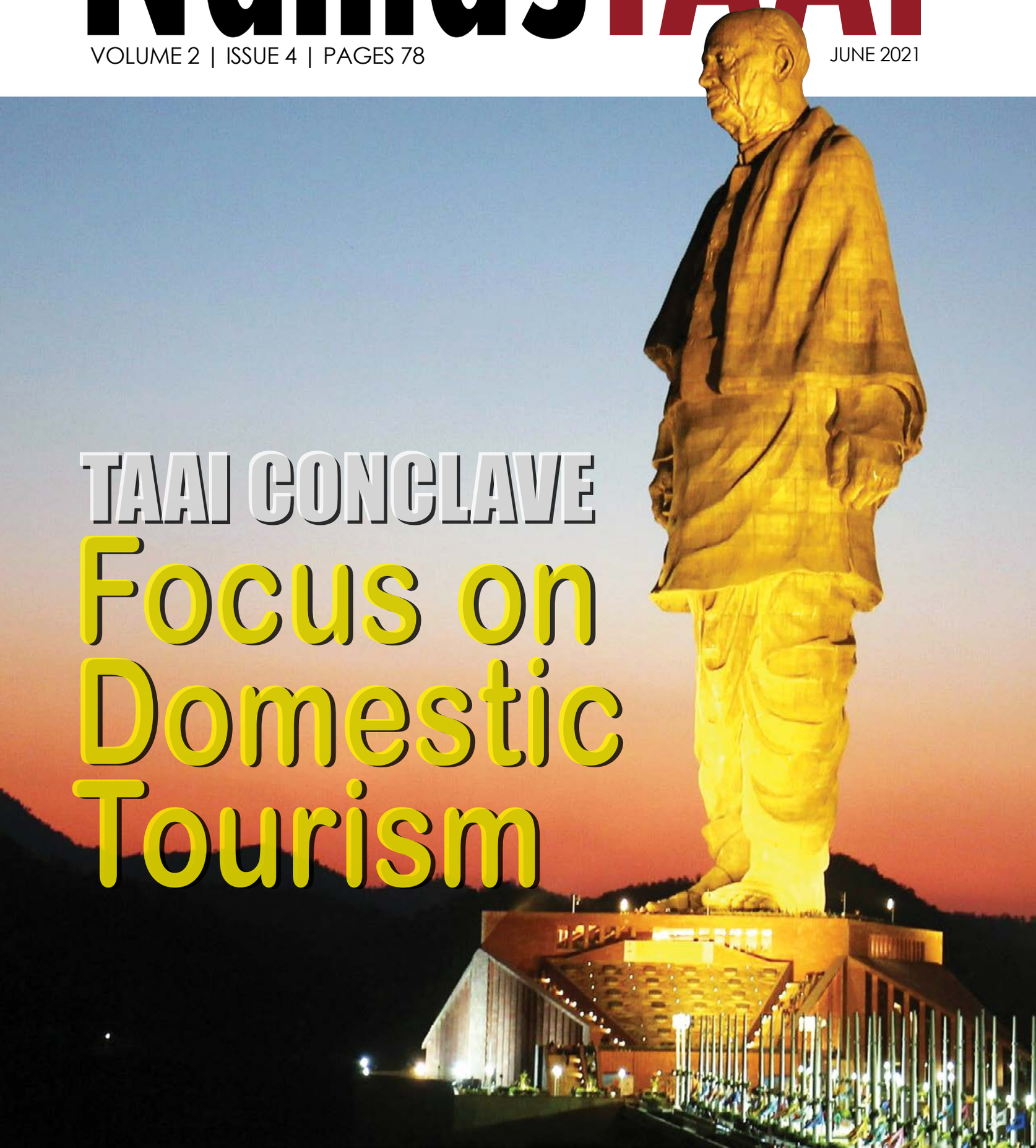
The TAAI Magazine
NamasTAAI
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JUNE 2021



TAAI CONCLAVE
Focus on Domestic Tourism



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Dear Members & Industry Friends,

Namaskar!

The nightmare of 2020 had just started fading, cases were reducing and the nationwide vaccination drive was gathering momentum, and suddenly we are challenged by a very destructive spike of Covid-19, which has come roaring back with a vengeance. This new wave has surpassed all previous records in terms of daily infection and mortality rates, and has resulted in lockdowns in most parts of the country again. Some states sadly have been more devastated than others and I believe there is no family which has not been affected directly or indirectly. My heart goes out to all who have lost their dear ones to this cruel virus.

The Travel Tourism & Hospitality sector is in its worst situation ever. While outbound travel plans were really non-existent due to poor connectivity and closure of borders, domestic tourism had slowly started recovering, but once again all our forward bookings have vanished and so has the summer tourism season yet again.

Friends, my intention is not to create negative vibes or demoralise you. I, myself strongly believe in positivity, but we must be aware of the environment so that we all are better prepared for the future. Let's accept the fact that Covid-19 is here to stay for some more time, but we need to act smarter than the virus and change our behavioural pattern. We certainly need to follow correct protocols and cope with the current situation. A slightly cautious approach will make a huge difference in tackling the problem. Let us be better prepared in handling the future situation. I welcome the government's decision to vaccinate people from 18 years of age and above. This will make a huge difference in controlling the infection. Let us motivate people around us to vaccinate. We need to learn from the many countries which have faced similar situations (second/third wave) and tackled the situation effectively.

On a more positive note, the Gujarat Tourism Conclave co-organised by TAAI in March was attended by more than 200 members and was a huge success, in spite of the challenging situation. This Tourism Conclave provided an opportunity to explore opportunities in domestic tourism and knowledge was shared on ways to work the changed environment. Delegates also experienced Kevadia as a destination with attractive surroundings, and of course the colossal Statue of Unity of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Arogya Van, Sardar Sarovar Dam and many other attractions. Besides this, experiencing the accommodation at Tent City 1 & 2, the evening dinner cruise along the River Narmada and the colourful cultural event organised by TAAI were all highlights of this Conclave. We did this to familiarise our members with the region and also promote the *Dekho Apna Desh* campaign.

I would like to congratulate all the office-bearers and members of the Gujarat Chapter for shouldering responsibility and making the event a grand success. We are grateful to Hon. Minister of Tourism Shri Prahlad Singh Patel for supporting us and also Gujarat Tourism, spearheaded by Hon. Minister Shri Jawaharbhai Chavda, Principal Secretary Smt Mamta Verma and MD Shri Jenu Dewan for inviting and extending generous support to TAAI. We are truly honoured.

I am also delighted to inform you that TAAI has added one more feather to its cap by chairing an APJC-India (Airline Passenger Joint Council) meeting for the first time. I chaired the 59th APJC-India meeting held virtually on May 25 which was attended by airline and agency representatives of both TAAI and TAFI. Hence, TAAI became the first agency representative (in India) to achieve the feat. Truly a historic occasion.

On behalf of the Indian travel industry, we are constantly in touch with the Central government and various ministries to provide necessary inputs for the betterment and recovery of our industry. I can assure you that we are leaving no stone unturned to secure our future. I strongly believe we will soon emerge from this situation, as we have done in the past, but this time stronger, more aware and much more resilient.

"Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive because your words become your behaviour. Keep your behaviour positive because your behaviour becomes your habits. Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny." – Mahatma Gandhi

So let us learn to appreciate, cooperate and collaborate. Stay Healthy and Optimistic... God Bless!

Jyoti Mayal
President
president@taai.in

VICE PRESIDENT'S VIEW

Dear Colleague Members,

We present herewith our e-Issue of NamasTAAI for June, 2021.

In this issue we showcase how we all regained our smiles (although for a short period) and met each other and interacted with our trade colleagues, partners, planning a way forward with full positivity, care, discussing new avenues and development of Domestic and Inbound Tourism. Momentarily business revival was taking place.

Across the country in our 20 Regions and Chapters, meetings and interactions took place. We got good support, encouragement and education from India Tourism along with many State Tourism Boards.

Gujarat Tourism invited TAAI members to familiarise with its state and the region, especially to visit the Statue of Unity, at Kevadia. In a short span of time the committee geared up to conduct its Tourism Conclave along with Gujarat Tourism. In this issue, we have a special section devoted to our Conclave in Gujarat, which was successful and we all loved the region, which is developing into a World Class facility and shall soon be one of the world highest visited tourism locations. *Kudos to Gujarat Tourism who along with Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India is going all out in promoting this a destination for holiday, mice, weddings, adventure, culinary, entertainment and much much more.*

We sincerely appreciate the support of Indigo Airlines who flew our delegates from across the country at special subsidised airfare.

So as to maintain health safety of our delegate members, we had restricted the numbers, but ensured around 250 delegates participated. It was a fun time !

We as TAAI, pledge our support in promoting the same to our clients, ensuring the world sees India now with positivity and showcase our class and culture along with our heritage and values.

Post Christmas, we saw holiday makers travel across the country, maintaining covid protocols and safety. It was a fantastic time for our colleagues in Jammu and Kashmir who after almost one and a half year saw tourism booming like never before ! We were all so delighted that our friends in J&K finally saw light of day! We thank our members from across the country who supported and promoted J&K for domestic tourism.

The clock once again stopped ! From end of March, 2021 number of covid cases started to rise again and since April most of the country is under lockdown.

We have seen bad times but this phase seems the worst. Inspite of having the vaccine, we have been engulfed into this situation, which has effected many of us, our colleagues, family and friends.

We urge you all to stay safe and ensure each of your family members stays secure and maintains absolute care.

We have surpassed and overcome turbulent times, be it when our commissions came to zero, IATA payments weekly to low-cost becoming upfront….etc.

This is the time to maintain our health and safety. ***Our parents and teachers always told us Health is something that we can't buy with money and today we all have witnessed and are also experiencing it.***

Lets care for humanity, lets care for ourselves, lets follow all protocols set by our Government. ***A Healthy & Safe India will be a Wealthy & Prosperous India !***

Our Committee has been working along with the Government, IATA, Airlines, Tourism boards so as to ensure all of us are assisted and the trade as a large does not loose its charm, dignity and prosperity.

We hope that reading this e-issue, will bring smiles on your face as well as give you the courage to fight and safe guard yourself, your colleagues, partners and family from this dreaded virus.

We at TAAI are one of you and have been experiencing the same situation at our workplace and our homes ! We are doing our best to ensure we work towards resolving all concerns faced by each one of us.

We are eagerly waiting for your suggestions, points of concerns and feedback, so as to try our level best to bring out solutions for a better tomorrow. ▲

Warm Regards,
Jay Bhatia
Vice President
vp@taai.in



HSG VIEWPOINT



Dear Members,

Namaste!!!

At the outset, we would like to convey our Heartfelt Condolences to Member's families who have lost their near and dear ones. We Pray to God to give strength to them during these difficult times. The second wave of COVID has caused incredible tragedy. The number of people suffering from illness, death of loved ones, unemployment, economic impact, health and poverty is overwhelming.

The Travel & Tourism sector has already been tremendously impacted. Seemingly overnight, countries suspended flights or halted international travel. Domestic travel has nosedived. Many businesses have been forced to close on temporary basis which may even escalate into some of them closing down permanently. We saw a limited activity between August 2020 and March 2021.

The country's doctors, health care workers, scientists etc. are waging a colossal battle against Corona. We salute all these Covid warriors with folded hands. The second wave is spreading faster than the first, but according to experts the recovery rate is higher and mortality rate pretty low. We just have to ensure that we must take utmost care as per guidelines issued by statutory authorities, and if proper steps are taken in the first couple of days and proper medical attention is given, we will recover faster. If we adhere to the protective measures, the SOPs, such as wearing masks, using hand sanitizers, staying indoors unless it is important to move around, maintaining social /physical distancing we can carry on with our daily work and keep ourselves protected from this second wave too. Vaccination is being administered on a war footing. Some of the countries will open up to travellers who would have taken their two doses of the vaccine. So, we urge all of you to please get yourself vaccinated and also spread the message to all.

We are constantly working with all the stakeholders in the Travel and Tourism industry, State and National Tourism Ministries to build the trust of travellers. It is very essential for our Government to support the Travel & Tourism industry during these testing times, and throughout the process of recovery. We are confident that this too shall pass and Travel & Tourism Industry will definitely recover.

Until then, please STAY SAFE AND STAY HEALTHY ! ▲

Bettaiah Lokesh
Hon. Secretary General
hsg@taai.in

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RISE & MOVE AHEAD

The spread of pandemic's second wave of infection has literally brought the country to a standstill, dashing hopes of recovery and revival that the travel & tourism industry was expecting after dismal year of 2020.

It is painful and disturbing to see the suffering, destruction and loss of lives and livelihoods. Our hearts goes out to all those affected.

But, history is testimony to the fact that mankind has not and will not bow down to any adversities and will surely come out of it. After all, every beginning has an end. This too, shall pass. On the same lines, travel & tourism industry too is resilient and we have to collectively withstand, correct, adapt, focus, rebuild, revive and work aggressively with renewed vigour and determination to make the industry profitable and prosperous, as it has been in the past.

The TAAI Tourism Conclave, held from 9th to 12th March 2021 in Kevadia – Ahmedabad, provided an opportunity for members to physically meet, interact and explore the grand hospitality of TAAI during 3 night/4 days event, after months of lockdown and having being confined indoors during which online was the norm. This was an opportunity for education and promotion of Gujarat as a Tourism Destination for domestic as well as inbound tourist.

The business sessions, panel discussions, participation of eminent industry experts, wide range of current industry matters and changing dynamics of the industry with focus on the domestic tourism, relationship with IATA and strengthening of the travel trade were hall mark of the great success of the event. We owe this success to Government of Gujarat and Gujarat Tourism for inviting us to Statue of Unity (SOU), Kevadia and extending all possible co-operation, help and support.

We thank Mr. Jawahar bhai Chavda - Gujarat Hon. Minister of Tourism; Mrs. Mamta Verma - Principal Secretary Tourism (Gujarat); Mr. Jenu Devan - Commissioner Tourism & MD of Gujarat Tourism; Mr. Nirav Munshi – Manager Commercial (Travel & Marketing) and all other officials. We thank IndiGo Airlines, media partners and entire TAAI Team comprising Managing Committee, Chapter office bearers and staff.

