

Understanding the Citizenship Amendment Act

BUREAUCRACY INDIA

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COVER STORY

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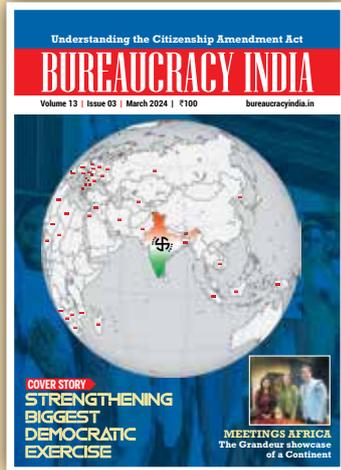
Exploration & Production

Power & Renewable



BUREAUCRACY INDIA

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2024 has been marked in the history for being the biggest global election year in the world with as many as 64 countries going for polls. And with many reasons at place, India's Lok Sabha Elections 2024 will be the biggest democratic exercise in the history of the world. Find out more as we bring you detailed outlay in our Cover Story.

With all your blessings, Bureaucracy India has gone globally and has been loved and appreciated by South Africans as we became the exclusive Indian Media Partner for 'Meetings Africa', 2024, an annual African Business Event that aims to create a market platform showcasing various travel and trade products to propel Africa to new heights on the global Stage.

It was a memorable journey for me as I have spent 10 days in this beautiful landscape and tries to bring to you the best of South Africa. The Editorial team has conducted a series of exclusive interviews beginning with her highness Ms. Patricia de Lille, The Minister of Tourism, South Africa. She is one of the most humble person and an excellent communicator, who is working extremely hard to strengthen India- South Africa travel ties and make it more easier and affordable for Indians to travel to their continent in less time. Find out the detailed story in our exclusive coverage section.

Few days ahead of election announcement in India, the BJP government has made CAA applicable which has created a lot of positive and negative noise around. In our Insight story, we bring you the factual concept in the easiest way possible.

With the beginning of April 2024, we wish all our readers a great new financial year and seek your blessings and love for you to keep growing like this and bring you more exclusive coverages.

Deepak Vyas
Editor-in-Chief



Don't forget to share your views and feedback at info@bureaucracyindia.in
Keep following our social media platforms to get updates regularly.



▲
6
Appointments



▶
10
Cover Story

▶
8
PSU
Watch



▶
9
Feature

▶
14
Exclusive
Coverage



▶
26
Feature



▶
28
Event



▶
30
Feature

GYANESH KUMAR & S S SANDHU APPOINTED NEW ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

Two retired IAS officers of the same batch but from different cadres -- **Gyanesh Kumar (Retd IAS: 1988: KL)** and **SS Sandhu (Retd IAS: 1988: UK)** -- to be appointed as Election Commissioners in the Election Commission of India.

Sources disclosed their names after the meeting of the collegium to appoint Election Commissioner chaired Prime Minister of India. Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** and Congress leader **Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary** were other members of the panel.

SS Sandhu recently retired as **Chief Secretary** of Uttarakhand while Kumar was Secretary in the **Cooperative ministry**. Sources said that the Government had sent Chowdhury five lists containing 236 names. The list included the names of 92 officers who retired as Secretary and Secretary equivalent in Government of India, 93 names of officers serving as Secretary and Secretary equivalent officers in Government of India, 15 officers who retired as Chief Secretaries of state and union territories in last one year, 28 and 8 officers serving as chief secretaries in states and union territories.

BUSHAN GAGRANI APPOINTED AS BMC COMMISSIONER

Bhushan Gagrani (IAS: 1991: MH) has been appointed as the new **Mumbai municipal commissioner**. The **Election Commission of India** asked the **Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led to appoint Gagrani** as the new **Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) commissioner**.

Further, **Saurabh Rao (IAS: 2003: MH)** and **Kailash Shinde (IAS: 2013: MH)** has been appointed as the new civic commissioners of Thane and Navi Mumbai, respectively.

SUBHANI APPOINTED AS BIHAR ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION CHAIRMAN

The Nitish Kumar administration in Bihar appointed **Amir Subhani (IAS: 1987: BH)** to the coveted post of Chairman, **Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission (BERC)** for a period of five years or till 65 years of age; whichever earlier. He replaces **Shishir Sinha (Retd IAS)** who recently completed his term as Chairman, BERC.



VIVEK SAHAY APPOINTED AS NEW DGP OF WEST BENGAL

Vivek Sahay (IPS: 1988: WB) has been appointed as the new **Director General of Police (DGP)** for West Bengal replacing **Rajeev Kumar (IPS: 1989: WB)**. The appointment was made within hours after the poll panel removed Rajeev Kumar as DGP. Sahay was the **Director General and Commandant General (Home Guards)**.



In 2021, the EC had suspended Sahay, then acting director of security for Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee. The decision to shift Rajeev Kumar was taken as he was removed earlier too from active election management-related duty during the 2016 assembly election in Bengal and in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The EC has asked the state chief secretary to post Rajeev Kumar to a “non-election” related assignment, and, as an interim arrangement, post an officer immediately junior to him as DGP.

RAILWAY BOARD: FIVE ADDITIONAL MEMBER APPOINTED

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has appointed five **Additional Members of Railway Board, Ministry of Railways**. Officers appointed to the key post are as follows:

- **Vivek Kumar (IRSMEE)** has been appointed as Director General (DG), Jamalpur.
- **Jitendra Singh** has been appointed as Additional Member, Environment and Housekeeping.
- **Shishir Dutt** has been appointed as Principal CAO/COFMOW, New Delhi.
- **A K Agarwal** has been appointed as Additional Member (Mechanical Engineering), Railway Board.
- **Sanjay Kumar Pankaj** has been appointed as Additional Member (Production Unit), Railway Board.



RUDRA

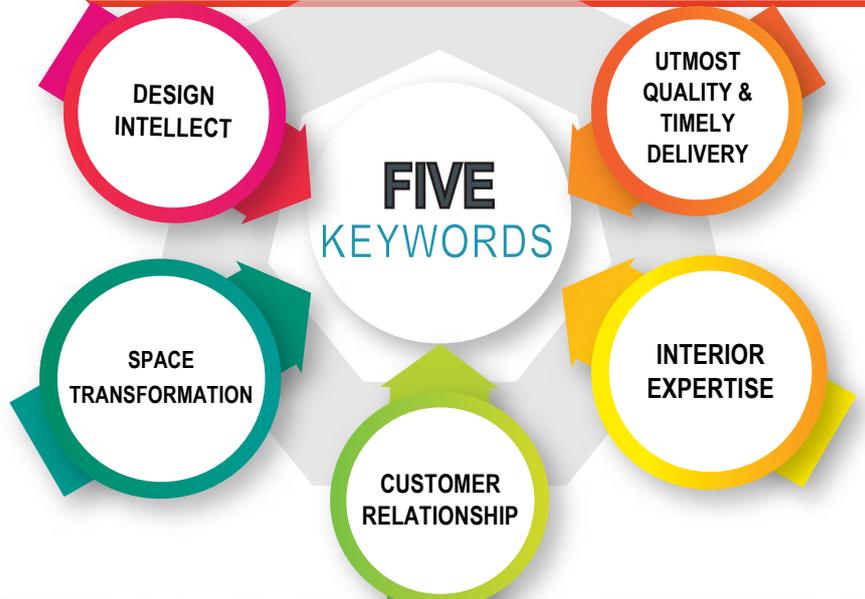
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GRID-INDIA CONFERRED MINIRATNA STATUS

Grid Controller of India Limited or popularly known as GRID-INDIA is now a Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) Miniratna company. In recognition of GRID-INDIA's role as the nation's Grid Operator, the Ministry of Power conferred upon it the prestigious status of Miniratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE). GRID-INDIA, with its five Regional Load Despatch Centres (RLDCs) and the National Load Despatch Centre (NLDC), is responsible for managing the critical All India Synchronous Grid, considered among the largest and most intricate power systems globally.

GRID-INDIA received this recognition under the leadership of **Chairman & Managing Director, Mr. S R Narasimhan**, an avid Electrical engineer with over three decades of experience in power system operations. He joined NLDC in July 2011 and was soon promoted to the position of Director of System Operation. He believes that India must uphold a power distribution system that is non-negotiable and uncompromising in its robustness, reliability, and financial viability.

His passion and extensive experience in interconnecting regional grids resulted in the establishment of a synchronous All India Electricity Grid. Presently, this grid is interconnected with neighbouring countries such as Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Mr. S R Narasimhan holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) in Finance. He has worked with some of the largest power PSUs including CEA, POWERGRID, and POSOCO, following his initial tenure with BHEL.

Established in 2009, GRID-INDIA's primary mandate is to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted flow of electricity nationwide, facilitating exchanges between different regions and even across borders while focusing on reliability, cost-effectiveness, and long-term sustainability. The company is responsible for the seamless and uninterrupted operation of the Indian Power System ensuring competitive and efficient wholesale electricity markets and administers the settlement systems. Currently more than forty power trading and power exchange companies are registered with NLDC including some of the big names like Tata Power Trading Company Ltd., NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd., Adani Enterprises Ltd., GMR Energy Trading Ltd., Reliance Energy Trading Ltd., etc.

Over time, GRID-INDIA has adapted its functions to meet the changing landscape of power systems, driven by the integration of renewable energy sources, increasing energy demands, economic growth, technological advancements, and evolving regulatory and market conditions.

Grid India is India's National Grid Operator and was previously known as Power System Operation Corporation Limited (POSOCO) before it was renamed as Grid Controller of India Limited or GRID-INDIA, by the Ministry of Power in November 2022.

NCRTC MD RESIGNS

New Delhi (15.03.2024): In a latest development, one of the leading experts in infrastructure planning, implementation and regional mobility resigned abruptly from the service. **Vinay Kumar Singh**, a 1988 batch IRSE officer, the incumbent **Managing Director of National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC)** has "reportedly" put in his papers citing personal reasons.

NCRTC is the implementing agency for the three corridors of the **Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)** in the NCR zone.

Singh was serving as MD of the NCRTC since February 2016. Before joining NCRTC he worked as CEO of the High Speed Rail Corporation, a subsidiary of Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd.



HINDUSTAN AERONAUTICS LIMITED (HAL) BAGS A CONTRACT WORTH 2,890 CR



The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on March 15, 2024 for Mid Life Upgrade (MLU) of 25 Dornier Aircraft along with associated equipment for the Indian Navy at a cost of Rs.2,890 cr.

The MLU for Dornier Aircraft includes an upgrade to incorporate state-of-the-art Avionics Systems and Primary Role sensors. The upgrade would significantly enhance the operational capability of the Dornier aircraft of the Indian Navy to perform Primary Roles of Maritime Surveillance, Coastal Surveillance, Electronic Intelligence and development of Maritime Domain Awareness. In addition, this upgrade will also enable Indian Navy Dorniers to carry out Secondary Roles of Search and Rescue, Medical/Casualty Evacuation and Communication Link.

Mid Life Upgrade (MLU) of 25 Dornier Aircraft is likely to generate an employment of 1.8 Lakh Man-days during its execution span of 6.5 years. The indigenous upgrade entails supply of major systems and equipments from indigenous sources thus significantly contributing towards "Atmanirbharta" in Defence, in consonance with Make-in-India initiative of Government of India.

