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SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

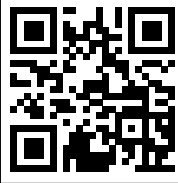
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MOT scheme to boost MICE

To be in effect from April 1, the new Champion Sector scheme initiated by Ministry of Tourism will help boost the MICE sector by reimbursing part of the hotel expenditure incurred for the guest, subject to certain terms and conditions.

Kanchan Nath

For India's tourism ministry, MICE is an important component and a key focus area, says **Rakesh Kumar Verma**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. "India has great opportunities for growing this sector. We have recently launched a Champion Sector scheme to give impetus to MICE tourism. We are

trying to improve our rank and increase the number of meetings happening in the country. The scheme reimburses part of the expenditure on hotel stay by foreigners during the event. We will start this scheme from April 1 this year. Though there are certain conditions, broadly speaking, for the first night's stay, the GST charged on the stay will be reimbursed to the customer," he adds.

The scheme reimburses part of the expenditure on hotel stay by foreigners during the event

To attain the government's target of being a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, Verma says that MICE tourism could play a

crucial role. "We may be growing at 12 per cent and be at the 25th position, but in the next five years, we will want to be in the top 10 or top five; our schemes will have to match that vision," he adds.

Upcoming convention centre
The convention centre in Dwarka will be ready soon and it will be a big advantage for the MICE sector, while offering the op-

portunity to organise more conventions in India. "ITPO is also going in for a refurbishment, which will be a good addition. We are trying to develop these facilities at other locations as well, so that we can have more meetings and MICE events in the country. MICE is also one of the priority sectors in the new tourism policy of 2020; we have a lot of provisions for it," Verma says.



Rakesh Kumar Verma
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

A revival plan for the industry

Trade associations share their recommendations to various ministries, urging them to take necessary steps to revive the tourism industry. Relief on both GST and Income Tax as well as suspension of licence renewal fee have been suggested.



Meenakshi Sharma
DG, Ministry of Tourism

“As an industry, we should start formalising plans for revival once the situation stabilises and is under control. **Tourism stakeholders have made several suggestions on measures that could be taken to keep the confidence of the industry, consumers and stakeholders, which will be considered for taking up with the concerned authorities.** We look forward to everyone's support and assure you of ours in overcoming the situation. The COVID-19 outbreak has affected business and people across the world, and we are doing our best to help our industry.”



Rajiv Mehra
Vice President, IATO

“Our demand is not loan waiver, just a delay on payments as our cash flow will now go down to zero for inbound and substantially decrease for domestic and other segments. If we do not get this support, the tourism industry in the next 45-90 days will find itself unable to pay back loans and the banks will be flooded with NPAs. We will also probably see bankruptcies emerge among many of us. **Interest-free or low interest loans for the tourism sector for rebuilding business and immediate transmission to the industry on term loans and working capital loans will also help revive the industry, as will fast-tracking of all GST refunds.**”

Contd on page 6 ▶

THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY



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TCS deferred till October 1

Ministry of Finance has deferred the implementation of TCS amendments proposed on the sale of overseas tour packages and foreign exchange remittances in the Union Budget 2020-21 till October 1, 2020.

 Manas Dwivedi

In a statement, the Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) has said that the Ministry of Finance has deferred the implementation of TCS amendments proposed in the Union Budget 2020-21 till October 1, 2020. Making amendments in the Finance Bill 2020 before getting it passed in the Lok Sabha, the Finance Minister



decided to defer the implementation of the much talked about TCS provisions to charge five per cent income tax on the sale of overseas tour packages and foreign exchange remittances from the buyer by the virtue of Section 206C under the Income Tax Act.

OTOAI further said it will continue this dialogue and strive for the complete rollback of TCS altogether by highlighting



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

its adverse impact on Indian outbound operators and how it would render them uncompetitive given the competitive landscape which also includes foreign players. OTOAI will keep addressing various issues concerning overseas travel with the respective ministries for the benefit of outbound tour operators as well as association members.


Sharing his view, Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI, said, "First of all, OTOAI would like to thank our Prime Minister for proactively taking action to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We acknowledge that the 21-day lockdown was inevitable and is the

only way to flatten the curve. We would also like to thank the finance ministry for deferring the TCS implementation till October 1. We have surely got interim relief, but our biggest challenge is to get the TCS rolled back. We

 We have surely got interim relief, but our biggest challenge is to get the TCS rolled back 

now have enough time at hand to have a dialogue with the ministry and to let them know the

consequences of the implementation of TCS on remittances."

Munshi added that the implementation of TCS was a losing proposition for all stakeholders, including Government of India. "Its implementation will result in a decline of outbound tourism business which would consequently reduce the amount paid towards GST and income tax to the government by travel companies. We are confident that the ministry would understand our plight and would withdraw TCS on remittances," he said. OTOAI had earlier met tourism and finance ministry officials, and made representations. 

A quick guide to TCS amendments

TCS covers sale of foreign tour packages and remittance under LRS which is not covered under TDS – after crossing threshold of ₹7 lakh per annum. TCS on Foreign Remittance of Education Loan is reduced to 0.5 per cent from 5 per cent. The TCS applicable based on the turnover of 0.1 per cent is exempted for exporters. There is nothing specific other than to follow the rules.



Haridas Bhat
Partner, GMJ & Co

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TCS: Time to rejoice yet?

The Ministry of Finance, before passing the Finance Bill, has deferred the implementation of TCS on outbound remittances till October 1, 2020. All associations together with FAITH, as well as in their individual capacity, had been making several representations to the Ministry of Tourism as well as Ministry of Finance to roll back implementation of Section 206(C) for TCS, which would have made travel packages costlier. The postponement of this amendment on outward remittances does give some relief to tour operators, but the joy is still temporary. Tour operators and travel agents feel that this would give them enough time to convince the government on how the said move would affect their business and would eventually make customers book packages from outside India, where it would be cheaper. While the relief is only interim, the aim for the industry is to get this provision rolled back.

Revival is tough, not impossible

The impact of COVID-19 on all businesses, including that of the travel and tourism industry, has been unprecedented and unexpected. While everything is on hold, especially travel, the industry is waiting for this difficult time to pass and things to normalise soon. However, with every business on a downward trajectory, leisure travel will be the last thing on people's minds, except if someone needs to travel for business. While the Prime Minister has announced the lockdown of the entire country for three weeks, various associations and companies are devising revival plans for getting back to business and look at new ways to work with their teams. The only upside in this scenario is the digital boom, and how companies are using different online platforms and applications to aid their staff to work from home efficiently. On the other hand, there are companies facing a cash crunch amid cancellations, and are even unable to pay their staff on time. In such a scenario, help from the government is needed, and associations are getting ready with their plans to request the government for longer-term relief than given, to come out of this situation faster.

Strengthen human capital

Investing in your workforce is not only great for the individual, but is also beneficial for the organisation. Many of the ideas mentioned in the column won't cost much to get started and will make a difference in the lives of the workforce.

A few years back, I remember being part of Ministry of Tourism's inception as an inbound tour operator. During my visit, out of curiosity, I asked the Director of the company, "How much do you invest in your team?" He looked at me with silence and after a moment, replied, "Sir, what happens if we invest in developing our people and they leave the organisation?" His statement left me in a dilemma. We often forget that the most effective HR and management practices aren't incidental, they are linked to company value.

The future that we are looking at is intended to be more challenging, competitive and digital.

Benefits of investing in the team
More than 60 per cent of the workforce expects career development in their organisation. The benefits mentioned below demonstrate why it's important to invest in a human capital development plan to get the most out of your workforce.

❖ **Enhance employee satisfaction:** Investing in professional and skill development for your team can lead to greater job satisfaction. As per international research, 48 per cent of team members have said that their organisation's initiative to professional development is 'most important to their job satisfaction'. The priority is to care for

leads them to look for another job. These figures prove the importance of career growth. The workforce that has been receiving professional education, skill development, and reasonable remuneration is less likely to look at other job opportunities.

❖ **Enhance team engagement:** Enhancing employee engagement is a priority of every SMTO. Engaged employees would be more productive and more loyal to the organisation. Investing in employee development will lead to the growth of employee engagement. Employee career advancement opportunities and investment in their individual development give them a reason

ing the salary is like investing in social media campaigns and not reaching the right audience, which will be an awful investment for the organisation. The right way is to invest in the employees to maximise the return

🔥 *If you're not investing in your team members, you're not investing in cementing the future; in return, they will take care of your business* 🔥

on human capital. Motivate your employees by offering opportunities for growth, skill development, and learning; it will surely improve your bottom line.

❖ **Improve organisational communication:** Investing in the team can work to better communication by improving the quantity and quality of the information transmitted inside the organisation. It also helps in building better communication between owner/senior and subordinate.

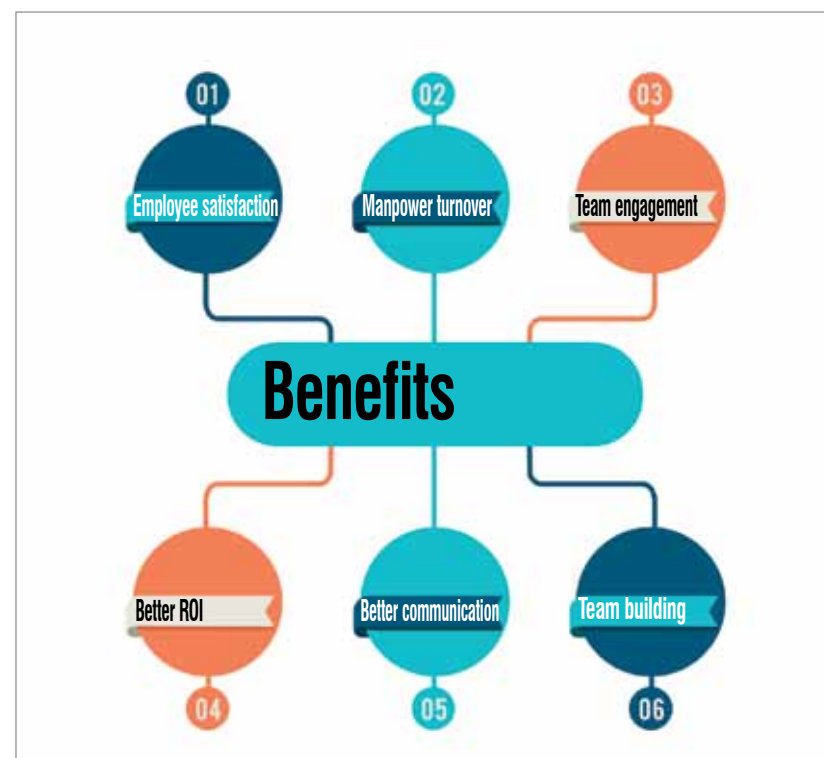
❖ **Team building:** This is another great way of investing in your team. The Gallup Analytics mention that close friendship at the workplace increases employee satisfaction level by 50 per cent, and people with a best friend at work are four times more likely to engage fully in their work.