We are overwhelmed by the continuous receipt of appreciation from all corners which inspires to continue to conduct such programmes in the future for educating, training and skilling members.

In spite of challenges and restrictions (due to Covid), we were determined to demonstrate that with will power, we can overcome difficult situation and after successfully conducting this event and we have proved this beyond doubt.

So let's rise and move ahead on our path to rebuild/revive our business and put industry back on track.

Stay Safe...▲



Shreeram Patel
Hon. Treasurer
treasurer@taai.in

NAMASTAAI
June 2021

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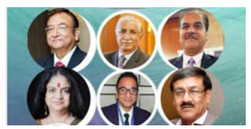




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22nd May, 2021

To,
Shri Narendra Modi
Hon. Prime Minister of India

Via Email

Respected Shri Narendra bhai Modi,

Greetings from Travel Agents Association of India ! (TAAI)
TAAI is the premier, nodal and largest Travel & Tourism Association in India, since 1951.

We would like to commend you and your entire team who have lead from the front during these crucial pandemic times. We salute your prompt actions and understanding of the situation right from day one, in the interest of the Citizens of India.

Sir,
We are compelled to write to you and divert your attention from more important matters prevailing in the country. Our members of travel and tourism trade at large is affected phenomenonly since over 14 months. We highlight a few points which require your immediate attention.

Travel and Tourism employs over 11% of the total work force in the country.
We generated 10% of the National GDP.
The largest in services sector contributing to USD 234 billion in 2018 and Foreign Exchange earning over USD 30 billion in 2019.
From 2015-19 there were 14.62 million additional jobs that were created.

1. <u>Livelihood / Survival of Our Trade:</u>
Our member entrepreneurs; travel agents and tour operators and their employees; have not even been able to do a business of more than 5% as compared to the pre-lockdown/pre-pandemic times since the last 14+ months.
Basic Survival has become a challenge. While our members tried their level best to sustain their staff for a few months, however with the global scenario undergoing the second and third wave, are compelled to reach out to you for guidance, assistance and encouragement so as to take care of the livelihood of the personnel working in the trade.
The worst hit are our junior and mid level teams, who are unable to survive ever for basic needs. They include, frontline counter staff, ticketing staff, tour planners, accountants, the airport representatives, porters, drivers, guides, sales and marketing staff, administrative team etc. The middle and senior members, including the owners are affected too.

Bad debts from clients, interest on bank loans/ overdrafts, EMI's, increased insurance premiums for staff etc.
Further, with **no respite whatsoever in statutory complaincs like PF, ESIC, Professional Tax, GST, Income Tax, TDS etc.** and with the introduction of the New Irrational Tax like TCS ensures that our establishments are forced to close down.
Although respite through MSME loans was given by the Hon. Finance Minister, to existing loan/overdraft holders, who had obtained them prior to February'20. **<u>However, there has been no consideration for our members who were working on their own finances, to obtain new co-lateral free loans/overdraft and rebated interest thereon.</u> Many banks and financial institutions have blacklisted Travel and Tourism organisations being non-revenue generators since April'20. Even the existing limits, if any have been reduced.**

We seek your attention in providing immediate support to all engaged in travel and tourism:

a. **Moratorium for atleast 2 years from all loan EMIs** for our staff and members.

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b. **Grant of Rs 10,000/- per month per employee for the next one year** until normalcy resumes. This shall be paid back, free of interest to the Government in installments over 24 months thereafter or deducted at 15% of their salary and paid back to the exchequer.

c. **Fresh co-lateral free loans/overdraft faciltities to our member organisations and personnel** be provided at rebated interest for a period of atleast 5 years until things are restored back to normalcy. This shall give support to them to meet their administrative overheads and promote travel and tourism effectively. The same could be computed on last 3 years average.

d. **Income Tax Holiday for next 5 years** for member Travel Agents and Tour Operators.

e. **Rebates on Digital payments:** The Credit Card companies / Banks are charging between 2% to 3.5% for payments received through credit card or wallets. This is hindering the purpose, revenue and ease of doing business. In todays Digital India, which was initiated by your goodself, has lost its steam for people making payments to us by debit/credit cards. Further the airlines too are not accepting digital payments from us vide creditcards or wallets, due to the same reason of higher percentage of deductions by the banks.
This should be brough down to 0.5%.

f. In the current scenario where many small establishments, like our members, are trying to work from home. With zero income, they have cutdown on their lease rentals. **Work from Home should be considered as an establishment for registered travel agents/ tour operators,** as many authroities are not permitting official addresses at residences. This should be directed through your good offices so as to safe guard health and safety.

g. May we also urge you to **direct the States to consider waiver and reduction of electricity charges / water taxes / property taxes / stamp duty / commercial licence fees / other local taxes for another 3 years.** This shall help and support the trade to survive.

h. **Syncronisation of all employee benefits** like ESIC, Professional Tax, PF, Gratutity etc. under one head so as to ease compliances and do business effectively, smoothly and motivate us to generate more revenue for the country.

Hon. Pradhan Mantri ji,

We do not seek grants as alms, but seek support in terms of repayable loans. This shall be repaid back to the Government post the 5 year period after the crisis ends. This shall only be an interim working capital for survival and revival along with ease of doing business.

2. <u>Industry Status for Travel & Tourism along with Cabinet berth for Tourism and Culture Ministry:</u>
Sir,
We have been working closely with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture for years. Hon. Minister Shri Prahlad Singh ji Patel is one of the most dynamic Ministers along with his team of Secretary, Shri Arvind Singh ji and Director General-Tourism Smt. Rupinder Brar ji. They have been a source of inspiration and proactive in listening to us over the last year. The Ministry has taken our feedback and suggestions on the revising of MDA guidelines, the new SoPs for opening up tourism very positively and implemented the same.

This being the largest service sector in India, we ensure that tourism to and from India is promoted to generate bi-lateral trade around the world. Incredible India has rich heritage and culture be it through arts and crafts, dance forms, music, food & cuisine, road trips, rail tours, but also has the best beaches, mountains, waterways, landscapes, deserts, temples, places of worship, nature and wildlife, medical tourism, agricultural tourism, camping, student tourism, promotion of yoga, Buddhist circuit, adventure tourism, festival tourism, spiritual tourism, sports tourism, MiCE, Weddings, Film tourism etc. Our members promote all verticals with ease and grace as our culture has embibed into us ***"Athithi Devo Bhava".***

Tourism-led growth hypothesis postulates that expansion of travel and tourism activities generates economic growth, resources and technology inside of the economy, additionally by expanding foreign exchange earnings in inbound. You are well aware that there is a reasonable relationship between economic growth, tourism and financial development.

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The contribution from this Ministry and the Trade especially in the last 5 years, deserves a Cabinet berth in your Government. Travel & Tourism was one of your key stakeholder partners in ensuring to make India the USD 5 Trillion economy.

We have already submitted proposals to the Ministry of Tourism as well as Ministry of Civil Aviation on policies for insurance protecting our members from global airline bankruptcies, consumer protection, travel insurance, tourism fund, Special Tourism Zones, structuring it for ease of doing business.