Understanding the



Just days ahead of the announcement of general elections, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on March 11 notified the Citizenship Amendment Rules, 2024 that would enable the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the Parliament in 2019.

The CAA is going to grant citizenship to 6 religious minorities persecuted in neighboring Islamic countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, who have taken refuge in India before Dec 31 2014 and have stayed for at least one year continuously before application.

These communities are: Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis. All these communities have been severely persecuted in the above countries, and their population has dwindled over the decades. The rules state that the applicants will have to provide six types of documents and specify “date of entry” in India. The list of permissible documents include birth certificate, tenancy records, identity papers, any licence, school or educational certificate issued by a government authority in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Act was passed on December 11, 2019, receiving assent from the President on December 12 the same year. The MHA had earlier notified that the Act will come into force from January 10, 2020. Since the rules were not framed yet, the Act could not be implemented.

India is not a party to UN convention on refugees and is a sovereign country that can decide on which refugees to take in and whom to grant citizenship to. To date, no government in India granted any constitutional rights to these refugees - no matter what their religion.

The CAA is clearly not anti-Muslim and definitely not against Indian Muslims. The poor among Indian Muslims and other communities will actually benefit from this as millions of illegal Muslims entering India from Bangladesh and Myanmar won't be able to take up citizenship and gain access to the same Government benefits, resources, organizations, Madrasas, and other NGO programs.

Indians have to be cautious against the massive disinformation campaign being done to create fear, uncertainty, and doubt about

CAA affecting Indian citizens' rights. It only strengthens Indian rights and India itself.

With respect to some persecuted Muslim sects in Islamic countries around India, they have about few dozen other Islamic countries to support them, many of them much richer and more resourceful than India. They also have rich, powerful western democracies to help them.

These rules will now enable minorities persecuted on religious grounds in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to acquire citizenship in our nation. With this notification PM Shri @narendramodiJi has delivered on another commitment and realised the promise of the makers of our constitution to the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians living in those countries.

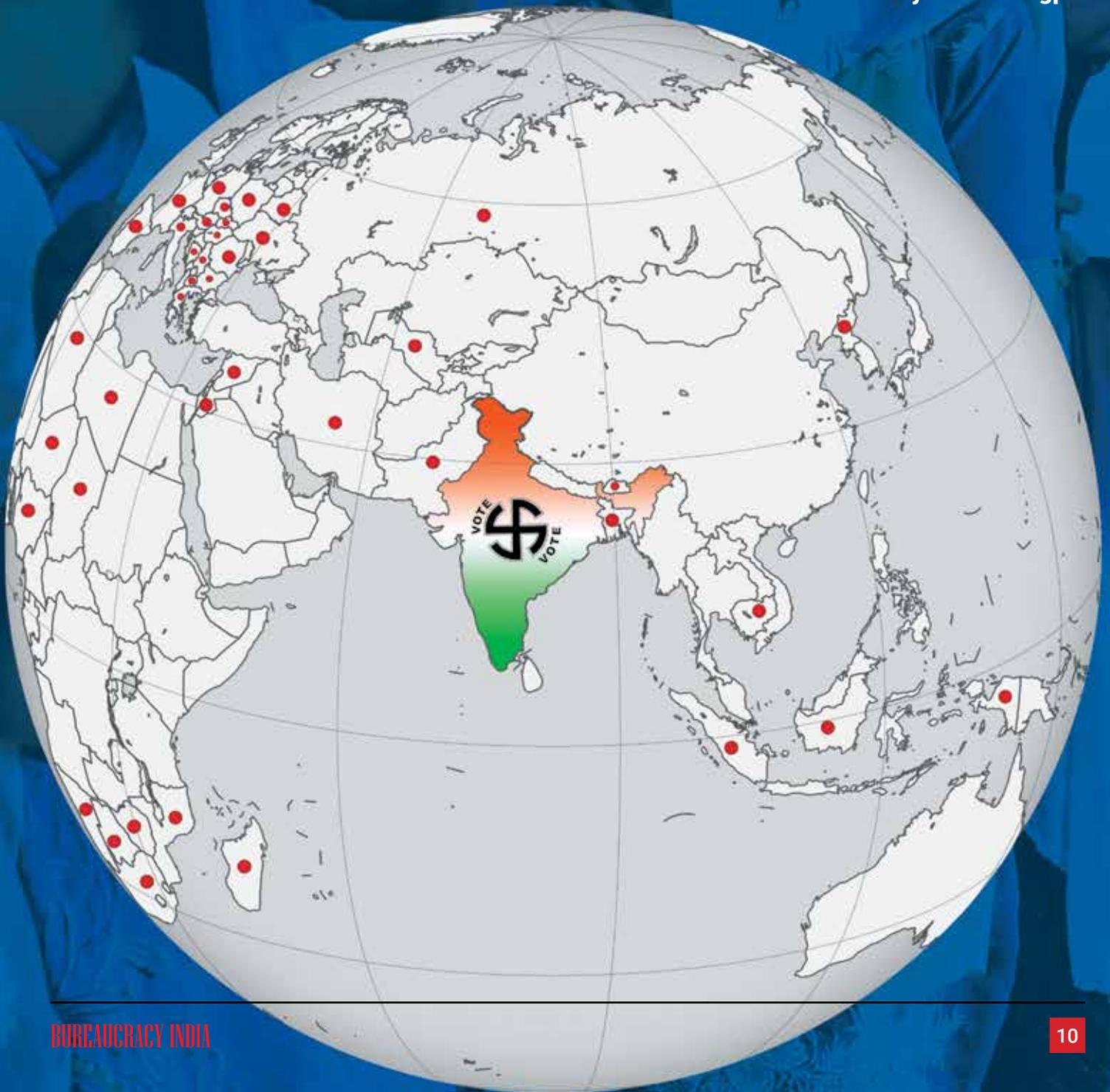
Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted (Posted on X)

Western countries and rich Islamic countries without helping and giving refuge to these persecuted Islamic sects in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh are claiming that India with a per capita of 3000 USD is Anti-Muslim and doing religious persecution for not giving citizenship rights to these refugees.

The worst part is countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh, which, after persecuting these minority Muslim sects and driving them out, do propaganda against India for not giving them citizenship. Some misguided Indians due to misinformation and propaganda, are supporting the same narrative. **BI**

STRENGTHENING BIGGEST DEMOCRATIC EXERCISE

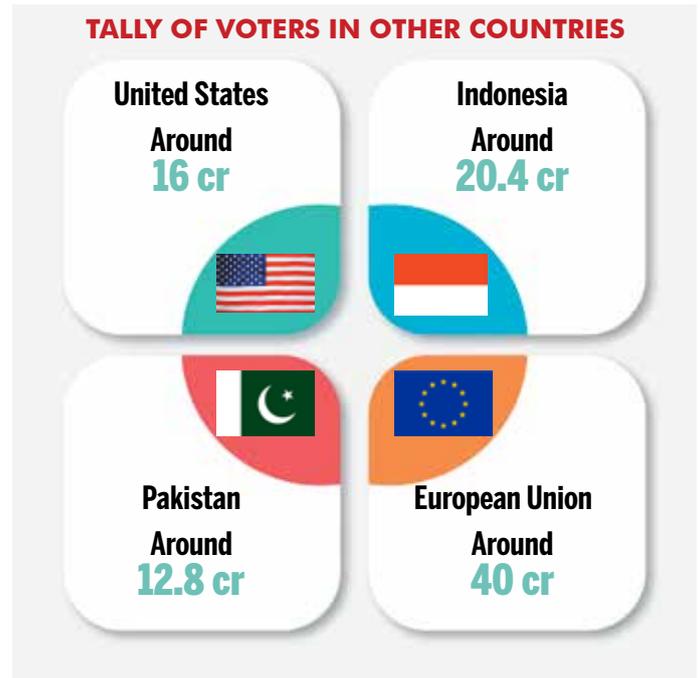
by Suhani Nagpal



“India gets ready for the celebration of democracy...A mammoth exercise in democracy which is world’s largest electoral movement of man and material,” quoted the Election Commission of India (ECI - the country’s independent poll-conducting body), while announcing the largest election this year: India’s Lok Sabha.

Spanning over a period of 44 days, India’s Lok Sabha elections will be held in seven phases and the results will be declared on June 4. The general elections of the lower house of Parliament, whose five hundred and forty-three members represent 1.4 billion people, will be held across 28 states and eight Union territories.

From the Himalayas in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, from the hills of the east to the deserts in the west, and in concrete jungles that are some of the world’s biggest cities to the smallest of villages, an estimated 969 million voters are eligible to cast their ballots. They will elect 543 politicians to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament. Two other members are nominated, to make up a total strength of 545 in the house.

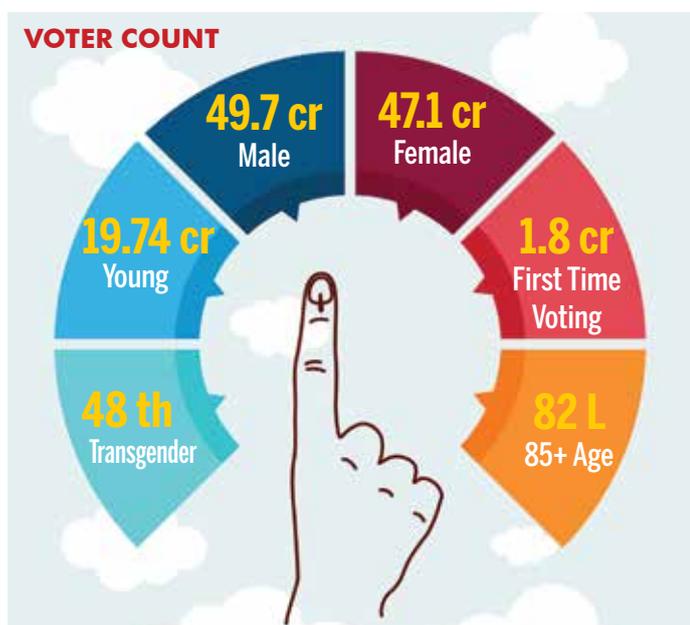


1 INDIA'S LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST 'ELECTORAL MOVEMENT'

India’s election is colossal, colourful and complex. It became the world’s most populous country across the world last year. So far, 17 general elections, over 400 state assembly elections, 16 presidential elections and Vice presidential elections have been conducted in the country. There are a lot of factors that will make this year General Elections a democratic exercise that is unmatched in scale globally, and in history.

2 THE VOTER COUNT

The size of India’s electorate is more than the population of all the countries of Europe combined. The total number of registered electors or voters in India are around **96.8 crore (968 million)**, the Election Commission of India disclosed while announcing



the poll schedule. As many as **49.7 crore are men, 47.1 crore are women, 1.8 crore are first-time voters, 19.74 crore are young voters, 48,000 are transgenders, 82 lakh are aged above 85 and 2.18 lakh are centenarians.**

They will cast their votes through **5.5 million electronic voting machines at 1.05 million polling stations**, of which some are located in the snow-clad mountains in the Himalayas, the deserts of Rajasthan and sparsely populated islands in the Indian Ocean.

