

# 1 IN CIRCULATION & READERSHIP SOUTH ASIA'S LEADING TRAVEL TRADE FORTNIGHTLY

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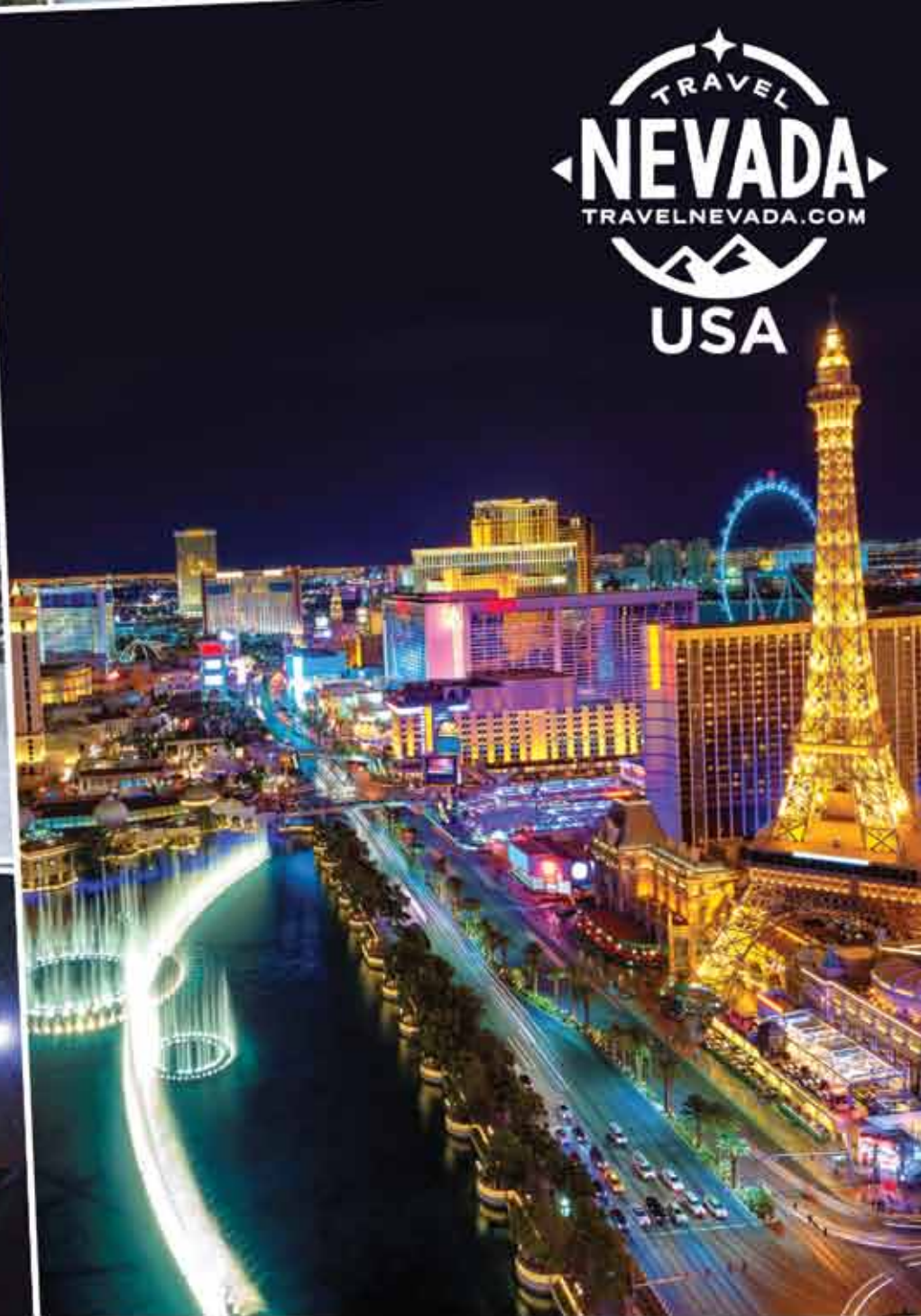
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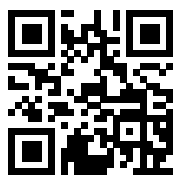
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## DDP pledges ₹1 crore to trade

The DDP Group, to support travel and hospitality companies affected by the COVID-19 crisis, has created a media fund of ₹1 crore under its 'Standing with the Trade' initiative. The move will help support businesses by providing targeted advertising campaigns, free of cost.



TT Bureau

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic which has greatly impacted the travel and hospitality industry, the DDP Group has launched its 'Standing with the Trade' initiative to provide Rs1 crore worth of free advertising to help the travel and hospitality communities in India and South Asia. This initiative is supported by all of DDP Group's premier publications, including TRAVTALK, Tourism Breaking

News, TravelTV, News, MICETalk and Hospitality Talk. Together, these publications reach 600,000 travel and hospitality professionals daily.

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to spread rapidly around the world, many businesses are resorting to cutting down on marketing budgets, especially in advertising. However, previous studies have demonstrated that maintaining marketing expenditure can help grow a business and gain



**SanJeet**  
Director, DDP Group

market share through periods of economic malaise. According to

an article published in the Harvard Business Review, "During recessions, it's more important than ever to remember that loyal cus-

✦ The timeliness of our actions as a united industry are more important than ever ✦

tomers are the primary, enduring source of cash flow and organic growth. Marketing isn't optional

– it's a 'good cost', essential to bringing in revenues from these key customers and others."

In light of this, the DDP Group aims to support businesses by helping them navigate these turbulent times through leveraging DDP's media assets. "The timeliness and effectiveness of our actions as a united industry are more important than ever, and we are hoping that our initiative can assist stressed businesses till the market begins to strengthen. Al-

though it is difficult to predict how long this might continue, history has enough examples to show that after a time of economic difficulty, industry and countries have always bounced back," says **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group. ✦

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## 'We are all suffering together'

**Hardeep Singh Puri**, Minister of State (I/C) for Civil Aviation, has said that his ministry is constantly in touch with travel agents and other stakeholders in dealing with the crisis they presently face. While the government has resumed evacuation flights for Indians stranded abroad, no news has been shared yet on the resumption of domestic flight operations.



Nisha Verma

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) is in active touch with all stakeholders of the tourism industry, including travel agents and airlines, claims **Hardeep Singh Puri**. "We are in daily contact with the airlines on specific issues and **Pradeep Singh Kharola**, Secretary, Civil Aviation, has been dealing with the travel industry and agents on an institutional basis. We are acutely conscious of the challenges they are facing and of the fact that they have cash flow problems. I can foresee that our ability to address these problems gets facilitated



**Hardeep Singh Puri**  
Minister of State (I/C) for Civil Aviation

only when we resume activity. We need to look at it as an industry issue; travel agents, airlines and the hotel industry are suffering together. We all need to put our heads together and figure out how to ad-

dress the problem, what the government can do and what kind of ecosystem we can devise. On behalf of all of them, we are in touch with different sections, including

✦ I can foresee that our ability to address these problems gets facilitated only when we resume activity ✦

Airports Authority of India and operators. I am confident that going forward, we will find solutions," he said at a recently-held press conference.



Commenting on the distress that the aviation sector has faced owing to COVID-19, he added, "Challenges that airlines are facing are from the pre-COVID period. We all know

that the aviation sector has suffered a lot."

Puri also announced at the conference that MoCA was bringing back 15,000 Indians stranded in

more than 10 countries, over seven days in 64 flights. The evacuation, being carried out on Air India flights, began on May 7. However, he insisted that the repatriation flights are no indication of domestic flight operations beginning soon, which would only resume after the lockdown is lifted. The minister also said that they will navigate the way forward based on how the situation evolves. "We will have to open the aviation sector in a gradual and calibrated manner. We can only plan for flights between two green zones. It will be difficult to resume services between red zones," he concluded. ✦

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# Writ plea for airline refunds

In a bold move that can possibly bring some respite to travel agents across the country, TAFI has asked the Supreme Court of India to intervene in a petition concerning refund of air tickets from airlines for travel during the lockdown period.

Hazel Jain

**Pradip Lulla**, Acting President and Vice President, Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), has revealed that the association has asked the Supreme Court to intervene in a petition concerning the refund of air tickets to passengers from airlines in cash for tickets bought for travel during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The primary plea was moved by the NGO Pravasi Legal Cell on April 27, 2020.



**Pradip Lulla**  
Acting President and VP  
TAFI



of our corporate clients where refunds are being adjusted without the receipt of the same from the airline. In

✂ In Zone 4 (India), they (airlines) are charging penalty for cash refunds even when flight schedules are cancelled ✂

the low-cost model, the refunds are being amalgamated in the login account of the agent without them receiving cash. We are awaiting the early date of the motion to be heard and seek

relief to our travel agent members," Lulla shares.

Crucial funds remain blocked with the airlines for travel not undergone and which, in fact, has been cancelled. Lulla adds that some airlines have divided their bookings as per zones where Zone 1 is US, Zone 2 is Europe, and Zone 3 is South-east Asia and for these they are giving refunds, but not for India that comes under Zone 4.

"In Zone 4, they are charging penalty for cash refunds even when flight schedules are cancelled. We hope to hear from the Supreme Court on this issue soon," Lulla adds on a positive note. ✂

dian as well as international. While we have approached the concerned authorities in the past through FAITH, the airlines have said that they will give refunds only after three months."

Travel agents across the country are being squeezed as fliers demand cash refunds. TAFI hopes that the refund should be paid to source, i.e. the travel agents from whom tickets are booked and issued on non-operation of flights during the lockdown and beyond.

"We are going through a lot of hardship from passengers



He says, "This was done on May 6, 2020 through NGO Pravasi Legal on behalf of TAFI. But this is for all air ticket issuing agents in India. I estimate that the total volume of refunds would come to around ₹800-900 crore, as bookings were made not just for the summer holidays but also for student travel. This is for bookings made for all airlines – In-



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# TRAVTALK

## VIEWPOINT

### Divided by distance, united by ambition

COVID-19 began as a crisis that travelled from country to country, region to region, wreaking havoc as it went along. Today, people and businesses across the world have been affected by it, with the tourism and aviation sectors having to bear the brunt. While 'survival of the fittest' may have brought them thus far, it is now crucial that the world recover from the crisis together. This calls for a set of guidelines and measures that can be put into force globally, so that when travel resumes, airlines, airports, travellers, and tourism industry stakeholders and participants are aware of what needs to be done and what to expect every step of the way.

The question now is, **who does the onus fall on**, which organisations must come together to formulate the strategy ahead, by when should the guidelines be ready [given that domestic travel is expected to resume soon] and how will they be implemented by each sector of the tourism industry?

The task at hand, though Herculean, seems like the only efficient way to come out stronger!

### 'Accept' the new normal

Yes! While the new normal has been talked about exhaustively, it is time we accepted it, adapted to it and looked to the future. Tourism may shrink, but people will continue to travel whether for business or leisure; flights may not be fully booked and aircraft may be grounded, but recovery will come even if slow and slender; hotels may not enjoy soaring occupancy levels, but guests will turn up and they will demand the services they always have, albeit in keeping with new norms. Now is the time to transform thought to action and look ahead into the near future. It is time we realised that COVID-19 is a reality we must live with, as we don't see it vanishing anytime soon. Each sector of the industry must review the segments that can be shifted online and those that may still require face-to-face contact.

Tourism 2020 and beyond was once considered the technology era, the pace has just been quickened.

# Road out of COVID-19

'Recovery will not be easy and will require critical strategic decisions to be taken by the industry and government,' says the latest update by CAPA - Centre for Aviation. Indian aviation will confront a series of challenges in the coming weeks and months.