Strategizing for setting up an efficient regulatory body along with TAAI and other stakeholders in the travel and tourism trade with MoCA and MoT like SEBI / IRDA etc. which shall not only protect the interests of the general public but also of the principals, travel agents and tour operators.
This shall also ensure that every **Travel & Tourism organisations/professional** registers with the Ministry though us, which shall safe guard, no fly by night operators mislead the traveller/ tourist and appropriate guidance and quality service is rendered.

Our members spend over 50% of their earning towards salaries and wages of personnel working in the trade. Education, Research, Continuous Education and upgradation of knowledge is an ongoing process to keep our clients well informed in this competitive world with technology.

We continue to endevour our drive to do business, escalating to higher standards and achievements, for which your intervention and support is being sought to provide Industry **Status to Travel & Tourism in India.**

This shall ensure overall economic growth, increased job oppourtunities, higher revenues, technology development in the trade.

We at TAAI assure you that, once again under your leadership, India shall re-gain its title of being "Sone ki Chidya", within the next 5 years.

Our humble request to you is to call for ***an emergent meeting of the Task Force on Travel & Tourism along with us, the stakeholders under your aegis.***

We at TAAI assure you that we shall strive to drive the change, to make the industry more resilient and productive, along with our full support to the Government. We shall grow to fulfil the dreams of making India a 5 Trillion Dollar Economy by 2023 ensuring travel and tourism contributes to over 15% to the national GDP by then, with your support and encouragement.

Thanking you.

Sd/-	Sd/-	Sd/-	Sd/-
Jyoti Mayal President president@taai.in	**Jay Bhatia** Vice President vp@taai.in	**Bettaiah Lokesh** Hon. Secretary General hsg@taai.in	**Shreeram Patel** Hon. Treasurer treasurer@taai.in

CC to:
1. Shri Hardeep Singh Puri – Minister of Civil Aviation
2. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman – Minster of Finance
3. Shri Prahlad Singh Patel – Minister of Tourism
4. Shri Amitabh Kant – CEO – Niti Aayog
5. Shri Pradeep Kharola – Secretary – MoCA
6. Shri Arvind Singh – Secretary – MoT
7. Smt. Rupinder Brar – Addl. Director General – MoT

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TAAI gets the honour of Chairing an APJC –India meeting for the first time

The 59th Airline Passenger Joint Council (APJC) India of IATA was held virtually on May 25, 2021, and attended by the airline and agency representatives of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI).

For the first time in India, an agency representative Chaired the APJC meeting held by IATA with TAAI President Jyoti Mayal unanimously selected to the Chair the meeting.

It is moment of great honour and pride for all of us at TAAI, the premier, nodal and largest trade association in India since 1951. We thank TAFI and all airline representatives for having faith and confidence in her and the TAAI team to lead the industry on the way forward, the national leadership of TAAI said in a statement.

At the meeting, TAAI was represented by Vice President – Jay Bhatia, Hon. Secretary General – Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon. Treasurer – Shreeram Patel and UFTAA President & Past President – TAAI, Sunil Kumar Rumalla.

The agency representatives took up all the important points of concern and have made recommendations through APJC to PAPGJC/PSG which shall be taken up at PAConf also.

"We thank each one of our trade colleagues, principal and partners in bestowing support and confidence in TAAI under the leadership of President – Jyoti Mayal. We at TAAI, assure all of you that we shall work diligently towards making positive changes in the working environment of the global aviation, travel and tourism industry," the TAAI national leadership said. ▲



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THSC achieves new heights under the able leadership of Jyoti Mayal and Rajan Bahadur



Jyoti Mayal took over the role of Chairperson of Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC) in August 2020, and since then she has been working closely with the CEO of THSC, Rajan Bahadur and the Board Members to take THSC to next level. As the Chairperson, Mayal has taken up various issues and challenges that THSC is facing at several platforms. She has also represented THSC to the Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Praveen Kumar and Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Arvind Singh on February 17, 2021 and February, 22 2021 respectively, along with Bahadur to discuss the future plans and initiatives of THSC in skilling ecosystem.

Even though the tourism industry has been hit massively during this pandemic, but still THSC was able to achieve its budgets and also added 3 more Centres of Excellence, under the mentorship and leadership of Mayal and Bahadur. During this period, more than 79,000 students got assessed with 15,000 placements across India. ▲



Jyoti Mayal and Rajan Bahadur, during the meeting with Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

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Tourism stakeholders meeting held under Swachhta Action Plan

Tourism stakeholders meeting under the Swachhta Action Plan (SAP) of the Ministry of Tourism, GOI was organised by the Institute of Tourism & Travel Management, Noida on February 17, 2021. TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal presented the welcome note while the expert speaker for the programme was Managing Committee Member, Rajan Sehgal. ▲

Meeting with Arvind Singh, Secretary, MoT



Arvind Singh was welcomed on his being appointed as Tourism Secretary and to establish continuing support from Ministry of Tourism. A formal letter reiterating urgent matters was presented on February 22, 2021. Arvind Singh was very receptive & most willing to support TAAI, not only in MoT but also in MoCA, as he was aware of aviation working. Arvind Singh, earlier to his current appointment, was the Chairman of Airports Authority of India (AAI). ▲

UFTAA Online Presentation

President, Jyoti Mayal represented TAAI in UFTAA presentation "How Digital Health Passports Can Change The Travel & Tourism Industry" on February 22, 2021. Mayal was a part of the discussion and helped the audience to get clarifications on how this will benefit passengers, and stakeholders, as well as, help in recovery of the travel industry globally from the disastrous effects of the pandemic. ▲



BITB Bounce at Hotel Andaz, Aerocity, New Delhi

The 18th edition of BITB Bounce, was held on March 17, 2021 at Hotel Andaz, Aerocity, New Delhi. TAAI partnered and supported the one-day event, which was a measured step towards bringing some normalcy, and instilling confidence among stakeholders and travelling public.

The conference section brought together speakers on the business of travel agencies, with presentations by leading suppliers. There were knowledge sessions, sharing of best practices, and keynote addresses from the masters in this business. All came together to create a memorable day of education, fun and serious networking. The B2B section enabled the travel agents, selling domestic and outbound, to meet with key partners.

TAAI members availed the opportunity of early registrations as TAAI had reserved 50 complimentary registrations. BITB had offered TAAI members special discounted rates for booth.

Over 250 delegates attended this event maintaining social distancing and strictly adhering to safety protocols. There were keynote speakers, panel discussions, fireside chats and product presentations. ▲



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Meeting with Nepal Tourism Board members



A delegation from Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), headed by Dr. Dhananjay Regmi, CEO, NTB, met the travel trade, including Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI on their visit to India on March 23, 2021.

Speaking about the destination, Regmi said that there is a lot more to Nepal than being a pilgrimage destination and this is precisely what they want the Indian travel trade and travellers to know. "While Indians relate Nepal to Pashupatinath, even in that segment we have other religious sites that are lined up with the Mahabharata Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Shiva-Shakti Circuit, as well as the Buddhist circuit. If we focus on interlinked packages, we can enhance the relationship between Nepal and India," he believed. He realised that Indian tourists cannot be attracted by just that. "Indian tourists mostly look for sun, sand and sea. In Nepal's mid-hills, you can find the first two and while we don't have a sea, all major rivers that flow into the Indo-Gangetic plain originate in Nepal and hence, there are many freshwater beaches. One can even enjoy all recreational activities like camping and rafting. The best part is that all thodis is available just an hour's drive away, in a country that has a similar culture," he said.