Investing in your workforce will help to develop loyalty towards your business.

(The views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



Zia Siddiqui
MD, Alliance Hotels & Resorts



If you're not investing in your team members, you're not investing in cementing the future of your business. It is important to understand that an investment in your team can range from individual development to financial incentives, to sponsor the motivational workshop, to activities that bring happiness and positive thought. The ultimate aim is that organisations need to show genuine care towards its employees and in return, they will take care of your business.

your employees and in turn, they will give their best performance that will benefit the business.

❖ **Improve manpower turnover:** Research proves that 54 per cent of the workforce is concerned about their career advancement opportunities with salary increments, while looking for another job. Another report states that 44 per cent of workforce has mentioned a lack of opportunity for growth and advancement as a major reason for work stress that

to be engaged at work. Ideally, SMTO should ask its workforce in what area they want to develop and then offer opportunities in those particular areas. Personalise your development opportunities to engage your employees at their best.

❖ **Better ROI:** Every organisation invests in its human capital. Whether they understand it or not, employee salaries, benefits and perks are all part of an investment. Investing and not pay-



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Be ready to adapt to changes

Titlis Cableways is currently on standby and is awaiting a go-ahead from the Swiss federal office to resume business. It hopes that they will recognise the importance of the tourism industry and work out a plan that helps mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the sector.



Rayomand Choksi
Regional Director
Titlis Cableways



Hazel Jain

In this line of work, says **Rayomand Choksi**, Regional Director, Titlis Cableways, one needs a lot of different job skills and sets. "Too often we find someone working inside a box and unable to handle anything outside that box. It is our responsibility to instil in them the confidence to search and learn for solutions. It is impossible for everybody to know everything, but knowledge of how to source the information is equally important. Ask and you shall find. It is an industry where inter-personal relationships are important and finally, commitment and timely communication is of the essence. Training also plays a very important part," he says.

Towards this, Titlis Cableways has collaborated with external companies to impart different skill courses and everybody from the Managing Director downwards has to undergo

We hope the government recognises the importance of this industry and supports it to make its effect as soft as possible

them. The company also encourages 'your day' in which they can assign themselves to tag along with somebody in another job function to understand their difficulties. So, a driver can accompany a ski-instructor for a day or see how the chef works.

For the trade, the Swiss Travel System conducts seminars along with Switzerland Tourism

in around 15 cities in India every year. "We try and make it personally for a few, but in any case our product is included in their teaching modules," Choksi adds.

The current situation in Switzerland is all based on the instructions received from the federal

government. "Based on that, we are closed for business till the end of April. All staff who can work from home is doing so. The others are on paid leave. Since most of our staff is from other parts of Switzerland and Europe, they have all gone home," Choksi shares, adding,

"Meanwhile, we are all on standby and have to await the okay from the Swiss federal office to resume business. We know that the okay, even when it comes, will be with certain restrictions. We have to be ready to adapt to these conditions. So whilst we are ready, we do not know how

ready we can be. The revival will be gradual. A holiday is far from everybody's mind right now. We hope that this industry is able to stand on its feet soon. I am sure many companies are hit badly and may even close down, and many will have to downsize. We hope the government recognises

the importance of this industry and supports it to make its effect as soft as possible," he adds.



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Shanghai Disney has taken the first steps towards reopening the resort after temporarily shutting in late January. It has opened limited shopping, dining and recreational experiences, but not the actual Shanghai Disneyland theme park.

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More relief will go a long way

► Contd from page 1



Riaz Munshi
President, OTOAI

“The travel industry is the worst hit. In a bid to help the industry revive, we have demanded a number of steps from the government. The first and foremost is to roll back the TCS. Another ‘tax’ing issue is GST and the way forward would be to suspend it for a year. The industry will also benefit from zero income tax complemented with some rebate for a year. **Travel companies should also be offered interest-free loans or loans with a lower rate of interest for working capital. Reducing airport taxes to bring cost of air tickets down will also help the industry.**”

“Most hotel owners have taken loans and in current circumstances, it seems difficult for us to pay interest and bank EMIs. Banks should be advised by the state government to consider the situation and defer EMIs and interest till normality is restored. SGST should be waived off till the situation becomes normal. The state government should also try and convince the Central government for a similar step. **We also need a fee waiver for any upcoming licences/permits renewal (such as BMC Holding Tax, Bar Licence Fee, Electricity Fee, etc).**”



JK Mohanty
Chairman, HRAO



Pradip Lulla
Acting President and VP, TAFI

“We have appealed to both the Ministry of Tourism as well as Ministry of Civil Aviation to recommend to the government certain abatement like a moratorium of six months on the interest payments on loan and EMI, **GST waiver for one year, suspension on incoming TCS from April 1, reduction on interest on loans for SMEs as well as subsidies in form of direct payment from the government for half of our salary bills for six months.** The above implementations would provide succour to our ravaged businesses and support our survival.”

“Hospitality industry is one of the biggest employment generators. **Other countries, while announcing closures, have immediately offered sops for the industry. Brussels has given a sop of 4,000 euros per establishment until March 31. We expect our government to offer something similar.** We have sent them recommendations like GST and other tax holidays, and push back on EMIs and principal payments on loans by six months. The impact is heavy on our industry and by doing this, the working capital generated will keep businesses alive.”



Gloria Guevara
President & CEO, W TTC

“W TTC is calling upon governments of all countries to take immediate action to help ensure the survival of this critical job-creating sector. We propose three vital measures. Firstly, **financial help must be granted to protect the incomes of the millions of workers in the sector facing severe economic difficulties. Secondly, governments must extend vital, unlimited interest-free loans to global travel and tourism companies, as well as the millions of small and medium-sized businesses. Thirdly, all taxes, dues and financial demands on the travel sector need to be waived with immediate effect.**”

“Tourism will be the last to revive. Our own revival plan would depend on the same and we will have to find ways to protect the smaller agents who don't have business and money to pay for anything. There is no money since we don't have any refunds, and payments must be done. We need to work collectively to safeguard the money and jobs in the industry. **We have requested the trade that they should try and not ask people to leave their companies. With the financial year being pushed till June, I think all the new things would move.**”



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

Railways to go digital

Vinod Kumar Yadav, IRSEE, Chairman – Railway Board, Ministry of Railways, says that modernisation gives an integrated approach for enhancing the capacity of the Indian railway ecosystem.

Kalpna Lohumi

According to **Vinod Kumar Yadav**, one needs to first accept that Indian Railways should have done more infrastructural development till date. “There is no denying that we are not able to cope with the traffic demand, be it passenger or freight. Now, when the railways have recognised the problem, it's time to work on the issue and sort it out. We have to prioritise our projects. Indian Railways has capacity constraints, not demand constraints. Our vision is to run trains as per the citizens' requirements in the next five years. Therefore, a lot of focus is being put on safety mechanism, digital transformation, upgrade of railway networks and stations, as well as infrastructure redevelopment of the rail ecosystem,” he shares.



Vinod Kumar Yadav
IRSEE, Chairman – Railway Board
Ministry of Railways

ment in capacity, multi-tracking, railway electrification or signal modernisation to name a few. “Indian Railways is providing national integration. As of now, we are present in almost all the states except Sikkim. Under the national project, we are trying to connect all the capital cities of Northeastern states, and all targets are set to be completed by 2023,” he adds.

For meeting traffic demand, the Indian Railways has prioritised and analysed the entire project, which will provide multi-tracking on all congested routes. “We have identified 58 projects and

we have already commissioned 12 out of those. We are going to complete the rest of the projects in the next two years,” he adds.

Focus is on safety mechanism, digital transformation, upgrade of railway networks and stations, and infrastructure redevelopment of the rail ecosystem

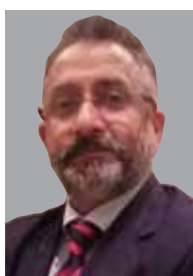
As far as train operations are concerned, The Indian Railways has gone ahead with Real-time Train Information System (RTIS). As of today, 60 per cent of locomotives are fitted with GPS. All trains will be mapped by ISRO satellite by the end of the financial year and by the end of next financial year, all our charting will be done through Artificial Intelligence,” Yadav claims.



Nakul Anand
Chairman, FAITH

“FAITH has sought PM Modi's intervention. We have asked for 12 months' moratorium on EMIs of principle and interest payments on loans and working capital from financial institutions. We also need to double working capital limits and on interest-free and collateral-free terms. This will prevent all our tourism businesses from going bankrupt. **We also request a 200% weighted exemption for 12 months on expenses to Indian corporates to hold exhibitions and conferences in India.**”

“I think, the first and foremost thing the government should do is to save jobs. Right now is not the time when somebody who loses a job can apply in another company or firm. There is a huge cash flow and liquidity crisis in the industry right now. For the next six months, there should be no tax burden of the past one year, no advance tax should be needed. The government should think of a fiscal benefit to the tune of 40-50 per cent of the turnover of the company so that employees start taking salaries.”



Naveen Kundu
MD, EbixCash Travel & Holidays



PP Khanna
President, ADTOI

“A multi-association task force has put together a document for the government, in which they have requested to rapidly **deploy a 'Survival & Revival' financial package to Indian hotels and resorts, travel agents and tour operators, as well as tourist transporters on four different parameters — term loans from financial institutions; working capital from financial institutions; and advisory to other stakeholders.**”

Inputs by Hazel Jain, Nisha Verma and Manas Dwivedi

TRAV TALK'S VIEWPOINT

Even as countries try and grapple with the situation, their tourism industries have started requesting for a much-needed bailout. Hotels are pleading for a stimulus the world over and India is not an exception. With the Sword of Damocles hanging over their heads, only an external boost can help survival. From giving discounts to tourists, to financial relief measures for the stakeholders, travel, aviation and hotel companies globally are urging their governments to extend to them some sort of relief measures. In such a drastic scenario, it is also vital that governments send out a positive message to the industry at large to help restore its lost glory and give a much-needed shot in the arm.

Focus on skill development amid crisis

In times like these, it is important to focus on training and skill development for the employees, says **Pranav Kapadia**, Founder, Global Destinations. He adds that this is also the time for the employer to introspect and think of the way forward, while further strengthening soft skills.



Hazel Jain

Why has skill development come into focus right now?

During normal times, we mostly focus on our day-to-day business. It's only during times like these that we realise the importance of skill development. As for any industry, our industry especially with its service-oriented nature, skill development is one of the most important, primary and vital aspects. With the knowledge, expertise and innovation that a skilled professional brings to the table, they are not only an asset to the organisation but to the industry as well.