The Election Commission will deploy about 15 million polling staff and security personnel to conduct the elections. They will trek across glaciers and deserts, ride elephants and camels, and travel by boats and helicopters to ensure every voter can cast their ballot.

3 COST OF LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

It is expected to be the world’s most expensive election as this year spending by political parties and candidates to woo voters will likely cost more than **1.2 trillion rupees (\$14.4bn)**. That would be twice what was spent in India’s 2019 elections – 600 billion rupees (\$7.2bn). Most of India’s election spending is not publicly disclosed. Candidates spend unaccounted money to woo voters. The election scrutiny machinery is weak in detecting cash transactions as candidates attempt to directly bribe voters with money or other enticements, from alcohol to clothes.

THOUSANDS OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

As of March 15, 2019, there were a total of **2,360** political parties registered with the Election Commission. Of these, seven were recognised as national parties, 52 were recognised as state parties and 2,301 were unrecognised parties. Parties that have a significant footprint in a state legislature are recognised as state parties and those with a meaningful presence in multiple states get the national party tag.

A record 612 million people of a 912 million strong electorate

cast their votes in the last election, registering the highest ever voter turnout at 67.4 percent. Women’s participation also increased to an historic 67.18 percent in 2019.

4 ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

Officials and EVMs: **Over 55 lakh EVMs and 1.5 crore polling officials** will be deployed for the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections.

Polling stations during Lok Sabha polls: There are around 10.5 lakh polling stations currently across the country. The total number of polling stations during the general elections to the 17th Lok Sabha 2019 polls was 10,37,848, as per the ECI data. Holding elections in the world’s seventh largest nation by area is a complex task. In 2019, election workers travelled 300 miles (482 km) over four days across winding mountain roads and river valleys to set up a polling booth for one voter in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China. Election officials also set up a voting booth at 15,256 feet (4,650 metres) in a village in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, making it the highest polling station in the world. Far off the country’s east coast, on the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands, workers travelled through crocodile-infested mangrove swamps and dense jungles to reach polling booths.

In Malkangiri district of Odisha, where left-wing Maoist fighters have a presence, polling staff walked 15km (9 miles) through forests and hills to protect electronic voting machines from the rebels after voting. Intelligence agencies had warned them that using cars could have made them easier targets.

“On sheer numbers, it’s gigantic and complicated, but in a sense simple also because at each level the law is very clear about what are the duties and responsibilities of each polling official,” said N Gopalaswami, the former chief election commissioner of India.



Election phases 2024

Phase	No of PCs	No of States	Poll Date
Phase 1	102	21	April 19
Phase 2	89	13	April 26
Phase 3	94	12	May 7
Phase 4	96	10	May 13
Phase 5	49	8	May 20
Phase 6	57	7	May 25
Phase 7	57	8	June 1

Credit : thehindubusinessline

55 lakh+
EVMs

1.5cr
Polling Officials

55 lakh+
Polling Stations

5 LONGEST VOTING PERIOD

Besides being the largest, this year’s Lok Sabha elections will be the country’s second longest after the first parliamentary elections that were held in 1951-52. The voting period this year will last for over **44 days**, while the first-ever national polls had lasted for more than four months.

With the announcement of the schedule, a model code of conduct also kicks in – campaign rules now apply, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government is not supposed to announce new policies that could influence voters.

Voting will run in seven phases from **April 19 to June 1**, said Rajiv Kumar, chief election commissioner of India. The counting of votes will take place on June 4. Assembly elections for the states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and



Sikkim will also take place along with the national elections.

After April 19, the other voting dates are April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. Some states will complete voting on a single day, while others will have voting spread out across several phases.

Over the years, the number of days over which voting has stretched has varied a lot – from the shortest ever four days in 1980 to 39 days in the 2019 election, to 44 days in 2024.

The primary reason for the multiphased election is for the deployment of huge federal security forces required to check everything from polling-related violence or attempts at rigging, according to N Gopalaswami, the former chief election commissioner of India.



5 RECORD BREAKING WINNING SEATS

PM Narendra Modi has set a **target of 370 seats** for the BJP, 67 more than in 2019; and for its alliance to cross 400 seats. He is seeking a third term in office.

The last time any party crossed 370 seats was in the 1984 election. The Congress party won 414 seats following the assassination of the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

If PM Modi wins and completes five years, he will be the third longest serving prime minister in Indian history. The country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru ruled for about 16 years and 9 months consecutively, while his daughter Indira Gandhi governed for a total of about 15 years and 11 months.

“Given the economic growth momentum in the domestic economy created by a Modi-led government and an increased image of India on a global stage, many are confident that Modi will win again,” Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities.

Since Modi won a second term in the 2019 general election, India has seen the economy strengthen, with Indian equity benchmarks hitting record highs. The Nifty 50 and BSE Sensex have both hit all-time highs this year after the country overtook Hong Kong in December to become the world's seventh largest stock market.

International Monetary Fund executive director Krishnamurthy Subramanian said that India is “easily” the fastest-growing economy and is poised for 8% growth this year.

Thanks to an alignment of calendars, 2024 will not only set a record for breathtaking win for BJP government as predicted but it will also set a record for the greatest number of people living in countries that are holding nationwide elections.

The World Economic Forum has called 2024 “a historic election year, with elections in 50 countries” to be held this year, when about 49% of the World Population will cast their vote. **BI**



MEETINGS AFRICA:

The Grandeur showcase of a Continent

by Deepak Vyas

I would like to start with extreme gratitude and pleasure that I felt being at 'Meetings Africa' as the Indian Media Partner. I have travelled across the globe, but the country that seems like home with the same warmth and humbleness as we Indians have is South Africa. Not only I have been mesmerized by its scenic beauty, the fresh air, lush green drives, cultural diversity but I have felt absolute at home all these 10 days I have spent there.

The city of Johannesburg, Gauteng province eagerly embrace the honor of hosting Meetings Africa 2024, for it is not only testament to the city's and the province's vibrant spirit but also the humble residents that shared this region with us.

This year is very special for South Africans as they commemorate and celebrate a significant milestone – 30 years of freedom in South Africa.

BONDay

The three days event (26th February- 28th February), held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, kicked off in style with the vibrant Business Opportunity Networking Day (BONDay) and was officially inaugurated by the **South Africa Tourism Deputy Minister, Fish Mahlalela** with his youth focused inspirational words,

"The future of our industry resides with our youth. This is why it warms my heart so much that at BONDay we hosted the Future Leaders Forum, a collaborative effort by South African Tourism's South African National Convention Bureau

The Minister of Tourism, **Ms. Patricia De Lille** warmly welcomes everyone on the floor with her great remarks,

"It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I extend a warm welcome to all of you to the 2024 edition of Meetings Africa. This annual event has become a hallmark in showcasing the best of the African business events industry sector... In these three decades, the tourism industry has played a pivotal role in showcasing the beauty, diversity, and warmth of South Africa to the world. It has become a beacon of unity, providing opportunities, fostering, understanding, contributing to the economic prosperity of this nation. Equally, their business events industry has done a tremendous job in positioning South Africa as a capable host of events of various sizes and we have numbers to prove it."

(SANCB), and the Southern African Tourism Educators of South Africa (TESA). This innovative program, tailored to engage and inspire young enthusiasts in the business events sector, provided a transformative experience... Today, I look forward to delivering the keynote address, officially declaring the trade floor open and am also excited for the walkabout that will enable me to engage with exhibitors, including new entrants from markets such as Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, and Zambia. I look forward to the positive impact that will undoubtedly emerge from our engagements together."



Fish Mahlalela, Deputy Minister, South Africa Tourism

Mahlalela delivered a stirring address at the plenary session on the pivotal role of the event in facilitating knowledge exchange and fostering innovation within the tourism sector. He highlighted the evolution of Meetings Africa into a premier business events trade show in Africa, emphasising its significance in creating vital connections between buyers and exhibitors.

He delved into the essence of knowledge exchange. He highlighted its role in fostering innovation, collaboration, and skills development.

“The time has come for us to rewrite the narrative on Africa,” added the Deputy Minister, advocating for a vision that portrays the continent not as a land mired in stereotypes but as a vibrant and dynamic player on the Global stage.

Furthering his emphasis on ‘Youth empowerment’, he talked a lot about education and skill impartment as crucial factors for the youth of our country in an exclusive interview with our **Executive Editor, Suhani Nagpal**. When asked about an exchange program with India for Skill Education, he said,

“Yes. What we’ll really appreciate is to have exchange programs around the critical skills that the economy of South Africa requires, which currently have got a huge problem within the tourism sector. There’s a huge skills gap. That’s why the tourism sector, in terms of workers, is dominated by migrants. The majority of South Africans are not employable because of the challenges and skills. So we love a situation where within the tourism sector, we have exchange programs of skilling of young people so that they’re able to build the necessary human resource capacity within the tourism space. Because the majority of young people in South Africa are not absorbed by the tourism because of the lack of skills in various sectors, be it hospitality, be it leisure, be it mice, businesses and all of that, we’ll need those skills to be made available. So we’ll really appreciate if we can create an opportunity, an environment where we either send students to India for skilling or practical possible. Then India sent some people here.”

Suhani: And I think that is better because then you can teach multiple layers of the youth. Apart from tourism, which all sectors you would like the youth to build skill?

Deputy Minister, Mr. Fish Mahlalela, “Well, the other sectors that we will prefer is skilling are education, especially around math and science, which were really lacking around and also finance. As you know, historically, the majority South Africans were black, were not given an opportunity to study Maths and Science. And therefore, we’re still backward in relation to that particular area. Even our own teachers are not good in Maths and Science. So Exchange Programs between Indian University and our Universities will really help in this regard.”

The BONDday has become a focal point for the business events industry, hosting insightful panel discussions and eminent speakers. It focused on educational sessions to facilitate knowledge exchange during the event. The BONDday precedes the two-day trade show event at the same venue.

Exhibition

South Africa’s Tourism Minister, Patricia de Lille, opened the two days Exhibition, expressing her sentiments of pride as she hints at Africa’s readiness to host events of any scale.

“I have no doubt that even here at Meetings Africa, it will be clear for all to see that the African continent is the best place to bring all meetings, events, expos and indeed incentive trips,” De Lille said.

Highlighting the significance of the business events sector and its contribution to the economy, De Lille commended the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) and its partners for their exceptional efforts in securing international and local bids for events to be held in South Africa. She noted that since the beginning of the current financial year (2023/24), the SANCB has sourced and submitted 95 bids for international business events to be hosted in South Africa between 2024 and 2032. These bid submissions are estimated to have a combined economic value of R1.5 billion and potentially attract 60,040 international and regional delegates to South Africa. So far,



BI Editorial Team with **Patricia de Lille**, South Africa’s Tourism Minister

South Africa has won 19 of the bids submitted for the 2023/24 financial year. These secured business pieces will contribute R85m to South Africa’s economy between 2024 and 2025 and attract 2995 international and regional delegates.

While acknowledging these accomplishments, De Lille emphasised that there is still room for further efforts to promote

HOSTED BUYERS



Meetings Africa is the largest B2B exclusive MICE show arranged by South Africa Tourism to develop MICE in South Africa. The event showcase South Africa as a perfect destination for Adventure, Leisure & MICE with multi available options. Every province in South Africa has its own contribution to promote tourism.