Grounding operations was relatively straightforward, but the road out of the lockdown is far more complex. The reports states that financial and operational challenges associated with the resumption of services are potentially so significant that some carriers may choose to remain grounded, whilst others may not survive. Assuming that air services resume from 01-Jun-2020, the industry will by that stage have been grounded for over two months, after having already experienced a sharp decline in traffic in March. The four months from June to September will be a critical phase. This includes the weakest period of the year for air travel in India even at the best of times, let alone in the aftermath of a once-in-a-century crisis.

#### National Civil Aviation Policy 2.0

CAPA suggests that there is an urgent need for a revised national civil aviation policy which defines the new parameters for operating within the reality of COVID-19. The gov-

Airline	Estimated fleet for domestic operations	Estimated fleet for international operations
IndiGo	135 - 150	25-30
SpiceJet	40 - 50	10-15
Air India	30	35-40
GoAir	30	5
AirAsia India	15 - 20	-
Vistara	15 - 20	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>265-300</b>	<b>80-95</b>

Airlines will need to quickly adjust their operations to the new traffic estimates

ernment must adopt a fresh perspective on the appropriate policy and regulatory framework, as well as institutional infrastructure. The original National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) released in 2016 was designed for an environment of growth. Post-COVID there is a need for NCAP 2.0 – possibly as an interim measure - to support sectoral emergence from the crisis through the stages of survival, stabilisation, recovery and eventually expansion.

CAPA suggests that COVID-19 represents the best opportunity to implement step changes to remove all barriers to growth and viability. And, in addition to

### CAPA concludes...

- ❖ The first major test for the industry will be the Supreme Court decision on cash refunds, as some carriers may need to organise funds to comply should the court rule in favour of passengers.
- ❖ Social distancing protocols will constrain airline capacity. However, demand in Q2 is expected to be so weak in any case that it is unlikely that traffic would be much higher if there were no restrictions.
- ❖ CAPA has revised its traffic projections downwards for FY2021 from our 06-Apr-2020 update (the estimate for domestic traffic has declined from 80-90 million, to 55-70 million, while international estimates are down from 35-40 million to 20-27 million) as the structural damage and weakness of customer sentiment become more visible. Forward bookings are currently frozen.
- ❖ Indian carriers will need to re-align their fleet deployment plans with the expected levels of demand.
- ❖ In order to successfully emerge from this crisis and transition to a sustainable industry, the entire value chain and the government will need to rethink aviation in the country. This will require a National Civil Aviation Policy 2.0 to be designed to support sectoral recovery.

### Key issues to be covered in NCAP 2.0

- ❖ Ways to strengthen corporate governance
- ❖ Regulating minimum cash reserves
- ❖ Why profitless growth over sustainability?
- ❖ Making the fiscal environment less punitive
- ❖ Ways to ensure bids for airport operator concessions are rational and do not compromise returns of entire downward value chain
- ❖ Reassessing the strengths and role of Airports Authority of India (AAI)
- ❖ Making Bureau of Civil Aviation Security more tech-focused than people-focused
- ❖ Measures to make MRO sector more competitive, reducing costs for Indian airlines and generating employment in-country
- ❖ Ways to streamline ground handling
- ❖ Corporatisation of air navigation services
- ❖ Incentivising training and education infrastructure
- ❖ Strengthening DGCA to become a more independent, professional regulator

the steps that the government takes with respect to the Indian market, it must encourage the adoption of a global, coordinated strategy to ensure a harmonisation of COVID-related measures across all countries. If the aviation industry has to navigate a patchwork of regulations for international operations, the costs and complexity will further damage any recovery.

#### Revised fleet

Based on revised traffic projections by CAPA, if the competitive structure of the industry was to remain unchanged, Indian carriers would operate around 265-300 aircraft in the domestic market in 2HFY2021 and 80-95 on international

routes. The total estimated operational fleet of 345-395 aircraft compares with a pre-COVID fleet of around 650 aircraft, resulting in a surplus of 255-305 aircraft. In the event that there are some airline failures, the fleet size is unlikely to be dissimilar in absolute terms, however the distribution by carrier will differ. Indian carriers (excluding IndiGo) may need to raise a minimum of USD2.5 billion of capital. Even IndiGo, which is relatively better-placed, may need to enhance liquidity in the event of a prolonged crisis. The estimate of USD2.5 billion may even prove to be highly conservative as the extent of the structural damage to the industry is yet to be understood. ↴



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# Jalesh arms trade with e-trainings

India's first cruise brand has initiated a series of webinars since the lockdown to turn a challenging situation into an opportunity, so that all its trade partners are ready to hit the ground running once travel resumes. These webinars are well-attended and cover an array of offerings from the brand.



Jalesh Cruises, first premium cruise liner catering to the Indian domestic and international cruise business, is making cruising an 'affordable luxury' for Indians. It has its very own cruise ship 'Karnika' that is unique as it is equipped in its variety of features that is respectful of every Indian who aspires to enjoy cruising the high seas.



**Amit Jain**  
Director  
Gem Tours and Travels

In order to make the best of the current situation, Jalesh Cruises has launched a series of webinars for its trade partners. Its aim is to ensure that the travel trade partners are updated about the measures that are being taken on board the ship as well as future sailings and opportunities. Kiran Bhandari, Co-founder, Cruise Club Vacations Pvt Ltd, has been a key player in arranging training webinars for Jalesh Cruises. He is also the Director of Trips Academy that brings in a new form of learning for the travel fraternity.

The cruise company has so far successfully conducted trainings for 10 key travel partners that was attended by over 2,000 participants. Its key participants included Riya Travels (Avinash Jadhav), Akbar Travels (Dharmin Desai), Gem Travels (Amit Jain), Zenith Leisure Holidays (Ishita Ghoshal), Orchid Global (Sanjoy Bose), Big Breaks (Raghav Rana), Delmos (Shruti Shah) and Travel Triangle (Humesh Sharma). Webinars help partners understand the ultra-premium comforts and non-stop entertainment



**Dharmin Desai**  
Head - Digital Products  
Akbar Travels of India

the biggest opportunities and feel this new and safe way to travel will intrigue a lot of their clients.



with stunning shows, thrilling adventure activities and exotic cuisines with international hospitality on the high sea.

Webinar participants are excited to be onboard Jalesh too and are looking forward to having their guest on the ship soon. The sessions have been designed keeping the end customer's questions and perspectives in mind. Travel partners feel that Jalesh Cruises offers them one of

These training webinars were conducted by Jalesh's sales team. It was moderated by Faizan Ghadai, Business Development Manager at Jalesh alongside their pan-India sales team managers Ritesh Yadav, Yogesh Kothawade, Hrishikesh Kulkarni, Abhay Raj Singh, Harshwardhan Joshi, and Shanta Soibam. They will conduct



**Avinash Jadhav**  
Head - International Business  
Riya Travel and Tours India

more such trainings in order to forge a synergy with its travel partners and share knowledge about the Jalesh cruises brand. As India's first cruise brand, it unites all the stakeholders to the spirit that is uniquely Indian.

**Explore the ship**  
Karnika is an outstanding cruise liner. It has beautifully furnished spacious cabins. On board the



ship, passengers can enjoy a variety of cuisines, entertainment, adventure and relaxation to choose from. Additionally, the cruise offers land-based excursions at different ports for passengers. The ship has three fine dining restaurants, which includes Indian cuisine and Thai, Malay, Korean, Mongolian, Taiwanese and Japanese cuisines. The ship hosts nine different buffet and food stations. There is a dedicated platform for Jain passengers. There are nine bars on board with a full bar menu. With a host of on-board entertainment for children as well as adults, there are Broadway shows, Burlesque performances, casino, music and dance nights, movie screenings and adventure activities to enjoy to the hilt.



**Faizan Ghadai**  
Business Development Manager  
Jalesh

is a home away from home experience for Indian passengers. Passengers can be on-board a cruise ship without going through the hassles of booking an international vacation.

**Post-COVID 19 measures on the ship**

India's first multi-destination cruise line launched on April 19, 2019 in the Indian market has been taking active measures to ensure that the passengers onboard Karnika are safe and protected. Safety being one of the major concerns, it has set processes in place after

tions by passengers have been made mandatory. Guest bedrooms and linen are sanitised and disinfected regularly, as are the common public areas and touch points that are sterilised hourly.



**Kiran Bhandari**  
Co-founder  
Cruise Club Vacations

Self-service in the dining areas has been suspended and recreational and entertainment facilities are sanitized pre and post usage. Air filters and coils are replaced to ensure healthy air quality in all cabins. The ship also has a 24x7 medical centre onboard with isolations room. All the frontline crew members wear a protective gear and undergo temperature checks regularly. To ensure complete safety, drinking water is checked several times during the day.

While Karnika is a destination in itself, Jalesh Cruises has a major focus on developing its domestic itineraries for its season starting from September 2020. Sailings starting from Karnika's home port Mumbai to destinations like Goa, Diu, Lakshadweep and the high seas are some of the major itineraries. It also has a few itineraries planned for international destinations such as Sri Lanka.



**Humesh Sharma**  
AVP - Sales & Operation  
Travel Triangle

Jalesh ensures that passenger have the best of culinary experience complimented with Indian hospitality and guest service. The team ensures that its guests take back happy memories after experiencing its finest entertainment curated and written by the international partners. The cruise company's major focus is to bring home the cruise experience and ensure the product



**Ishita Ghoshal**  
Assistant Manager  
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the COVID-19 situation. Guests are made to understand that outside F&B will not be allowed on board. Temperature checks and signed health declara-

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**Tourism Breaking News**

- Karnataka government to revive tourism sector in five phases
- FAITH doubles its tourism loss estimates from ₹5 lakh crore to ₹10 lakh crore
- Most air passengers wish to begin travelling this month: IATA survey
- Wedding segment likely to reach pre-COVID levels once outbreak recedes: Horwath HTL
- Tourism between UK and France to restart with no quarantine
- MoCA proposes draft SOP for airlines; no cabin baggage, fill detailed forms
- Telangana to develop tourism sites, garner more revenue

# Hotels to alter course of business

**Pushendra Bansal**, COO, Lords Hotels & Resorts, says that though business is expected to pick up towards the end of 2020, it is in the interim that they need to begin devising plans to create future demand. These plans do predict that the role of hotels is bound to change considerably.

 TT Bureau

**Q How are you dealing the crisis at the moment?**

Lords Hotels & Resorts has opened up its hotels for the healthcare fraternity, vulnerable populations and anyone fighting the spread of COVID-19. Our hotels are also helping underprivileged people by dis-



**Pushendra Bansal**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Lords Hotels & Resorts

**We can sell our hotel space as workstations, use it for local art & culture, and even organise local field trips or day-long picnics**

tributing hygienically cooked meal boxes. All the cooks, chefs and housekeeping staff at the hotels have been di-

rected to maintain personal hygiene. Checking temperature of every guest, increasing frequency of cleaning rooms and public areas is continuously followed.

**Q According to you, how long will the hotel sector take to stabilise?**

The hotel industry will see a paradigm shift in the post-COVID-19 world. We will soon be referring to it in terms of BC and



AC — 'Before COVID' and 'After COVID'. The road to recovery will be a long process, as the guest will have to feel comfortable and safe to venture out.

International travel will take longer to get back on track, while domestic business will be a key factor in the industry's recovery. We expect to see growth in the last quarter of 2020.

**Q What is your recovery plan?**

Due to limited travel options after the crisis, we will promote staycations for local travellers. We can sell our hotel space as workstations, for use as spa, or local art & culture and dining, and even organise local field trips or day-long picnics during this period. We will be focusing on rationalising cost, cutting down expenditure as per changing customer needs,

automation as well as adoption of technology to improve service levels.

**Q Lessons learnt from COVID-19?**

COVID-19 and its aftermath have forced us back to the drawing board to look for innovative solutions. The guest experience will change in terms of safety as well as the safety of our associates.