Pranav Kapadia
Founder, Global Destinations

How do you encourage your team to take this up?

We consider skilling a crucial part for our work culture. Different individuals have their own strong points and we try and identify their strengths at

an early stage. Based on this, we organise in-house brainstorming sessions as well as external trainings conducted by professionals. Further, we also ensure that each sales person gets a first-hand experience of the destinations with regular familiarisation trips. We do not see this as a cost, but as an investment for the team member, as they will not only self-develop but also differentiate our organisation in the market.

What about educating the trade?

Our industry is facing an unprecedented situation right now. But, looking at the

positive side, it also gives us an opportunity to further strengthen our knowledge, develop soft skills, introspect and reboot. Educating will only further empower and give you the much-required advantage which is so crucial in these current times. We are continuously encouraging all our travel industry friends to complete specialisation courses like our Matai Fiji Specialist. These are certified courses and one can proudly display these certificates to their clients, which will not only enhance client confidence but also result in improved business. We have already conducted webinars for Tourism Fiji, Palladium Hotel Group and Air New Zealand, and continually participate in product presentations for the travel trade. We are also sharing timely updates with our B2B partners via regular

emailers on the continuously-evolving situation.

Do you have a revival plan for your clients?

We are regularly reminding the travel fraternity that this is the time to reinvent ourselves and work on our weak points. This

We are working closely with all our partners to put in place various offers, deals, etc., and will launch those soon

is a passing storm which will wither away and a new day will certainly present new opportunities. We are currently working very closely with all our partners to put in place

various offers, deals, etc., and will launch those as soon as the situation improves. We are also working on plans to handle the surge effectively, which will come along once the scenario changes.

Would you have any wish list for the government?

The travel industry needs the government's help and intervention at this time more than any other. It's obvious that the world over, governments have or are in the process of announcing various relief measures. We would certainly request the government of relief measures like tax concessions such as GST relief and withdrawal of TCS besides financial bailout packages, which can help organisations such as ours to meet various financial commitments.



HVS Research reveals that if demand in the industry picked up in October-November, the branded hotel segment would still suffer a loss of \$4.1 bn, approx. 22% more than what it would lose if demand picked up in July 2020.

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Tourism Breaking News

- Expo 2020 postponed; new date to be announced soon
- Railways ministry mulls plan to close private booking agent service
- UNWTO forms Global Tourism Crisis Committee; to release recovery recommendations
- Poona Hoteliers appeal to Chief Minister for interim relief amidst COVID-19 crisis
- Tourist arrivals may decline by up to 3% & APAC to be most affected, says UNWTO
- MoCA launches first-ever thrice-weekly flight from Indore to Kishangarh under UDAN
- EU suspends 'slot use' rules till June 2020

Refund agents, advises FHRAI

The pan-India body for hospitality professionals, FHRAI has requested its members to refund 100 per cent deposit on bookings made by travel agents. The association has also put forth its recommendations to the government to provide relief to the sector in a time like this.

 Hazel Jain

Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), has said, "We have advised all our hotel members to give 100 per cent refunds to travel agents through whom the bookings have come. Some of them may have not done so, but they are definitely deferring the dates. We have advised them not to do this because at the time of crisis, to gain the confidence of the guest, one must offer immediate and 100 per cent refund whenever asked for. Of course, deferment of dates is already there. We request the travel agents to try and

influence the airlines – certain airlines have not been kind enough to refund. They are only offering a change of date. Unfortunately, that is not how it will work, especially at a time like this. We are a service industry and customer is of prime importance."



He however added, "The current situation has really hurt our industry with hotel occupancy down 80-90 per cent. But, we have put people

before business. Therefore, it is also the duty of the government to look after the livelihood of the individual involved with



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli
Vice President, FHRAI

the travel & tourism and hospitality industries, especially the latter as we are a labour-intensive sector. We have therefore

sent our recommendations to the government."

FHRAI thanks and applauds the efforts of members in taking adequate measures, well in advance, to battle the spread of the virus. The strict imple-

 The current situation has really hurt our industry with hotel occupancy down 80-90 per cent. But, we have put people before business 

mentation of these measures has significantly helped the industry in sustaining the trust of its guests.

New short-term courses
Kohli has also shared that the

association's hospitality institute has launched new courses that were to start from March 2020. He says, "We have an institute called FIHM, which is short for FHRAI IHM, in Greater Noida and keeping the demand for shorter courses in mind and emerging trends, we have introduced short-term courses on FOSTAC and FSSAI that involve skill development. This is also something that the government is pushing. We have these courses ready and they were due to start immediately, but now we have kept it on hold because of the unfortunate COVID-19 situation. We will start them as soon as this comes under control. Apart from short-term courses, we also have the regular courses, but we have stressed on the shorter term courses as they are the need of the hour. There will be guest lecturers and visiting faculty for this as well." 



According to IATA, with travel restrictions closing down international aviation, markets with severe restrictions (including quarantine for arrivals, travel bans & border closures) cover 98% of global passenger revenues.

Marriott to facilitate skill development

Marriott Hotels has recently collaborated with THSC and NSDC to train as many as 5,000 professionals across the hospitality group's network of properties in India, giving them hands-on experience that will help hone their skills and polish them further to serve the hospitality and tourism sectors better.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) has collaborated with Marriott India to promote apprenticeship in the tourism and hospital-

portunity to receive hands-on experience at Marriott hotels for developing broader expertise in their respective sector, preparing them to cater to the demands of tourism and hospitality. **Neeraj Govil**, Senior Vice

President of this programme, Marriott hotels across India will service training centres, where we will provide necessary skills to the youth to have a career in hotels. Essentially, they come through a qualifying process

for Marriott but for the industry at large. We have 60-70 hotels under construction and as they open, they will become part of this partnership as well."

Rajan Bahadur, Chief Executive Officer, THSC, believes that the tourism and hospitality industry has huge potential to absorb the best talent in the country. He says, "Our objective is to empower the youth by making them industry-relevant. The service sector is a great contributor to the country's economic growth and our aim is to impart global standards of training to build the capabilities of semi-skilled and unskilled workforce through apprenticeship. Our objective is to scale-up the apprenticeship programme in the country in collaboration with the industry, to bridge the gap between industry demand and availability of skilled manpower. We have about 300 industry part-

ners and that's what makes our canvas so large and interesting, but the whole intent is to take it to the next level."

For **Manish Kumar**, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, NSDC, apprenticeship has been recognised world-wide as

 Marriott hotels across India will service training centres, where we will provide necessary skills to the youth to have a career in hotels 

Neeraj Govil

the key to providing the right training and acquiring world-class talent. "The introduction of optional trades widens the scope of apprenticeship in sectors such as services,

retail, tourism, IT & ITeS, among others, enabling the industry to design its own course and create a skilled workforce matching its needs," he says.

Kumar adds that apprenticeship is something the Ministry of Skill Development has been emphasising on for a long time and that the support it provides will result in better partners coming in.

"Tourism and hospitality are two such sectors where much more can be done within India. Besides this, we also need a centre of excellence where training could be done at a much better scale. Given our ambition to be the 'skill capital of the world', we need to prepare ourselves in doing the best in whatever we do. With such a collaboration, we only come closer to what we are trying to do," he concludes. 



ity sectors. As part of the collaboration, Marriott will engage 5000 apprentices through its network of 90 properties in the country. The apprentices will be provided with an op-

portunity to receive hands-on experience at Marriott hotels for developing broader expertise in their respective sector, preparing them to cater to the demands of tourism and hospitality. **Neeraj Govil**, Senior Vice

President of this programme, Marriott hotels across India will service training centres, where we will provide necessary skills to the youth to have a career in hotels. Essentially, they come through a qualifying process

Biggest crisis yet for hotels?

As hotel occupancies plummet, leaders of international hotel chains describe the COVID-19 crisis and its impact as the biggest they have seen yet. In such unprecedented times, they continue to work tirelessly for business continuity and ensure support to stakeholders.



Arne M Sorenson
President & CEO, Marriott International

“ We are working tirelessly to take care of our guests and stakeholders. We feel it is important to share an update on some of what we have seen to date and describe key measures we are executing to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. While we cannot predict today how long this crisis will last, we know that it will get behind us. And when it does abate, lodging demand will rebound. We are confident that our company has the expertise and the resources to weather this crisis. ”

“ France currently faces a health crisis and Accor has decided to make its services available to front-line medical staff, to all French people engaged and mobilised in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 and to the most vulnerable populations.

The dedication of our owners and our teams has been exemplary and we are doing everything we possibly can. As the country battles to contain this unprecedented health crisis, Accor stands by their side. ”



Sébastien Bazin
Chairman & CEO, Accor

“ IHG has a robust business model and the measures we are announcing to reduce costs and preserve cash give us the capacity to manage the business and to support our owners during this incredibly difficult time. These were not easy choices and we are mindful of the impact these decisions will have on our colleagues and shareholders. However, we believe that these are essential to ensuring that we are ready to capitalise on what remains as growth potential. ”



Keith Barr
CEO, IHG

“ This is an evolving situation, and our ability to assess the financial impact of COVID-19 on our business continues to be limited due to quickly changing circumstances and uncertain consumer demand for travel. We have continued to monitor the situation and while we remain unable at this time to quantify the full-year impact on our financial results, we believe it is appropriate to withdraw our previously announced 2020 outlook and earnings sensitivity based on Greater China RevPAR. ”



Mark S Hoplamazian
President & CEO, Hyatt Hotels

Inputs by Anupriya Bishnoi

Up to ₹90 crore loss a day for Indian aviation

A recent report estimates a net loss of anywhere between ₹75-90 crore a day for Indian aviation as a result of the suspension of operations.

TT Bureau

The credit profile of the companies in the Indian aviation industry has further worsened following the spread of COVID-19 to more than 180 countries. Governments of almost all countries have issued travel advisories. Specifically, the Indian government has stopped all international flights to and from India from March 23, 2020 till April 15, 2020 (after a 21-day lockdown announced on March 24). Furthermore, domestic travel has also been ceased with effect from March 25, 2020 till April 15, 2020. This is expected to have a severe impact on air travel in March 2020 and beyond, especially Q1 FY2021, until the situation normalises.

According to ICRA estimates, considering the operating expenses of the Indian

aviation industry in FY2019 and that 35-42 per cent of their expenses are fixed in nature, it is estimated that the industry will report a net loss of ₹75-90 crore per day of shutdown of operations. While some airlines have sufficient liquidity and/or financial support from a strong parentage, which will help them tide over this disruption, some airlines, who are already in financial stress, will face serious troubles.