The CEO also added that in their research, NTB analysed that Indian travellers were looking for everything from nightlife to new properties in Nepal. "Hence," he added, "why shouldn't we showcase that in India and do our branding in a different way here. That's why we came to India with 25 companies from Nepal to showcase what we can offer." He also shared that they have appointed Buzz Travel Marketing to help with promotions in India. The NTO has already met a number of OTAs as well as heads of various travel trade associations here. Regmi said that they are all happy to support Nepal in its campaign. "We have also invited them for a FAM trip in April. Let's hope that together we can achieve what we are looking to," he shared.

Laxman Gautam, Head - Tourism Marketing & Promotion Department, NTB, added that while they will be adopting the traditional approach of participating in fairs, organising functions, publicising via media and organising familiarisation trips to Nepal, they will also initiate some new programmes.

"We are working out special programmes and want to present to the market, packages in collaboration with the private sector, so that people would be able to understand the changed landscape of Nepal. They will look at it from a different, modern view," he shared.

Gautam also added that they are primarily focusing on the Indian market. "We will go to other countries, but in terms of budget and a human resource focus, we will try to reach out to the Tier-II and III cities of India as well, because there is a large and growing outbound population from these cities that has a good capacity to spend. Earlier, we were only focusing on metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru," he added.

President Jyoti Mayal suggested many points in her discussion. Important suggestions were of joint marketing plan with TAAI & dissemination of correct procedures adopted in consideration of Covid-19. She also said BIMSTEC countries should work together to promote the entire area together as it was extended domestic tourism for Indians. Proper collaborations & co-operations were needed to take this forward. ▲

5th Meeting of Karnataka Chapter

National office-bearers attended and interacted with members on various issues and the way forward on May 5, 2021. All queries including those related to TAAI-IATA Joint Bank Guaraodntee (JBG) in terms of renewals and criteria for new applicants to join the programme were answered. Karnataka Chapter Chairman, Amish Desai, Hon. Secretary, S.V. Chidambaresh & Hon. Treasurer, N. Amarnath and members expressed happiness at the way TAAI remained committed to its membership. ▲

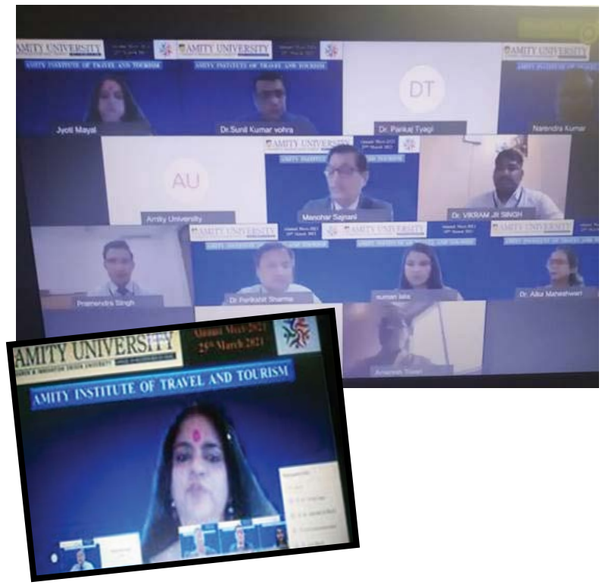
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TAAI attends Amity Institute of Travel & Tourism online Alumni Meet

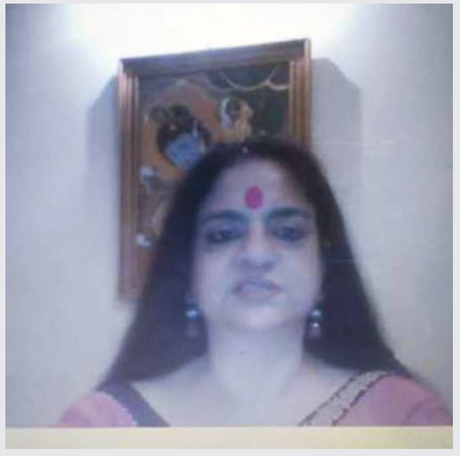
TAAI President Jyoti Mayal was the Chief Guest at the online Alumni Meet 2021 of Amity Institute of Travel & Tourism, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh held on March 25, 2021.

Mayal laid strong emphasis upon upskilling by young participants so that when the industry comes out of this turmoil due to the global pandemic, then these young minds are able to create space for themselves. There is also a need to learn and explore new destinations as tourism products, along with the existing ones and for this upskilling, training is very important. Students should learn more and train themselves as per the industry expectations. There is a need for technically sound young minds equipped with a positive and a proactive approach, said Mayal. Her words were full of motivation and guidance for everyone.

In her concluding remarks, Mayal, on behalf of TAAI, assured the young participants of full support during these times of pandemic. Mayal also consented to support the Amity Institute of Travel and Tourism in every possible manner for the fulfilment of the academic and research oriented objectives of the institution. ▲



ITB India Virtual Event



TAAI extended supported to ITB India which was held virtually from April 7 – 9, 2021.

It was a 3-day business-to-business trade show and convention, curated to connect members to the Indian travel market. The event brought together key travel industry leaders and international exhibitors from MICE, corporate, and leisure sectors.

Speaking on the "Vision of future of the Travel Industry – Winners Playground", TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal emphasized that the travel industry is a very dynamic industry, contributing substantially to the country's GDP and is a very important source of employment. She commented, "Though the road to recovery will be long, we must redefine, change and work with renewed vigour. Crisis brings in opportunities. Let's create an environment, reinvent, collaborate amongst all Asian countries and rebuild our business". Mayal also added that business needs clarity, certainty, ease, simpler process, and procedures, so that people can travel locally and internationally without hassles. ▲

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Buddha Jayanti Celebration



TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal was an esteemed speaker at the Buddha Jayanti Function and "Day of Vesak Celebration" with live prayers on DNT News, which was live on social media platforms on May 26, 2021.

Addressing the gathering, President, Jyoti Mayal highlighted how Gautam Buddha's preaching's and teachings continue to guide and inspire mankind to live a dignified, and respected life. On this occasion, she paid homage to all the departed souls who passed away during the last 15 months of the global pandemic and prayed to the Almighty to give strength to the bereaved families.

She narrated the dynamic role played by TAAI, the largest and oldest travel association in India since its inception in 1951 and the leadership it is offering to the industry. It has evolved with changing times and today is the one point of contact with all stakeholders.

Quoting Buddha, "Every morning we are born again", Mayal said, "We must concentrate on what is today, rather than thinking of the past and though the global pandemic has dealt a severe blow to the industry, we will revive and our industry will once again boom in the future". ▲



TAAI members attend Maldives tradeshow

Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corporation, India office conducted a tradeshow with TAAI members on March 22, 2021 at the Shangri La Hotel, New Delhi. 60 TAAI Agents, who mainly promote outbound to Maldives attended the event.

TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal was the Chief Guest and delivered a speech. She addressed the gathering on how Maldives had picked up as an outbound destination with a huge number of tourists from India. With increase in air capacity from various metros, it was one of the more preferred destinations for leisure travelers. ▲

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TAAI Members meet



An interactive virtual session of members with TAAI National Office Bearers was conducted on May 10, 2021 in which there was overwhelming response from across all 20 Regions/ Chapters of TAAI.