# Weddings are not 'pandemic-proof'

Estimated to be a \$74 billion industry (source: IBISWorld), the world of weddings is hurt today, claims **Meher Sarid**, Indian Wedding Industry Expert, Wedding Curator & Stylist, Sound of Music India. She believes that the dynamics of the wedding market, in relation to the tourism and hospitality industry, would take a whole new turn.

The wedding industry is one industry that was considered 'recession-proof' and one that wouldn't see a stop. But, here we are, grappling with a pause; whether a long one or short, is still left to be seen. We know that tens of thousands of weddings have been called off, impacting the tourism,

aviation and hospitality segments in a big way. The Indian wedding tourism turnover was projected to be valued at about ₹458 billion in 2020, up from ₹234 billion in 2017, according to Statista and its research, that picked up from KPMG's 2017 report estimating the size at \$50 billion, then.

Little did Indian wedding service providers know in March 2020 that the sparkle in the wedding business will not be long-lived, as announcements on social distancing came about. The new wedding season is now pegged to pick up in September or October this year, and one can expect social

distancing and clinical levels of hygiene needed.

**Phase-wise return:** As weddings cannot have more than 50 guests for the next few months, it would be safe to

**By October 2020, we will see slow movement in weddings; the big fat wedding will be slimmer until March 2021**

assume that by October 2020, we will see some slow movement in weddings. The big fat wedding will be slimmer until March 2021, and only then will we see it pick up.

**Choice of destination country:** Weddings will predominantly stay within the country till 2021. The upwardly mobile in

the last four years had started moving to exotic faraway lands, and the revenue outflow from India was staggering. Not only did they fly their guests, but some carried a whole entourage of photographers, hairstylists, chefs, florists and the works from India. About 25 million people in India travel outbound, but we will see this trend reverse with Indian destinations picking up.

**Destination wedding hotels:**

It will be the return of the business traveller over leisure travellers. Up until December, we will find that properties within driving proximity will get priority over properties that need to be accessed by flight. The domestic market will see decent revenues for at least the next one year.

FHRAI and FSSAI are also working on setting the new

norms for hotel SOPs, and those will also impact the way a wedding is to be done. With the stringent probability of a policy of 'No Buffet Service' in the near future and a probable regulation of pre-portioned food to be served, hotels and wedding planners need to realign themselves, be it on how the service will be done, or on the service style to conduct this.

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



**Meher Sarid**  
Indian Wedding Industry Expert, Wedding Curator & Stylist, Sound of Music India

Phase	Time period estimated	Pax estimated	Distance and mode of travel estimated
Phase Zero	Now to August 2020	5 to 50 Pax	Stay home, Zoom calls, Court Registrar may visit home for wedding registration while practising social distancing.
Phase I	September 2020 to December 2020	Up to 50 Pax	Within driving distance from home/ a Metro phenomenon/ direct flights to close-by destinations within the country. A more boutique hotel phenomena.
Phase II	January 2021 to March 2021	Up to 100 Pax	Direct or one-stop flights to states within India. Luxury hotels business' regrowth phase.
Phase III	April 2021 onwards	150 to 300 Pax	Flights within and outside the country. Outbound tourism will start gaining ground.



# MOT to first observe, then decide

Through webinars and constant representation of the industry's woes to concerned government ministries and departments, Ministry of Tourism is working towards ensuring that the industry picks up as soon as the COVID-19 crisis begins to recede. It shall also devise post-COVID strategies once global ones have been tried and tested.



Nisha Verma

For **Rupinder Brar**, Additional Director General, Ministry of Tourism, it was a combination of many ideas that pushed the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) to launch its webinars, which have today become a regular feature for them. "We started with the webinars on April 14 and there were a few reasons behind it. Firstly, there was a lockdown and there was no other way to communicate with the people at large and with the industry. Secondly, post-COVID, there will be a lot of interest in domestic tourism. Even before COVID-19, MOT was trying to provide thrust to domestic tourism, especially through the Dekho Apna Desh campaign," she said. With so many webinars already hosted by MOT, Brar claims that they have a huge team which works on gathering the content and curating the entire journey to a place through a virtual medium.



**Rupinder Brar**  
Additional Director General  
MOT

Apart from that, MOT is in cognisance of the industry's issues and is looking at both the organised and unorganised sector. "MOT is in receipt of a lot of representation from both organised and unorganised sectors. The ministry has been representing them before the Ministry of Finance—both at the level of the Minister as well as the Secretary. There have been many interactions and the government has already given some relief in terms of moratoriums, PF, etc. It is a constant dialogue which must be at a higher level in

the government. We, at MOT, can only represent the interests of our stakeholders and must leave it for the government at large to fit it into their overall plan. Yet, voicing the concerns of our industry and putting them in the right perspective is what we have been doing. The government is proactive and hence the measures that come also directly or indirectly go to our stakeholders. There have been steps taken by RBI, the government and other bodies, which might not be noticed by some sectors, but any kind of relief benefits everyone," she claimed.

With everyone talking about post-COVID safety measures and protocols for tourism and hospitality, Brar said that they will be formulating these policies once the National Tourism Task Force meets. "In the meantime, there will be a lot of dependence on the protocols that the health ministry shall be coming up with very soon. However, we need

to create a sense of security, whether in restaurants, hotels, airports or other tourist places. Each country will be bringing in its own set of protocols ensuring that travellers and tourists have a sense of security that the place is safe from COVID-19 and is keeping in with norms for safety and

**We need to create a sense of security, whether in restaurants, hotels, airports or other tourist places**

hygiene. Hence, the government and stakeholders have to work together if we want people to come to our country," she asserted.

Meanwhile, there is no clarity on the statistics of the unorganised sector of the tourism industry. "There have been recommendations regarding the same and we

have received figures from FAITH as well. The statistics indicate that about 70 per cent of the industry is the MSME. Having said that, the entire MSME does not necessarily become unorganised. Hence, I cannot clearly say anything yet," Brar commented.

While everyone is talking about the new normal, it is believed that there will be new kind of promotions and new markets to explore to attract tourists into India. Would Incredible India 3.0 look different from Incredible India 2.0? Providing her view, Brar said, "We still have to see how the world actually evolves and what we can expect, because there will be a lot of changes in the future. It's too early to say what we can do. Meanwhile, there is a lot of talk of sustainability, home-cooked food and experiential tourism. However, we need to see how it will pan out, in detail, and shall wait for most parts of the world to come up with their own guidelines. We

will continue to study trends in the meantime."

She added that they can already foresee there will be more domestic tourism and short-distance travel in the future. This would also be reflected in our commercials. "For overseas promotions, we need to showcase our strengths, particularly in the COVID-19 environment—the way of life, the 'Namaste' greeting, the philosophy of home-cooked food, and other things derived from our culture like Ayurveda, meditation, Yoga, etc. We would be looking at pitching them. However, which countries we should pitch to and from where travel will happen, we shall wait for some time to know. We will see how the countries come out with their own protocols of travel. There is no point creating a promotion at this point, as the world is still grappling with COVID-19. Right now, all we need to do is wait and work towards creating hope."

## 'We must look at on-ground realities'

**Sejoe Jose**, President, IATO Kerala Chapter, shifts the focus on tourist guides, drivers and hygiene measures at monuments in a post-COVID-19 world. He also says that people who travel domestically will automatically be brand ambassadors in showcasing to the world how safe India is to travel to.

First and foremost, we need help with our office staff. The Central government needs to start pumping money into State governments to help sustain our staff. That is the primary problem we face today. We need a rescue plan for them, as our billing today is zero every month. With that, paying our staff has become very, very difficult for us. We can do it for one or two months at the most; beyond that, it is a Herculean task. Until this package is announced, a zero to four per cent interest payable in 2021 will be ideal for small to medium-sized travel agents. We don't expect domestic travel to begin before October 2020 and international travel before January 2021.

Another sector that we need to address is Government of India-approved tourist guides. They have been struggling with zero work and they need to be looked

after. Another community that needs immediate help is over a million drivers in the organised and unorganised sector who are stuck without work. Some

**People who attend MICE events and weddings, or go on domestic holidays, are going to showcase to the world, through social media, how safe our destinations are**

of them have invested all their savings into their vehicles. Our request to the government is to please look at them as they are also part of the tourism fraternity.

We should use this time to conduct webinar trainings for our guides, especially for foreign language-

- 01 0-4% interest payable in 2021 for small to medium-sized travel agents
- 02 Problems of guides & drivers to be addressed as they have been out of work for long
- 03 Regular webinar trainings for guides, especially foreign language-speaking ones

speaking guides, be it Japanese, French or German to name a few. Kerala lacks this and it is a good time to ask them to register for language training programmes.

The Kerala government should also look into creating an India panel that will look at tourism post COVID-19. Cleanliness of each of our destinations and monuments and what steps can be taken to keep them clean

must be decided. Let us also, as an industry, stop using plastic bottles and develop a system to completely remove plastic from our system.

We need to send out positive messages to the world to keep them updated on what India and Kerala are doing towards medical tourism and how India is prepping itself to ensure that visitors will be protected. We

- 04 Develop a strategy to completely remove plastic from the system
- 05 Create a positive message around the world that India is a safe place to visit
- 06 Encourage corporates and families to conduct events and wedding in India

need to create a positive message around the world that India is definitely a safe place to visit in future when things get normal.

We need to understand how we can get the ball rolling for tourism. Yes, marketing is very important, but one of the most important things to do right now is to start supporting each other locally. We also need to start encouraging various corporate companies in

India and families to start doing their events and weddings in our country and in our state, by giving them attractive deductions in GST or making the package attractive and incentivising them. Ultimately, the people who attend these MICE events and weddings, or go on domestic holidays, are going to be our marketing people as they are going to showcase to the world our products through social media and how safe our destinations are.

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



**Sejoe Jose**  
President  
IATO Kerala Chapter

Changing  
the way

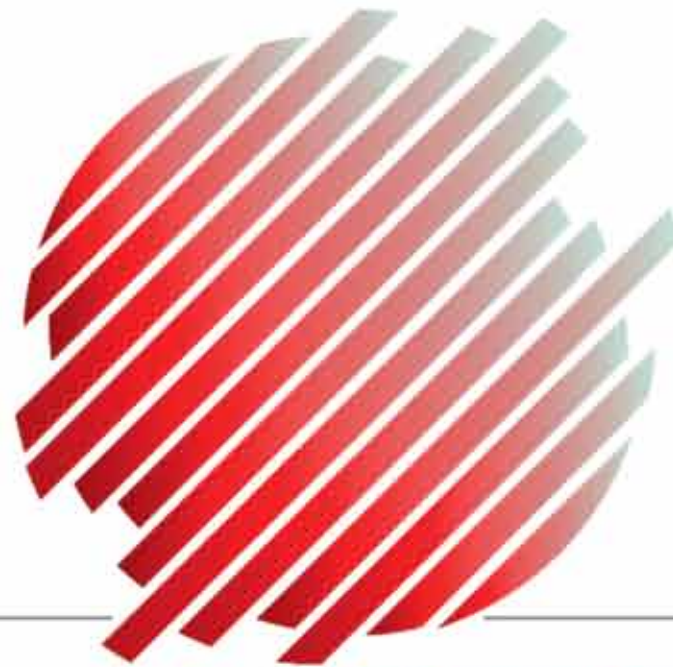
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# Inbound to recover in 18 months

In the foremost session of 3<sup>rd</sup> TRAVTALK Digital Conclave titled 'The Reality of No Tourism', panellists discussed the current scenario where inbound sector is witnessing zero billings and income, and facing the threat of survival.

 Manas Dwivedi

At this gripping first session, focused on inbound tourism, panellists discussed the extent of damage done to the industry and how the government could help through some relief. A major shift in the marketing and destination-selling approach was also discussed apart from what inbound tourism will look like in the post-COVID-19 era. While there are a lot of expectations from the government, this may well be an opportunity for the industry to learn, not just dealing with crisis but preparing for a future crisis, and adapting to a changing world.