The industry is already reeling under pressure and suspension of operations will result in inability of the airlines to meet their operating expenses in the absence of cash inflows. ICRA also expects FY2021 to witness a de-growth of 8-10 per cent in domestic passenger traffic, with H1 FY2021 witnessing a sharper de-growth and recovery in H2 FY2021. ↴



Inputs by Anupriya Bishnoi

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MP taps new international markets

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board will stimulate newer markets such as Scandinavia and Russia, and promote experiential tourism like rural experiences in offbeat spots of Mandu and Orchha. Among domestic markets, Delhi continues to be its largest contributor to arrivals, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

 Hazel Jain

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board will look at tapping newer international markets to increase arrivals. Revealing this is **Faiz Ahmed Kidwai**, Secretary - Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, who says, "MP Tourism plans to invest in the Scandinavian market, and to seed the destination in the Russian and Australian markets as well. Globally, we have identified UK, USA, Germany, Spain and France as our key international source markets for inbound tourism. In terms of domestic markets, Delhi is the largest contributor, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra."

Madhya Pradesh sees the maximum number of tour-

ists, including excursionists and overnight visitors, in the month of October and foreign tourists in December. Speaking about the one destination that he would like foreign tour-



Faiz Ahmed Kidwai
Secretary - Tourism, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh and MD, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

ists to visit more often, Kidwai says, "Madhya Pradesh has a lot to offer. However, Mandu, situated 3,000 feet high with the largest fortified area of 45 sq kms, makes for a must-visit destination. The city is

strewn with beautiful monuments and provides impressive views of the lush green valley. Though Mandu looks beautiful throughout the year, it is the monsoon that sets this place apart; it's truly breathtaking. In terms of itinerary, it can be clubbed with Ajanta and Ellora."

 We have identified UK, USA, Germany, Spain and France as our key international source markets for inbound tourism 


He says that international tourists visiting Madhya Pradesh mainly prefer wildlife and destinations with rich heritage. "Today, tourism is all about experiential travel and in order



to develop this further, we are creating rural experiences with food and culture, homestays and farm-stays, campsites in the buffer area offering interesting activities like nature walks, birding tours, heritage walks or walking tours, cycle tours, etc. We have also introduced a craft trail which starts from Indore-Maheshwar (weaving), Bagh (block printing), Ujjain

(batik printing) and Neemuch (Nandna prints), where tourists can interact with artisans and shop as well," he says.

Apart from this, festivals serve as a major attraction for tourists and MP Tourism has curated events like Namaste Orchha, Mandu Festival and Jal Mahotsav which not only helps create a buzz but also puts the destina-

tion on the world map. The government, both state and Centre, routinely allocates budgets to boost tourism. The amount of subsidy for projects has been increased and the number of projects has also grown. The board also gets funds for circuits and building infrastructure in those circuits from the government's policies like the Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD. 

Celebrating a unique culture

The three-day tourism festival, Namaste Orchha, organised by Madhya Pradesh Tourism, celebrated the cultural diversity, natural beauty and architectural heritage of the state. Hosted in the culturally rich town of Orchha, the festival was attended by many a dignitary, and brought to life the music, dance, heritage, cuisine as well as arts and handicraft of the state.



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Brace for an 'influx of demand'

Mandeep S Lamba, President - South Asia, HVS ANAROCK, reveals that while ADRs may suffer a decline of anywhere between 7-8 per cent over 2019, the damage the industry will bear overall due to COVID-19 is irreversible. A reopening plan that's similar to a pre-opening plan of a hotel may help brace the influx of demand once the virus begins to recede.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

What impact has COVID-19 had on the Indian hotel market?

India, like most other countries, is on a lockdown, the ramifications of which are unprecedented. Travel and hospitality sectors have been hit hard. The current situation is extremely grim, as inbound tourism has come to a grinding halt and domestic flights have also been suspended since March 25. All other demand segments such as MICE, business, social and sporting events have been can-

celled or deferred indefinitely for the foreseeable future.

We expect the second quarter of the calendar year to be the worst hit. Hotels will be unable to drive rates and may even seek to attract business at deep discounts.

While the veracity of the impact on the sector may only be fully known much after the cessation of the pandemic, we estimate the overall occupancy in the branded hotels segment in 2020 to decline by 16.7-20.5 percentage points over 2019,



Mandeep S Lamba
President - South Asia
HVS ANAROCK

while ADRs are estimated to decline by 7-8 per cent for the year. As a result, RevPAR will witness a significant decline of 31-36.2 per cent in 2020. The branded segment is expect-

ed to witness revenue loss of US\$3.55-4.1 billion in 2020. The overall revenue of the In-

 We expect the second quarter of the calendar year to be the worst hit. Hotels will be unable to drive rates and may even seek to attract business at deep discounts 

dian hotel sector, including both organised and unorganised segments, is set to decline by anywhere between US\$ 8.85 billion to US\$ 10 billion, reflecting an erosion of 39-45 per cent compared to the previous year.

What do you think is the way out?


Our industry has proactively taken several steps to mitigate the immediate impact. However, this will be an ongoing process that needs to adapt quickly to the rapidly changing business environment. In the wake of multiple directives being issued by various government authorities nationwide, hotels should use the opportunity to devise and implement a 'Stop Gap Plan' to ensure that when demand bounces back, hotels are well-prepared to benefit from the upswing.

How long will the industry take to stabilise?

While the current situation is grim and the Indian hotel sector is undoubtedly one of the big-

gest casualties of the pandemic, we believe the industry will be in recovery mode sooner rather than later. Hotels should prepare a 'reopening' plan similar to the pre-opening plan that was devised for the hotel prior to its initial opening. The only critical difference is that the opening of the hotel this time will be post a horrific event that would fundamentally alter the foundation of the hospitality sector globally.

Hotels should look to implement the reopening plan in the shortest possible time available, as when demand returns the customer will become a bigger and more demanding 'king'. Hoteliers can connect with HVS experts to learn more about the Stop Gap Plan and Reopening Plan. 

 With the 21-day lockdown announced on March 24 and domestic travel coming to a halt, ICRA expects FY2020 to witness a de-growth of 2.5 per cent in domestic passenger traffic growth, as against its earlier expectation of 4.5 per cent growth.

The way forward for hotel industry

Recommendations for Hotels

According to recent reports, over 90% of domestic hotels in China had resumed operations at the end of February 2020, just 2 months after the first Covid-19 case was reported in the country. Hotel bookings have also been increasing with business travellers accounting for the largest segment. Hotels located in proximity to transportation hubs have been the popular choice. All the above news comes as a silver lining as it provides the Indian hotels sector a window to look for in the future, as it comes to terms with Covid-19 related travel restrictions and cancellations.

Our industry has proactively taken several precautionary steps to mitigate the immediate impact. However, we must forewarn that now more than ever, hotels will need to continue their efforts to quickly adapt to the rapidly changing business environment. To assist with the same, we have highlighted a few measures that will assist hotels with the current onslaught below:

Stop Gap Plan

Hotels should use the opportunity to devise and implement a "Stop Gap Plan" to ensure that when demand bounces back, the hotels are well prepared to benefit from the upswing.

Among essential items the Stop Gap Plan should include:

- ❖ Bare minimum operations sufficient enough for quick recommencement when the opportunity arrives
- ❖ Implement a subtle digital and social media marketing strategy to retain mindshare of customers
- ❖ Engage with suppliers / vendors to compute their capacity to re-engage with the hotel on recommencement
- ❖ Develop and maintain communication lines with key customers and team members
- ❖ Continue to remain in discussion with relevant local government authorities
- ❖ Develop a Reopening Plan and Budget
- ❖ Utilize this period for implementing Ken-fix-it / upgradation, wherever possible

Prepare & plan the reopening

The reopening plan of a hotel should be viewed through the prism of past preopening plans that were devised for the hotel prior to its initial opening. The only critical difference in this instance being that hotel will now reopen post a horrific event that would have fundamentally altered the foundation of hotels sector globally.

Hotels should look to implement the reopening plan in the shortest possible time available, as when demand returns the customer will become a bigger and more demanding 'King'. Below, we have provided some key tasks that hotels will need to consider as part of their reopening plan:

Task Force Management Team

- ❖ 'Stop Gap Plan' task force team to handover the hotel to an operational 'Reopening Plan' task force team.
- ❖ The task force team should evaluate short term recruitment to bridge any gaps in operations.

Sales & Marketing

- ❖ Carrying forward from the 'Stop Gap Plan', aggressive efforts to reestablish connections with all customer through all available channels should be implemented.
- ❖ Effective digital and social media strategies must be rolled out as part of the communication plan.
- ❖ Follow a mechanism whereby all the bookings that were previously cancelled or deferred are honored in good spirit.
- ❖ Instead of 'Glocal' go 'Local': demand from outstation travelers will be low in 2020, hence, it is time to focus and rely on local demand.
- ❖ Special experiential packages and promotions targeted at 'locals' should be the driving mantra.
- ❖ Promote packages for specific target groups such as 'Staycations'.

Initial Working Capital

- ❖ A 90 to 180 days initial working capital 1 credit line should be established.

Re-engagement & Support for Returning Team Members

- ❖ Provide adequate support to the returning employees to restart their work life, including assistance on matters such as housing etc.
- ❖ Roll out a training and reengagement processes for their specific duties and departments.

Power & Equipment

- ❖ Prior to powering up all necessary equipment, a thorough service plan should be mobilized to ensure that all equipment is fully functional, adequately safe and capable of delivering the required results.

Front of House Facilities

- ❖ 'Demand outlook' should be the funnel through which decisions for opening of multiple front of the house facilities such as restaurants, Spas and Gyms be made.
- ❖ As demand improves, hotels should gradually reopen the areas which earlier were temporarily shut down.

Prudent Spending

- ❖ Refrain from any form of spending that may not have a direct revenue benefit.
- ❖ Continue cost saving measures even when demand is back to normal to recover the losses during the crisis.

Vendor Management

- ❖ Post assessment of supplier capability and categorization of all operating supplies including perishables in order of importance, the procurement team must ensure proper stock piling.

Increase Ancillary Revenues

- ❖ Focus on ancillary revenues that maybe generated through non-core revenue generating areas such as Gyms, Spas, etc.
- ❖ Provide services that have traditionally not been part of the hotel's core offerings such as food delivery through online platforms or leasing of kitchens for cloud kitchen requirements.

Maintain Pricing Charts

- ❖ Hotels should think 'long-term' and promote value-added services and flexible booking terms instead of reducing rates.
- ❖ Discounts can be creatively packaged, by bundling services into customized packages & promotions, without adding substantially to the hotel's cost while leveraging the property's exclusive characteristics to remain competitive.
- ❖ Offering a flexible cancellation and rebooking policy will reassure existing & potential guests.

