

## Golf Tourism – Harbinger for Economic Growth : PHDCCI

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PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PHDCCI) organized the 3rd edition of PHD Golf Tourism Conclave and Tournament from 12-13 December 2019 in Jaipur, Rajasthan with a focus to make 'India: The Next World Golf Tourism Hub'. PHD Golf Tourism Conclave was held on 12 December 2019 at Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre and brought on one platform all the relevant stakeholders- the Government and the private sector to discuss issues and opportunities for promotion of Golf Tourism in India. The Inaugural Session was graced by H.E. Chung Kwang Tien, Ambassador, Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India; Vinod Zutshi (Retd. IAS), Former Secretary - Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Dr. Manisha Arora, Additional Director - Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan. Also present from PHDCCI were Anil Khaitan, Former President; Digvijay Dhabriya, Chairman - Rajasthan State Chapter; Rajan Sehgal, Co-Chairman - Tourism Committee; Suneel Dutt Goyal, Co-Chairman - Rajasthan State Chapter; and Dr. Jatinder Singh, Director.

While welcoming the delegates, Anil Khaitan, Former President, PHDCCI, said that the emerging trend of playing golf among the youth has motivated the government and private players to improve infrastructure, including golf courses of international standards and trained manpower. He further said that with Golf becoming a growing sport worldwide, there are immense opportunities for the growth of Golf Tourism in India. H.E. Chung Kwang Tien, Ambassador, Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, gave a detailed presentation on the golf courses in Taiwan and invited all the stakeholders to experience the destination.

Vinod Zutshi (Retd. IAS), Former Secretary - Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "It has been observed that golf-linked tourists possess a higher purchasing power and spend more than the regular

visitors. High profile golf events like U.S. PGA should be organized in India to attract domestic and international tourists and golf enthusiasts from all over the world.” Rajan Sehgal, President, India Golf Tourism Association, informed that Golf Tourism is growing at 9.3% year on year and about 1.6 million people travel for Golf Tourism every year. During the Conclave, a Knowledge Report was also released by PHDCCI and Auctus Advisors titled ‘India: The Next World Golf Tourism Hub’ which highlights the scope and opportunities towards developing Golf Tourism in India.

A Panel Discussion on ‘Developing an integrated Golf Tourism strategy for India’ was also organized which was moderated by Rajan Sehgal, President, IGTA & Co-Chairman- Tourism Committee, PHDCCI. The panelists included Vinod Zutshi (Retd. IAS), Former Secretary - Ministry of Tourism, Government of India; Isra Stapanaseth, Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand - New Delhi Office; Bhim Singh, Chairman - Rajasthan Chapter, Indian Association of Tour Operators; Deepali Shah Gandhi, President, Golf Industry Association; Kunal Singh, Member, Rambagh Golf Club; Greesh Bindra, Vice President - Operations, The Suryaa New Delhi; and Ankit Garg, Principal, Auctus Advisors.

The subject was passionately discussed by the panelists, who sought for various interventions from the government like accessibility, so that this sector progresses by leaps and bounds. As Indian golfers ascend new heights, the popularity of the sport is bound to improve and appeal to larger section of the country. PHD Golf Tournament was organized on 13 December 2019 at Rambagh Golf Club, Jaipur. The Tournament saw the participation of over 80 golfers from all over the country, besides some local golfers from Rajasthan.

Meenakshi Sharma (IA & AS), Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, graced occasion as the Chief Guest and welcomed all the avid golfers from all across India. She said, “Golf Tourism has the potential to significantly increase the foreign exchange earnings from tourism. While a large share of this is captured by few countries like the USA and Japan, many other countries, especially developing ones are investing heavily on Golf Tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India endeavors to work as a catalyst and active supporter for the development of Golf Tourism in the country.”

The Rambagh Golf Course proved a challenge even for most of the experienced golfers. The winners of the tournament were:

- Overall Winner - Col. S. K. Lakra
- Runner Up - Shantanu Sangi
- Lady Winner - H.E. Yih Jiun, Tien Chen
- Closest to Pin - Niraj Lakhi
- Longest Drive - Haider Ali
- Straightest Drive - Jeetu Bhatnagar

All the Winners were given Hotel and Airline Vouchers from Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and Tourism Authority of Thailand. The Golfers appreciated the efforts made by PHDCCI for organizing Golf Tourism Conclave & Tournament.

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