“There is need from people to only work with government-approved travel agencies. Once everything normalises, IATO will start organising skill development programmes for its members. We are hoping for some relief from government soon. I expect this grave situation to get a little better in 3-4 months' time once lockdown is lifted. IATO will definitely go forward and promote domestic tourism.”



**Rajeev Mehra**  
Vice President  
IATO

“Sustainability is the biggest issue right now. There should not be a lot of expectation from the government. A lot of people will also look at consolidation in the industry. With new technology, new virtual reality products should be introduced. Right now, spending wisely should be the only smart plan B. Once the situation normalises, demand for 5-star hotels will shoot up because of increased need for hygiene.”



**Bharat Bhushan Atree**  
Managing Director  
Caper Travel Company

“In the post-COVID world, there will be more travellers than tourists, and the industry needs tourists to survive. Lockdown has come as a form of opportunity for the industry to learn and adapt to a better world. For eastern India, the biggest opportunity will be cross-border tourism with East Asian countries. A lot of indirect support from the government is needed.”



**Debjit Dutta**  
Director & CEO, Impression  
Tourism Services (India)

# Tech-driven 'new normal' in hotels

At the second session of the Digital Conclave it was deduced that hospitality companies across the nation need to look at adopting technology for processes, while maintaining a balance with offering experiences and value to customers.



**Mandeep Lamba**  
President - South Asia  
HVS ANAROCK

We need to understand that this is a reality that can hit us again, and hence we need to be far better prepared the next time. The payments will continue to happen through credit cards, but we are going to have contact-less check-in and check-out over the phone. There are going to be permanent disruptors, and I believe that it is now the death of the front office.



**Dilip Puri**  
Founder & CEO  
Indian School of Hospitality

There is going to be a massive shift towards hotels making online learning for the workforce mandatory. If there is anything the industry can do to support its people, it's to encourage them to build upon this habit and upskill themselves. The new normal is going to be so different. Encourage and invest in the workforce to help them upskill themselves to meet the challenges of the new normal.



**Jatin Khanna**  
Market VP - North India,  
Bhutan and Nepal, Marriott

“Today, one of the biggest problems of our industry is that we need to bring confidence back in our customers. Whenever the demand comes back, we need to ensure that our customers have complete confidence and faith in our hotels and brand in terms of safety. Today, it's a work in progress for everyone. When it comes to technology, we couldn't have been at a better stage than today.”

 Nisha Verma

The second session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the TRAVTALK Digital Conclave, titled 'Hotels in the age of social distancing: Where are the robots?' saw in attendance three big personalities from the hospitality industry covering various aspects of hotel business, while discussing the changes that the COVID-19 crisis has brought about. The panellists shared insights on what the post-COVID era would look like for hotels; focused on the education of manpower; and elaborated on operational aspects.

# Bringing home weddings & MICE

Here's an opportunity for India to shine as a wedding and MICE destination, was the message at the final session of the Digital Conclave. The next step is for the stakeholders to ensure that the infrastructure is at the ready.

 Hazel Jain

The third edition of the TravTalk Digital Conclave on May 15 also brought three experts together who deliberated on the topic titled 'Big-ticket business: When do we start looking at weddings, corporate and MICE travel?' There can be no simple answer to this, of course. The readiness of not only the corporates but also the service providers such as hotels and event planners is a process. The Ministry of Tourism also wants travel to take centre stage with MICE tourism as its component. For this to happen, protocols and SOPs have to be in place and every stakeholder has to be aware.

“The last wedding we did was on February 29, 2020 in Udaipur. This situation is not that big of a problem for those who have cash reserves. These months are anyway an off-season for weddings. Business will definitely come back by November-December 2020, with a bang, and it will come back to India! We will promote Indian hotels and destinations first. The expense is not a problem as people have money to spend on weddings.”



**Rajeev Jain**  
Director  
Rashi Entertainment

“We need to change the narrative of the crisis. Corporates will not buy travel the same way as before, that's for sure. To be able to cater to this, travel companies are definitely going to relook at the mix of people they will hire, depending on their skill sets. The entire travel industry is going to move to IT. They will also have to learn how to close deals on the phone.”



**Rajdev Bhattacharya**  
GM, Global Travel &  
Hospitality Services and  
Way2go, Digital Operations  
& Platforms for Wipro

“We will see a lot of RFPs for exhibitions coming up and those who are armed to handle it well amidst COVID-19 will stand to win. Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata and Mahabalipuram are great destinations for MICE with good infrastructure. I believe that domestic luxury MICE will bounce back and by the end of the year, short-distance MICE destinations in India will be in demand.”



**Rajeev Kale**  
President & Country Head  
(Holidays, MICE, Visa)  
Thomas Cook (India)

# 'Bailouts preserve inefficiencies'

In a free-wheeling webinar interview organised by CAPA – Centre for Aviation recently, **József Váradi**, Chief Executive Officer of Wizz Air, minced no words while sharing his opinion. He believes that bailout packages provided by governments, albeit selective, could be a hindrance to the betterment of business practices and preserve issues.



Hazel Jain

**Q What is your growth strategy going forward?**

We have an operating fleet of 121 aircraft which will go up to 135 within a year. In that period, we will be taking 22 new aircraft deliveries and retiring eight older aircrafts. We are growing on the basis of new technology that will give us economic efficiency.

Meanwhile, the industry is stepping backwards, deferring deliveries and cancelling orders. As a result, post COVID-19 we are going to be a very efficient, new technology based, very low-cost opera-



**József Váradi**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Wizz Air

tion, as compared to the rest of the industry.

**Q Do you see another round of airline failures coming?**

I think there will be three groups of airlines in the end. One is a very small group – just a few

airlines globally, that are self-sufficient and they have preserved sufficient liquidity and cash to go through this crisis without needing significant government inter-

**✦ Governments are distorting level-playing field by bailing out hand-picked airlines. It is a severe undermining of basic market principles and market distortion ✦**

vention. I think we will be one of them. Then we have another category like the large national

carriers that are bailed out and approved by the governments on a discriminatory basis. They will be kept alive and the rest will basically go bust.

**Q Should the government help and bail out this industry?**

In the short term it feels good when the government steps in and bails you out. They put your people on furloughs on different schemes. But that preserves the inefficiencies of the airline. So as opposed to pushing you by market force to do the right thing for your business for the long run, such government acts are just preserving your issues and inefficiencies. This crisis is going to make us a significantly better business than what we are today.

**Q Why do you think bailouts are a bad idea?**

It is a severe undermining of

basic market principles and market distortion. Let's not forget, the governments are spending tax-payers money. And they in turn will hopefully question them why the governments are spending their money on bailing out airlines as opposed to spending it on public health, for instance. If you look at the magnitude of this spending, thousands of billions of euros are spent on these bailouts, versus the market cap of a couple of billion euros. So it is ridiculous in proportion the amount of money is put into a company, as against the real value of the equity that is bailed out here.

Since they are not forced to restructure or revive their business towards economic efficiency, the tax-payer will end up paying for this and they will be charged higher fares as

against buying a ticket on an efficient airline. So I don't think they are doing the right thing structurally in the long run.

**Q So how should the government help?**

If you want to have a level playing field, the government needs to measure the contribution of the airlines to their respective economies. If you want to put money into the sector, you need to do it on a fair and equitable basis, which is far from what governments are doing at this point in time. ✦

**New routes**

Wizz Air will be launching five new routes from its new Abu Dhabi hub, which will serve Bucharest & Budapest from June 3, Katowice & Sofia from Sept 15, and Cluj-Napoca from Sept 16, 2020.



*UNWTO has released a Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package to offer guidance in response to COVID-19. It is structured on economic recovery, marketing & promotion, and institutional strengthening & resilience building.*

# What flying will mean from now

No doubt, air travel will change drastically and where it will ultimately settle down is anyone's guess. But, looking at the situation at hand, one can safely assume that much is about to change. Three players in the tourism industry share their perspective on how air travel will look like for passengers in 2020.



TT Bureau

Even though the airline business is not a stranger to crisis, never before has there been a situation where every airline in the world has been impacted at the same time. Amidst all this is a silver lining, feels **Aditya Ghosh**, Former President & Board Member, IndiGo and Board Member at OYO Hotels & Homes. "About 80 per cent of air traffic in India moves only in the top 10-15 business cities, which will be essential travel. So there will be a short burst once lockdown is lifted, followed by a long sluggishness, followed by recovery," he says.

Where will this business come from? Ghosh feels it will be affordable products segment that will recover first. "Any airline that is able to take advantage of this can control their overheads and be able to meet the additional



**Aditya Ghosh**  
Former President, IndiGo and Board Member, OYO

costs will survive the next six months," he adds.

Airlines with inadequate reserves are going to have a problem, feels **Sunil Chopra**, Director, Industry Relations, TAFI and former Director on Board, IATA India. "At least the most busy airports need to rethink on what their pricing model should be in terms of handling. More importantly, the survival of the travel agent is at stake at this point. We are going to find almost 30 per

cent of the agents vanish from the market soon and that's a very big concern," Chopra adds.

**How can the government help?**

Ghosh's suggestion is the government can give some relief in terms of airport charges, reduce tax, nullify



**Sunil Chopra**  
Director, Industry Relations, TAFI and former Director on Board, IATA

landing navigation charges, or get guarantees which allow airlines to take debt at a lower interest rate. "More importantly, any bailout should only go to those airlines that



**D Sudhakara Reddy**  
Founder & President  
APAI

have been running the business properly. When you do industry-wide bailouts, somebody who doesn't deserve it also gets the money," he adds.

Chopra, on the other hand, lays stress on reforms. "The government needs to rethink structural reforms right now and it should be largely focussed on ATF and tax on ATF so there is better off-take of fuel. It has been raised that airports are overcharging because of the mechanism that airports bid for business by

offering the highest percentage to the Airport Authority of India and hence has to ensure that they increase pricing everywhere. That concession concept has to change – the way airports are allocated to private partners to operate," he says.

**D Sudhakara Reddy**, Founder & President, Air Passenger

Association of India (APAI), touches upon ATF and says, "The government recently announced a reduction of 36 per cent on ATF and we urge the Government to bring it under GST and make it as minimum as five per cent. That will help airlines bring down operational costs. I also feel lounges will not be in operation in the immediate future." ✦

**Key takeaways for airlines**

- ❖ Any airline that is able to take advantage of this can control their overheads and be able to meet the additional costs will survive the next six months.
- ❖ Airlines with healthy balance sheets will have an advantage. Those that have been running inefficiently even before the crisis will feel the brunt.
- ❖ If airlines are able to bring down variable costs by scaling down their network, there may not be massive spike in air fares.
- ❖ Airports need to rethink their strategy to ensure that airlines can survive, otherwise they don't have business.

# 'North Americans will travel first'

Giving inbound agents a lot of hope, **NS Rathor**, Chairman, Western Region, IATO, says that the North American tourists will probably start travelling to India first and that he has already started receiving inquiries for December 2020 - January 2021.

Hazel Jain

When will the international borders open and tourist movement between countries begin is anyone's guess. But, **NS Rathor**, Chairman, Western Region, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), is positive that the first foreign tourists to start travelling to India will be the North Americans. He says, "I have already started receiving inquiries from my clients from North America for December 2020 end and January 2021, which is a very positive sign."

To hasten this process, he has a suggestion for the industry as a whole. "It is my personal view



**NS Rathor**  
Chairman, Western Region  
IATO

that we can all promote India to the rest of the world by telling them to visit India in 2021 at the price of 2019. I don't know if this can be done – it is a huge challenge – but if we can come together as tour operators, hotels and airlines, and freeze our

prices and rates for a year, I believe we can help our businesses recover faster," Rathor says, adding that states must also think about making entrances to our historical monuments free for Indian nationals and bring it down to 50 per cent of the current fee for foreign tourists.

### Creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

As an expert in inbound tourism, Rathor says that inbound tour operators will need to change the way they will operate in a post-COVID-19 world. "We will have to be very particular about sanitising our buses and cars, our drivers will need to get health certificates

✦ We can all promote India to the rest of the world by telling them to visit India in 2021 at the price of 2019 ✦

and trained on hygiene safety protocols when foreign tourists start arriving. They will need to have masks on all the time while sitting in the vehicles. I am sure IATO as an association will think of all these standard operating procedures for this and list down all the points that should be heeded," he says.

Amidst the chaos that surrounds us, one positive occurrence that has emerged is the strong solidarity among various industry associations. Rathor says, "I am very happy to see that all the associa-

tions like TAAI, TAFI, FHRAI, ADTOI, ETAA and IATO have come together under the umbrella of FAITH and are talking to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India as one unit. The Ministry of Tourism has in turn approached the Ministry of Finance for the same and we are all waiting for a positive response from both the departments on our demands."

### Demands by inbound operators

IATO as an association has made some demands and Rathor lists down some of the key pain points. "We need support to pay salaries to our staff as we have zero billing right from March 18, 2020. We also need some relief in terms of road tax because all our buses and cars have been sitting idle. We need relief in state GST, the loans that have already been taken as well as the new loans that some of us might want

to take once business starts. There are some states that are considering giving subsidies on these lines. States must think about making entrances to our historical monuments free for Indian nationals and bring it down to 50 per cent of current fee for the foreign tourists," he says.

Meanwhile, various chapters were part of a national-level conference call with more than 300 members joining in. "We discussed ideas on how we can recover our business and how we can help each other. All chapter chairmen are in touch with their respective state governments as well. Maharashtra and Gujarat have already given their demands to the state governments, and Madhya Pradesh and Goa will soon do the same. All four states have already had meetings with their state governments and we wait to hear from them," Rathor says. ✦

✦ In a bid to keep trade partners up to date with the tourism offerings in Nevada, USA, Travel Nevada has added some virtual tours that can be accessed at <https://travelnevada.com/>.

## Domestic and MICE to lead

**EM Najeeb**, Chairman & MD, Air Travel Enterprises (ATE) and Senior VP, IATO, believes that domestic tourism and MICE would be the first to recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

Nisha Verma

With the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant lockdowns having created an unprecedented crisis for tourism all over the world, including India, **EM Najeeb** says that a bigger question now is – what next? He adds, "All the source markets for India, like Europe, UK, USA and other important markets, have been affected by COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown. Hence, it will take time for the normal sea of tourists to once again flow all over the world."

He expects normalcy to return by September 2021 and as far as India is concerned, the biggest market would be the domestic market. "We have so many states and attractions, and connectivity across the country via air, rail and road is very good. I am sure that opportunity lies in domestic tourism for the next one to two years. There is also an opportunity in MICE tourism for Indian tour operators



**EM Najeeb**  
Chairman & MD, ATE and  
Senior VP, IATO

and the Indian hospitality sector, which was always going outside India. Now, however, it's going to stay back in India," Najeeb explains.

He also does not expect much inbound tourism to India this season. However, he adds, "India has handled the COVID-19 situation very well in comparison to many other countries. I am sure India is going to become one of the safest destinations after COVID-19. Also, we have handled tourists who were here during this time, very well. They

have been treated and looked after. We have sent them back safely to their home destinations and they have left with good memories. I am sure that they will give priority and preference for their next tourism destina-

✦ There is also an opportunity in MICE tourism for Indian tour operators and the Indian hospitality sector ✦

tion to India, and will come back. They will bring more tourists to India once the situation in their countries settles down and Government of India starts its visa-on-arrival facilities."

Today, ATE is conducting brainstorming sessions with its managers and senior staff members on dealing with the crisis, and moving ahead with their plans to regain business. ✦

## Learn to promote better

**PP Khanna**, President, ADTOI, claims that amid the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent lockdown, they've been educating their members on destinations to help promote domestic tourism better.

TT Bureau

While the industry talks about domestic tourism, ADTOI is taking the lead in educating its members on different destinations and hotels, claims PP Khanna. "We are making our members utilise the time during the lockdown period in learning to promote domestic tourism more effectively. Hence, we spoke to a few states, tourism boards and hotels for educating our members online, so that they could take advantage of the time at hand and learn about the potential of domestic tourism and tourist spots of Indian states. They can also learn about hotels, to promote them and learn about the steps the hotels are taking for the safety and security of their clients. Hence, we started talking to some of the state tourism boards, like Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, who came forward and gave presentations to our members. For hotels, brands like ITC, Taj and



**PP Khanna**  
President  
ADTOI

Accor have already conducted educational programmes for our members," he shares.

They are also making sure that ADTOI members manage their finances well. "Considering the implications of GST for the travel and tourism industry during COVID-19, ADTOI organised a conclave on May 2 on GST for members where Ashu Dalmia, an FCA and GST professional, answered all the queries of our members. We have done one webinar called ADTOI Connect, which was a session on business automation and was at-

tended by many of our members. I am sure they must have benefited from it and learnt about digital changes in the future, which they should adopt to revive their business," Khanna says.

✦ We spoke to a few states, tourism boards and hotels for educating our members, so they could take advantage of the time at hand ✦

Speaking of government support, he adds that they, as an industry, are awaiting a result from the ministry. "Almost five crore people are engaged in the industry, sharing 9.2 per cent in the GDP of the country. FAITH, the unified body of 10 associations, along with FICCI, CII and PHD, has taken up the requirement of a bailout package with the ministries of tourism and finance," Khanna says. ✦



# Rejuvenate the mind, body and soul

With lockdown restrictions being eased and people gearing up to spend some time in the sun, a beachside resort with an air of relaxation is just the place to be. It has been said time and again that short-haul destinations will be the first to pick up in the post-COVID era, and X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat (by Cross Hotels & Resorts) makes for the perfect setting.

Koh Samui is one of southern Thailand's most popular tourist destinations and is home to pristine beaches, lush tropical forests, and vibrant dining and nightlife. The island has its own airport and is just an hour-long flight from Bangkok. It also offers

tions to revitalise the mind, body and soul. In addition to ensuring that cleanliness and hygiene are extremely good across all operations, the resort has implemented enhanced cleaning and hygiene with best practices. While proper cleaning and fre-

The resort also offers a bouquet of activities! Guests can try their hand at a game of Pétanque, paddle a kayak on the calm ocean waters, or take a bike out for a spin along the coastline and through nearby villages. They can also dip into



by the poolside on the plush sun loungers while enjoying the endless ocean view!

## Accommodation

Featuring a unique contemporary style décor, X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat offers guests 26 high-design villas - 23 with

The three 'Garden Villas' cover an area of 85 sqm each, with plush furnishing, airy living spaces, and their very own garden and terrace area tucked away to offer full privacy. The 'Pool Villa', built over 162 sqm, offers guests idyllic and ample space for their dream holiday. It has a state-of-the-art entertainment system with a media library, extended garden and terrace areas, as well as its very own private pool.

Taking luxury up a notch is the 'Family Pool Villa' built on an area of 180 sqm. It has an open-floor plan and can comfortably house up to four guests. This room-type has its own private terrace, garden, swimming pool, sun loungers and a state-of-the-art entertainment system with a media library. The largest and most luxurious of rooms offered by X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat is the two-bedroom Pool Villa that is built on an area of 230 sqm. This prime accommodation features a stunning beachfront view,

a private pool and terrace, and all the other premium X2 amenities to offer guests the very best in design living.

## Other facilities

X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat by Cross Hotels & Resorts understands luxury and guest needs well. Its 4K Restaurant & Bar, located right on the beachfront, offers all-day fusion dining along with a full complement of wines and spirits. Guests needn't worry about indulging in the recreational activities they wish, as an officer is available through the day to arrange it for them. What's more? The resort also offers a movie and magazine library. 📺

## COVID-19 Alert!

Operations at X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat presently stand suspended and are expected to resume on July 1, 2020. We recommend you check with the hotel before making any reservations.

just the place to rejuvenate at X2 Koh Samui – A Spa Retreat, with over 100 metres of uninterrupted beachfront and serene views of the Gulf of Thailand. What adds to the experience is its 'all spa inclusive' package, a first to be offered in the region. Ideal for couples, honeymooners, families or friends looking to blend some quality time together with that much-needed escape, the package offers unlimited spa treatments throughout the day to relax those sore muscles. The X2 Spa has a luxurious relaxation space where skilled therapists apply innovative treatments that combine modern techniques with age-old practices passed on through genera-



quent sanitisation of all common areas and guest rooms is carried out, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also available for guests and staff to use.

the resort's magnificent centerpiece – an expansive swimming pool, the deepest resort pool on the island. They can take an invigorating swim or simply relax

private pools and three with a landscape garden. Guests at the property can also opt to add X2's famous champagne breakfast to the list.

# 'Prepare for better guest experience'

**Harmeet Singh Bedi**, Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group India, JLL, lists down several key measures that hotels will need to take once travel resumes, to ensure that travel agents choose them for their clients. From use of masks to monitoring temperature, he shares his view on simple, but important, steps.

The hospitality industry is a customer-centric industry and therefore, direct interface is a prerequisite in the overall guest experience. Hotels will therefore have to prepare and adopt protocols for a better guest experience. Below are some of the protocols that would need to be adopted to instil confidence among the guests as well as the team for their health and safety. These may include the following:

- ❖ All hotel personnel will have to mandatorily wear masks. Guests could also be provided masks as part of guest room supplies. Masks could be customised especially in the brand's colour or motif.

- ❖ At the entry level, the doorman would open the door for arriving guests. Alternatively, doors would have to be left open. Hotels with automatic sensor doors will not have to worry.

- ❖ Monitoring temperature of the guests was already in place prior to the lockdown. Sanitisation areas would need to be created in the lobby before the guest heads for check-in.

- ❖ Advance check-in and check-out systems will have to be adopted so as to ensure minimal crowding in the lobby. Alternatively, one would have to follow a queuing system with at least three-foot distance between guests.

✂ Hotels will have to put in place manpower scheduling with equal staff spread across all three shifts ensuring safe distancing ✂

- ❖ Guests may have to produce health certificates, as mandated by the government.

- ❖ Swimming pools, gyms and spas will not be operational initially.

- ❖ Ventilating and disinfecting rooms after check-out will be mandatory.



the preparation process.

- ❖ Minimum three-foot distancing between tables in restaurants. Breakfast will be pre-ordered and served to guests. Also, breakfast on-the-go options with takeaway packaging will have to be offered.

- ❖ Menu offerings could be limited, taking into account customer diet preferences while ensuring additional quality of the ingredients as well as safety in

- ❖ Near contactless delivery of food, especially in-room dining as well as smaller individual portions, will need to be in place.

- ❖ FSSAI standards for one to three-star hotels and HACCP standards for four-star and above should be strictly followed.

- ❖ Regular timelines mandated for sanitising, for example,

every 15 minutes wash hands in the kitchen/food production and service areas, cleaning and disinfecting high-contact surfaces like handles, elevator buttons, switches, etc., at regular intervals.

- ❖ Hotels will have to put in place manpower scheduling with equal staff spread across all three shifts ensuring safe distancing. They will also need to ensure high hygiene standards and regular sanitising.

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



**Harmeet Singh Bedi**  
Director, Hotels & Hospitality Group India, JLL



*WTC has unveiled a range of new worldwide measures – Safe Travels – to restart the sector. The measures have been designed to rebuild confidence among consumers so they can travel safely once restrictions are lifted.*

## From survival to revival: The true test

**Kamlesh Barot**, Director, VIE Hospitality and past President, FHRAI and HRAWI, believes that while the tourism industry has been affected terribly by the COVID-19 crisis, the true test would be after the first three months of opening, recovering from no business to at least 50 per cent of what existed, and then achieving pre-COVID levels.