Compliances

- ❖ Ensure that the hotel is compliant with any revised government and brand norms.
- ❖ Ensure the hotel continues to follow the health and cleanliness guidelines.
- ❖ Reassure Guests and Employees by intensifying routine maintenance and increasing deep clean measures.

Conduct Dry Runs

- ❖ At the end of such dry runs, the hotels should be able to understand any gaps remaining prior to full roll out of the hotel.

Communicate fair and square

It is a given that the tourism and hospitality industries are at the mercy of many external circumstances way beyond our control. What counts most in times like these is constant and open communication with team members. It is equally important to keep present and future guests updated on where things stand.

From political upheavals, climatic considerations and natural calamities, to diplomatic relations between nations and financial ups & downs, the tourism and hospitality industries are always affected by external circumstances. The same is proven once again, at the time of COVID-19. While all have been impacted globally, I do not think any industry has been as badly hit as tourism, hospitality and aviation.



How do we cope with this crisis of an unimaginable magnitude? For starters, let us take it on the chin – it has happened and it is here to stay. I am honestly aghast at the defeatist and self-pitying attitude I am seeing on social media from so many people. Of course, there will be a financial crisis in your company; of course, you will have to take tough decisions to reduce staff; of course, things will

come to a standstill – these are all a given. What counts most in times like these is constant and open communication with your team members. Please do not do anything behind their back. It is most unfair of managements to spring surprises on those very people who have served the company well till 10 days ago. It is equally important to keep your present and future guests updated on where things stand.

Quick and decisive measures have to be taken, and the magnitude of these measures taken will vary from business to business. Some of us are sending a majority of our staff in every unit on paid leave for a couple of weeks, while only a skeleton staff is being kept back for daily upkeep and caring for the few guests who check-in. This will also ensure that the staff and guests do not come in close contact with too many unknown

people. Guests wanting to cancel their reservations are also being offered to re-book at a later date or an immediate refund. Considerations for domestic and inbound guests do vary. At Tree of Life Resorts, the situation will be reviewed in the first week of April and depending on how the

Quick and decisive measures have to be taken, and the magnitude of these measures taken will vary from business to business

overall situation has progressed, we will take the next steps. Quite obviously, taking care of all protective measures for guests and staff is a given.

It is also in these trying times that everyone looks to the government for support, for bail-outs, for tax cuts and benefits. Unfortunately, our government is also grappling with so many situations that I doubt it will have the time or the capacity to pay heed to any of the requests that our various associations are making. The fall-out of our reaching out to the government is that every individual association is putting up its wish list with more or less the same points of appeal. One nodal association should put forth the wish list of the entire industry, and that nodal association should then be the contact point with the government rather than each one adding to the confusion and being repetitive.

And when will this end? The April 15 date is not a magical one. It is just an expression of optimism, of hope, that by then, things should

limp back to normal. However, there is no guarantee, so it would not be recommended to plan your future steps with this date in mind. Go all the way to May 1, at least, and if the situation 'normalises' earlier, good for all of us. These times are just one of the many tests for us in the industry. We have always bounced back and will do so this time as well – just that the blow has been pretty lethal with this one.

(The views expressed are the author's own. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)



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Learn More about Korea Tourism

Our next upcoming webinar will be on **Friday, 17th April 2020** at **1500 hrs (IST)**.

Austria focus on families

During the three-city workshop in India, Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) highlighted its focus on family and luxury travellers, while also urging more MICE movement.

 Manas Dwivedi

Christine Mukharji, Director, ANTO, claims that 2020 began on a good note for the tourism board. "We organised a successful Swarovski event on February 1 on a yacht in Mumbai, after which we had our B2B meetings and workshops in Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi. The response received from the travel trade of all three cities was fantastic, with almost 300 tour operators attending the workshops. Visitor numbers for 2019 have also been good and we had just below 200,000 Indians visiting Austria," she said. For the workshops, ANTO had a total of four suppliers from Austria which included the Vienna Tourist Board, Panorama Tours Salz-



Christine Mukharji
Director
ANTO

burg, Tirol Tourist Board which has Innsbruck as its capital, and Swarovski Crystal World.

This year, ANTO plans to continue promoting family and luxury holidays. Mukharji said, "We are also going to be a bit stronger on the MICE movement to Austria and hoping that we will easily cross

the 200,000 visitor mark, while expecting to double overnight stays."

Among upcoming destinations in Austria, while people still prefer

 We are hoping that we will easily cross the 200,000 visitor mark, while expecting to double overnight stays 

Vienna, Salzburg and Innsbruck, places like Hallstatt, Zell am See, Auersthal and Kaprun are also very popular. Mukharji added that ANTO is now doing online campaigns with tour operators and OTAs in India. 

KTO to train OTOAI members

Apart from webinars, Korea Tourism Organization is also looking at undertaking multicity training programmes with OTOAI members this year, giving them a thorough knowledge of South Korea.

 Hazel Jain

With a country as vast as India, the travel trade fraternity will be equally varied and geographically scattered. "Each travel agency has its own set of clientele and its own specialisation in terms of its offerings of travel packages. As a destination promoter, it is important for Korea Tourism Organization to educate them about the variety of offerings South Korea has to offer to suit the requirements of their clients. A thorough knowledge of the destination not only helps the travel agent in selling the destination better, but it also creates a desirable image of the destination for the travellers," says **Jong Sool Kwon**, Director, Korea Tourism Organization, New Delhi Office.






Jong Sool Kwon
Director, Korea Tourism
Organization, New Delhi Office

food requirements. At the same time, specifics such as special interest travel, MICE and educational tours are also covered in the programme.

"There are various offline and online modes through which the tourism organisations have been educating travel agents in India. For us, the webinars have worked best as they enable us to have a larger geographical and number reach with travel agents. Korea Tourism takes a 360-degree approach when it comes to educat-

ing the travel trade. This year, we have planned seven webinars. Multicity trainings with OTOAI are also on the cards. Like every year, we plan to participate in ma-

 For us, webinars have worked best as they enable us to have a larger geographical and number reach with travel agents 

major travel and tourism exhibitions to reach out to as many travel agencies as possible," Kwon adds. 

Webinar on April 3

KTO invites the trade to sign up for its webinar that it will host on April 3, 2020 at 3pm. The webinar will cover not just FIT and leisure travel but also touch upon MICE.

 *The city of Venice is enjoying crystal-clear waters in its world-famous canals due to a lack of debris from tourists and near-zero boat traffic under Italy's ongoing coronavirus lockdown.*

Trade learns more about Finland

Visit Finland recently hosted its annual workshop in Delhi and Mumbai, where it educated the Indian travel trade about new destinations with the idea of making Finland a year-round destination. The tourism board's objective is to encourage travellers to make the most of the Finnish weather that is a great escape from the sweltering Indian heat.

 Nisha Verma

Optimistic on the Indian market after having touched the milestone of 100,000 overnights from India, Visit Finland recently held its workshop here. **Tarja Koivisto**, Account Manager, Global Sales Promotions, Visit Finland, said, "In 2019, we had a 27 per cent increase in overnights from 2018 figures. Since we measure overnights, we would like people to stay longer when they come to Finland. We are extremely happy about this achievement."

Koivisto insisted that for Indians, Finland is still a new destination and hence they are curious about it. Exhilarated at the support received for the roadshow in India and an amazing turnout, she added, "Indian tour operators and travel agents are familiar with Lapland and Helsinki. These are the destina-

tions people know best, but our job is to promote entire Finland, like Lakeland and the archipelago. We also want to market it as a year-round destination. While the winter is already magical, if travellers want to escape the



Tarja Koivisto
Account Manager, Global Sales
Promotions, Visit Finland

hot Indian summer, then our summer is perfect, since the temperature doesn't go over 30 degrees."



Talking about the growth in interest for Indian travellers from a Finnish point of view,



Sara Juneja
Country Manager - India
Visit Finland

Sara Juneja, Country Manager - India, Visit Finland, said, "The interest has grown from our Finnish partners. This time, for our workshop, we had 15 partners, while we had around six last year. The synergies between Finland and India are changing." She claimed that there is huge interest for MICE and weddings in Finland from India, even the luxury segment is not far behind. "There has been a lot of interest for FIT and luxury, especially for the Lapland sector,

but there has been tremendous response from MICE. Even at the workshop, we were very happy we got a mix of FIT agents, and group tour

 This year, we will be launching some mono-Finland products, especially focusing on the summer 

Sara Juneja

and MICE operators, because we are trying to build Finland as an all-round destination," Juneja shared. In the future, the tourism board aims to get

in more partners from Finland to travel to cities beyond Delhi and Mumbai.

In terms of promotions, Visit Finland has been working with the Indian travel trade and all its marketing promotions are focused on B2B players.

"For the first two years, our focus was on Lapland and we wanted to educate the people more about it, but this year onwards our focus has been on summer travel, and we will be working on developing our Lakeland region and Lapland. The aim is that this year, we will be launching some mono-Finland products, especially focusing on the summer," Juneja said.

She claims that there is no problem in Finland with regards to Indian or vegetarian food. "In Helsinki, we have a huge Indian diaspora and there are a lot of Indian restaurants. Since ingredients are so fresh, the food is very good. Even in Rovaniemi Lapland, we have two Indian restaurants and in Lakeland as well as Archipelago, there are Indian restaurants. Also, in terms of vegetarian food, Finnish people are turning towards vegetarianism and going vegan. Hence, every restaurant offers vegetarian options on the menu, and one can have soups and salads. Honestly, one will never really face any kind of food trouble in Finland," she added. 

 *A recent report by IATA Economics reveals that outside APAC, it was the Middle East that saw the biggest y-o-y drop in passenger numbers for March (based on bookings data for the month) at approximately 70 per cent.*



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UNWTO



Rupinder Brar
Ministry of
Tourism



Kapil Kaul
CAPA



Tricia Warwick
VisitBritain



GB Srithar
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Tourism Board



Deepak Rawat
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Etihad to add southern India frequency

India plays a crucial role in Etihad Airways' global growth strategy, a testimony of which is the airline's 15-year anniversary of operations in India. Etihad will soon add frequencies to its Thiruvananthapuram and Chennai network on the A320 aircraft, thus providing 158 additional seats on each route.



Nisha Verma

Having begun operations in September 2004 with Mumbai as its first route in India, Etihad Airways recently completed 15 years of operations here. The celebration in New Delhi had in presence **Danny Barranger**, Etihad Airways' Senior Vice President for Global Sales and **Neerja Bhatia**, the airline's Vice President for the Indian subcontinent.