– **Gajesh Girdhar**

Founder & National Coordinator NIMA
(Network Of Indian MICE Agents)



As the sun kissed the African horizon, an air of anticipation filled the atmosphere, signalling the commencement of “Meeting Africa,” a remarkable event hosted by the South Africa Tourism Board. As a delegate representing the NIMA, I embarked on a journey of discovery, immersed in thought-provoking sessions and meaningful exchanges, all aimed at celebrating the beauty and diversity of the African continent. The heart of “Meeting Africa” lay in the dynamic interactions between buyers and sellers. It was inspiring to witness representatives from various African countries come together, each offering unique value propositions, showcasing the rich tapestry of cultures, landscapes, and experiences that Africa has to offer.

– **Vikas Khanduri**

Founder & CEO – Holiday Merchants

and position South Africa as a leading destination for business events.

According to global economic research, the global business events industry was valued at 345.8 billion US Dollars in 2021 and is projected to reach 2.1 trillion US Dollars by 2031. Meanwhile Africa’s business events industry for 2023 was estimated at 12,7 billion US dollars while South Africa’s Business Events for 2023 was estimated at 6,4 billion US Dollars.

De Lille said the country’s positioning should transcend its socio-economic challenges. **“It is imperative that we take control of our narrative and boldly showcase ourselves to the world. Our challenges do not define our potential, our ability to lead in key business sectors, or our capacity to innovate and host global MICE events. South Africa is home to exceptional individuals achieving remarkable feats, and it’s time to share that story.”**

In an exclusive round table interview with global media representatives, **The Minister of Tourism, Patricia De Lille, spoke to our Editorial Team, Deepak Vyas and Suhani Nagpal.** Here are the excerpts:

Deepak Vyas: How would you describe your success story post Covid?

Patricia De Lille: Well, I can tell you the two things that I can identify that have led to our success. Success is that if you want to grow the numbers, people have to get to your country in some way or the other. So we put a lot of effort into engaging directly with airlines to fly to our country. And when you engage with the airlines to fly to your country, you cannot just give them a plan, just leisure tourism. It has to be what investment opportunities are in your country. And so it’s a combination, because the airlines also depend on the business class seats that they sell to make their profits. So we have approached a number of world airlines directly and our own local airlines. South African Airways has been out of commission for a couple of years and they slowly getting back into the market. So we work with South African airlines and Brazil, just to give you one example... Before COVID-19 we were sort of very static. And the way we were marketing our country was all about safaris, Kruger National Park, Table Mountain. Yes, those sites will be there forever, but you need to diversify your offerings so that you attract different groups of people. So we then started introducing in 2023, an offering that was never yet put to tourists coming from outside. We show them what we have got in our townships... We’re now going to put all our villages and the culture and the history and the cuisine and, you know, the dancing, all of that and then we have got what I call hidden gems. Hidden gems are tourist attractions that we as the department of tourists can develop to bring more tourists... We have signed agreements with Google Maps, Trip Advisor and Airbnb... So we were really trying to, after COVID-19, overlay all our tourism marketing decisions with digital technology... What we can even do better if we improve air access within Africa. Intercontinental. The African Union signed an agreement in 2012 where they wanted to have a single airline strategy to improve flying within the continent. It was finally launched in 2018. And then in 2018, out of the 53 countries that signed in 2012, only, I think 35 are now part of that agreement... And I want to start by connecting first all the cities within the continent... So in the month of April, I’m putting that plan before cabinet.

Deepak Vyas: There are a lot of safety concerns that arise while someone plans to visit South Africa and its all over the news. How are you working in this respect to assure safe travel for tourists and MICE groups?

Patricia De Lille: So let me just say, on the safety concerns, yes, we regret, of course, any visits they get attacked in our country. We regret. We don’t want to see that. And the mandate to protect all South Africans, including our visitors, is with our police services. So what we’ve done in the past eight months, is a partnership with the private sector. From government side, we have put in 174 million rand. We have recruited 2300 young people and train them to be tourism monitors. We identified all frequently visited tourist sites. That’s normally a hotspot because everybody goes there, and we deployed them all there. The private sector came with a technology site.

They have developed an application called Secura app. So when you arrive in South Africa, you can download the app and if there's an unlikely incident where you get attacked, the place of a button, you can get the police and 300 private security companies help. You will also get immediate medical help if required as there are 200 medical institutions and organizations on that app. We then launched an operational system center in August last year where they can monitor this app 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. In November I advised them to say, this is our safety plan so they can inform their citizens when they want to visit us here. We also, through our own international relations department, have send that safety plan to all our missions abroad, so that when prospective travelers come to our country, they will get that information from our embassies when they land here. We also working with the airports company, and we've also given some of the tourism monitors to the airports company, and they've been deployed all over. We had far less incidents this summer season. We have deployed 40 tourist monitors to patrol an alpha table Mountain. So, yes, tourists are safe there now.

Suhani Nagpal: I would first like to congratulate you for conducting a series of successful road shows in India that we covered in our last magazine issue as well. Even Tire 2 cities are looking forward to be part of South Africa now and all our corporates are ready to come here. So I would like to ask you a few questions on that. First of all, Visa is an issue. And also the flights, I mean, they are taking a lot of time and are expensive. So are you doing something on that? And the second question is what are your plans for, since we are the most populated country now, and last year the numbers were 79,000, so we at least want to cross 1 million for South Africa. So what are your plans for India and anything you are looking from Indian government to support you in anyway?

Patricia De Lille: Now, India is definitely one of our key source markets, and therefore, we sponsored those companies to travel to the five cities in India. While on the other side, we're dealing with the visa issue and the air access. South African Airways used to fly from Johannesburg to Mumbai. And I engaged with South African Airways to find out when are you going to reinstate the flight in order of priority. The next flight that they are reinstating after Brazil is the London one. As we can't wait until SAA finally going to fly from Mumbai, so we've engaged with Air India. Air India is prepared to fly directly... There are a lot of family connections between Indian families in South Africa. A lot. So even the Indian population from South Africa is also looking forward to that. I'm hoping that in April, we will at least have a date where all of the regulatory things will have been sorted out that will allow Air India to fly to South Africa. On the visa issue, I really have put India and China together as part of the BRICS community because Russia and Brazil has got a 90 day visa waiver... I'm winning the argument slowly, I've gone even as far as the office of the president, and the president has put a special group to work together with me on the visa issue for India and for China. And there's some movement there because we summons the security people of India and China to come and meet with our security people here and then find a way of how they can deal with the security issues. But on the tourism side, we are ready to roll and we are hopeful to sort Visa and Air connectivity issues this year.

Suhani Nagpal: That is indeed very good news. South Africa is a very beautiful country and Indians would love to explore it. Thank you.

The Minister later explored the show venue, engaging with exhibitors. She expressed delight at the truly pan-African nature of the show, evident in the diverse range of exhibitors.

With 380 exhibiting companies from 21 African countries in attendance, including new Products from Egypt, Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Cape Verde, Meetings Africa 2024 is solidifying its status as the continent's premier business events trade show.



I wish to extend my sincerest appreciation to the organizers for orchestrating such a remarkable event. As a buyer, I was thoroughly impressed by the meticulous planning and execution of this fair. Moreover, I commend the organizers for their discerning selection of exhibitor companies. The diverse range of businesses represented at the fair provided invaluable insights into emerging trends and innovations within the travel sector. Whether it was networking with established industry leaders or discovering promising newcomers, I was spoilt for choice with the wealth of knowledge and expertise on display. In conclusion, the success of Meetings Africa serves as a testament to the dedication and professionalism of its organizers.

– **Rajesh Sethi**

Managing Director, Carnation Travel Services Pvt. Ltd.



Attending Meetings Africa offered a comprehensive insight into South Africa's role in the global MICE industry, highlighting the country's rich potential for hosting diverse events.

The event showcased meticulous organization, valuable networking opportunities, and educational sessions that emphasized emerging trends like sustainable event planning and technological innovations. South Africa presents itself as a compelling MICE destination, with world-class infrastructure, unique cultural and natural experiences, and a strong commitment to sustainability. South Africa's MICE sector is enriched by the unique offerings of Johannesburg, Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga, Durban and Cape Town.

– **Dr. Anup Tarafdar**

CEO, EVENTEX, Metaverse Expo Pvt. Ltd.

The Fabulous Host: Gauteng Province



In the heart of Johannesburg, amidst the bustling energy of Meetings Africa 2024, an unforgettable voyage began – one that would reveal the captivating allure of South Africa. I had no clue of the surprises in store when I was rushing through the my meetings with local travel suppliers during these 2 days exhibition. South Africa, with its rich tapestry of cultures, landscapes, and experiences was a true stimulus which transcended expectations and made me embrace the spirit of exploration. As a travel professional, I am inspired to show South Africa to my fellow Indian travelers. The country's unparalleled offerings, ranging from exhilarating adventures, immersive cultural experiences and the warm hospitality, present so many opportunities for unforgettable incentive trips.

– **Mukesh Makhijani**
Director, Stimulus Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.



South Africa has been a favourite destination for various reasons –it was the first international trip of my life and the beginning of my journey in this industry. But this time, South Africa touched my heart and soul more because of some amazing people I met like Neliswa and Netto of Mbombella Experiences, who now embody the ethos of South African culture for me – pure, true, interesting and hardworking. Thank you for showing us this side of your home and heart and including us. Eternally grateful!

– **Tanuja Pandey**
Founder Director MICEONLINE



Sthembiso Dlamini, CEO, Gauteng Tourism



Nonnie Kubeka, Head of Gauteng Convention

Gauteng Province, being the economic epicentre of South Africa, contributes to over a third of the country's GDP. Its name in Sotho-Tswana even means “place of gold.” This is because gold was discovered in the region in 1866, leading it to become the single largest gold producer in the world. It is characterised by a cosmopolitan mix of people from all walks of life. The province's unique cultural and social legacy is evident from the many excellent museums, theatres, cultural precincts and craft markets.

In an exclusive Interview with Suhani, **Sthembiso Dlamini, CEO, GAUTENG TOURISM** and **Nonnie Kubeka, Head of Gauteng Convention and Events Bureau** expressed their joyfulness for hosting Meetings Africa 2024.

Here are the excerpts:

Suhani: Thank you for hosting Meeting Africa. I just love being here. And whatever time I will get I will explore the city myself. But how would you like to explain Johannesburg, since this is the heart?

Sthembiso Dlamini: Indeed, Johannesburg is the heart of South Africa, understandably so, because if you're coming from India, especially in Mumbai, it's got a lot of similarities. It's busy. People here actually do different types of businesses. There's the nightlife, there's the food element, there's the culture. We've got a lot of infrastructure that can host events. So hence, I felt it was important for me to bring in our head of convention bureau so that at least she takes you through the value proposition for Johannesburg, particularly when it comes to business events and attracting meetings into our destination. But if you want to do leisure, she also has put together, a nice itinerary asleisure goes in hand with the business. And at the end of the day, we want leisure also for people to relax. We want the combination of everything. And whenever we plan for MICE from India, first destination was Johannesburg in South Africa.

