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# TRAVTALK

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# DDP Group makes IndiaThink

Tourism is a topic that demands participation of stakeholders for effective implementation of plans and policies. We all talk about doing something for tourism, but not all of us have the tenacity to see through these initiatives. **IndiaThink** series is an initiative by DDP Publications to bring together the leading minds of the travel tourism & hospitality industry and suggest the road ahead.

The first round table conference was held at Le Meridien, New Delhi, in August. The topic of the discussion was 'Inbound Tourism - Promoting India 'Without' the Government'. The participants included **Sujit Banerjee**, former Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Secretary General, WTTCII; **Ajay Bakaya**, Executive Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts; **Arjun Sharma**, MD, Le Passage to India; **Dipak Deva**, CEO, Destination Management, India & South Asia, Kuoni; **Kamal Hingorani**, Sr. VP & Head InFlight Services and Customer Experience, SpiceJet; **Pronab Sarkar**, Secretary, IATO; **Meena Bhatia**, VP-Marketing & Operations, Le Meridien; **Sanjeet**, Director & Publisher, DDP Publications and **Deepa Sethi**, Editor-In Chief, DDP

Publications. While discussing the strategy to work together and increase inbound tourism, the participants came up with constructive ideas, the implementation of which would definitely benefit all the stakeholders of the industry.



For details on the first of the IndiaThink series, see page 30 ▶

# National Tourism Awards for cleanliness

Union Minister for Tourism Shripad Yesso Naik chaired the National Conference of Tourism Ministers held in New Delhi recently.

**PEDEN DOMA BHUTIA**

Organised as part of the 100-day action plan of the Government, the objective of this conference was to initiate high-level discussions on important issues faced by India's Tourism Industry. Union Minister for Finance and Defence, Arun Jaitley,

was the chief guest. Eighteen state tourism ministers including **Mukul Sangma**, Chief Minister, Meghalaya and **Lt. Gen Ajay Kumar Singh**, Lt. Governor, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, attended the conference. The other states / Union Territories were represented by their senior officials. Key representatives of the travel and hospitality industry also attended the conference.

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## Announcements made by Naik

- ➔ From next year, the National Conference of Tourism Ministers will be a two-day affair.
- ➔ The MOT has decided to institute from 2016 a new category in its annual National Tourism Awards to recognise the best efforts made by all States / UTs for ensuring cleanliness at places of tourist significance. This would be carried out on the basis of a cleanliness Index being evolved by the Ministry. The Index will rank the cities on the basis of cleanliness at 10 destinations, 1 market place and 3 entry-exit points per city. The 3 cleanest destinations and 3 cleanest cities will be awarded.



Shripad Yesso Naik  
Union Minister for Tourism

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# Travel Industry seeks a



The first of the **IndiaThink** series was held at Le Meridien, New Delhi on August 11, 2014. The first round-table conference was attended by some of the best minds in the hospitality, travel & tourism industry. The discussion tabled was on 'Inbound Tourism - Promoting India 'without' the Government'. The panellists discussed the promotion of inbound tourism and highlighted the recommendations on how to take this forward to the next level. **Following the discussion, a Position Paper on the recommendations will be presented to MOT and the travel associations.**

**Q** Is there a desire to make a change in marketing India?

**Q** Is India more important than the individual?

**Q** Why is the tourism industry divided and what is the way forward?

## Recommendations:

- ❖ Raise the cry of a National Tourism Board where private sector is equally involved and which will be chaired by the MOT
- ❖ Privatised Incredible India marketing overseas. Use marketing organisations that are result oriented
- ❖ The Ministry of Tourism should be restructured
- ❖ During off-season, waive the visa fee by 50%
- ❖ Incredible India needs to be rejuvenated
- ❖ China needs to be tapped
- ❖ Model Code of Conduct for Hospitality and Tourism industry
- ❖ Reinvent India's image in the international market
- ❖ More entertainment facilities for families
- ❖ Safety norms for adventure tourism are not adequate
- ❖ Free Indian skies
- ❖ Give us a clean destination to sell
- ❖ Engage with the media and do positive stories
- ❖ A TV channel just for tourism in India
- ❖ Synergy between tourism and culture
- ❖ Develop various circuits – Buddhist Circuit, Mughal Circuit, South India Circuit