On the occasion, Bhatia reiterated that Etihad's commitment to India stood firm, and that the airline was one of the most preferred among travellers from India. She added that India played a crucial role in the airline's growth strategy and contributed significantly to its global operations. While the

airline is presently not looking to expand its Indian network beyond the 10 existing points, it will add a second frequency to Thiruvananthapuram and a third frequency to Chennai for the month of May. Bhatia shared that these additional services will be operated by Etihad Airways' A320 and will add 158 seats to each route. As a result of these seasonal changes, Etihad Airways will operate 21 weekly flights to and from Chennai, and 14 weekly flights to and from Thiruvananthapuram during this period.

For Barranger, Etihad Airways remains committed to its largest and busiest market - India. "The UAE and India have shared strong commercial, cultural and historic relations and we will continue to honour these excellent trade and



(L-R) Lindsay White, VP, Asia Pacific & Indian Subcontinent, Etihad Airways; Neerja Bhatia, VP - Indian Subcontinent, Etihad Airways and Danny Barranger, SVP Global Sales, Etihad Airways

tourism ties through a closer partnership with our friends in the Indian travel trade. We are proud that today, Etihad Airways serves more destina-

tions in India than any other country across its network, truly supporting the growth of air travel to and from the country," he shared.

Barranger also said that Indian travellers had increasingly been using Abu Dhabi as a gateway to the US, with its pre-clearance facility at Abu Dhabi International Airport, to avoid immigration formalities in the North

four daily services to London Heathrow from Abu Dhabi, providing optimised timings and easy connections from India," he added.

Etihad held a 24 per cent stake in the now defunct Jet Airways, commenting on which Barranger said that they were still bullish on India. In fact, he shared that the airline had not seen any reduction in passenger traffic from India despite the grounding of Jet Airways, which was apparently feeding in passengers to Etihad from Tier-II and III markets. "We are seeing a big improvement in terms of yields. We are happy with what we are operating at. There are one or two destinations that we will explore, for which we might see some tweaking of network," he said.

 **Etihad Airways serves more destinations in India than any other country across its network, supporting the growth of air travel to and from the country** 

Danny Barranger

American country. "Even for London, Indians are increasingly using Abu Dhabi as a transit point since the airline operates

An evening for some cricket

The Department of International Trade UK along with VisitBritain welcomed the Lancashire Cricket team and introduced the Emirates Old Trafford to key travel trade professionals over dinner at the British High Commissioner's residence in Mumbai.



Visa training is crucial to trade

Up-to-date information about visas is critical in the tourism business as one misstep can lead to an entire tour getting cancelled. Visa Lounge continues to encourage its team to undertake classroom trainings as well as webinars. The company also trains the trade on visas.

Hazel Jain

Clevio Monteiro, Chief Executive Officer, Visa Lounge, is always encouraging his team to undertake training while on the job. "Good training and being informed about the latest updates regarding visas is very important, especially in our industry. Misinformation or the inability to read the itinerary correctly and suggesting the correct visa requirement can turn out to be a major problem to our client. This is why we are always encouraging our team to undertake training while looking at day-to-day work. We have a small internal training session followed by a questionnaire to determine the level of our staff



Clevio Monteiro
CEO, Visa Lounge

skill and understanding of the product. We also encourage them to attend online webinars whenever possible," he says.

The company is also constantly looking at training the trade about visas through its e-commerce marketing plans, direct B2B agent trainings, joint marketing

plans with like-minded partners and emailers. "So far, we have done joint marketing activities in 12 cities in India and plan to do more this year," Monteiro adds.

For now though, the team is working on a revival plan. "I'm sure everyone in the travel industry is doing this right now. We will stick to our basic plan of expanding to new cities and introducing more technology-driven products to help agents process visas in a systematic and efficient way," he reveals. There are many new products in the pipeline and Visa Lounge will announce a few major initiatives in the near future.

On his wish list though is a holiday – a tax holiday! "There are

many trade bodies interacting with the government right now, showcasing the industry's pain points and requirements to them and I'm sure the authorities will understand our predicament and come out with a solid plan soon. It should consider giving us a tax

✦ So far, we have done joint marketing activities in 12 cities in India and plan to do more this year ✦

holiday for two years at least and also consider giving interest-free term loans or overdraft interest waivers for six months," he says.

At this point though, he hopes to overcome this situation at the earliest and bounce back stronger. "The best way to do this is to support each other," Monteiro says. ✦

Rxpertize joins hands with Southern Odyssey

Rxpertize Hotels & Resorts will now provide its specialised hotel marketing services to Southern Odyssey, to help them establish their presence in North India.

TT Bureau

With a focus on its fastest-growing market, Southern Odyssey has appointed Rxpertize Hotels & Resorts to expand its tourism activities in North India. As part of the association, Rxpertize, a specialist hotel marketing company that works with upscale stand-alone hotels, will be responsible for increasing awareness, conceptualising and implementing sales strategies about the company in North India from its existing as well as new markets. **Roma Malik**, Director, Rxpertize Hotels & Resorts, will spearhead the sales and marketing strategies for the company. Currently, she is heading Sales & Marketing for Winsome Resort & Spa, Jim Corbett; Hotel Sitara International Manali; Umaid



Roma Malik
Director, Rxpertize Hotels & Resorts

Safari's & Desert Resort, Bikaner and Jain Group of Hotels North East.

Through incisive domain knowledge in hospitality marketing, Rxpertize will ensure that Southern Odyssey consistently delivers a superior competitive performance in its existing and new markets. It will help reposition their business through a long-term and a sustainable module. ✦

✦ Based on the evolutions in APAC and the patterns of previous crises, UNWTO estimates international tourist arrivals could decline by 20-30% in 2020, translating into a loss of \$300-450 bn in international tourism receipts.

Holiday division to grow

Akbar Travels plans to grow its holiday division and focus more on its group and FIT departures. It is also offering a six-month credit note to clients that they can use to rebook packages.

Hazel Jain

Joining the company more than 15 years ago, **Benazir Nazar**, CEO, Akbar Holidays, has a vision to grow the company. She wants to not only carry the legacy her father has created forward, but also expand the niche she has crafted for herself. "I feel very



Benazir Nazar
CEO, Akbar Holidays

didn't want to do wholesaling. At that time, Akbar was lacking an online presence as well as a holiday division where we could curate holidays for travellers. So, I came on board and was initially part of the start-up of Akbar Travels Online. I later started Akbar Holidays – the only part that was missing," she says.

The company has now started group departures which are competitively priced. "We are also looking at doing luxury experiences for evolved travellers. This would include activities such as polar bear migration, getting a ride in a Ferrari, or being served by a Michelin-star chef on a cruise. This is specifically targeted at evolved travellers and giving them a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Nazar adds. With regards to current bookings, Akbar Travels is offering a six-month credit note to clients that they can use to rebook the same package or choose an entirely different destination, whether international or domestic. ✦

Speaking about the other segments that have caught her attention, she adds, "My vision for the next five years is to become one of the largest companies to do group departures, FIT and corporate travel. We now also have a corporate tool that can be personalised for each company, making it a self-booking tool for the corporate client and requiring no support staff from our side."

Nazar is actually a lawyer by profession, but she decided to join the travel company 15 years ago at her father's behest. "When I came in, I was sure that I

✦ We have a tool that can be personalised for each company, making it a self-booking tool for the corporate client and needs no support staff ✦

passionate about my holiday division and that is what I am majorly focused on right now. But, the online division is also something that I am very interested in and eventually we will merge these two divisions," Nazar reveals.

Talking Turkey with TAAI



The Ministry of Culture & Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, in association with the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), recently completed its six-city Destination Turkey Workshop and B2B sessions. These are glimpses from the Kolkata edition of the roadshow, where almost 25 suppliers from Turkey participated.

5 years & a new destination

Red Carpet Travels recently celebrated its fifth anniversary, and invited partners and members of the trade to join in the festivities. On the occasion, the Destination Management Company (DMC) announced that it will now serve the Australian market as well, as a DMC based in Melbourne. The celebrations also made for the perfect occasion to thank trade partners for their support.



Trade tweets #savetravelindustry

Travel professionals the world over ensured that #savetravelindustry hashtag went viral over the few weeks – whether it was to voice their displeasure against TCS or to urge the government to safeguard jobs in the tourism industry.



Purvi Jhaveri @PurviJhaveri3 · Mar 20
#BailoutTourism #savetravelindustry

FINANCE MINISTRY WHILST YOU ARE CONSIDERING BAILOUT FOR AVIATION AND HOTEL INDUSTRY, ALSO KEEP IN MIND CRORES WORKING FOR TRAVEL AGENCIES AND TOUR OPERATORS THAT ARE

#Keepbookingholidays #savejobs #savetravelindustry #bestof_travel

Don't cancel your travel Change the dates Save tourism ❤️

#DontCancelPostpone

Ashutosh Gupta @ashuricha

I appeal to the INDIAN govt to save the fraternity from this unjustified TCS compliance! This will eventually will lead to tempt travellers booking online and pay on arrival leading to more tax evasion

#pmindia #savetravelindustry #savethetravelindustry #travelcompanysshutdowntax

WE ARE TOGETHER #SAVETRAVELINDUSTRY

T - TRAVEL C - COMPANY S - SHUTDOWN TAX

#Travelkarona #Daro-na

Shetal Parikh @parikh_shetal

#BailoutTourism: #savethetravelindustry #nsitharaman let justice be done. Understand and help the travel industry that contributes significantly to our Indian economy #aitihadevohava

Alpa @alpagani

Closure of Jet Airways, Cox and Kings and now the coronavirus and to top it all #TCS tax is going to hurt the outbound travel industry causing huge job losses in an already bleeding industry #savetravelindustry

Shayeen Dalal @shayendalal · Mar 8
Replying to @alpagani #savetravelindustry

TravelMG @traveling_m · Mar 8
Replying to @shayendalal and @shayendalal We have and had enough business in the process of discounting and Redbus we killed each other, to add the tax and now covid, only God can bless us @TAPL_TAVT

Shayeen dalal @shayendalal · Mar 8
#savetravelindustry

Shree @Shree13401470 · Mar 18
Replying to @shayendalal and @shayendalal

Mahendra Vakharia @mahendravakharia · Mar 20

PLEASE HELP FOR A MONTH TO THE GOVT FOR IMMEDIATE relief in order to survive:

Grant us:
- Total tax holiday for 2 years
- No TCS on travel
- Moratorium of loan repayments
- Financial Aid to pay salaries

We other industry except travel can claim to support 1 in 10 jobs. In India it supports 8.8 or directly and govt needs to #BailoutTourism and #savetravelindustry

Appeal to govt to save millions of jobs by granting:
- Financial aid to pay salaries
- Moratorium of loan repayments for 1 year
- No tax for 2 years
- No AEC on travel

TARI @TARI_TWEETS

Happy #WomensDay 🎉 save the women who work for their livelihood in the travel industry. #savethetravelindustry #savetravelindustry remove unjust #TCS tax remove unjust #gst save the women rather than just celebrate the day.