Welcoming the members, President Jyoti Mayal highlighted Managing Committee's commitment to continue to work for membership & industry and impressed upon members to make use of the platform to highlight problems, come out with suggestions/inputs and seek updates/clarifications if any.

All questions pertaining to industry issues were taken up & answered in a very positive & transparent manner by the Office Bearers who explained details of TAAI Joint Bank Guarantee Programme for existing members to renew and new applicants to join the programme.

There were discussions on issues related to airlines capping, enhanced version of BSP, refunds, GST, industry recognition, arrangement for vaccination of travel agencies, its staff and families, seeking monetary support from the government due to complete loss of business from the second wave of the pandemic.

President, Jyoti Mayal urged members to register with the Ministry of Tourism, so that the recognition of registered members could gain importance and they could avail opportunities offered by the Ministry of Tourism from time to time and also currently under MDA and other notifications.

Members expressed happiness and thanked Office Bearers for reducing membership fees for FY 2021 – 22 for all categories of membership payments made upto May 31, 2021. ▲

TAAI WITT/MoT/FICCI FLO in collaboration with TravTalk on "Skill HER for Sustainable Tourism"

"Skill HER for Sustainable Tourism", a very informative exchange of ideas under the initiative of Travel Agents Association of India - WITT & FICCI FLO, was conducted by Jahnabi Phookan, President FICCI FLO & Jyoti Mayal, National President TAAI, on April 9, 2021.

Arvind Singh, Secretary, MoT, was special guest for this event.

The other special invitees included
Rupinder Brar Additional Director General, MoT, GOI

- Mamta Verma, Principle Secretary Gujarat Tourism
- Parineeta Sethi, Wellness & Luxury industry
- Madhu Jain, Fashion industry
- Priya Paul, Chairperson, Apeejay - Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd.
- Suhela Khan, Country Programme, Manager, UN Women

President, Jyoti Mayal and all the other speakers shared their views on empowering women for sustainable tourism. The event gave a voice to many initiatives which will be taken up by the women moving forward. The Ministry of Tourism, Gujarat tourism & UN, appreciated the efforts & confirmed their support to take this initiative forward. ▲

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TAAI appeals to IATA to waive off annual fees & extend financial security deadline



The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has appealed to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to reconsider the extension of Financial Security by one more year and also asked for a waiver in Annual Fees considering the global pandemic. These concerns were shared by TAAI President Jyoti Mayal during a webinar organised along with IATA on GoLite Accrediatation v/s Standard IATA Travel Agency Accrediation & IATA Easy Pay. Over 250 members attended the session from across India's 20 Regions & Chapters of TAAI.

The Financial Security renewal is scheduled for June 30, 2021 and this year due to the withdrawal of Iffco Tokio General Insurance from providing extension/renewal of securing the airlines against agency defaults, the burden of the member travel agents has fallen on the Association to include members into its Joint Bank Gaurantee Program. Agents can also provide their own Bank Gaurantees to IATA but, the banks are asking for over 100% as co-lateral to provide the same.



Over the last two years TAAI has been appealing to MoCA and IATA to rework Financial Security towards protecting the travel agents from Airlines defaults and its suspension of services, which has impacted the travel agents by several hundred crores.

Sales of member agents over the last one year has dropped to less than 5% of the total sales it conducted in financial year 2019-20. Due to the same TAAI too has rebated its members on its annual membership fees.

At the webinar, IATA-India was represented by Amitabh Khosla, Rodney Dcruz and Ritham Saha who presented the accreditation options available to agencies under the NewGen ISS.

The presentation featured comparisions on accreditation models to the members. Due to the pandemic lockdown, travel agents across India were undergoing challenging times on IATA's stringent and rigid compliances.

The comparison shared by IATA on GoStandard v/s GoLite, stated that members opting for GoLite would be exempt from providing to IATA, Financial Statements, Annual Financial Review and Financial Security. The GoLite agents would be required to make payment for its sales on cash and carry basis only from the funds available in its EasyPay account, which are held with two empanelled banks with IATA, being Yes Bank and Standard Chartered Bank in India.

Although with no assurance from IATA or any operating airline in India that Ticketing Authority would be made available to all agents. The airline/s reserve their right to allot the same to agents on selective basis. Mayal stated that the same has been placed once again in the forthcoming APJC – India meeting for consideration. ▲

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TAAI urges Air India to open GDS refunds without negative billing for members



The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) is seeking Air India's attention to a host of issues. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, met Meenakshi Mallik, Commercial Director, Air India for an urgent meeting, to voice the concern of agents on Vande Bharat flight bookings, seamless refunds on GDS and seeking 5% commission on total airfare. Representatives from Air India were also present in the meeting.



"We had discussed various times in the past few months that it was inappropriate to sell the tickets on these special flights (Vande Bharat Mission) only on the airline's website. Being IATA-accredited agents, and Air India being an IATA BSP concurrent airlines as well as the national carrier it must ensure that the trade, agents are protected and assisted," a letter signed by the national office-bearers of TAAI reads.

TAAI has suggested that a time limit to ticket once the seat is blocked should be restricted to maximum of 5 hours between 10am to 5pm and 12hours if booked beyond the working hours. This should only be for limited VBM flights which are operated under the aegis of MoCA/Govt of India. A special circular with conditions for making bookings on these VBM flights must be issued so as to assist the agents. "We are also pained to note that Air India does not connect with us to support and assist in the matter where challenges are faced during the bookings. We have received assurance from the Secretary Civil Aviation Pradeep Singh Kharola that Air India and all Indian carriers shall assist and facilitate our member travel agents. This ongoing mistrust between Air India and the agents has created a wrong perception amongst travellers/customers to not book through accredited agents."

With regards to refunds, TAAI said that Air India is the one of the airlines which is not permitting refunds on the GDS. "Only once a month we receive circulars to refund the tickets on the GDS/ RA(IATA) and under negative billing the same will not be processed. This is unfair. Member agents have always ensured timely payments to the airline/IATA as per the PSA Agreement/ BSP Resolutions."

TAAI office-bearers stated that it is unfortunate that Air India is not supporting its accredited members who have supported the national carrier over the decades. "We shall appreciate if the GDS refund process without negative billing credits is opened up immediately for member agents. Further, we expect Air India to permit booking of all flights across all GDS systems. This shall empower more sales and bookings, effecting higher load factor and profits for the airlines."

Seeking a minimum commission of 5% on the total airfare, the oldest travel trade association has also requested Air India to curate a fixed formula to calculate commission. "This shall ensure that members who have provided financial security through IATA at a cost plus their cost of sales and employment, so as to earn a living is justified, especially by the national carrier." ▲

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High testing costs could stall the recovery, says IATA

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) called on governments to ensure that high costs for COVID-19 testing don't put travel out of reach for individuals and families. To facilitate an efficient restart of international travel, COVID-19 testing must be affordable as well as timely, widely available and effective.

An IATA sampling of costs for PCR tests (the test most frequently required by governments) in 16 countries showed wide variations by markets and within markets. Findings include:

Of the markets surveyed, only France complied with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation for the state to bear the cost of testing for travellers.

