

# Reaching Greater Heights

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With an impeccable track record in the travel industry spanning well over four decades, A Vigneswaramoorthy, Chairman of VMS Group of Companies speaks about his humble beginning and VMS' journey of 25 years enriched by his steadfast guidance.

By Kamalika Jayathilaka

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"I told myself that the only way I can contribute to the travel industry is by opening up my own company. And as such, I started VMS Travels and Tours in 1987 with four staff. Since then, we have never looked back, experiencing steady growth during the past 25 years. Today, we are a successful Group of Companies with international presence," began Vigneswaramoorthy, Chairman/Managing Director of VMS Group of Companies elaborating on the initiation of a successful travel related company in Sri Lanka.

Having begun as a Limited Liability Company, VMS Travels was appointed to represent IATA (International Air Transport Association) as an agent as early as

1989; and subsequently, after the formation of VMS Aviation Air Service, in the early 1990s it was appointed as General Sales Agent for Uzbekistan Airlines in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, which had been one of the major initial achievements of the Company. Today, VMS has a branch office in Toronto Canada, Los Angeles, USA, affiliated offices in the United Kingdom and Singapore and are aspiring to open up offices in other countries in order to promote varieties of new and lucrative tours that will encourage the corporate and individual tourists.

Vigneswaramoorthy, also known as 'Vicky' among those in the travel circle in Sri Lanka, had foremost served at Swiss Air for a period of 18 years as a senior staff member with a successful record. "I was posted as the Country Manager for Swiss Air in Malaysia, I was in charge of the entire Malaysia. In 1987 unfortunately Swiss Air was pulled out of the country, which led me to begin my own establishment," stated Vigneswaramoorthy. While at Swiss Air he had also been a Training Coordinator involved in the training of staff. As a consequence, soon after establishing VMS he had been invited by the IATA Agents Association to lecture students, which he had happily accepted. Vigneswaramoorthy has therefore lectured at the Chamber of Commerce and at the Civil Aviations Center. He is presently a permanent member of the Council of the Travel Agents Association in Sri Lanka and a senior member of the IATA Agents Association of Sri Lanka.

"At VMS we concentrate on training people and we make sure we have a certain standard. Most travel agencies concentrate on offering discounts. We do not do that. We have the know-how, that is why all the airlines have recognised us. It is very difficult for an individual to get an airline, especially government owned ones.

Airlines nowadays do not just look for a building, they now look for professionals to represent them," added Vigneswaramoorthy.

**"We Are Planning Now To Go Into Inbound Travels And Bringing In Tourists Into Colombo As We Have A Conducive Climate In The Country."**

As a result of the hard work and appropriate and intensive training of staff in the most innovative communication methods used globally, VMS Travels and Tours has been taken into the major league in the Travel Industry in Sri Lanka and is today recognised as one of the top 15 travel agents in the country. Their latest achievement is being appointed the representative in Sri Lanka for Cebu Pacific Airlines of Philippines. Cebu Pacific is the largest low cost carrier in Philippines.

Aside from its 19 international destinations, it also has an extensive network across the Philippines with its 32 domestic destinations. VMS Travels and Tours is also currently the General Sales Agent for Ethiopian Airlines.

With their motto 'Caring always', VMS strives in fulfilling the requirements of their clients by providing a satisfactory service, whether it is through issuing and delivering airline tickets, undertaking hotel reservations or handling travel insurance.

"In the 70s we had many reputed international airlines serving our country but around 1983 we started losing all that including the foreign exchange. Presently, with the peace that has emerged in the country more airlines are considering coming back, which means tourism will improve in Sri Lanka," stated the Chairman of VMS stating that tourism is currently flourishing in the country bringing in a host of opportunities for those involved in the Travel and Tourism Sector.

"We are planning now to go into inbound travels and bringing in tourists into Colombo as we have a conducive climate in the country," stated Vigneswaramoorthy speaking on the future plans of VMS. "Once upon a time travelling in a plane was a novelty. But now everyone travels. It is a necessity. Coming from such a background we have made many achievements and it was not easy. There were many challenges that the Company had to overcome to reach this status, but we have no regrets," concluded Vigneswaramoorthy, proud of what VMS has achieved during its successful 25 year journey.