Kulso Shah @kulso_shah

#savetravelindustry #notcstax otherwise we shall be sitting next to these.

‘Most airlines could be bankrupt’

CAPA – Centre for Aviation, in its recent analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on aviation, states that by the end of May, most world airlines would be bankrupt, and that coordinated government and industry action now is the only way to avoid catastrophe. Each country needs to work towards the greater good of all.

TT Bureau

As the impact of COVID-19 clubbed with multiple government travel reactions sweep through the world, many airlines have probably already been driven into technical bankruptcy or are at least substantially in breach of debt covenants. Cash reserves are running down quickly as fleets are grounded and what flights there are operate much less than half full. Forward bookings are far outweighed by cancellations and each time there is a new government recommendation, it is to discourage flying. Demand is drying up in ways that are completely unprecedented. Normality is not yet on the horizon.

Peter Harbison, Chairman Emeritus, CAPA, says, “Things are moving so fast and so far



Peter Harbison
Chairman Emeritus, CAPA

beyond anything we’ve ever imagined before. Outside a handful of exceptionally well-cashed-up companies, the only airlines that can survive three months with no income, while at the same time having to re-fund cancellations, are those that are substantially propped up by their governments. We have a long way to go before we can expect to see global improvements. Hopefully it will force governments to recognise the vital importance of tourism and aviation, especially in the environmental debate.”

What is hampering recovery?

The two main reasons that are impacting the aviation sector amid the COVID-19 outbreak, according to CAPA, are governments failing to cooperate with each other and putting national self-interest over cooperation.

❖ Governments failing to cooperate

While governments are grappling with the health challenges of COVID-19, it is clear that there is little instinct to act cooperatively. Messages are mixed and frequently quite different. Each nation is adopting the solution that appears best suited to it, right or wrong, without consideration of its neighbours or trading partners.



❖ National self-interest over cooperation

The fear is that, as a collapsed airline system is reconstituted, similar national self-interest will prevail. That’s important because the aviation industry is about much more than airline health. It is crucial to global communications and trade. Yet, it remains impossible for airlines to merge across national boundaries. Often provoked by unions in what is a heavily unionised industry, foreign own-

ership is strongly resisted and foreign airline operations within another country (“cabotage”) is globally proscribed. The result has been a fragmented and largely unviable airline industry.

Today, government response has been fragmented – and is being resolved along national lines, with limited consultation. As things stand, the likely tepid response to the airline crisis will equally be fragmented and nationally based. It will consist

mostly of bailing out selected national airlines.

The post COVID-19 world

Post the COVID-19 chaos, there will emerge a unique opportunity to reframe the foundations of a global airline industry. If the will is there, finding the right direction will require leadership and a recognition that there is no place for nationalist attitudes in this most international of all industries. While some survivors are self-evident, such as Chinese airlines that are mostly government-supported and so at least the majors will remain solvent, a conflict along nationalistic lines would have colossal implications for the entire aviation supply chain, airframe and aerospace manufacturers, lessors and financiers. It would be greatly reduced in size and would be catastrophic for many satellite activities.

Tourist sites beyond Ahmedabad

Jenu Devan, Managing Director & Commissioner of Tourism, Gujarat Tourism, shares that the board will now be promoting new destinations in the state and engaging with the agents for the same. Some ancient monuments and sites are also being opened to the public, with development of tourist infrastructure already underway.

Nisha Verma

Gujarat Tourism once again saw double-digit growth in numbers, in 2019, a trend it has maintained for the past few years. **Jenu Devan** says that in terms of tourist growth, for the last so many years they have been growing at 14 per cent and it was similar for 2019 as well. “After the inauguration of Statue of Unity, the number has been substantial, and so many people are visiting new tourist attractions across the state, including Balasinor Dinosaur Museum and Fossil Park,” he adds.

In fact, this year, the tourism board will give more publicity to the untapped and unknown locations of Gujarat. “We have identified a few destinations and



Jenu Devan
Managing Director & Commissioner of Tourism, Gujarat Tourism

have started with their promotion. We launched the calendar for this year where we have showcased such new locations that are not in the public view, but which have very good tourism potential. In terms of existing tourist locations, we would like to concentrate more on developing circuits in and around them. Our strategy would be to ensure that if a tourist

is coming to see Statue of Unity or attend Rann Utsav, for instance, he should stay for one more night. Hence, we are working on what else can be developed in

❖ Our strategy would be to ensure that if a tourist is coming to see Statue of Unity or attend Rann Utsav, for instance, he should stay for one more night

and around that destination and how that can become a circuit,” he shares.

Devan adds that Gujarat Tourism will increasingly engage with



agents this year. “Our association with the agents and operators has substantially increased. We want to have more meetings with them and our strategy is to make sure that tourist arrivals are not concentrated in and around Ahmedabad city alone. We are thinking of going beyond Ahmedabad to other big cities,” he says.

What’s new in Gujarat?

Devan shares that near the Balasinor Dinosaur Museum and

Fossil Park, they are developing new tourist attractions. “It is only 1.5 hours away from Ahmedabad. There is a very good dam and the place offers natural beauty. We want to ensure that it is also being given proper infrastructural assistance and proper marketing, so that more people visit those particular areas. Towards the north of Ahmedabad is Polo Forest, which itself is a beautiful location that has been frequented

by people for day-long picnics. Now, three or four more locations have come up there and are attracting a lot of tourists. The sites include ancient monuments, culture breeding ground and even a dam. All these things would definitely attract tourism. Towards the south, we are coming out with more infrastructure facilities. While some places will be fully developed soon, others would be ready in the next few years,” he shares.

Twenty-two tourist attractions in the United Kingdom now offer virtual tours. Those interested can sign up for these online tours for royal residences, museums and galleries, national parks and more, including The National Gallery.

EVENT TALK

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JUNE 2020

IATA AGM	Amsterdam	22-23
Arabian Travel Market (ATM)	Dubai	28 June- 1 July

JULY 2020

TTF	Kolkata	3-5
International Conference on Tourism & Hospitality	Singapore	6-7
TTF South	Hyderabad	10-11
HICSA 2020	Mumbai	22-23

AUGUST 2020

Digital Travel Summit APAC 2020	Sentosa	17-19
International Conference on Sustainable Tourism	Kolkata	21-22
IBTM China	Beijing	26-27

SEPTEMBER 2020

UITT 2020	Kyiv, Ukraine	1-3
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Global Hospitality and Tourism Conference on Experiential Management and Marketing	Shillong	23-25
KITF	Almaty	24-26

OCTOBER 2020

India International Travel Mart	Mumbai	9-11
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NOVEMBER 2020

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India International Travel Mart	Pune	27-29
CII Travel East	Bidhannagar	27-29

DECEMBER 2020

India International Travel Mart	Hyderabad	4-6
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For more information, contact us at: talk@ddppl.com

Nomination withdrawal extended

Ahead of IATO's biennial election scheduled for April 25, the list of contestants for various posts in the Executive Committee has been released. In wake of the nationwide lockdown, the last date for withdrawing nominations has been extended.



Manas Dwivedi

Nominations for the IATO election have been released. The last date of withdrawal of nominations was March 24 (by 3 pm), but after presiding over a meeting of all contestants, the Returning Officer for the election, **Akshay Kumar**, CEO, Mercury Himalayan Explorations, decided to postpone the date of withdrawal of nominations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Withdrawal of nominations received so far stands invalid. It was also decided that there will be no campaign till such time the new dates are announced.

The position of the President has received five nominations—**Rajiv Mehra**, Uday Tours & Travels; **Amaresh Tiwari**, AT Seasons & Vacations Travel; **Lally Mathews**, Divine Voyages; **Rajesh Mudgill**, Planet India Travels and EM Najeeb, Air Travel Enterprises. For Senior VP, the nominations are—**EM Najeeb**, Air Travel Enterprises;

Lajpat Rai, Lotus Trans Travel; and **Sarab Jit Singh**, Travelite (India). For VP, nominations have been received from **Raj Bajaj**, Perfect Travels & Tours; **Ravi Gosain**, Erco Travels; **Amaresh Tiwari**, AT Seasons & Vacations Travel; **Arun Anand**, Midtown



Travels; **Lally Mathews**, Divine Voyages; **Rajesh Mudgill** and **Lajpat Rai**, Lotus Trans Travel.

For Honorary Secy, nominations have been received from **Rajnish Kaistha**, Paradise Holidays India; **Raj Bajaj**; **Ravi Gosain**; **Amaresh Tiwari**; **Lally Mathews**; **Rajesh Mudgill** and



Akshay Kumar
Returning Officer, IATO Election

Sanjay Razdan, Razdan Holidays. For Honorary Treasurer, **Rajnish Kaistha**; **Viney Tyagi**, Uni Crystal Holidays; **Ravi Gosain**; **Arun Anand**, Midtown Travels; **Sunil Mishra**, Cosmos Tours & Travels; **Atul Rai**, Ananya Tours; **Tony Marwah**, Indian Travel Promotion Company and **Sanjay Razdan** have applied. For Honorary Joint Secy, **Rajnish Kaistha**; **Raj Bajaj**; **Viney Tyagi**; **Sunil Mishra**; **Atul Rai**; **Tony Marwah**; **Sanjay Razdan** and **Naresh Sharma**, Inpac Tours, have filed nominations. For EC Members – Active, nomina-

tions have been received from **Himanshu Agashiwala**, Columbus Travels & Services; **Mahender Singh**, KK Holidays N Vacations; **Deepak Gupta**, Tour Express; **PS Duggal**, Minar Travels; **Manoj Kumar Matta**, Oriental Vacations & Journeys; **Vikram Madhok**, Abercrombie & Kent; **Viney Tyagi**; **Deepak Bhatnagar**, Aamantaran Travel Company; **VKT Balan**, Madura Travel Service; **Arun Anand**; **Vishal Yadav**, Incredible Destination Management Service; **Sunil Mishra**; **Atul Rai**; **Tony Marwah**; **Harish Mathur**, Concord Travels & Tours; **Naresh Sharma** and **Ravinder Kumar**, Indian Legends Holidays. For EC Members – Allied, nominations have been received from **Kamlesh Hemchand Lalan**, Ravine Trek; **Ashok Dhoot**, Harsh Travels; **Zia Siddiqui**, Alliance Hotels & Resorts; **A Aarif**, Parveen Travels; **P Vijayasathy**, Benchmark Hotels and **Sunil Sikka**, Katha Tours. 🐦

COVID-19 revival plan soon

As the tourism industry comes to a standstill owing to the COVID-19 crisis, **Jyoti Mayal**, President, TAAI, claims that they are working on a revival document for their members and staff, once things come to normal, which could take over nine months.