Suhani: I want to congratulate you for putting up meetings Africa, so successfully. So what was your hard work behind this success story?

Nonnie Kubeka: Yeah, I think what we do is to identify the buyers that is the first thing, besides buildings and everything, that are going to be part of the show. We started, like, in 2019, disturbed by COVID. So when you identify a buyer, you check what the destination needs, because the needs of the destination changes. And then you identify by saying, what is there? What are the sectors that are there that you want to promote and what associations are there that we can link to these sectors? So there's a lot of research behind that, and there are a lot of people that contribute to the buyers. But usually in Meetings Africa, we invite new buyers so that we get new leads. And at that particular time they become potential. And then we, afterwards work with the buyer in order to make it elite. And from there it becomes confirmed meeting or a confirmed business. So that whole process takes relationship building with the association, with the media around there and with other people in terms of products around there, so that it can become successful. But we've got exhibitors also that we have to work with them and negotiate. That they can exhibit, by sending their senior executive, so that they can meet the CEO's of companies. Because most hosted buyers, you find are the CEO's or decision makers. And they can conclude if they need to conclude. So also the type of exhibitors that are here, they needed to be quality exhibitors coming out with the right marketing strategies keeping in view the hosted buyers.

South African Tourism Airline Pavilion Takes Flight

Collaboration is key in Africa's airline industry, which is why the Airline Pavilion at Meetings Africa 2024 is incredibly significant. With eight airlines represented, the pavilion has allowed airlines to showcase access to Africa.

"This is the second time we are doing the Airline Pavilion at Meetings Africa. Last year was such a success we brought it back," says Bronwen Auret, South African Tourism's Chief Quality Assurance Officer.

"The pavilion is really important because from a business positioning point you can't get people to a country, to a meeting, a conference or the event without the airline so it's really critical that we have that route development conversation with business events."

The airlines housed in the pavilion are: Airlink, Eswatini Air, CemAir, Linhas Aereas de Mocambique, ASky, Ethiopian Airlines, and Air Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya Airlines.



In the heart of Johannesburg, where the pulse of commerce meets the rhythm of adventure, Meetings Africa 2024 marked the beginning of an extraordinary odyssey. Our adventure commenced with a bustling business meet amidst the vibrant energy of Meetings Africa 2024. Amidst fruitful discussions and networking sessions, the stage was set for a transformative exploration of South Africa's myriad treasures. From its rugged landscapes to its warm hospitality, this enchanting land has left an indelible mark on my heart—a testament to the enduring allure of adventure and discovery.

– Sanjeev Mehra

Director, Aaryan Leisure & Holidays Pvt. Ltd



As I travelled to Johannesburg, the heart of South Africa's economic hub, I was immersed in a dynamic business environment that showcased innovation and resilience. The meetings and networking events offered a glimpse into the Travel & Tourism industries thriving in the region. The blend of business, culture, and nature has left a lasting impression on me, inspiring me to approach my work with a renewed sense of curiosity and openness. With its rich tapestry of experiences, South Africa has not only expanded my professional horizons but also touched my soul with its beauty and warmth. I leave with a heart full of gratitude and a mind enriched by the lessons learned.

– Jay Agarwal

Managing Director, Hillpeak Tours

Sandton Hotel: The Luxury Par Excellence



Step into a world where luxury isn't just a concept – it's a lifestyle. Nestled in the vibrant heart of Sandton, Sandton Hotel and Sandton Apartments redefine the hotel experience, offering an unparalleled blend of sophistication and convenience.

Located on the Northern edge of the Sandton CBD, it is at a walking distance from the Sandton Gautrain Station, Benmore shopping centre, Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton City and many corporate offices that make this the economic heart of Johannesburg.

With 561 opulent rooms including penthouses and suites, Sandton Hotel sets a new standard for luxury.

Two years ago, Sandton emerged as a beacon of luxury and since then, it has firmly established itself as a premier destination hotel and conference venue. From world-class conferencing facilities and co-working spaces to a fully equipped gym and a variety of dining options, Sandton offers an all-encompassing lifestyle experience.

Sandton Hotel offers a relaxing respite from the bustling streets outside, with a grand reception foyer welcoming guests inside and all the amenities you could need under one roof. On the deck you'll find our sparkling blue swimming pool, with a smaller child-friendly pool attached and a fully-equipped children's play area nearby. Here you'll also find the Clubhouse, which offers enticing views and a place to relax, unwind, and enjoy a refreshing cocktail or ice-cold beer. Sandton-Spa boasts a unisex sauna and steam room, which is available to all guests making use of the spa facilities.

Experience the epitome of luxury living at Sandton – where every moment is crafted to exceed your expectations.

For more information on our current special offers, call +27 11 440 1444 (Apartments) and +27 11 395 4777 (Hotel).

Exploring Mpumalanga: The Hidden Gem



Mpumalanga means 'Place of the Rising Sun'. The Mpumalanga Province in South Africa boasts magnificent wild-life, magical mountain ranges, panoramic passes, valleys, rivers, waterfalls, lush forests and starry skies. This is also Big Game Country, the setting for dozens of sanctuaries teeming with wildlife and birds. Among them, the Kruger National Park is world renowned, as are several of the luxurious private reserves on its western boundary.

The entire Mpumalanga area offers exceptional opportunities for bird-watching, hiking, horse-riding and fishing. Few beautiful places to explore are BLYDE RIVER CANYON, BOURKE'S LUCK POTHOLES, GOD'S WINDOW, GOLIATH'S FOOTPRINT, SUDWALA CAVES, THE PINNACLE ROCK among others.

In an incredible Bush Barbeque Dinner at Kruger National Park, hosted by Mpumalanga Tourism, the **CEO of Mpumalanga Tourism, Mr. Mduduzi Herman Vilakazi** spoke to our Editorial team about his participation and expectations from Meetings Africa.

He said,

"We come from an environment that tells us South Africa is the most beautiful country. But what we do not have are people interested in South Africa. And we feel that the other parts of South Africa, which is away from Cape Town, are ignored by the tourists. And that is why we have invited you here, so that you see the other part of South Africa that has the ambience that you cannot get anywhere else. This was a bush pride. We can have a bush conference. We can mingle with the animals. So I'm expecting big groups coming in for meetings, conferences and incentive tours to assure that Mpumalanga grows with India. Thank you."



Mduduzi Herman Vilakazi, CEO
Mpumalanga Tourism

Mbombela Experience – A One Stop Solution



Mbombela Experience is a registered and accredited Tour operator, established in 2014 by Mr Netto Maluka. The company was birthed out of a passion for wildlife and hospitality, which seamlessly integrated into our work ethic and service excellence. It is based in White- River, Mpumalanga, which is a stone throw away to the World-renowned Kruger National Park and the Blyde River Canyon.

Our qualified and experienced team prioritizes safety and creating



great memorable experiences to our guests and building a lasting relationship. Travelers love our comprehensive and cost-effective tours and that's what motivate Mbombela Experience Tours and Safaris to offer tours and safaris that suit everyone's pocket and travel schedules.

They offer Day and Overnight packages to the Kruger National Park, Blyde River Canyon, Johannesburg and a number of customized tours in South Africa. Their tours are a combination of culture, heritage, adventure and wildlife experiences.

For Package bookings and other details contact:

Contact No - +27 732648955

Email Id - info@mbombelatours.com

Website - <http://www.mbombelatours.com>

BUSH BABY VALLEY LODGE – An Explicit Nature Experience

Bushbaby Valley Lodge is nestled in the eastern part of South Africa. It is only a 5 hours drive from the O.R. International airport and 45minutes from the Kruger Mpumalanga International airport.

The lodge will offer you with total exclusivity, with only 13 units on an 8-hectare piece of land. The rest of the land is rested with natural catchments, ponds, lush gardens and not forgetting the beautiful river bounding the property. Bushbaby is a true Eden in the Sabie Valley of Hazyview.

They offer self-catering rooms and luxury rooms (villas) which are non-self-catering. You get to choose your room with a private splash pool or balcony with a river view. The best part is their on-site restaurant caters for almost all guest's dietary requirements including all types of vegetarians.

They can help you plan your vacation with a full itinerary to Africa; from the third largest canyon in the world, the Blyde River Canyon on the panorama route to the game drive into the renowned Kruger National Park for an African safari experience. If you wish to stay indoors, you will be spoiled with aromatic spas and facial treatments. Romantic picnics with a loved one can be arranged and enjoyed under the African Sun.

The packages starts from \$200.00 dollars per night.

For bookings, contact:

Phone number: +27 825911 692

Email: sibonisile@bushbabyvalleylodge.co.za

Website: <https://bushbabyvalleylodge.co.za>



New African Exhibitors Inject Diversity And Excitement

Amongst the exhibitors for Meetings Africa 2024 are new entrants Egypt, Cote D'Ivoire, Tanzania and Zambia. These additions promise to enrich the diverse array of proudly African products and services showcased during the event.

Galaxia Group is from Egypt with offices across the Middle East; the Mangalis Hotel Group are from Cote D'Ivoire; MICE Solutions

DMC from Tanzania, and Willch Travel and Tours from Zambia.

Their participation will further enrich the Meetings Africa line-up with a total of 22 exhibiting African countries, including Nigeria, Uganda, Togo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland and Senegal to name a few.

Showcasing Uganda

Uganda is maximizing its presence at Meetings Africa 2024 and other platforms to showcase the country's distinctive tourism and investment prospects to a broader international audience. Uganda's chairmanship of two major international summits recently, the 19th Summit of Non-Aligned

Movement (NAM) Heads of State and Government, as well as the third South Summit organised under the framework of the Group of 77 and China in January 2024, provided a powerful showcase of the country. During the events, Uganda took over the NAM chairpersonship for three years, as well as the leadership of the G77

and China for a year.

Upcoming events include the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE), an annual tourism and travel trade show that is organised by the Uganda Tourism Board and will be held at the brand-new venue in Munyonyo, Kampala from 23-25 May 2024. The theme will be Responsible Tourism.

Uganda Tourism Board CEO Lilly Ajarova said, "The one thing that I advocate for is that Uganda is one of the best destinations for filming. We are investing in films as a way to create awareness and reach a larger market."

Sustainability Under The Spotlight

AT MEETINGS AFRICA South African Tourism has pulled out all the stops to ensure that this year's Meetings Africa is environmentally friendly in line with its mandate to promote sustainable tourism.

The **CEO Nombulelo Guliwe** said that for Meetings Africa 2024, South African Tourism had partnered with an entity to independently assess the event's sustainability aspect.

Delegates at this year's event are encouraged to go digital, including further using the App to limit reliance on paper. Other improvements at the event include easy access points for recycling.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that our current needs do not have a negative impact on the environment," she said.

Furthering her talk regarding Indian Market, exclusively with our **Executive Editor, Suhani Nagpal, the CEO of South Africa Tourism, Ms. Nombulelo Guliwe** suggests the plans they have for Indian market. Here are the excerpts:

Suhani: I would like to, first of all, congratulate you for putting up this wonderful show Meetings Africa. It was such a great success, I mean much beyond our imagination, and we're hoping to double the numbers from India because we love the country. Indians love South Africans as we know that our Prime Minister has brought you at G20 table. So what is your strategy on India as a market?