Once we have a vaccine, will we still be social distancing? Wouldn't we all rebound to our pre-COVID practices and show unprecedented buoyancy, refuting every forecast made today! Historically, our hotel industry turned into IT hubs in the technology bubble era, 26/11 made our hotels more secure than airports, the eco-wave made hotels more efficient through the three R's - reduce, reuse and recycle! Should we forget about reuse and recycle now, and only concentrate on reduce? We re-designed our hotels for the differently-abled and now, because of COVID-19, our hotels will be more sterile than hospitals. I wonder where hospitality has gone!

The key to our survival and revival will heavily depend on our first 50 days of online reviews. Upon arrival at your next stay with us, don't be surprised if you're given three bags: one for soiled towels, one for soiled bedding and one

for trash. You may then be asked to place the bags near the entrance to your room and contact housekeeping for clearance. Few of you may observe no in-room housekeeping per se during your stay, as the deep cleaning of the rooms might only take place after guests leave. Maybe others would get into their rooms which have been kept vacant, then cleaned, again kept vacant and then allocated, after the previous guest has checked out. Few hotels might have no minibars, few might have shut their spas or swimming pools, fewer still may have stopped buffets. Maybe there'll be no excess pillows or excess linen or hangers; you might also be given a specific gym time slot, IRD (room service) might be with bento boxes or tiffin boxes or set meals; and others may allow only one person in the lift car.

We are one of the most capital as well as labour-intensive in-

dustries. Without new normal working capital revenues flowing, it'll be difficult to service our lenders and honour our commitments to our teams, our supply chains and the authorities, when our banks have today blocked our bank accounts and our credit card funds due to directives to

✂ Once we have a vaccine, will we still be social distancing? Wouldn't we rebound to our pre-COVID practices and show buoyancy ✂

many banks. What support will we get from our governments at the state-level and the Centre, with so many representations being made, as our businesses and expansion plans have been put in the attic?



Now, we will be moving from the hands-on and human touch approach to contactless hospitality, no breakfast overcrowding, no communal tables and new staff cafeterias. New menus shall be either 'use & throw' or menus shall be QR-scanned on guests' phones or on sanitised tabs. Cutlery, crockery, glasses and napkins may be UV-sanitised or thrown away. All this will increase our overheads rather than lowering our costs, coupled with depressed revenues due to the

spaced-out seating, to adhere to safe distancing.

In these trying times, with staff exodus to their hometowns and stalled mass transportation, we have yet to face the biggest challenge - to retain our most talented and multitasked team. Though we are not in favour of retrenching our decades-loyal staff for a few months' salary trimming, to cut down on the heaviest loader on your P&L, but that is if we will revive. With 1.3 billion guest's

pent-up money and entertainment desire with no software in cinemas and lesser screens, since the non-polluting and zero honking lockdown started, the size & shape of their wallets, also would have changed. There'll be now the new fine-dining avatar and takeaways, even at an additional delivery cost, going up to 35 per cent at times to the restaurants, as the new strategic point-of-sale, without any value cutting.

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



**Kamlesh Barot**  
Director, VIE Hospitality and past President, FHRAI and HRAWI



# New avenues for hotel revenue

**Bjorn DeNiese**, Director, Mayfair Spa, Resort & Casino and Director, RightClique Hospitality, believes it's time to look past F&B outlets of the hotel or merely selling rooms to ensure there's a constant revenue flow now and going forward. For India, he says, the domestic traveller will help tide over the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis.



TT Bureau

**Q How are you dealing with the ongoing crisis? What kind of industry damage are you calculating?**

Currently, it's a lot of e-learning, research and rest that's helping me through the ongoing crisis. I have been spending several hours a week on looking at alternate revenue streams and their viability to supplement earnings for hospitality establishments in the days to come. The times when we focused just on accommodation and food & beverage sales for a hotel will need to change, and we will need to look at all the ancillaries that

could be amplified to ensure a hotel is able to earn some revenues even in a lockdown-like situation.

The hotel industry has taken and will continue to take a beating for a while, in my opinion. The branded and organised hotels clock an annual earning of around ₹38,000 crore (USD 5 billion), and the unorganised ones will account for nothing less than another ₹40,000 crore. We could expect damages at around 60 per cent of annual industry earnings.

**Q Will the domestic traveller now drive demand?**

For India, fortunately, the do-



**Bjorn DeNiese**  
Director, Mayfair Spa, Resort & Casino  
and Director, RightClique Hospitality

mestic and regional traveller has helped the industry tide over tough times in the past. Once again, we find ourselves looking at this segment to keep the industry afloat. However, the impact of market closure

across industries, job losses and the cash crunch many are faced with today would have an impact on the travel plans of even this segment. With international source markets even worse off than India right now, many hotels will be forced to adapt to this. Hotels in India have been seeing a lot

it comes to policies and procedures, especially with the international brands operating in the country.

**Q Do you think it's time for the Indian government to intervene?**

We have a massive number of jobs in the industry already hanging in the balance given that the tourism industry employs 12.5 per cent of the population. Moreover, even if we look at the bigger companies and independent private players, the impact is unprecedented.

The most practical thing to do in the situation is to lay off, send without pay or cut pay significantly. It is certainly not what any company would want to do but is compelled to do with the delay in decisions and a lack of any plan or indication

of an economic revival package. Every day counts and by now, some sort of confidence should have been instilled by the government. Our industry is such that a day without a room being sold or a session without a cover being sold has an impact on us, unlike the manufacturing sector which has traditionally received significantly more importance than tourism.

Besides all the points already extensively and comprehensively covered by FAITH in the representation to the tourism and finance ministries, a financial package from states to cover a minimum of six months of premise rentals and salaries due to employees based on the paid receipts for the same of the previous year would provide significant breathing space.

Hotels in India have been seeing more domestic business and have been welcoming them with open arms

more domestic business in recent years and have been welcoming this segment with open arms for a while now. Hotels would require a little more flexibility, however, when



In the Philippines, more than 155,000 employees from 4,290 tourism-related enterprises received their cash grants under the joint programme of the Department of Finance, Social Security System and Bureau of Internal Revenue.

## Most people don't wish to travel

To get a pulse of the current sentiment with a cross section of society, RightClique Hospitality conducted a survey, with over 80 per cent of the respondents being in the 25-44 age group.

While some of the key concerns of people about travel, as expected, were being at crowded airports/railway stations and being in a confined environment with strangers, DeNiese lists some other revelations the survey brought about.

It was also found that 86% of the respondents would

wear a face mask in future to travel and 45% would be upset if others didn't.

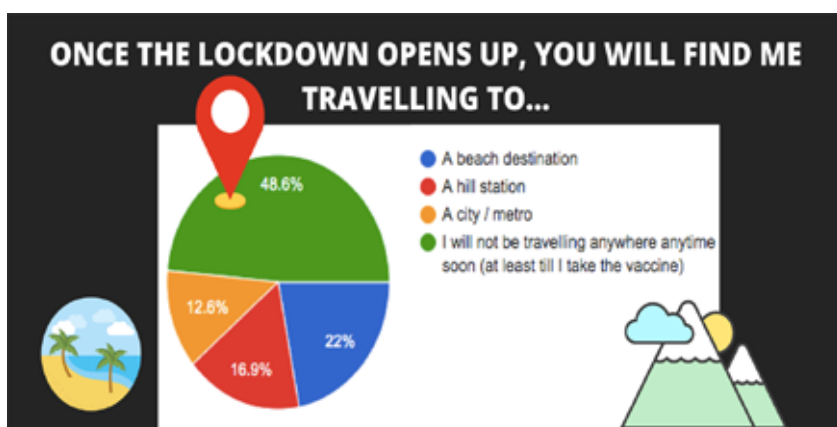
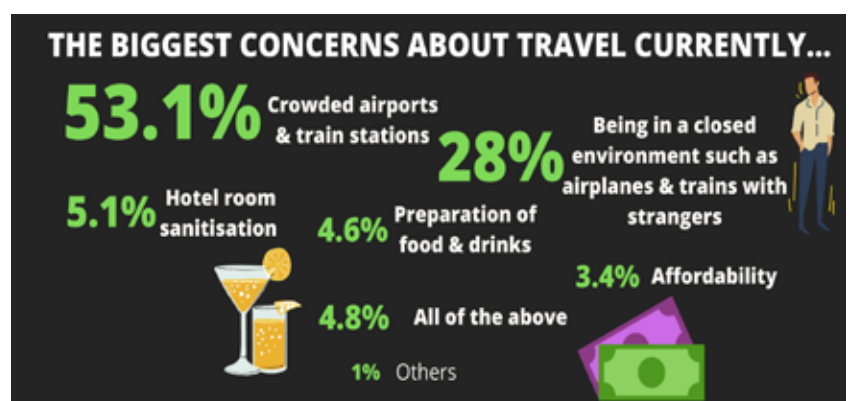
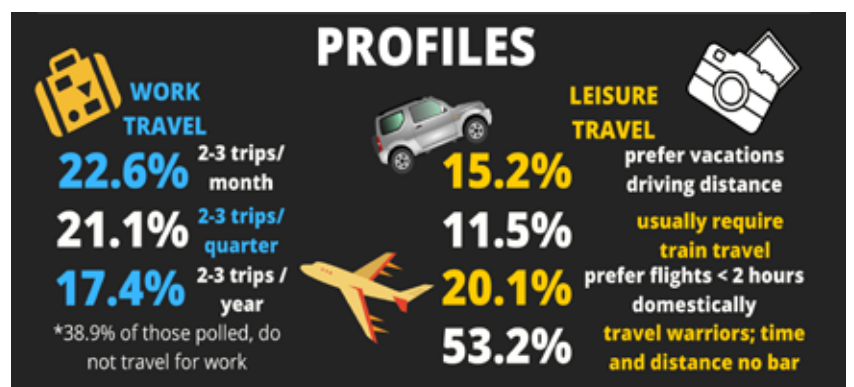
Just 23% felt they would continue with their existing hotel choices while more than half would be taking a closer look at which hotels they are booking henceforth.

There seems to be some hope for restaurants, with 46% still finding it alright to dine out with social distancing in place, while 31% will stick to home food for

now. About 23% of the respondents were undecided.

The million-dollar question, of course, of when would the recovery be had the respondents divided with 42% saying it would take a year at least and 42.3% expecting it to recover in two quarters. An optimistic 11.4% expects it to recover as fast as it slowed down.

"In conclusion, I'd like to say that we are all going to have to be brave, face the storm and make some sacrifices for the future of our industry. It's a



time when we will need to lean on each other to stay on our feet. The government taking not just cognisance of the critical care required for tourism both for the short as well as long term, but action as well

is the need of the hour. We are going to honestly get used to living with the virus since cures, vaccines, etc., are just not something we should be banking on. Having said that, this will bring in a new era in

operating procedures for all of us across the travel fraternity and we must adapt, be prudent and transparent to get through this process. And we are, and will always be resilient," he concludes.

# Azerbaijan announces virtual Fam

Azerbaijan Tourism Board is working on several online measures to engage the trade – its new e-learning module, virtual tours of Baku and of course, the virtual familiarisation tour! Having witnessed a remarkable year-on-year growth in arrivals from India in the first two months of 2020, India will continue being its key source market in the post-COVID phase as well.



Hazel Jain

This is probably an industry first. Taking a step further in the e-engagement sphere, Azerbaijan Tourism Board (ATB) has announced that it is preparing to conduct a virtual familiarisation tour for travel agents soon. Sharing this information was **Florian Sengstschmid**, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board, via a Zoom interview. He said, “We will conduct our first virtual familiarisation trip for Indian travel agents in May 2020. We will select a few key partners and invite them to be part of this tour. It will be in real time and highlight the attractions of Azerbaijan, just like a regular Fam trip with agents visiting our key attractions, hotels, etc., with the possibility of asking ques-



**Florian Sengstschmid**  
CEO  
Azerbaijan Tourism Board

tions and interacting with us the way it is on a Fam.”

