



Zip Zap Zoom Expressway

The impending opening of the Yamuna Expressway holds much promise for the travel trade. However, the question being asked is that 'Why is it not being opened officially when it is ready and is being used only through issue of permits?' No one has an answer, even as all stakeholders are looking forward to this plush road.



ANIL MATHUR

A few vital and time-bound measures have to be taken for attaining the set goals. For one, politics has to be kept out and the Yamuna

He revealed that more Jaypee Delcourt properties will come up along the Expressway, in addition to a 611-room hotel in Noida.

Arjun Sharma, Managing Director, LPTI, points out,

lates on the point that, "The Expressway has opened doors for many other developments in the area like the Night Safari at the Mursheedpur forest, which will be the first in India and fourth in the

come up in Agra and more chains are coming up. It is ironical that a world-famous city like Agra has no flights. This must change.

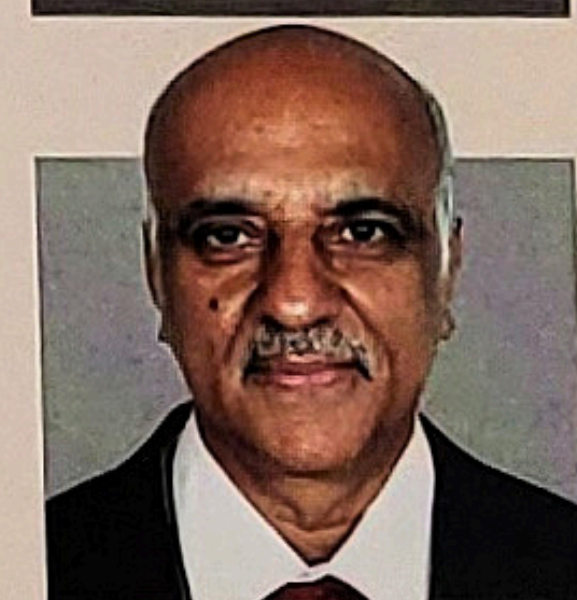
Suraj Jha, General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel Greater Noida, confidently states, "Travel in the Golden Triangle will never be the same again, thanks to the opening of the Yamuna Expressway." He feels that the new facility will be more used by the SUVs and Coaches, for group, FIT and Incentive movements.

The better connectivity will also boost special packages for the business, leisure and MICE market.

Jha is designing innovative packages to cater to the expected increase in corporate, MICE and auto-related events. "The Test Track for cars and the Expressway are excellent ways of promoting leisure and incentive travel," he feels. He plans to tie-up with properties in Agra and Delhi to offer attractive packages, so that overnight stays also increase. "We want

Need of the hour

Arun Dang, Director, The Grand Hotel Agra, feels that the suggested airport near Mathura, at Baldev, would be a great help, especially in boosting the interest of and catering to the large number of NRIs, who would like to come for pilgrimage and spiritual trips to Vrindavan and Mathura, apart from coming to see the Taj. "In the past, the room capacity was very low in Agra but as the capacity increased, so has the traffic. There is no need to fear better connectivity and greater capacity," says Dang, who has been active in the vibrant Tourism Guild of Agra also. But industry veterans like Gupta and Dang feel that certain things need to be sorted out before the full benefits of the Yamuna Expressway can be reaped. For one, the issue of toll tax and barriers on the way must be simplified, so that the time gained on the actual driving should not be lost at the barriers. Secondly, the procedure of viewing the Taj by Night must be streamlined, as the present system of taking a pass to view one day in advance just does not make any sense.



Arun Dang
Director
The Grand Hotel Agra

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Arjun Sharma
Managing Director
LPTI

Expressway will open doors for developments like the Night Safari which will be the first in India



S M Azmat
Senior Joint President
Jaypee Group

The smooth 90-minute drive to Agra will give a wonderful experience to domestic and international travellers



Suraj Jha
General Manager
Radisson Blu Hotel Greater Noida

The new facility will be used more by SUVs and Coaches for group, FIT and incentive movements

to increase the size of the cake," he quips.

Krishna Mohan, Managing Director, Southern Travels is excited at the development. He points out, "There will be a lot of saving on time and money, as the Haryana taxes will be avoided and the guests can save over 90 minutes each way, which can be utilised to see the Taj and other places, like Dayal Bagh and Soami Bagh in Agra, as extra quality time will now be available for the tours."

The impact of the Yamuna Expressway will be felt by hotels in Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Greater Noida and Agra and how the market, traveller and the industry handles the situation will be watched with interest.

Expressway should be thrown open for the public as soon as possible and the new regime in UP should show an enlightened approach in this case, especially, since the plush road is already being used through issue of permits.

