourists. It does not portray a good picture, especially for those accustomed to luxury travel.

The government has taken initiatives to promote responsible tourism by sensitising key stakeholders of the tourism industry through



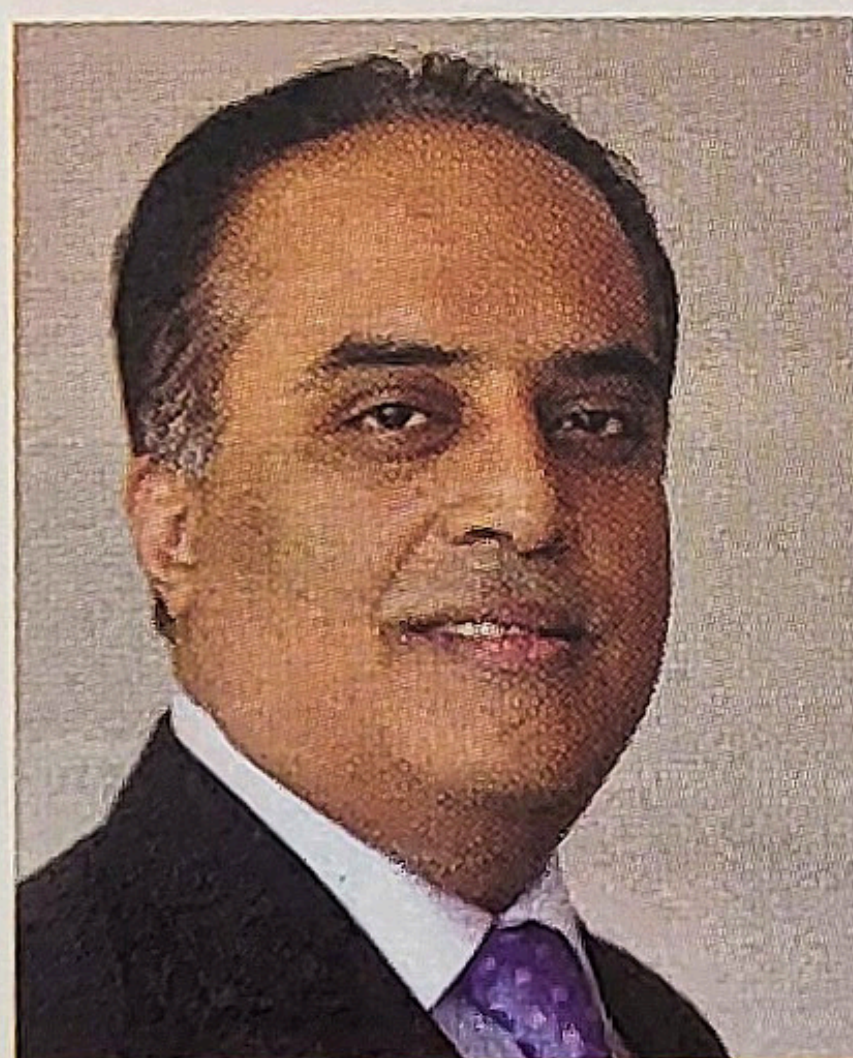
training and orientation, to develop a sense of responsibility towards tourists and inspire confidence in foreign tourists about India as a preferred destination. One such major initiative is the "Atithi Devo Bhava" campaign. More such efforts are required to improve the degree of service across various operators.

2 Lack of proper infrastructure

to harness India's tourism potential, several efforts are being made to open new destinations apart from exploring niche segments. However, infrastructure facilities such as air, rail, road connectivity, and hospitality services at these destinations and the connecting cities are inadequate. This remains a major hurdle for development of tourism. Roadways form a vital network in the tourist industry with almost 70 percent of tourists in India travelling by road. Moreover, many tourist circuits depend on roads.

Despite numerous efforts to improve road infrastructure, connectivity remains a major problem. There is a greater need for strengthening road and rail network, development of more expressways, and tourist-specific routes to improve connectivity to various locations across different regions.

Aviation infrastructure is also critical since it is a major mode of entry for inbound tourism. Passenger traffic is expected to increase in the coming years; however infrastructure facilities at airports are a cause for concern. Expansion and development of airports at major gateway cities is



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ARJUN SHARMA
Managing Director
Le Passage To India

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underway to cater to the increasing passenger traffic. However, in addition, airport facilities at important secondary cities and tourist destinations also need to be improved to be able to handle greater passenger traffic.

3 No clarity on five star status

Classification of hotels is not yet clear. What disturbs a tourist is the lack of standardisation of classification of hotels. At times, it is frustrating to explain how two classified five star hotels can differ so much in their services. Also, when tourists search for decent alternatives, most often desirable alternatives are not available in smaller cities like Gwalior or Varanasi. Apart from increasing the capacity of rooms, the quality of services should be standardised as well.

4 Security issues

Security has been a major impediment for the growth of tourism for a number of years. Terrorist attacks or political unrest in different parts of the country have adversely affected sentiments of foreign tourists. Terror attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 dealt a strong blow to tourism

in the country. They raised concerns of safety. In addition, insurgency in different parts of the country also mars India's image as a safe destination.

5 Need to broaden our tourist product

We need to broaden the experience to include India's cultural heritage areas as that will be the 'differentiating factor' of our destinations. We need to ensure that those visiting have a dream vacation and look forward to returning for another trip in another unique Indian area.

At the moment, in various cities, there is no 'experiential tourism' apart from sightseeing and dinners at 5-star hotels. Yoga, spirituality or wellness segments are some examples that can be planned in an organised manner. That the Indian tourist product is world-class is a given fact. But the question is whether its full potential has been tapped or are we just scraping the surface of its veritable 'gold mine'?

Arjun Sharma is heading Le Passage to India (LPTI), India's second largest destination management company. A keen golfer and an established leader of the travel industry, Arjun confesses he has tourism in his DNA.