

## Repeat tourists coming back to India

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A few years ago during a conference in Jordan, one Indian delegate said to the audience, "You know that Indians who speak fluent English are more than the population of England and USA citizens," and at another conference, an official said, "India and China is the world factory." More and more, India is considered the number one country in the world in regards to Information Technology

The huge population and big land area makes India an incredible and great country, and all eyes around the world are looking to India from many views, but in general, Indians are kind people, hard workers, and hospitable to their guests. Even they say that the guest is protected by God; in general, India and its people deserve the best.

We, at Islamic Tourism are looking at and interested in the travel and tourism industry in India, and during ITB Berlin, we had the chance to talk to Mr. M. N. Javed, regional director of India Tourism in Europe, and CIS countries, in

his office in the second floor of India stand at Hall 5.2.

**ITM: What about the new visa restriction ( the gap of two months) for European and American tourists; do you think it's an issue?**

M. N. Javed: I want to clarify that the gap of two months it managed, the counselor general of India or the Visa officer is in power to give exception, and we have asked all tour operators in Europe that if you have a group going to Nipal, or Srilanka or other destination and then come back to India, just give your itinerary for the trip in your letter head showing the package



that they will return, then the embassy will issue a multiple entry visa.

**ITM:** Specifically, to the European and CIS, what about the Russian market, and what are Russian tourists looking for - luxury tours or budget tours - and are they coming for beaches or for culture tours?

Javed: The Russian market is growing and becoming one of our biggest markets now. We got more than 90,000 tourists from Russia last year, and I expect the numbers are still growing. In fact, we have both luxury and medium class. We are still not looking for the economy tourists, however, slowly more charter flights are coming, and we will have that problem. Tourists from Russia [have been] coming to India for years, traveling all over India. Now the destination for tourists from Russia is Goa; others are going to Kerala and Rajasthan.

**ITM:** For Goa, there was a security issue; does that make it a little challenge for travelers?

Javed: Not really, there are certain issues that happened in the world and, fine, it happened in Goa also. We are not looking to it as a

security issue, we are looking to ensure that what happened [will] not to be repeated again. We have tightened security. The society in India is very closed and due to the large quantity of tourists and the mix of people coming from all [over] the world, we have to be very careful the government of Goa is also careful that this accident is not going to happen again.

**ITM:** Some countries like Brazil established a hot phone number. If anyone reports issues like this, will the police act?

Javed: In fact, this happened around the world, but in India, for example, if you go between Delhi and Agra, which is 200 kilometers, you will see in each small village, a police station, and they are available and visible and ready.

**ITM:** During the show here in ITB, you have some fantastic adventure components - some India exhibitors are offering sky diving tours, others are offering balloon tours - is adventure travel becoming a major component in India?

Javed: Adventure has been a major component in India for years; numbers coming for

adventure are not large. One of the things [is] that adventure travel is very expensive; there are many components of security and safety the agent has to prepare. For example, if we need a helicopter to pick somebody [up], that does not happen in India - only rich people can afford [this]; the packages are expensive, also insurance is expensive. However, tourists are coming again for another trip; we are on track and moving.

**ITM: What do you think is the percentage of European tourists who have returned to India another time?**

Javed: Our national percentage

average is 42 percent [of] people coming to India are repeat visitors. We still feel that many did not come to India, and those are my target - to let them come; I want them to go to India.

**ITM: How are you promoting India?**

Javed: It's normal; like other promotions, we go for direct advertisement for hospitality, public relations, and we sponsor cultural events, which helps in talking the brand and the "incredible." We have done a lot of outdoor promoting of "Incredible India."

**ITM: Thanks and wishing you good luck with the show.**