Nombulelo Guliwe: India is an important and critical market for us. It's a growth market. We know that there's untapped opportunity. It's therefore important that we have a strategy to grow that market share for India and we are working on that. We are happy with the values that we gain from our traditional post market.

Suhani: So as far as MICE is concerned, we travel in big numbers like 500, even thousand. So do you think South Africa is prepared to cater to such groups?

Nombulelo Guliwe: We definitely have the infrastructure. South Africa is ready to host big groups. The infrastructure speaks for itself. One of the target work for the next financial year is to also have a corporate dictate with corporates and say, what are your needs? So that we can match them to what we have in South Africa. So the short answer is we are ready to host big events.

Suhani: Bringing Bureaucracy and tourism together because we belong to that sector. If we would like to bring in a government delegate or a bureaucratic delegate here, what special can we expect from you as a tourism board?

Nombulelo Guliwe: So every delegate is important to us and



Nombulelo Guliwe
CEO, South Africa Tourism

the best thing for us is to be aware about the needs of our delegates. I always say it's important to know what your customer needs are so that you can respond to them. So depending on whether you are a homemade delegate or depends on your needs and added so we are there to welcome you to South Africa. You've experienced the past few days with us in South Africa and every second person I've made has said they can feel the warmth. So we are naturally a welcoming country but one of the key things is that we work on what our consumer needs so that we can deliver the same. Thank you.

Continuing our discussion regarding Indian Collaborations, our **Executive Editor, Suhani Nagpal** spoke to **Ms. Neliswa Nkani, Hub Head – Middle East, India and South East Asia, South African Tourism.**

Here are the excerpts:

Suhani: First of all, I would like to congratulate you for bringing in such a big delegations from India to magnificent 'Meetings Africa'. What do you feel about it and about India?

Neliswa Nkani: I think it's been an incredible event. I think we brought some of the most amazing, credible, serious buyers who were looking for something new. What was even more interesting was the yearning for something. They were very clear that they're wanting alternative products in South Africa. New experiences. So it was a really good success. But I say for me, the success lies with the tour operators and the mice guys. Once we start seeing the business, I think it will absolutely a testament of how successful it was

Suhani: Since we are the most populated country of the world now, what is your plan to get Indians out here? Because the numbers are 79000 so far and we want to come to South Africa like four times.

Neliswa Nkani: Firstly, we are having robust conversations with the department of Home affairs to make it easy to get your visa issued. Secondly, we're obviously going to touch the consumer. We've got a campaign that we are running with Ethiopian Airways, Rs.39,000 less 15%, which will be promoted now, but travel will be in September. We continue to be hosting corporates and engaging corporates. We'll be doing a lot of trade training as well and we're preparing now for the mega, mega endeavor where we're looking at about 80 to 100 buyers from India. But we'll be focusing on tier two and tier three cities, which is very important for us, as well as making sure that we are hosting corporate and media to showcase new destinations in South Africa. Thank You.



Neliswa Nkani
Hub Head – Middle East, India
and South East Asia
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When a movie or TV series is filmed on location, it not only captivates audiences but also generates employment opportunities, revenue, and promotes the development of essential infrastructure, thereby providing an immediate economic stimulus to the local community.

Africa is now poised for its big break with the help of Filmset, an innovative platform designed for Africa utilising state-of-the-art technology, Filmset serves as a comprehensive database of film locations including State-owned and private venues such as convention centres, hotels, and other facilities, accessible to the World. The easy-to-use location marketing tool also facilitates direct access and communication between film commissions, producers and location agents.

Explore the possibilities with Filmset and unlock the potential for your business or region to thrive in the exciting world of film.



Meetings Africa in Numbers

Meetings Africa 2024 saw a remarkable increase in attendees, reaching **3,480** compared to 2,987 in 2023.

The (BONDay) saw **1,535** attendees, offering a dedicated session for networking and collaboration ahead of the main event.

The number of exhibiting companies also rose to **385** in 2024 from 355 in 2023, indicating a healthy interest in the event as a platform for showcasing products and services.

The media presence remained strong, with **179** media representatives attending across the globe.

The event attracted **371** buyers, a notable increase from 273 in 2023.



In the heart of Africa, against a backdrop of diverse cultures, rich history, and dynamic economic landscapes, the Meeting Africa 2024 events from 26-28 Feb 2024 emerged as a beacon of collaboration, innovation, and growth among the industry. Held in a bustling metropolis city Jonesburg, this gathering brought together leaders, visionaries, entrepreneurs, and policymakers from across the globe to execute the continent's future.

– **Ram Kumar**
Director, Aditya Grand Vacation

Among the highlights were several educational Streams hosted for industry professionals, including innovation, sustainable tourism, and artificial intelligence (AI). Delegates learned from experts how these developments are changing the face of the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) Industry. According to organisers, ‘Meetings Africa

2024 aims to create a market access platform for African Business Events products by facilitating quality connections.’ This annual event has become a hallmark in showcasing the best of the African business events industry sector and to harness the potential within their diverse cultures, landscapes, and industries to propel Africa to new heights on the global Stage.” **BI**

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A comprehensive study about NIMA

One of the profound sector that supports tourism of any country is MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions) Tourism. The Indian MICE Industry is at its boom with both inbound and outbound tourism and the association that has come in support of MICE agents is NIMA (Network of Indian MICE Agents).

The network is operated with an aim to keep members updated on the Global activities happening through out the world and also create an International platform for members and informing about the opportunities coming in future.

by **Suhani Nagpal**

In a one-to-one interview with Mr. Gajesh Girdhar, Founder & National Coordinator NIMA (Network Of Indian MICE Agents), our Executive Editor, Ms. Suhani Nagpal has come out with some interesting facts about the organization. Here are the excerpts:

Q How and When Nima was established?

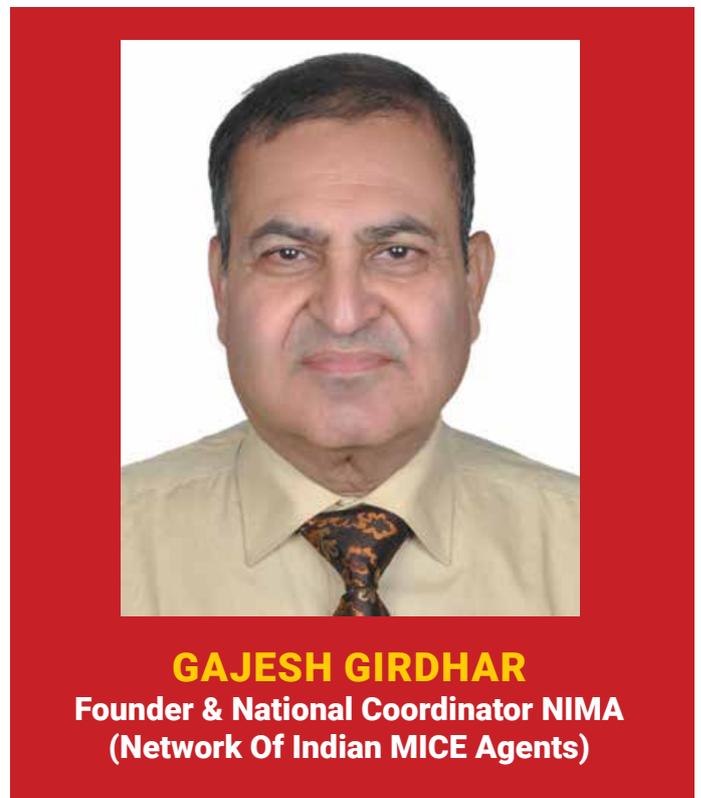
NIMA was established in 2014, keeping in mind the development of MICE as we didn't see any association which was taking care of MICE sector dedicatedly in India at that time.

Q What are the main objectives of NIMA and have you been able to fulfil them?

When we formed NIMA, the founders decided not to charge any membership fee from the members and to bring forward the agents from Tier 3 & Tier 4 who are doing MICE. Today we have 30% members from remote cities of India. Also we have criteria that only owners, partners, directors or final decision makers of a company can apply for NIMA membership. Even after 10 years of establishment we follow the same policy strictly.

Q How is NIMA helping new agents to establish themselves in the industry?

We provide annual training sessions. We encourage members to participate in domestic and international B2B events and take advantage of such events. We encourage members to participate in NIMA flagship annual event MICE Forum which give



opportunity to members to gather information related to new technology, available products, destination updates and available MICE policy by domestic and international tourism boards.

Q After the PM Modi's call for 'local', what is your initiative to promote India as a MICE Destination?

We emphasis members to promote domestic tourism as we now have world class infrastructure for big conferences and events in India. India is now capable of hosting large international level conferences and events and has now come up with new destinations in almost all Indian states to showcase different cultures.

It was indeed a very enlightening information that can help millions of people aiming to be a part of massive Indian MICE Industry. **BI**

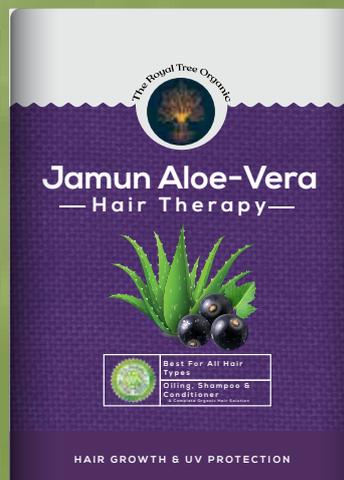
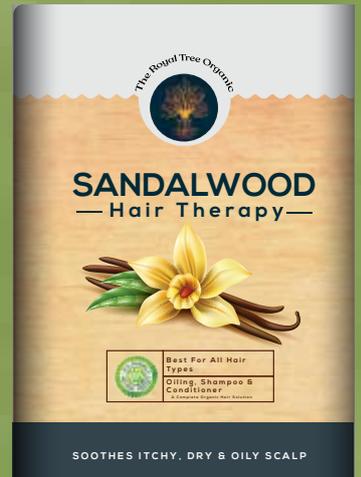
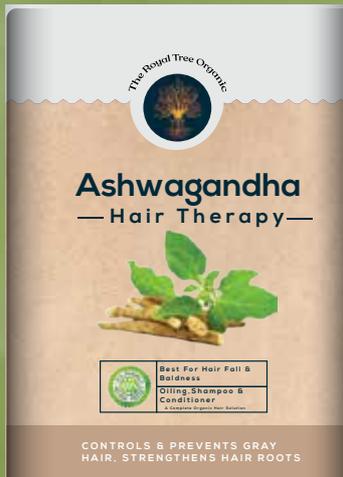
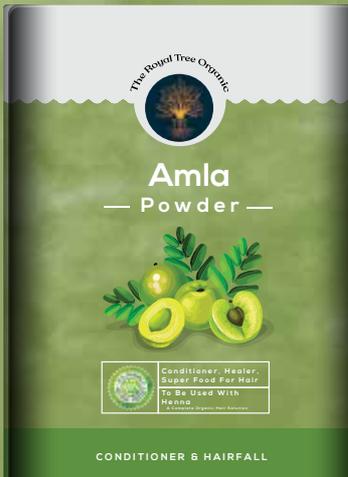
“When we formed NIMA, the founders decided not to charge any membership fee from the members and to bring forward the agents from Tier 3 & Tier 4 who are doing MICE. Today we have 30% members from remote cities of India.