ATB is also preparing to launch 20 virtual experiences in Baku on its Salam Baku website soon. Another e-feather in its cap is its new e-learning programme launched on April 29, 2020. Titled ‘Azerbaijan 101’,

the e-learning platform consists of six modules. The course will cover products across health and wellness, gastronomy, wine tours, cultural heritage and more. Courses are currently available in English. Upon completion, participants will be certified as an ‘Azerbaijan Travel Expert’.

Sengstschmid added, “While we have been busy developing these tools, we have also been undertaking in-depth training through webinars with Indian tour operators in Tier-I and Tier-II cities regularly. We recently did one with Zenith Holidays, where more than 100 agents participated.”

#### On-ground training

Meanwhile, in Azerbaijan, ATB together with State Tourism

✦ We have been undertaking in-depth training through webinars with Indian tour operators in Tier-I and Tier-II cities ✦

Agency (STA) of the Republic of Azerbaijan and in cooperation with Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AQTA) has launched a programme called SAHMAN (Sanitation and Hygiene Methods and Norms). It is supported by the UNWTO, and PwC will lead the audit and certification process.

The programme will focus on accommodation, F&B and touristic transportation providers. “This has already started. We are training our workforce in hotels, attractions, and other spheres of tourism on the new safety measures. We are doing this in part-

nership with some international partners to ensure that these services that they are providing are keeping in mind the world-class standards of health and safety,” he revealed. Implementation will be carried out in four phases: enrolling in the programme, participating in it online and onsite trainings and certification, labelling, and validation.

#### A tweak in strategy

ATB has also re-strategised its approach on how it will roll out its brand. “We have identified different phases of travel that will re-start post COVID-19. Domestic travel will become the first option. Regional markets will be the next to open once border restrictions are lifted. The last phase will be a slow return to normalcy with long-haul travel. But, we still need to figure out what the new normal for travelling within the country will look like. How do we manage swimming pools or sauna? What social distancing

would mean in terms of offering new aspects of safety for travellers?” Sengstschmid asked.

Parallely, other things will come into focus – things like overtourism and environment concerns while travelling. “Our future travel behaviours will change, procedures will change. We will be more critical about how accommodation providers, transport providers, DMCs comply with international health standards. Mass tourism will lead to niche, nature-oriented experience-based travel. Responsible and sustainable tourism will emerge,” he predicted. ✦

#### Good to know

The Azerbaijan government has announced a relief package of 1 billion Manat (roughly half billion euros) to secure employment of its people.



*TravTalk Salary Survey 2020 reveals that domestic travel agencies continue to show resilience. When asked if any of the staff had been put on ‘leave without pay’, almost 56% of the respondents said that was not the case.*

# How much have we suffered?

The Global Travel Staffing Barometer quantifies the discharged staff and aims to become the central hub for tracking the loss of human resources, and in time offer the first glimpses for the road to recovery for the global travel industry. The free-to-use tracker offers data on terminations, furloughs and pay-cuts across industry categories and countries.



TT Bureau

“The travel industry is crumbling before our eyes with more than half a million lay-offs in less than a month. Amid the global spread of the pandemic, companies of all shapes and sizes – from the billion-dollar valued to start-ups – are trimming costs, disbanding, and letting go off their most precious asset – the workforce,” observes **Virendra Jain**, Co-founder and CEO, Videc.



**Virendra Jain**  
Co-founder and CEO  
Videc

lated from various sources and updated on a daily basis.

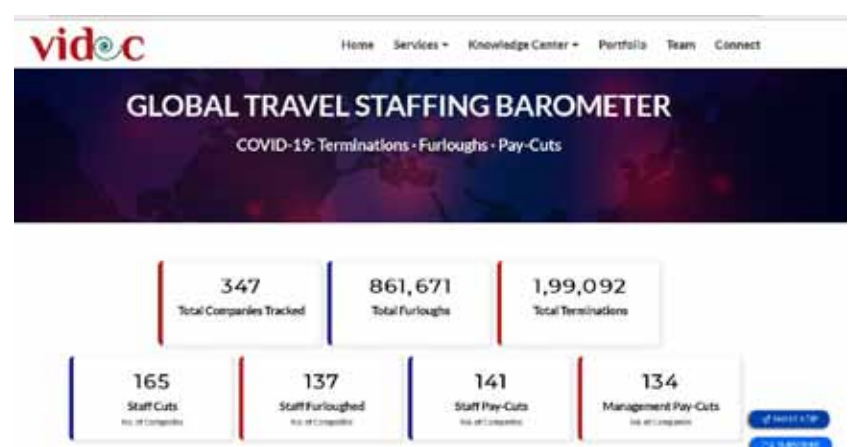
“The travel, tourism and hospitality industry employs almost about 10 per cent of the global workforce, directly and indirectly. The industry is the biggest contributor to both the global economy and jobs. We have been tracking the developments in China very closely and by March 2020, it was evident that the global travel industry was in the throes of un-

precedented carnage. The industry will be one of the first and the foremost fatalities, whether it is ready or not,” Jain adds.

Giving an overview of what the impact has been in India, Jain adds, “India is under-represented in our analysis because many

✦ Across the 30 companies tracked (in India), we have tracked 15,550 jobs at risk, including terminations and furloughs ✦

companies aren’t sharing specific details around their cost-cutting measures. Still, across the 30 companies tracked, we have tracked 15,550 jobs at risk,



including terminations and furloughs to date. More companies in India are initiating management and staff pay-cuts compared to simply laying off their workforce.”

Will this change in the next two to six months? Jain says that there’s no one answer. “More airlines have furloughed and initiated pay-cuts, whereas in ho-

tels the quantum of terminations is way higher. The forecast is likely to be bleak in the absence of government-supported bailouts for these companies and lack of unemployment schemes for the workforce being laid off or furloughed,” he says.

From a domestic tourism perspective, Jain anticipates in-city

staycations and road trips picking up first. “Upon recovery, air and train transport will still operate at minimal levels, and scale up in a staggered manner. The Indian cruise industry is still very nascent, and the limited ability to maintain social distancing on-board will deter masses from taking cruise holidays,” he says. ✦

# TGFI appeals for relief for guides

In a bid to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on their livelihoods, Tourist Guides' Federation of India (TGFI), representing around 3,500 regional tourist guides licensed by Government of India across the country, has approached Prime Minister Narendra Modi and tourism minister Prahlad Singh Patel, requesting a relief package.

 Nisha Verma

**Shakeel Wahab Chauhan**, Nominated Vice President, TGFI, says that because of no business coming their way in this time of lockdown, most of the member associations might lose their entire year's income and most of them do not have any funds to survive. TGFI has thus approached the PMO and MOT for some relief. "We have also written to Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog. Today, because of the pandemic, we don't know if tourism is going to survive or restart. We are not salaried employees of any travel agency or anybody else. We get a licence with one of the signed conditions being that we will not be able to do any other job apart from this. Hence, we are dependent on this work and the problem is that it's a sea-



**Shakeel Wahab Chauhan**  
Nominated Vice President  
TGFI

sonal job for five to six months. This year, right amidst the season, this pandemic happened and now we need a financial package as many of us have home loans and different loans on our heads. We request the government to suspend these EMIs for at least six months. We will start paying them after business restarts. There are different categories of rates for guides, minimum being

₹2,200 for half-day sightseeing. Hence, the government should consider this, so that we can get a minimum amount for the next six months for us to be able to survive, as we cannot do any other job," he says.

### Urging tour operators for payments

TGFI has also approached tour operators and IATO for the re-

 We request the government to suspend these EMIs for at least six months. We will start paying them after business restarts 

lease of their payments. "We also have a demand from the travel agents. All the tour opera-

### On IITFC

There are over 3,500 regional-level guides across the nation, recognised by Government of India and divided into four regions—East, West, North and South. Sharing his views on the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator Certification (IITFC), Chauhan says, "We are against it because the term 'facilitators' literally means to facilitate something. They can facilitate tourists arriving and departing at airports, railway stations, check-in, etc., and we are fine with that. It is good for the people once they are trained, since they would be going in front of the foreign nationals, which is good for the image of the country. However, the IITFC guidelines mention that the facilitators can also go to the monuments to guide. It seems that MOT wants to finish the word 'guide', despite it being globally recognised. The tourist won't understand a facilitator, but would know what a guide is. Secondly, in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958, there is a clause— Rule 8B, according to which nobody can converse, guide and go for any commercial gain into the national protected monument without having a licence. We are licensed according to that, so how can facilitators do the guiding inside the protected monument?" he questions. The matter is still sub judice, and TGFI has also made its representation to Meenakshi Sharma, DG, Tourism, for the same.

tors are paid in advance from the clients, but we don't get it in advance from them. Once we work for them, we get our wages after the season is over. This is a big issue, because COVID-19 crisis happened in the middle of the season, and now we have our payments due. Now the season

has ended, and we have minimum of ₹2 lakh-3 lakh due for each guide, as it is for the whole year. If the tour operators release our payments as well, it will be quite helpful for us," he informs.

In this regard, Chauhan claims that they have also approached

the local handling agents or excursion agents as well as Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), but they haven't got any support. "Thus, instead of travel agents, we are approaching our own ministry for the release of financial assistance," he adds. 

## Private aviation to merge

**Kanika Tekriwal**, CEO & Founder, JetSetGo Aviation Services, shares how the private aviation sector has been affected by COVID-19 and how it will reshape after the pandemic.

 Manas Dwivedi

"The aviation industry has been hit extremely hard by the COVID-19 crisis and when flying through such turbulence, it's critical to focus in the horizon. One of the important points is consolidation. It is usually perceived that private aviation sector is not consolidated, and few players are still working on solo mode which will make survival difficult," comments **Kanika Tekriwal** while briefing about the survival, revival and resurgence strategy in the private aviation sector which includes the operation of charter flights.




**Kanika Tekriwal**  
CEO & Founder  
JetSetGo Aviation Services

According to Tekriwal, there was a nine-fold increase in the number of international inquiries they were receiving for charter flights, but the lockdown and travel ban came as a major setback. "Whether it is health risk concerns or just getting where you need to be, people and companies that have the means to fly privately, but had previously eschewed it, are now looking at the options. The industry as a whole is working on a requirement basis to help people reach their destinations. No two days will be same again in private aviation and we need to stay braced for some turbulence," she adds.

Explaining that it is not the correct time to predict how long it will take for businesses to bounce back, Tekriwal shares that they are looking at six months to a year post-COVID-19 to revive from the losses incurred due to the lockdown. "Most of our customers are HNIs and business travellers, who will resume booking services once

 Unlike commercial aviation, there are fewer touch points in private aviation wherein the flyer is in contact with others 

the lockdown is lifted, pertaining to their travel requirements. Also, there will be a surge in first-time travellers as people with money will move to charter aviation due to its safety, hygiene and convenience. Unlike commercial aviation, there are fewer touch points in private aviation wherein the flyer is in contact with others, which makes it safer," she says. 

Explaining further about the need of the hour in the sector, she says, "Another important step is to have a data-driven, action-oriented plan to help us emerge stronger from the COVID-19 crisis. All this needs to take into account the demands of flying private, safety and security of all our customers which is our utmost priority, and the market structure scenarios."

## 'Find your Finnish calm'

Finland has once again been announced as the 'Happiest Country in the World' by the United Nations World Happiness Report. Visit Finland thus shares some simple tips on finding your calm at home.

