

The pandemic will enable the young leaders to make their careers in a robust & an enterprising ecosystem

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Covid-19 pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis in the tourism ecosystem; giving immense shock to the sectors of travel, aviation and hospitality. However, the crisis presents an opportunity to rethink the tourism ecosystem for a more sustainable and resilient future. Tourism and Hospitality sector will have to reinvent itself in what will be a 'New Normal', requiring a complete transformation.

With this objective, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized the 4th edition of National Talent Competition in Tourism & Hospitality Sector with the theme Re-packaging Tourism and Hospitality for 'New Normal' from 19-20 August 2020.

18 Teams consisting of Students from 12 Tourism and Hospitality Management Institutes from all over the country took part in the Competition and highlighted strategies towards the recovery of this sector while encouraging new business models, embracing digitalization, and meeting the safety demands of the guests.

Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Culture, Government of India, in his deliberation mentioned that the tourism sector has faced severe challenges due to the pandemic but this pandemic has also opened new opportunities for development and getting all the stakeholders together to fight against this situation.

Encouraging the Students, the Minister said that this crisis will bring about a change for the better and the young leaders will be making their careers in a much stronger, robust and an enterprising ecosystem.

Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel mentioned that under the guidance and support of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, we have been able to give some help to the industry in the best way possible. We have been able to open all the monuments, hotels and soon we will be able to open the banquet halls in half capacity. We have been able to revive the air travel to a certain extent and we will continue to increase it.

The tourism industry is a pivotal sector for the development of the economy, said Mr. Prahlad Singh Patel. We have immense opportunities to increase Wellness Tourism in the country. We need to hand-hold and collaborate so that the tourism industry bounces back more smoothly.

Mr. Suman Billa (IAS), Director - Technical Cooperation & Silk Road Development, UNWTO, deliberated about the challenges faced in the tourism sector due to the pandemic and mentioned that globally, there will be fewer travellers this year due to which there will be a reduction in tourism revenue. This will have an adverse effect on the job markets as well. We can estimate that it will take 2-3 years for the global economy to bounce back.

The tourism sector needs to have strong and robust safety and hygiene protocols in place to ensure that tourists can travel with minimum risks. It's important to kill the anxiety in the mind of tourists and gain their confidence, said Mr. Billa.

Talking about the role of technology, he mentioned that we need to assimilate technology in the hospitality sector at the same time, ensure that the hospitality experience is still in place. For India, the tourism and hospitality sector will see three phases that are survival phase; revival phase and thrive phase.

Ms. Rupinder Brar (IRS), Additional Director General - Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said that the Covid-19 pandemic has allowed us to think out of the box, to look back into our life existence, question a few things that went wrong and bring certain practices into our lives. This program being organized by PHD Chamber presents a great opportunity for young minds to think through the crisis, suggest business solutions, and realign the industry with the new norms. She also asked the students to come up with innovative ideas on how to promote Incredible India to Indians and people overseas.

Mr. Sanjay Aggarwal, Senior Vice President, PHDCCI, lauded the steps undertaken by the government to provide significant cushion to the tourism and hospitality sector in these tough times of the pandemic to aid their revival, growth and contribution towards economic growth.

The government needs to take more steps to ensure that destination communities are comfortable and

that the benefits associated with the return of visitors outweigh any concerns over the potential health risks, said Mr. Aggarwal.

Mr. Aggarwal highlighted the need for creating a robust and sustainable eco-system for skill development for budding tourism and hospitality professionals in the country so that they can adapt to the changing demands of the industry.

Mr. K B Kachru, Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor - South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said that the tourism industry was the first which saw a complete shutdown in the very first months of the lockdown, but this industry is known for bouncing back and will continue to evolve in the years to come. The key solution is that we re-imagine, re-invent, re-align, and re-package our offerings, whether it is operations or guest expectations.

Talking about the trends of travel in the recovery phase, Mr. Vinay Malhotra, Regional Group COO - South Asia, Middle East & North Africa and Americas, VFS Global, pointed out that traveling to new places will still be on the traveler's bucket lists; luxury travel will thrive since it offers an extra element of safety and exclusivity; adventure travelers will continue to explore outdoors, and health in addition to safety and security would be amongst the new norms.

The Winners of the Competition were evaluated by a distinguished panel of Jury Members that included Mr. Vinod Zutshi (Retd. IAS), Former Secretary - Tourism, Government of India; Mr. Rajan Bahadur, CEO, Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council; Mr. Anil Parashar, President and CEO, InterGlobe Technology Quotient; Ms. Divia Thani, Editor, Conde Nast Traveller; and Mr. Kush Kapoor, Chief Executive Officer, Roseate Hotels & Resorts.

Addressing the Participants, Mr. Vinod Zutshi (Retd. IAS), Former Secretary - Tourism, Government of India, who was also the Jury Chairman for the Competition, said that the 'takeaways' from this event is of great utility for the knowledge and sensitization of students and young professionals for acquiring required skill sets and talents.

Garware Institute of Career Education & Development, University of Mumbai represented by Ms. Rinali Parmar and Ms. Simran Thakur was adjudged as the Winner of the Competition. Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration (WGSHA), Manipal represented by Ms. Kavya Kotekal and Ms. Nikita Singh and International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM), Delhi represented by Mr. Nipun Banerjee and Ms. Rupali Joshi were the 1st and the 2nd Runners-Up respectively. Ms. Niranjani. B from Avinashilingam University, Tamil Nadu was selected as the 'Best Budding Manager' among all the participants. All the Winners were awarded Cash Prizes, Trophies, and Certificates. The Cash Prizes were supported by the Travel Agents Association of India, Northern Region.

Ms. Radha Bhatia, Chairperson – Tourism Committee, PHDCCI, in her address spoke about the importance of skill in the education field. She said that tourism has a great capacity to create large scale employment and the generation of massive productive employment opportunities is what India needs the most. She also highlighted how education and skill development can help boost the quality of the tourism and hospitality industry in the country.

Mr. Rajan Sehgal, Co-Chairman – Tourism Committee, PHDCCI, said that this Competition will help the corporates for retention of the young talent pool and at the same time provide a unique opportunity to the budding Managers to demonstrate their creativity and professional prowess.

Mr. Saurabh Sanyal, Secretary General, PHDCCI, delivered the formal vote of thanks, where he expressed his gratitude to the eminent dignitaries and said that PHD Chamber will continue to organize such programs to bring the best out of best talent to the fore.

The webinar was moderated by Dr. Jatinder Singh, Director, PHDCCI, and received a participation of more than 150 participants.

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