Of the 15 markets where there is a cost for PCR testing to the individual

- The average minimum cost for testing was USD 90.
- The average maximum cost for testing was USD 208.

Even taking the average of the low-end costs, adding PCR testing to average airfares would dramatically increase the cost of flying for individuals. Pre-crisis, the average one-way airline ticket, including taxes and charges, cost USD 200 (2019 data). A $90 PCR test raises the cost by 45% to USD 290. Add another test on arrival and the one-way cost would leap by 90% to USD 380. Assuming that two tests are needed in each direction, the average cost for an individual return-trip could balloon from USD 400 to USD 760.

The impact of the costs of COVID-19 testing on family travel would be even more severe. Based on average ticket prices (USD 200) and average low-end PCR testing (USD 90) twice each way, a journey for four that would have cost USD 1,600 pre-COVID, could nearly double to USD 3,040—with USD 1440 being testing costs.

"As travel restrictions are lifted in domestic markets, we are seeing strong demand. The same can be expected in international markets. But that could be perilously compromised by testing costs—particularly PCR testing. Raising the cost of any product will significantly stifle demand. The impact will be greatest for short-haul trips (up to 1,100 km), with average fares of $105, the tests will cost more than the flight. That's not what you want to propose to travelers as we emerge from this crisis. Testing costs must be better managed. That's critical if governments want to save tourism





and transport jobs; avoid limiting travel freedoms to the wealthy," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

The World Health Organisation's International Health Regulations stipulate that states should not charge for testing or vaccination required for travel, or for the issuance of certificates. The WHO COVID Emergency Committee recently reiterated this position, calling on governments to reduce the financial burden on international travelers of complying with testing requirements and any other public health measures implemented by countries. Many states are ignoring their international treaty obligations, putting a travel recovery in jeopardy and risking millions of livelihoods. High testing costs also incentivize the market for fake certificates.

"Testing costs should not stand between people and their freedom to travel. The best solution is for the costs to be borne by governments. It's their responsibility under WHO guidelines. We must not let the cost of testing—particularly PCR testing—limit the freedom to travel to the rich or those able to be vaccinated. A successful restart of travel means so much to people—from personal job security to business opportunities and the need to see family and friends. Governments must act quickly to ensure that testing costs don't stall a travel recovery," said Walsh.

Among the markets surveyed, France represents the best practice. It bears the cost of testing, including tests to facilitate travel. The European Parliament is moving Europe in the right direction. Last week, it called for testing to be universal, accessible, timely and free-of-charge across the EC.

"France and the European Parliament are helping to lead the way. We are in a health and economic emergency. Testing is part of the road to recovery. So it's a government responsibility to ensure that testing is accessible to all. If governments are not going to make testing free, at least they must ensure that there is no profiteering by testing companies at the expense of people who just want to get back to some form of normality in their life and travel habits. And that scrutiny should include governments themselves who, under no circumstances, should charge a tax for this critical service," said Walsh. ▲

(Source: IATA)

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Domestic passenger traffic shrinks 29% in April 2020: ICRA



For April 2021, domestic passenger traffic is estimated at 55-56 lakh, implying a sequential decline of 29% compared to 78.2 lakh in March 2021. With this, the domestic passenger traffic has reached lower than the October 2020 levels.

The airlines' capacity for April 2021 was lower by ~15% compared to March 2021 (~60,300 departures, against ~71,300 departures in March 2021), indicating the declining demand scenario stemming from averseness of consumers to travel due to the rise in Covid-19 infections. It is to be noted that domestic airline operations were completely ceased during April 2020 due to the nationwide lockdown owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Kinjal Shah, Vice President & Co-Group Head, ICRA: "The number of flights departing has also gradually declined from February 2021 onwards, with the average daily departures close to 2,000 in April 2021, down from 2,300 in March 2021 and February 2021. The average number of passengers per flight during April 2021 was 93, against an average of 109 passengers per flight in March 2021." The gradual decline depicts the stress on demand, driven largely by the second wave of Covid-19 and passenger fear against travelling.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) permitted increasing the capacity gradually from 33%, with effect from May 25, 2020, to 80%, with effect from December 03, 2020. The same, as per the latest announcement by the MoCA, continues till May 31, 2021.

While the scheduled international operations are yet to start, the MoCA has permitted international operations under the Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) and Air Transport Bubbles (ATB). Under the VBM for evacuation of Indian citizens from foreign countries, which started from May 07, 2020, the international passenger traffic (inbound and outbound) for Indian carriers has been 34 lakh for the period May 07, 2020 to April 30, 2021. For April 2021, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers under the VBM was estimated at 3.6 lakh, a sequential decline of 21%.

In April 2021, many countries like the US, the UK, Singapore, Kuwait, France, Canada, Australia, Iran, Indonesia and the UAE, which had ATB arrangements or under the VBM, have banned flights from India citing the increasing coronavirus cases. The international operations through VBM or the ATB route were the only source of revenue for airlines and the cancellation of flights by the destination countries will further impact the beleaguered domestic carriers. ▲



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TAAI at SATTE 2021

Informa Markets organised its first physical event, the 28th edition of SATTE from March 24 to 26 at India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR. It was inaugurated by Chief Guest Arvind Singh - Secretary Tourism, Government of India along with key dignitaries Dr Abdulla Mausoom, Minister of Tourism, Maldives; M P Bezbaruah - Former Secretary Tourism, Govt. of India and Secretary General, Hotel Association of India; Maneck E. Davar - Chairman, Service Export Promotion Council, and Jyoti Mayal – President TAAI; Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India and Pallavi Mehra, Group Director, Informa Markets In India.

TAAI's partnership with SATTE is well known and this year too, this support was very well visible, with SATTE fully hosting TAAI Managing Committee. President Jyoti Mayal and National Hon. Treasurer, Shreeram Patel along with several Managing Committee members & Region/Chapter office bearers attended and interacted with domestic and international exhibitors & participants. TAAI's logo was displayed prominently in all marketing collaterals. The response at TAAI's stall, manned by TAAI Delhi office staff Kavita and Harish, was overwhelming.



On behalf of the travel trade, President Jyoti Mayal along with Yogesh Mudras - Managing Director, Informa Markets India, addressed the media. She congratulated Informa Markets for organising SATTE at a time when tourism sector is opening with caution as this event will surely instill confidence among travel fraternity and pave the path for new business opportunities in today's challenging environment. It is also heartening to know that Informa Markets is implementing its Informa All Secure to enhance Health & Safety Standards at their events in post COVID period. ▲













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12th and 13th Managing Committee Meetings of TAAI conducted virtually

12TH MANAGING COMMITTEE MEETING OF TAAI

The 12th Managing Committee Meeting of TAAI was virtually convened in February.

In addition to transacting all business as per agenda, the house decided to go ahead and hold the "TAAI Gujarat Tourism Conclave", supported by Gujarat Tourism, from March 9 - 11 in Kevadia, Gujarat. The detailed programme, day wise schedule, flow of events, FAM sightseeing visits, and sessions were finalised. It was informed that all arrangements of accommodation, air tickets, ground transportations and necessary approvals from concerned authorities have been completed.