 TT Bureau

**TIP 1 – Start your day with a cold shower** (instead of a dip in a lake or the sea)

The Finns love winter swimming as much as they love the sauna. The easiest way to do this at home is to take an ice-cold shower for a couple of minutes. Learn more about swimming at <https://www.visitfinland.com/article/a-refreshing-dip-icy-waters/>

**TIP 2 – Make sense of the world by reading** (instead of visiting a library)

Books are close to the Finns' hearts. The country has 5.5 million people, and they borrow close to 68 million books a year. Moomins are probably the most known and adored Finnish literary icon. The white, hippo-like Moomins are Finnish characters created by the much-loved Swedish-speaking Finn, writer and artist Tove Jansson in the 1940s. Reading (any) book is surely more relaxing than surfing social media!

Learn more about Moomins at <https://www.visitfinland.com/article/long-live-the-moomins/>

**TIP 3 – Experience a relaxing forest path on your sofa** (instead of walk in an actual forest)

It has been scientifically proven that only 15 minutes in the forest calms your pulse and your body starts to rest. So, close your eyes, stretch yourself on the sofa, and have an imaginary sound trip to the forest. Listen

The Finns love their coffee and Korvapuusti so much that there is actually a special word for it, Pullakahvit, which literally means 'bun coffee'. Here is a great recipe for how to bake them, and make your world a little sweeter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ynuFyeEJMc>

**TIP 5 – Transport your thoughts through online mediums** (instead of visiting a museum)



VisitFinland.com

to Scapes album on Spotify at <https://www.lapland.fi/visit/sound-of-lapland/scapes/>

**TIP 4 – Make the world a better (and tastier) place by baking a Cinnamon bun** (instead of a visiting a Finnish café serving them)

Finland's contemporary art scene embraces everything from experimental artist-run initiatives and commercial galleries to flagship art institutions. Visit Taiko, the world's largest online gallery, at <https://en.taiko.art> 

## EVENT TALK

Media Partners:



## MAY 2020

MOT's Dekho Apna Desh webinar	11 am	16
FHRAI Webinar on F&B	4 pm	16
Jalesh Cruises Webinar	1:30 pm	18
CAPA Masterclass webinar	2:30 pm IST	20
UNWTO Webinar on Wine Tourism	8:30 pm IST	20
Switzerland Tourism Webinar	3 pm	22
Jalesh Cruises Webinar	1:30 pm	23
Jalesh Cruises Webinar	1:30 pm	May 24-30 (Except 25 <sup>th</sup> )
CTC Online Masterclass on new normal travel programme	8:30 am IST	27
CAPA India Webinar	5.00 pm	29

## JUNE 2020

Arabian Travel Market Virtual	Worldwide	1-3
International Day of Yoga	Worldwide	21

For more information, contact us at: [talk@ddppl.com](mailto:talk@ddppl.com)

## IATO election post lockdown

Under the prevailing conditions of the nationwide lockdown, IATO has decided it best to postpone its annual election and may conduct it online. Another meeting is scheduled for June-end, where an informed decision will be taken.



Manas Dwivedi

For the second time this year, the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) has decided to defer its biennial election till such time that the lockdown restrictions are lifted. The Returning Officer for IATO Election 2020, **Akshay Kumar**, in a meeting with IATO Executive Committee (EC), and



all contestants decided on May 6, 2020 that even post lifting of restrictions, the association will need to accommodate the process of companies having to rebuild their business and begin



**Akshay Kumar**  
Returning Officer  
IATO Election 2020

operations. Another meeting is scheduled for June-end, where an informed decision will be taken. IATO will also explore the viability of conducting elections online if the need arises. In the interim, the office bearers, EC and Chapter Chairmen of IATO are hereby allowed to work as usual, with no restrictions. Everyone across the board was unanimous in asking for postponement of IATO elections.

Earlier, the date of withdrawal of nominations was postponed.

Later, the elections were postponed by 30 days starting April 6 and the EC decided to meet after 30 days to take stock of the situation. According to the IATO memorandum of associations, the election should, however,

**If the election cannot be held within 90 days, IATO could call for an EGM to decide new dates**

take place within 90 days from the announcement of withdrawal of names by the candidates. In case the election cannot be held within 90 days, the Returning Officer recommended that IATO could call for an EGM and allow the house to decide upon the new dates for election.

Meanwhile, the IATO EC has also decided to defer the last

date for renewal of membership till July 1, 2020 looking at the present national lockdown. Members of the association can raise invoice of the renewal till July 1. All membership renewed for 2019-2020 will continue to be valid till the time new invoices for annual subscription for financial year 2020-21 are raised. However, interested members can make advance payment to IATO for their membership.

The association has also written a letter to PM Narendra Modi for formulating survival and revival plans for the crisis-ridden tourism industry in the country. Fearing a huge impact of COVID-19 on the industry, the association has demanded a sectoral bailout package. In its recommendations, IATO listed out several immediate relief measures required for survival on both short-term and long-term basis.

## 'We don't want credit shells'

**Jyoti Mayal**, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), shares that they have suggested to the Ministry of Civil Aviation to come up with a win-win solution for both airlines and agents, so each can brave the impact of COVID-19 on their business. Only a coordinated strategy and cooperation between the varied segments of tourism can help revive it.



Nisha Verma

Claiming that this was the first time TAAI, as an association, could make a representation to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), **Jyoti Mayal** said, "We have been trying to put it across to them that we are an industry and as much a part of the tourism industry as the airlines are. Tourism and aviation are inter-dependent. Both airlines and travel agents depend on each other for business, hence, we have requested the Ministry of Civil Aviation to look at a solution that is a win-win situation for both. We don't want airlines to go out of business, but also want to save our businesses. While airlines across the world



**Jyoti Mayal**  
President  
TAAI

are seeking monetary support for their survival, they should not be holding back the agents' or customers' money, which is lying with them as per advance bookings. They should refund the agents and customers, instead of giving credit shells."

She added that while airlines are seeking bailout packages from their governments and some of them are even getting it, why is there a problem with the airlines to return the booking amounts given by the agents and even customers directly. "We are asking the government that our rightful money comes back to us. We don't want credit shells. We need money back for the bookings we have given to airlines, group advances to international airlines and other partners. That money rightfully belongs to our members and the customers. We don't need excuses for not getting it back, just because the airlines are struggling. We are part of that struggle as well as

our own. Hence, we need to sit down and work towards a win-win situation for both," she asserted.

Claiming that MoCA has been positive towards their suggestions, Mayal said, "The ministry is supporting us in a lot of ways. However, we are looking for quicker results. Today, we are struggling to

**We need money back for the bookings we have given to airlines, group advances to international airlines**

pay our salaries, our dues, interests and fixed costs to our establishments. This is the same across the industry, from hotels, travel agents, tour operators and adventure tour



operators to MICE operators and other service providers. We are all struggling with our overhead expenses. Hence, we have asked the government for statutory waivers, relief from GST, and TCS being resolved."

## Working for members

Claiming that they are doing a lot for the members, she informed, "We are trying to put the right perspective into our webinars and motivate them. We have regular meetings with all concerned ministries and other trade bodies to share inputs and put our requests to the government. We are also sharing inputs

on how we should start with domestic tourism and what policies we can make to take tourism forward. We have also been collecting data for the ministries to see the real problem at hand, since it's an unorganised sector and getting the correct data has been a big challenge. We are trying to re-invent and re-establish ourselves."

## Need to re-invent

Mayal says that when tourism has an industry status, it will be an organised sector. "Today, we need proper infrastructure so that we can create funds for ourselves. Of course, we will need government support, but we also want to be in a position where we can also put our hand out for support to the government, just like other industries, especially in a situation like today," she says.



*Sicily has already started to think of its tourism revival. The island has said it will cover half of flight costs and a third of hotel expenses for travellers wishing to visit, as well as free tickets to many of its museums and archaeological sites.*

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# Gujarat readies for new era

Kingshuk Biswas, Manager Marketing, Tourism Corporation of Gujarat, reveals how the state's tourism department is trying to identify its lesser-known destinations which can be offered to tourists in a post-COVID-19 landscape that includes tourism packages that follow social distancing norms.

Hazel Jain

**Q** What is the kind of discussion Gujarat Tourism is having with domestic tour operators regarding opening up of the state for tourism?

We have received their representations and suggestions on reopening tourism in the state. This includes suggestions on bailout packages and other efforts which can be jointly taken up by the travel trade and the tourism department. There have definitely been discussions in that direction, but we are also keenly observing the government directions related to opening up of public places post lockdown. We are formalising our marketing plans and also preparing for travel exhibition participation and conducting roadshows across the country, once the lockdown phase is over. We have already

conducted a few webinars with the tour operators in Gujarat.

**Q** Is the state thinking of announcing support to its tourism industry in terms of financial, policies or tax regimes, separate from the Centre?

Yes, we are. Currently, we are trying to understand and gauge the loss to tourism in the state due to the crisis. Also, a number of draft tourism policies are in the pipeline, subject to approval of the government. We have already received

We are preparing for travel exhibition participation and roadshows across the country, once the lockdown phase is over

representations from the hospitality sector and the travel trade sector, and are currently reviewing them. The possibilities will be discussed with the government post lockdown.

**Q** How do you think domestic tourism will change in a post-COVID landscape?

India definitely has two tourism markets - domestic tourism and inbound tourism - unlike a few tourism economies that only depend upon international tourists. In that sense, we are lucky as the industry has a huge domestic market to cater to. International mobility will be severely limited, as national borders are closed and even if they are to open post lockdown, there are bound to be several health-related apprehensions, restrictions and checks. To begin with, in India, domestic markets will prevail in the short-run at least.

also being thought about. So, the emphasis on marketing would be on the lines of 'public health' and 'social distancing'.

**Q** What are the on-ground activities in terms of training stakeholders?

We have a State Institute of Hotel Management (SIHM) in Sidhpur, near Ahmedabad. Various kinds of online training sessions involving hospitality leaders have been started for the students. Also, we have already done a webinar for motivating our offices outside Gujarat, with the help of IITM, Gwalior. Further, a series of such webinars are being planned for our travel trade, too. We are very keen to continue this for some time till restrictions are eased. I am confident that adversity will be turned into an opportunity.

## Advice to tour operators

"Being caged at home for more than three months or so, it is natural that all of us are yearning to rush outdoors and be amidst nature or longing to meet our friends and families. Freedom from lockdown seems to be the most yearned desire now. So for marketers, there does lie an opportunity to offer outdoor activities, alas with a caveat of 'social distancing' firmly in place. Some people may venture out with weekend gateways in private transport. The holiday period would be shortened, as people would not be very keen to be out of home for more than a few days. Hence, resorts in the periphery of major cities have an opportunity, provided that they are able to convince tourists about health issues. Public health solutions for tourism entities will become a must. Tourism entities should attempt to get certifications from government/industry bodies regarding 'public safety', which will reassure the tourists. People have realised that the best safety for them is their homes and hence, tourism industry should be ready for a reduced or a shrinking market initially.

The post-lockdown consumer in many economies, including India, will be a financially scarred one. Marketers have to be ready for low purchasing power in the economy at least in the short and medium-term. However, pricing is always a function of demand in the market as well as the value it brings to the market. So, if innovative products emerge in the tourism sector, which ensure social distancing and public health safety, there would be buyers (demand) who would be willing to accept higher prices."

**Q** How is Gujarat planning to rebrand itself in 2020?

Assuming that we have to live with COVID-19 in the short run to middle run, we are currently trying to identify lesser known destinations which can be offered to the tourists. We are trying to evolve tourism packages which follow social distancing norms. We have started a dialogue with the travel trade to create innovative products which are solo by nature, such as yoga, trekking, cuisine, handicrafts, water sports, para-sailing, etc. Niche tourism areas like bird watching, golfing, etc., are



Kingshuk Biswas  
Manager Marketing  
Tourism Corporation of Gujarat

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