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40th Skal Asia Congress ponders over tourism-related issues

The recently concluded 40th Skal Asia Congress in New Delhi provided an opportunity for top professionals of the Delhi's travel and tourism fraternity to interact and network with their counterparts from other countries of Asia.



The 40th Skal Asia Congress, held in New Delhi from March 31 – April 2, saw the participation of over 100 international delegates, local members and top officials of Skal Asia including Skal International president **Tony Boyle**, vice president **Mok Singh**, Skal Asia president **Gerald Perez** and Delhi chief minister **Sheila Dikshit** among others.

Addressing the congress, Dikshit highlighted the fact that tourism was a passion for most Indians. "We are trying to make India the most attractive destination in the world. We are progressing and building a sound infrastructure to offer unforgettable experiences to the visitors," she said adding that India is one of the most exciting countries where each aspect of life, be it culture and festivities, dance, crafts, folklore, paintings and philosophy to its diverse flora and fauna, are given importance." The chief minister sought global expertise for conserving the heritage

of Delhi and the promotion of tourism. She urged Skal to come forward to share their expertise in the conservation efforts of the government in Delhi. "We have everything. But we don't have the expertise to do things. We are ready to provide assistance to those who want to work with us to conserve and promote our heritage," she added. She also informed that the government had upgraded 47 monuments in Delhi out of 150 monuments during the Commonwealth Games 2010.

Speaking on the occasion, RH Khwaja, union tourism secretary, urged Skal to play a key role in promoting responsible and sustainable tourism. He said that India offered a lot of investment opportunities in the field of tourism and Skal delegates could discuss various business propositions during the conference.

JB Singh, president, Skal Delhi Club, said that Skal Delhi had grown from strength to

strength and become the third largest club. "The Congress provides a platform to introduce diverse aspects of our rich heritage and also an opportunity for top players of the tourism fraternity to interact and network with top decision makers of the industry from other parts of the Asian continent," he said adding that hosting a conference of this nature itself brings the city and the destination on the tourism map of the region.

Tony Boyle, president, Skal International, said that Skal was the largest and oldest tourism organization with 20,000 members in 86 countries. "Our motto is doing business among friends," he said. Skal International is also trying to invite young travel professionals to join the Young Skal Club. "No association can survive without the participation of young professionals. Hence, we are encouraging young Indians in the travel trade to join the Young Skal Club," **Gerald SA Perez**, president, Skal Asia, said. "Tourism and

aviation are growing the fastest in Asia and Skal members in India need to discover 'Incredible India' in its true sense, focus on best tourism practices and increase the network of professionals," he added.

The last day of the Congress also saw the re-election of Gerald S.A. Perez as president, Skal Asia Area Committee for 2011-13. Other re-elected members are Praveen Chugh, VP, West Asia; Malcolm Scott, treasurer; Robert Sohn, director of PR & Marketing; Graham Blakey, international councilor and Ivo Nekvapil, secretary. The newly elected members are Marco Giovanni Battistotti, VP, South East Asia; Raymond Tait, VP, East Asia; Jason Samuel, director, Membership Development and P Saravanan, director of Young Skal & Scholarship.

The next Skal Asia Congress will be held in Penang, Malaysia, 10 – 13 May 2012 and Colombo, Sri Lanka will be the venue for the 42nd Asia Congress in 2013. **-MM JHA**