Nisha Verma

Spearheading the association, **Jyoti Mayal** claims that they are speculating on what the future holds and how a roadmap is now needed to cross all hurdles that will emerge once the lockdown is over. "For the last one



month, we have been fighting many issues such as TCS, which has been deferred till October and we hope will be deferred forever," she shares, adding that TAAI is doing everything possible to make sure that the industry is able to resurrect itself sooner.

"We've been making representations to the ministries of finance,

aviation, tourism and commerce, as well as the Prime Minister and Niti Aayog. We have constantly been in dialogue with the airlines, both domestic and international, regarding refunds and other issues. In addition, we have been in touch with DGCA, IATA and UFTAA. Jointly with other associations, including FAITH and CII, we have put a united front to the

🐦 We are looking forward to reliefs that can ensure that we give salaries to our staff, so that we can all survive in this difficult time 🐦

government and are supplying them with data on different rebates and reliefs we are looking forward to. Amongst other things, we are looking forward to reliefs that can ensure that we give salaries to our



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

staff, so that we can all survive in this difficult time. We project that it will take more than nine months before business activities normalise once the lockdown is over," Mayal says.

The TAAI President also feels that leisure is not going to be a priority for people as businesses are affected. "IMF has already announced that we have moved to the phase of global recession. We, at TAAI, are in the process of documenting a roadmap for the survival of our industry," she shares.

Mayal believes that this is the time to reinvent and re-establish the industry. "We need to put into place the right criteria to transact our businesses vis-à-vis airlines, IATA and all our suppliers. We need to safeguard ourselves and create a corpus for an emergency like this. We need to see the safety and survival not only for our members, but also our staff, who are a part of our extended family. We need to be one strong voice to be heard. All our members shall consciously take an oath to be together and put up a united front. The responsibility to work ethically is the onus of our members, but creating the right environment should also be a priority. TAAI and its members have been working diligently in giving representations to IATA and other government bodies. We will collectively come out of this catastrophe and create a favourable environment for us," Mayal says. 🐦

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ANDHRA PRADESH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION Vijayawada



Former Chairman & Managing Director of Air India, **Ashwani Lohani** has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) with the rank of a cabinet minister. The Andhra Pradesh government has appointed the former bureaucrat for a tenure of one year. A retired officer of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers, Lohani has previously served as Chairman & MD of India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), Chairman of the Railway Board and MD & Commissioner of MP Tourism, among others.

GOAIR Mumbai

GoAir has appointed **Sanjiv Kapoor** as Advisor. Kapoor, whose career spans over two decades with airlines in Asia, Europe, and the US as investment advisor, portfolio manager, and management consultant, will advise GoAir on important business and government matters. Prior to GoAir, he steered Vistara as its Chief Strategy and Commercial Officer and played a pivotal role in its growth from nine aircraft and 40 flights to 36 aircraft and 200 flights a day. Likewise, Kapoor, in his earlier stint with SpiceJet, led the airline through its unprecedented turnaround as its COO, shepherding the airline through a period of record-high oil prices and a cash crunch.



SAROVAR HOTELS Gurugram

Sarovar Hotels has promoted **Nihar Mehta** from Corporate Human Resources Manager to General Manager—Human Resources. An industry adept professional, Mehta has an experience of almost a decade. He has previously worked with organisations such as ITC Fortune and several multinational companies, including Ravi Jaipuria where he had led the HR department for the retail division for J Mart brand, and Varun Beverages. In the new role at Sarovar Hotels, Mehta, who is an MBA from University of Western Australia and holds a Masters in Human Resource Management from Monash University (Melbourne), will be responsible for managing employee development policies and systems.



SAYAJI HOTELS Mumbai

Sayaji Hotels has appointed **Amit K Singh** as Corporate General Manager - Operations. A seasoned professional, Singh comes with a rich experience of over two decades in the hospitality industry. In his new capacity, he will play a pivotal role in driving and overseeing all aspects of operational excellence at Sayaji Group of Hotels. He motivates his team to achieve targets and has been responsible for the overall growth in his previous role. Prior to this, he has worked with reputed brands such as Pride Group of Hotels as Area General Manager for Gujarat, ITC Hotels, Ramee Group of Hotels, Choice Group of Hotels and others. Singh has always been committed to providing strategic leadership.



LE MÉRIDIEN RESORT & SPA Mahabaleshwar

Marriott International has appointed **Manav Malhotra** as the new General Manager of the Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa. He brings with him over 16 years of experience in core hotel operations and has held managerial roles with several renowned hotel chains. Malhotra will now oversee all the operational and commercial aspects of the hotel. He will be responsible for driving the performance through new and innovative strategies at the Le Méridien Mahabaleshwar Resort & Spa. Malhotra, who joined the Marriott India family four years ago as Director of Operations at JW Marriott Kolkata as a pre-opening team member, has also led the pre-opening team of the iconic Ritz Carlton Pune.



RADISSON BLU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Mumbai

Pankaj Saxena has been appointed General Manager at Radisson Blu Mumbai International Airport. He was most recently General Manager at the 151-room Radisson Blu Pune Hinjawadi. Saxena brings with him over two decades of experience in the hospitality industry in India and has previously worked at properties like Radisson Varanasi and brands like Sarovar Hotels and ITC Hotels. He also served in the Executive Committee of Hotel & Restaurant Association of Andhra Pradesh, which is affiliated with FHRAI, as VP from 2011-12. In the new role, Saxena will be responsible for all aspects of operations at the hotel.



RENAISSANCE CONVENTION CENTRE HOTEL & MARRIOTT EXECUTIVE APARTMENTS Mumbai



Pallav Singhal has been appointed as Hotel Manager at Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet- Mumbai, Marriott Executive Apartments. He has been in the hospitality industry for over two decades and has extensively worked with the Hyatt group in India, Diani Reef Beach Resort & Spa in Africa and multiple properties of Marriott International including JW Marriott, Fairfield by Marriott and Renaissance Ahmedabad Hotel, which was his last assignment and where he was the GM.

RENAISSANCE RACE COURSE HOTEL Bengaluru

Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel has appointed **Jen Varghese** as the Director of Sales & Marketing. With a robust experience of 16 years in the hospitality sector, Varghese has enriched his professional expertise in the areas of sales, business development, strategic planning and team management, after having worked for key brands in the hospitality industry. In the new role at Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, his core responsibilities will include maximising hotel revenues through result-oriented sales and marketing strategies, while also exploring business opportunities through events. Prior to this, Varghese was associated with Le Méridien, Bengaluru as DoSM.



HOLIDAY INN OMR IT EXPRESSWAY Chennai

John Mathulla has been appointed as Executive Assistant Manager at Holiday Inn Chennai OMR IT Expressway. Armed with more than a decade of experience, Mathulla has mastered the art of hotel operations and their responsibilities, to ensure an experience for guest right from where they first come into contact with the hotel and staff, and to leave lasting impressions. In the new role, Mathulla will support the team as a leader in achieving their full potential. He has previously worked with a number of hotel chains, and moves to the new role from that of Rooms Division Manager at Crowne Plaza Kochi.



Identify these airlines using their logos and mascots as a hint.

1



2



3



4



5



6



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Relief to industry awaited

The Ministry of Tourism has put forth the requests of the tourism and hospitality industries to the Ministry of Finance, in a bid to help stakeholders come out of the financial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, which is at its peak in India.

Nisha Verma

Rupinder Brar, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism (MOT), Government of India, says that the COVID-19 crisis has made the travel industry suffer a lot, and the only way to come out of this is to adhere to the rules of social distancing and work towards recovery of the industry.

A grim situation

An extremely grim situation for the tourism and hospitality industry has been created because of COVID-19 and India continues to grapple with a terribly-hit economy. Brar says, "It is hard to quantify where we are headed. We are in a continuous dialogue with the representatives of CII, FAITH, WTTC and other trade bodies, including PHD Chambers of Commerce, and we hope that we have the problem behind us very soon. Hotel occupancy has come down to 20 per cent from what it could have been, as this was a huge travel season for India when occupancies are usually recorded at 70-80 per cent. After our talk

with the industry, it seems that the situation is only going to get worse, and the occupancy might even come down to 10 per cent. It is worrisome for us as an industry and as a country as well."

MOT at the forefront

Since this situation came unannounced for everyone, the first thing that MOT did was to take care of the foreign tourists who were in India. Brar says, "No-

Stakeholders need working capital either from the banking sector through easing of norms or support through reduction in taxes

body knew the protocol and what to do even at the state government level. The tourists had no idea either. Since the symptoms of this infection are so similar to common flu, we first started educating the tourists, state governments, tour operators and stakeholders

about ensuring that the tourists are either sent back to their countries or are given medical care in India to the best of our capabilities, in line with the traditions of Atithi Devo Bhava."

She adds that there were many challenges, especially because no one knew how to go about it. "However, with the support of everyone, including media, we are able to tackle that phase. The second challenge came when we started sending messages to all our tour operators that even domestic tourism should not be encouraged considering the chances of community-level penetration of the COVID-19 virus. I am glad that everyone cooperated. People were holding themselves back, which required collective response at a societal level. Apart from that, in terms of calculating the economic impact, we are in constant dialogue with FAITH and other industry bodies, and they have been sending us inputs on what kind of evaluations should be made and the period required to stage a comeback," Brar shares.

"We are fully supporting the cause," Brar claims, adding, "Industry stakeholders need working capital and they are looking at interventions either from the banking sector through easing of norms or support through reduction in taxes. These are the things that would leave money in the hands of the industry right now. We would be taking with us the representation of the industry and the thrust would be that the industry needs to survive so that job losses do not happen. I would refer to the honourable PM's speech to the nation, where he has himself mentioned that we should make sure that we don't stop the wages of anyone. Hence, all the efforts of the Ministry of Finance would be to ensure that no such job losses happen in the tourism and hospitality sectors."



Rupinder Brar
Additional Director General
Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

Global benchmarks in tourism

The meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Tourism & Culture was held in New Delhi. Led by its Chairman, the Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism & Culture, Prahlad Singh Patel, the agenda of the meeting was 'Promotion/Development of Rural Tourism and Homestays and Improvement in Global Benchmarking of Tourism Sector'. The Ministry of Culture focused on various cultural activities like fairs and festivals. Members of the committee gave innovative suggestions on promotion of tourism and culture for Incredible India. The minister highlighted the need to convene at regular intervals and he also highlighted the need to give specific suggestions on aspects of road development so that the diverse parts of India could be accessed by all to appreciate the immense potential of India's art, heritage, culture and natural sites.

Appeal to Ministry of Finance

MOT, in its support for the tourism and hospitality players in the country, has put all the requests of the industry to the Ministry of Finance. Brar says that the tourism minister has met all association representatives. She hopes that an interim package is announced soon.

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