Elaborating on the benefits of the Expressway, SM Azmat, Senior Joint President, Jaypee Group, who has been closely involved with the developments in the area, points out that foreseeing the emergence of Greater Noida as the next hub, Jaypee Hotels developed the luxurious Jaypee Greens Golf and Spa Resort and the Jaypee Delcourt.

He stated, "Apart from the boost to tourism and hospitality developments in Greater Noida, the smooth 90-minute drive to Agra will make for a wonderful experience, both for the domestic and international travellers."

The rise of Sports Tourism, seen in recent months, will get a further boost by the splendid facilities created at Greater Noida.

"Since the Taj Mahal continues to be the most popular and the most visited tourist destination in India, its ever increasing popularity has resulted in heavy vehicular traffic on the existing Delhi-Agra NH2. Apart from reducing the travel time, the Yamuna Expressway will also ease the traffic that one has to face on NH2 and will provide a safer and uninterrupted movement for travellers from Delhi and western UP."

Significantly, he adds that the Expressway is expected to boost the socio-economic development of areas like Aligarh, Mathura and Agra. Interestingly, Sharma articu-

world, after Singapore, China and Thailand."

Sunil Gupta, Director, Travel Bureau, feels, "That better connectivity, as the new Expressway will provide, always helps, just like during the introduction of Shatabdi trains." But he, like Azmat, feels that a Civil Airport must be made available in Agra.

Gupta suggests that till a new airport is built, the existing Air Force should have a dedicated civil corridor. Gupta, who is a major player in the region, points out that in recent months, over 250 new rooms have

Grey areas

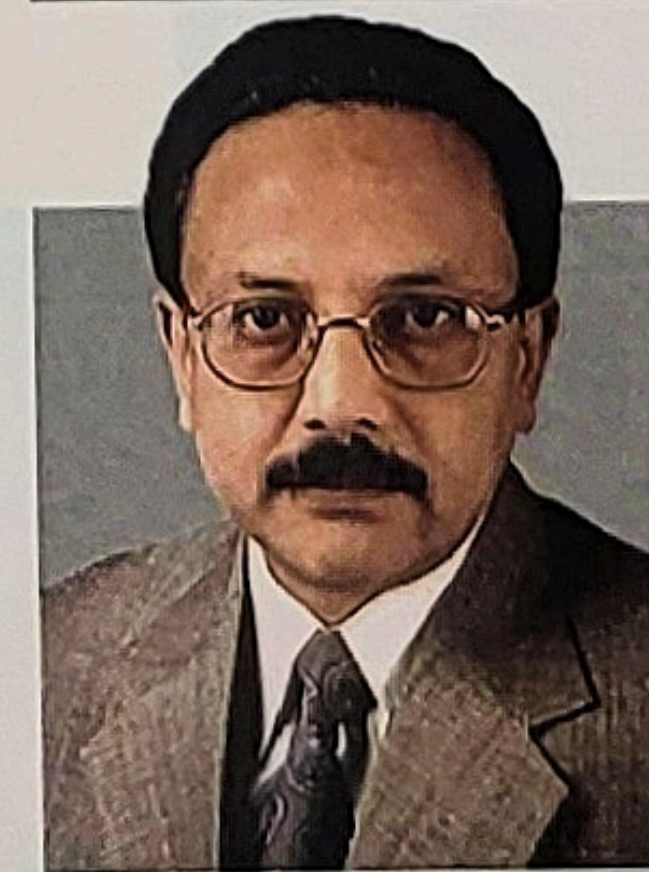
Some fine tuning and addressing the grey areas is necessary now. For example, a simplified, ideally one-time payment of toll taxes should be devised so that the benefits of speed are not lost and wasted at the barriers. One of the sore points on the NH2 has been the delay at the borders. The growth in villages and

populations along NH2 causes much safety and security issues and these should be addressed now at the Expressway. What will be the policy on letting habitats come up on the route and will trucks be allowed? As it is, a lot more of SUV's and coach traffic is expected that would cater to the tourist traffic.



Krishna Mohan
Managing Director,
Southern Travels

Time and money will be saved, as Haryana taxes will be avoided and guests can save over 90 min each way



Sunil Gupta
Director
Travel Bureau

Better connectivity will provide help just like it did during the introduction of Shatabdi trains

QUICK READ

India ranks 1st in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka received a record 4,52,867 foreign tourists in the first half of this year, with India leading the pack with 85,426 tourists. This is an 18.7 per cent growth over the same period last year.