## Privatise international marketing



**Dipak Deva**  
CEO-Destination Management  
India & South Asia, Kuoni Destination  
Management and Chairman, WTTC/II

**Privatising marketing offices overseas is the need of the hour.** The concept of Govt of India Tourist Offices in various countries is just not a workable solution. It obviously doesn't suit government interests as it will cut down their foreign postings. They, however, sometimes do more damage than actually marketing Destination India.

**We need to look at setting up private sales offices as they will be more competitive and result-oriented. These private stakeholders would understand the foreign country's local behaviour better.**

This is not a herculean task. We still do not have an office in Russia. Yet, Russia is one of our vital source markets. However, we need to work out the modalities but this in my opinion, is the only way forward.

# National Tourism Board



## Discounted eVisa during off-season



**Arjun Sharma**  
Managing Director  
Le Passage to India

For the first time, I see a giant rainbow of hope. It's time to restructure MOT, which was organised in the late 1950s.

It's time to raise the cry for a National Tourism Board with some teeth. The private sector should be equally involved in this initiative. Thus, we need a Tourism Board which could be chaired by MOT, but with private stakeholders being actively involved. Also, India cannot replicate what Germany or Macau is doing. We need to come up with our own model.

Off-season e-Visa at 50% discount should be rolled out. Also, we need a global tourism mart to build our image. The opening of the Indian skies is also needed to steer growth. Also, Incredible India has to roll out new versions of Incredible India 2.2, 2.3, 2.4.

## Why are we trailing the Dragon?



**Ajay Bakaya**  
Executive Director  
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

I don't know if the private enterprise in India can achieve much if government does not support them. I am not sure why we have not been able to tap China. We haven't tapped the volumes that we could get from there.

We have not even realised the potential of inbound tourism from the Commonwealth countries. We need to introspect and see if we can become united to boost tourism. How united we are as a private stakeholder to come and work for the benefit of the country is what will drive tourism in India. Needless to say, we require a model code of conduct for the hospitality and tourism industry in the country. This is going to define the growth of the industry in the years to come.

## Create new tourism circuits



**Sujit Banerjee**  
Secretary General  
World Travel & Tourism Council  
India Initiative (WTTCCI) and former  
Secretary, MOT

Unfortunately, tourism is not given its due importance in our country. If our allocation in the Plans is just about 0.3 per cent, then what are we talking about? The entire industry in India is driven by the private sector, with government probably acting just as a catalyst.

Till date, we have just sent one tourism industry leader in the Rajya Sabha. There is no synergy between our heritage, tourism and culture. We have about 30-odd UNESCO heritage sites. However, we do not know of any other monument beyond the Taj Mahal. How many of us know about Hampi? We have done nothing to promote the Buddhist circuit. We cannot wait for India to join hands with Nepal or Bhutan to promote the same. We can create other attractions such as the Mughal, Gandhi, Southern circuits.

## Get media to do positive stories



**Kamal Hingorani**  
SVP & Head Inflight Services &  
Customer Experience  
Spicejet

What we as an industry should do to promote inbound tourism is to get the media not to exaggerate about various unfortunate stories. Take the case of Nirbhaya and we are even now facing its brunt in terms of low inbound numbers. We need to engage the media with or without the government support and work on positive stories to promote tourism.

Also, the industry lacks good training and faces major attrition issues. We internally have a policy for renewed focus on delivering superior customer experience. Based on the principle of SOCH (Safe, On-time, Clean, Courteous and Hassle-free), this is our mantra and has yielded good results for the company over the past one year. I would suggest that private stakeholders in tourism should employ such methods.