– **Gajesh Girdhar**

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‘THE LOGISTIC MAN OF INDIA’

The Logistics Leader Was Recognised For His Outstanding Contribution at The ET Auto CV and Logistics Conclave 2024

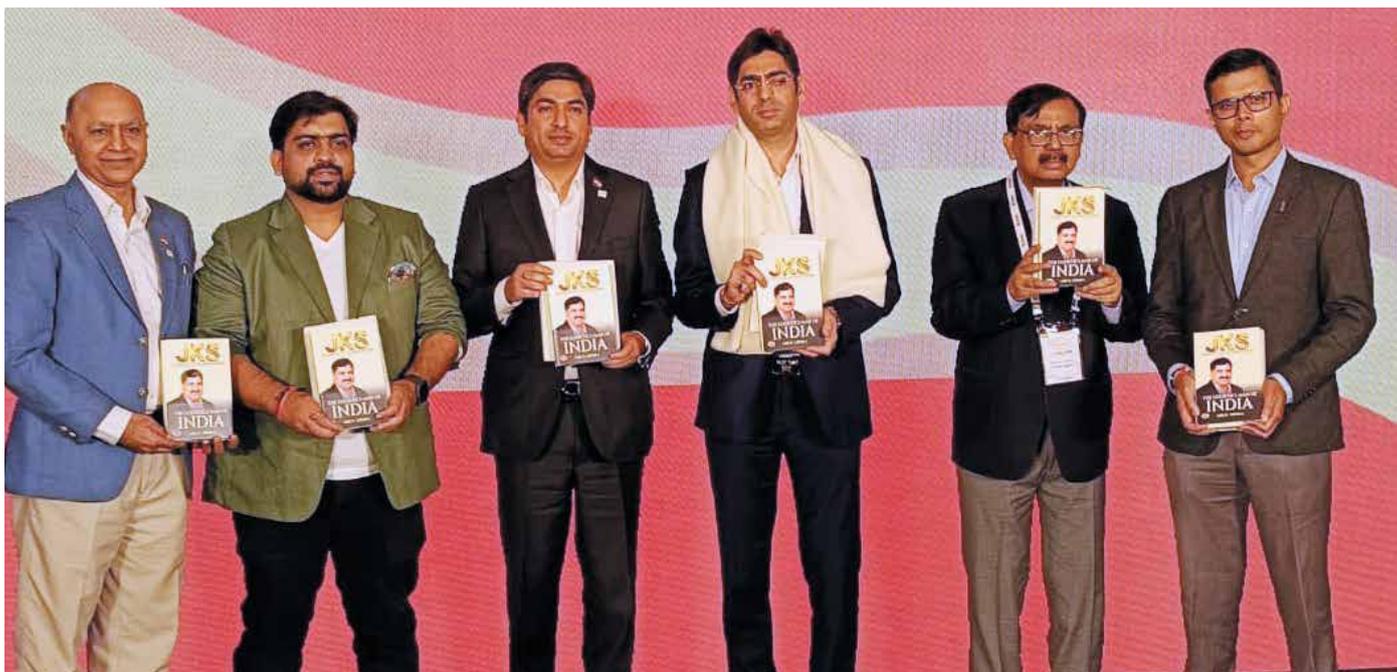
Shri Jai Karan Sharma, Founder Chairman, Chetak Group was conferred with the title of “**THE LOGISTICS MAN OF INDIA**” at the Economic Times (ET Auto) Commercial Vehicle and Logistics Conclave 2024 on 15th March in Mumbai. The award, recognising his outstanding contribution to the logistics sector was given away by Deepanshu Taumar, Co-founder and Senior Editor, ET Auto and Sumantra Bibhuti Barooah, Consulting Editor, ET Auto. The award was received by Rajesh Haritash and Sachin Haritash, Directors Chetak Logistics, in the presence of Arun Arora, Head and Director Chetak Foundation and Madhurendra Sinha, Member Advisory Board, Chetak Foundation.

Speaking on the occasion Deepanshu Taumar, Co-Founder and Senior Editor ET Auto said, “**We are proud to confer the title of The Logistics Man of India upon late Shri Jai Karan Sharma recognising his pioneering work, his contributions & outstanding accomplishments in Logistics. He brought Logistics to the national mainstream, establishing Logistics as a growth engine for India’s economy. I was happy to hand over the award to his sons who are taking his legacy forward,**

bringing innovative practices and technology and customer experience to the sector.”

The third edition of The Economic Times Commercial Vehicle and Logistics Conclave explored the industry’s pace, trends, and future outlook. Stakeholders, including policymakers, industry leaders, and logistics professionals participated to discuss disruptive solutions, emerging trends, and the sector’s evolving role in the global economic value chain. The conclave delved into how companies are leveraging digitization, deploying sustainable transport solutions, and embracing connected technology to redefine operations and usher in more efficiency to this dynamic landscape.

Sachin JKS haritasH, Director of Chetak Logistics and youngest son of Shri Jai Karan Sharma said, “**We are humbled to receive ‘The Logistics Man of India’ award for our father at The Economic Times CV and Logistics Conclave 2024, a prestigious Industry Forum for the sector. He was among the pioneers in logistics who brought in the latest in technology, innovative practices and customer orientation. His entrepreneurial journey, his passion, tribulations and his triumphs continue to inspire the industry. We thank The**



KS – The Logistics Man of India, the book authored by Arun Arora was released

Economic Times (ET Auto) for bestowing this honour upon our father. We commit to work hard and take our father’s legacy forward and aim to grow Chetak Group and the industry with best practices in sustainable logistics.”

The recognition was followed by an enriching panel discussion on, “How India can be among the top 25 global logistics hubs?” Sachin JKS haritash Director Chetak Logistics shared his perspective on the theme, in the presence of renowned fellow panellists from the Commercial Vehicles and Logistics Industry.

The event also witnessed the release of a biography on the life of Shri Jai Karan Sharma. Titled **JKS – The Logistics Man of India**, the book authored by **Arun Arora** was released by Deepanshu Taumar, Sumantra Barooah in the presence of Rajesh Haritash, Sachin Haritash, Arun Arora and Madhurendra Sinha. The book captured the life journey of the self-made entrepreneur Shri Sharma highlighting his successes, struggles, tribulations and triumphs which aspires to inspire the future generations. The book was earlier released by Shri Anurag Thakur, Hon’ble Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Youth Affairs and Sports and Shri Brijesh Pathak, Hon’ble Deputy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.

Shri Jai Karan Sharma, the son of a farmer, hailing from Jhijnjar, a small village in Haryana was a self-made entrepreneur who started from scratch and went on to build the Chetak Group, one of the leaders in Logistics, in India. His success sparked the imagination of a generation of progressive Indian entrepreneurs. He was a business statesman and visionary who introduced, what is now called Integrated Logistics solutions with multi-modal transportation, warehousing, packaging and just-in-time solutions, and way back in the 1980s.

He stood for inclusive growth. He supported numerous potential entrepreneurs in setting up their own transport companies. He created livelihood opportunities for thousands of people. He had a passion for helping underprivileged people of the society. He contributed to the education sector by supporting the infrastructure development of schools and colleges for

economically weaker children.

Established in 1979, Chetak Group takes pride in its long-range strategy of providing comprehensive logistics solutions to its customers. Equipped with its own 2 million sq. ft modern warehousing facilities across India, the Group provides Total Supply Chain Solutions, including Transportation Services through all modes, Warehousing & Distribution, International Freight Forwarding, Customs Clearance & Logistics Services.

Shri Sharma’s contributions to the social and economic development of society at large have been numerous recognised by many national and international organisations. In the past he was awarded the “Transport Rattan” the “Rashtriya Udyog Ratan” Award, “Outstanding National Citizen” and he was also bestowed with the title of “Transport Samraat” and the “Udyog Rattan” Award by the Institute of Economic Studies.

He left for his heavenly abode in October 2020. Posthumously, the Logistics Industry bestowed him the title of “The Logistics man of India” in 2021. Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Hon’ble Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of the North-Eastern Region, released a postal Stamp issued by the Indian Postal Department to honour and recognise Shri Sharma’s contribution to the nation’s socio-economic development, in 2022. He was also honoured with the “Life Time Achievement Award” at the Social Impact Award in Jan 2023. Shri Nitin Gadkari, Hon’ble Minister for Road Transport and Highways, released a biographical book capturing the life journey of Shri Sharma in Hindi and Shri Brijesh Pathak, Dy Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Shri Anurag Thakur, Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Youth Affairs and Sport released his biography in English in early this year.

His dream lives on, through the Chetak Foundation, a social arm of Chetak Group, set up by his family as a tribute to its founder Late Shri Jai Karan Sharma’s vision of making a positive impact on the lives of underprivileged communities. The Foundation is focussing on various areas including Education, Environment, Health, Livelihood, Nutrition and Road Safety. **BI**

FHRAI Hosts Travel for Life Tourism Sustainability Summit 2024

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), the world's 3rd largest association announces the successful culmination of a one-day event "Travel for Life - Tourism Sustainability Summit 2024" held at Hotel Le-Meridien, New Delhi, on March 8, 2024. This initiative was organized with the support of Ministry of Tourism which aims to bring large-scale behavioural change amongst tourists and tourism businesses, significantly impacting environmental protection and climate action.

FHRAI is the apex body of the Indian hospitality industry, representing hotels, restaurants, and hospitality establishments across the country. It works towards promoting the growth and development of the hospitality sector while advocating for sustainable practices and industry standards.

FHRAI forged strategic partnerships and signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with key stakeholders, during the Summit to drive sustainable initiatives within the industry. Noteworthy collaborations include an MoU between FHRAI and the Indian Plumbing Association (IPA), aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange and joint initiatives for water conservation and sustainable plumbing practices in hotels and restaurants. FHRAI announced another partnership with the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) to further its commitment towards sustainable development in the built environment. The collaboration seeks to enable India to become a global leader in sustainable building practices by 2025.

The event was also graced by esteemed dignitaries, including "Special Guest" Mr Yugal Joshi, Mission Director of Life & Adviser, Water, Land Resources, and Communication at NITI Aayog, Government of India, and "Chief Guest" Mr Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa and Former CEO of NITI Aayog, Government of India. The summit aligns with the Ministry of Tourism's vision to promote environmental protection and climate action through responsible tourism. With the theme 'Travel for Life', the event was aimed to bring a shift in the mindset of tourists and tourism businesses towards sustainable practices.

"I'm truly delighted that sustainability and Travel For Life is the theme of the FHRAI conference this year. As India charts its path towards sustainable growth, it's evident that tourism will play a pivotal role in shaping our future. With the potential to create 25 million new jobs in the coming years, tourism not only drives economic prosperity but also presents a unique opportunity for India to lead the way in decarbonization. Despite our low per capita consumption, we must proactively address the looming challenge of greenhouse gas emissions. India's commitment to decarbonization is not just a necessity but a responsibility as we strive to build a greener and more resilient future for generations to come" said Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa and Former CEO, of NITI Aayog, Government of India.



Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Pradeep Shetty, President of FHRAI**, expressed his enthusiasm for the summit's success and emphasized the importance of collective action towards sustainability. He stated,

"As stewards of the hospitality industry, we recognize that sustainability isn't just a concept—it's a powerful force for transformation. By embracing sustainable practices throughout our operations, businesses can not only ensure their long-term success but also play a vital role in fostering a healthier planet and delivering truly enriching experiences for our guests. These partnerships are aimed to drive collaborative action to enable the hospitality industry to have a lasting positive impact on our planet and its people. The time for action is now, and it's within the hospitality sector that we find the potential to lead the charge towards a more sustainable future".

In a special interaction with BI correspondent, **Mr. Jaison Chacko, Secretary General at FHRAI** delightfully explained about the 'Travel For Life' Initiative and said,

"Travel for Life is an initiative launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2023 for promoting sustainability in tourism. So taking this mandate of tourism ministry forward, we have come together with the Phd chamber and HIA, so that the message of sustainability has to be taken out to the farthest and also to each and every member where we represent our members of the hospitality segment. Tourism is being a very important sector that is contributing to national GDP and in employment generation also... In India, there is a lot more to be done with respect to sustainability practices. So we, as the premier apex chamber from the hospitality industry, wants to make it as a mandate for ourselves and also for our members to act, introduce a paradigm shift in the way we do our businesses and heralding change in the way our people enter into the business. So the concept of this summit is revolving around this theme."

FHRAI extends its gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism, its hospitality partner, The Fern Resorts, and technology partner, Urzza, for their invaluable support in making the summit a resounding success. **BI**



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People, Politics, Purpose



by Vibha Gurtu

I have been a student, a student who lives in awe to experience and learn from the wonders of the world, a student who is not seeking but living in the moment. I come from a family of journalists since 1860, the family which owned newspapers in Lahore of the Undivided India, MitraVilas in Hindi and Akbar-I-Am in Urdu. As a result, conversations at home revolved around mostly the social and world issues, their solutions, facts and myths, people and politics and so on. I got my first lessons on politics through these deep conversations, arguments and debates at home. I understood that Politics is a profession which revolves around needs and wants of the people and the underlying mission to bring about growth and prosperity for all.

I must mention here that as far back as my memory takes me, my brother & I were religiously taught the ‘Gita Saar’ (essence of the holy book, the Gita). My aunt, who had memorized ‘The Bhagwad Gita’ all its 18 adhyays (Chapters) in 18 days was our teacher. She would make us stand erect, in saavdhaan (attention) position and recite it from beginning to end, everyday. Even though I did not much understand it then, the soul (aatma) understood beyond the words that we uttered.

Krishna, the eight avatar of Vishnu, who we know as the naughty child, a lover, a prince, a king, and the saviour of justice, spoke about living in the moment, to fulfil the karma, to fight for the right besides understanding that Change is constant and permanent. He taught us that Action is the key to Live and to Surrender to the Almighty is the ultimate Faith. In the 18 chapters of the Gita, Krishna talks about the understanding of the individual and the Cosmos. He lays down the code for responsible Dharma (duties) of the individual that

must lead to elevate the Collective Consciousness of the society through responsible living.

It is time again for electing a government for ourselves, for choosing our leaders for the next 5 years. In fact, 64 countries around the world, representing half of its population, will elect their leaders in 2024. It is time, therefore, to fall back on Krishna’s message of fulfilling collective consciousness through rightful living as an individual. It is appropriate to say that making the right choice towards the larger good of the society through mindful decision making is following Krishna’s message in letter and spirit.

Speaking specifically for the people of India this is the biggest exercise of human existence that amplifies the spirit of collective consciousness. Let us fulfil it with responsibility. “Remember, Democracy is defined as a Govt. of the People, by the People, for the People” **BI**

About Author

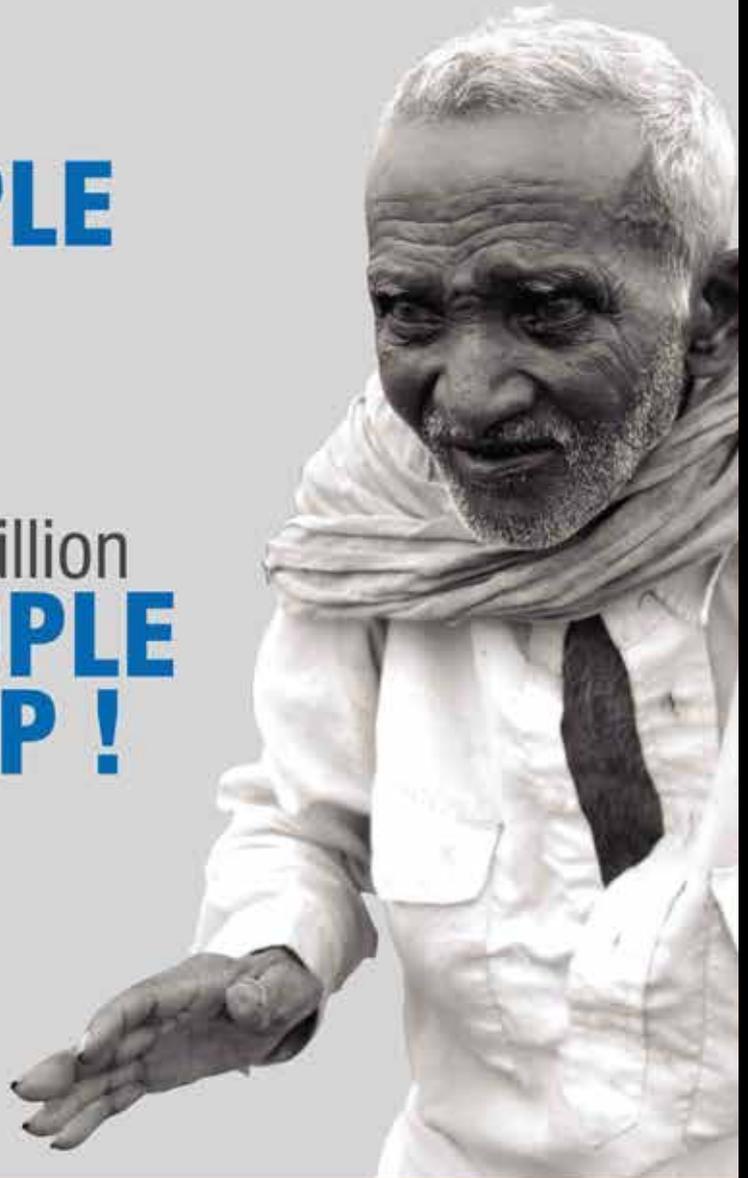


Vibha is an author, a practitioner and facilitator of Shamanism and an intuitive healer. Trained in reiki, pranic healing, hypnotherapy, tarot card reading and others, she founded Aumtara, a spiritual hub, in New Delhi. Vibha is a spiritual guide, talk therapist and an image consultant. She uses her learning and experience to create inner and outer balance. Vibha assists people to break repetitive patterns to achieve life goals through clarity. She provides holistic healing to bring a shift internally in thoughts and externally with behaviour and appearance. She has conducted numerous workshops on image makeover, relationships and empowerment at individual and corporate levels.

To learn more, visit www.vibhagurtu.com

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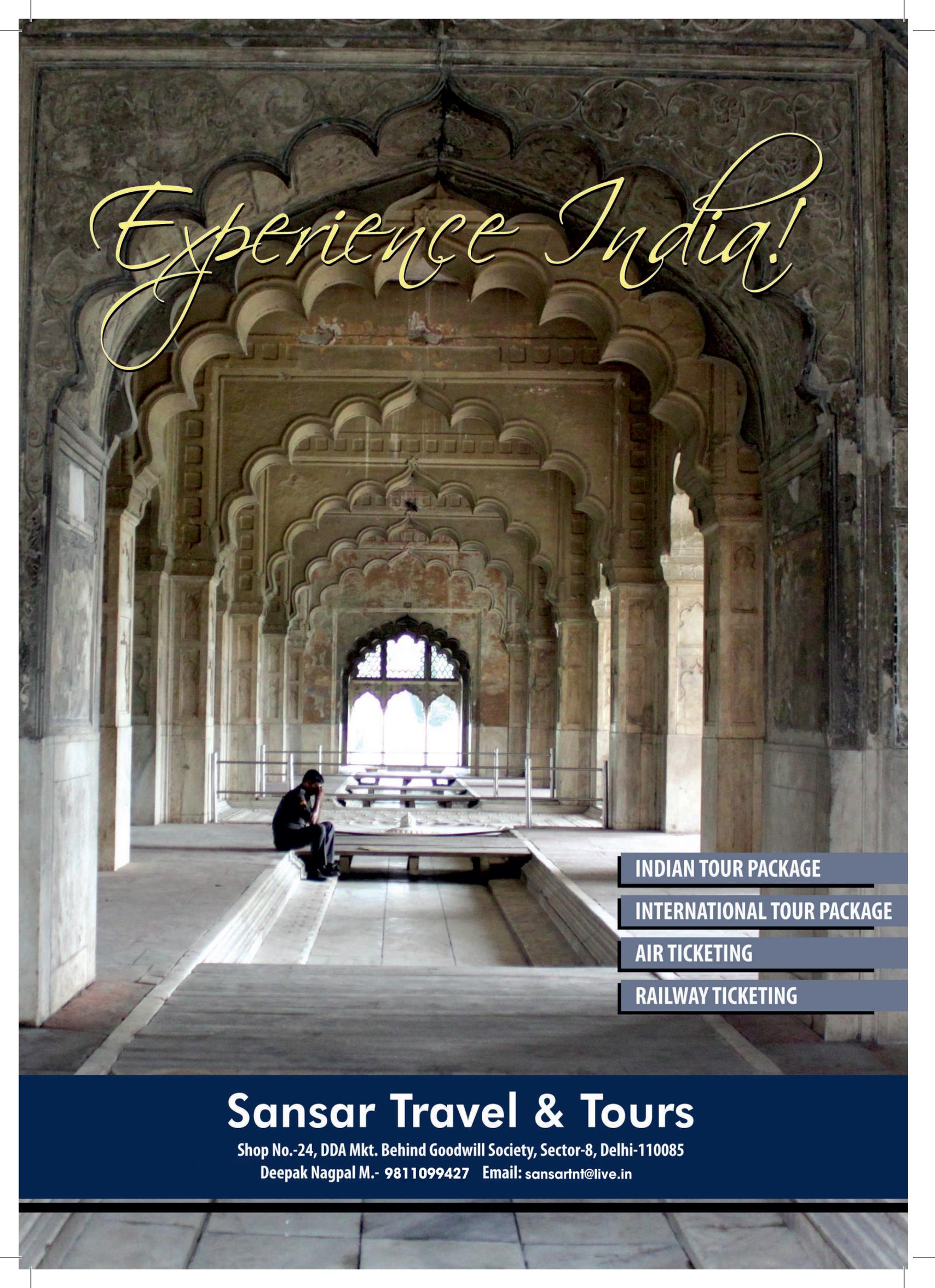
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