LEADERS TALK

Gearing up for the decade ahead

Having registered an aggressive growth in its first 10 years, LPTI has garnered over 17 brands in the travel and tourism space. These strategic business units are in various stages of development and will ensure that the group grows even more aggressively in the decades to come.



Arjun Sharma, Managing Director, Le Passage to India (LPTI) and TUI India

VIVEK SETHI
 These are the selected excerpts from a free-wheeling interaction between TRAVELTALK and Arjun Sharma, Managing Director, Le Passage to India (LPTI) and TUI India.

Strategic Business Units (SBUs):

We are nurturing 17 SBUs spread across the inbound, outbound and domestic segments. They are based on our realisation that the end consumer is not the same. Across different sectors, the needs of the consumer are different. These needs can be best met by servicing them through expertise in respective fields.

Here, one needs to understand that the gestation period varies across dif-

ferent segments. For instance, a dedicated luxury division would require about 5-10 years and our LUXE division has completed four years. LPTI and Go India Journeys have enabled us to pursue growth opportunities aggressively in both conventional and new source markets. Similarly, our other divisions are also in various stages of gestation cycle and

we are committed to nurturing all our units.

Organic growth strategy:

We follow a primarily organic growth strategy. To find the most appropriate cultural fit for people is more difficult than creating financial provisions for them. We like to follow 80:20 ratio of organic and inorganic ventures. But, at the same time, when we see value in a business proposi-

tion, we are more willing to invest. For instance, the Ministry of Tourism is promoting niche segments that include golf. We also see potential in golf in times to come and hence had recently acquired a medium-sized company to create a strategic business unit equipped to cater to the needs of domestic, inbound and outbound golf tourism market. Similarly, we

are willing to venture into different aspects of tourism that remain unexplored.

We had also started a new SBU; Dakshin Routes which focusses on marketing Kerala. We will like to extend similar units in Orissa and other states in the North-East. We are also keen to extend our presence in neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar to name a few.

Growth Windows:

Today, the revenue contribution from inbound and outbound space is roughly in the proportion of 80:20. Going forward, looking at the dynamics of growth, we will expect them to grow in such a manner that the ratio becomes 50:50. This year, the outbound had shown a little moderation

due to increase in air fares and strong dollar among other factors. However, the overall dynamics predict strong growth in range of 20-25 per cent in times to come in the outbound space. The outbound MICE also offers great potential. In the inbound space, the weak rupee didn't result in gains for inbound operators due to high air fares. The inbound sector is also likely to continue to register strong double digit growth.

Challenges:

The common challenge to the tourism growth is the poor shape of the aviation sector in India. Affordable air travel options are essential for good health of the tourism sector. We should allow global competition to ensure that the routes don't get choked.

Contd. on page 25 ▶



Vrooms at 58% CAGR in first decade

The group's turnover has witnessed a meteoric rise at a rate of 58% CAGR since its inception in 2002-03. From mere ₹ 10 crore, the projected turnover of the group is likely to touch ₹ 669 crore in 2012-13. Similarly, the group is now poised to service a mammoth 2,49,785 guests in 2012-13 as compared to 5,287 guests in 2002-03.

LPTI growth story continues

Contd. from page 18 ▶

Building future leaders:

Travel business is all about passion and motivated manpower. Hence, it's critical in the travel business to keep the manpower motivated and passionate to scale new highs. All our SBU heads exactly do that to keep the manpower motivated. I encourage all the SBU heads to function independently and with an enterprising spirit.

CSR: Shaping Lives

Corporate Social Responsibility is something

Overseas rep in MOT roadshows

Indian companies participating in the roadshows organised by the Ministry of Tourism can also authorise their overseas representative to participate on their behalf. There was some confusion

over the participation of overseas representatives of Indian companies, which was clarified by the Ministry of Tourism at the recently held stakeholders meet on the 3 August 2012.

very close to my heart and I strongly believe that it is very important for us to give back to the society to expedite inclusive growth. In fact, we have created an independent unit - Shaping Lives headed by a General Manager to

collate, coordinate and expand our roles in this sphere. We work with several NGOs and will continue endorsing such initiatives that have potential of shaping lives, especially, of the underprivileged, for betterment.

Delhi's 1st speciality Jain restaurant



Delhi's first speciality Jain and Marwari Restaurant at The Ashok, New Delhi was inaugurated by Subodh Kant Sahai, Union Minister for Tourism, Government of India. Also present on the occasion were Dr. Lalit K. Panwar, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC); Jayaram Banan, Founder, Shraman and Owner, Sagar Ratna. Shraman is an initiative by Jayaram Banan, founder and owner of Sagar Ratna chain of restaurants.