The house sought full support and cooperation of Regions/Chapters to make this programme a huge success and memorable one for the participants.

13TH MANAGING COMMITTEE MEETING OF TAAI

The 13th Managing Committee Meeting of TAAI was virtually convened on April 10.

The house recalled the excellent contribution and services of TAAI Southern Region Chairperson, Shahul Hameed who passed away in the early hours of April 4, was instrumental in strengthening TAAI Southern Region. As a mark of respect to the departed soul, the committee observed two minutes of silence and prayed that his family gets the strength to bear this huge loss.









The house acknowledged the huge success of the recently concluded "TAAI Gujarat Tourism Conclave" held from March 9 to 11 in Kevadia, Gujarat. The conclave saw enthusiastic participation from the members, with discussions in tune with the current times. The event was organised very well and executed with utmost professionalism.

The house complimented the services and efforts of TAAI Gujarat Team

- Hon. Treasurer, Shreeram Patel
- Managing Committee Member, Paras Lakhia
- Gujarat Chapter Chairman, Virendra Shah
- Gujarat Chapter Hon. Secretary, Prashant Madlani
- Gujarat Chapter Hon. Treasurer, Viral Shah

The main agenda item was TAAI IATA Joint Bank Guarantee (JBG) matters. After extensive discussions, deliberations, review and detailed analysis of the existing program, the house decided to go ahead on the same basis and accordingly roll communication to existing members for renewals and to new members desirous of the joining the program which will be effective from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. ▲



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Western Region

The Western Region organised its first physical meeting after the pandemic on February 15, 2021. Members were excited to attend this meeting as most of them had not met since the lockdown in 2020. Everyone appreciated the efforts TAAI had put in for various issues.

The meeting was also addressed by Praveen Kumar Chander, VP, Sales and Marketing – India, IHCL, concluding with cocktails and dinner.

Moreover, a FAM trip to Govardhan Eco Village, Wada was held on February 5 organised by India Tourism. India Tourism had organised a coach transfers to and from Mumbai for this FAM trip.

Western Region office bearers along with MC Member Anoop Kanuga, and Jay Bhatia, Vice President of TAAI had the opportunity to partake in a joint meeting with The Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Morocco; Rajiv Dube, along with the VFS team. During the meeting, attendees discussed various methods to increase tourist traffic to the Morocco and exchanged ideas to promote Morocco as a tourist destination. The TAAI Western Region is looking forward to working closely with the Consulate General in the future on the same. ▲



TAAI meeting at Taj Lands End



TAAI Western region members with Regional Director Venkateshan of India Tourism at Govardhan Eco Village



Govardhan Eco Village

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Eastern Region

In these challenging times when not only our country but the entire world is going through a catastrophe, TAAI Eastern Region is making sure that the region members are involved in product updates and knowledge based events.

The Eastern Region has done a couple of events, out of which 3 were landmark events, in which, they had partnered with Indiatourism Kolkata. The first event was held on February 10, in Antara Cruises to promote Cruise Tourism in Eastern India. The second event was a Heritage Walk, organised on February 14, in the footsteps of Netaji, to promote the heritage places of Kolkata, and the third event was an interactive session held on March 1 with all the domestic carriers of Eastern India to promote new domestic routes. TAAI Eastern Region members participated in, and appreciated all the 3 symposiums which were organised by Indiatourism Kolkata, exclusively for TAAI Eastern Region members. The Eastern Region continues to keep its members motivated and updated. ▲











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Eastern Region











TAAI Eastern Region is continuously making efforts to involve the region members in product updates and knowledge based events







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South Tamil Nadu Chapter

TAAI Active Member Sriharan contested in Tamil Nadu Assembly Election (MLA) from Virukambakkam Constituency, Chennai. Dr P. Murugesan, Managing Committee Member of TAAI greeted him with best wishes, during his campaign on February 27, 2021.

IITM HOSTS A NETWORKING DINNER

India International Travel Mart-IITM had organised tourism roadshow for two days on March 31, and April 1, at ITC Grand Chola Hotel, Chennai and invited industry Leaders for a Networking dinner on March 31. Dr P. Murugesan, Managing Committee Member of TAAI, participated in the event with Industry stakeholders and interacted with them. Rohit Hangal, Director of Sphere Travel Media & Exhibitions was also present at the event.

PENANG ROADSHOW ORGANISED IN CHENNAI

Penang Roadshow was organised by Penang Tourism on January 20, at ITC Grand Chola Hotel, Chennai and invited Tourism stakeholders from Tamil Nadu. Dr P. Murugesan, Managing Committee Member of TAAI participated in the meeting along with the Director of Malaysia Tourism. ▲







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Southern Region



Dubai Tourism offered a FAM Trip to Dubai for 20 members of the South Tamil Nadu Chapter, from March 21 to 26. The trip was well organised and useful for the members.

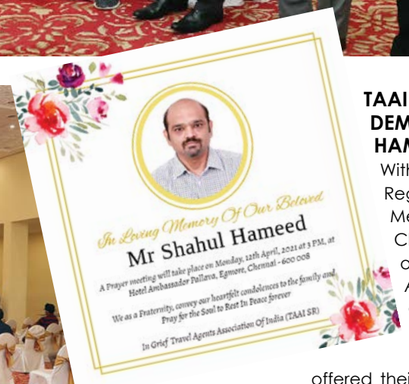


Southern Region conducted 'Dubai Products Training Program' On February 18. It was an exemplary moment for the trade fraternity as more than 80 members attended the programme.

REGION HIGHLIGHTS







TAAI MEMBERS CONDOLE DEMISE OF SHAHUL HAMEED

With profound grief, Southern Region conducted a Prayer Meeting to their beloved Chairman, Shahul Hameed on April 12 at Hotel Ambassador Pallava, Chennai. Braving the pandemic restriction, a good number of members offered their prayers and respects for the departed Soul to Rest in Peace. More than 60 members participated in the prayer meeting.

The meeting started with the condolence message by President, Jyoti Mayal which was very emotional and touching. The Office Bearers, Managing Committee members, Past & Present Chairmen spoke to their heart out emotionally.

The meeting witnessed the presence of trade fraternity in large numbers. People from Airlines, Tourism Department, Hotels and other departments attended in big numbers.

Razaidi Abd Rahim, Director of Tourism Malaysia- South India & Sri Lanka conveyed his condolence message in person. Besides this, representatives from SKAL / Hotels conveyed their condolence message in person.

Honorary Secretary, Sakthivadivel read out the messages sent by D Venkatesan, Regional Director (South) India Tourism. Y Venkata Rao, Department of Tourism Studies, Pondicherry University, had sent a video Condolence message. Also, messages from Other Regional Chairmen and Airlines were read out.

Everybody felt a big void has been left for TAAI and the benchmark of the standard he had set has to be fulfilled. ▲

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Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh Chapter

TAAI organised the 5th chapter meeting of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh at Hotel Marriott in Indore on January 23. Shankar Lalwan, Member of Parliament & Chairman Airport Advisory committee, graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Venkatesan D, Regional Director, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Aryama Sanya, Airport Director- Indore, Yuvraj Padole, Deputy Director, MP Tourism, were present as Guests of Honour. Around 50 members attended the meeting. ▲



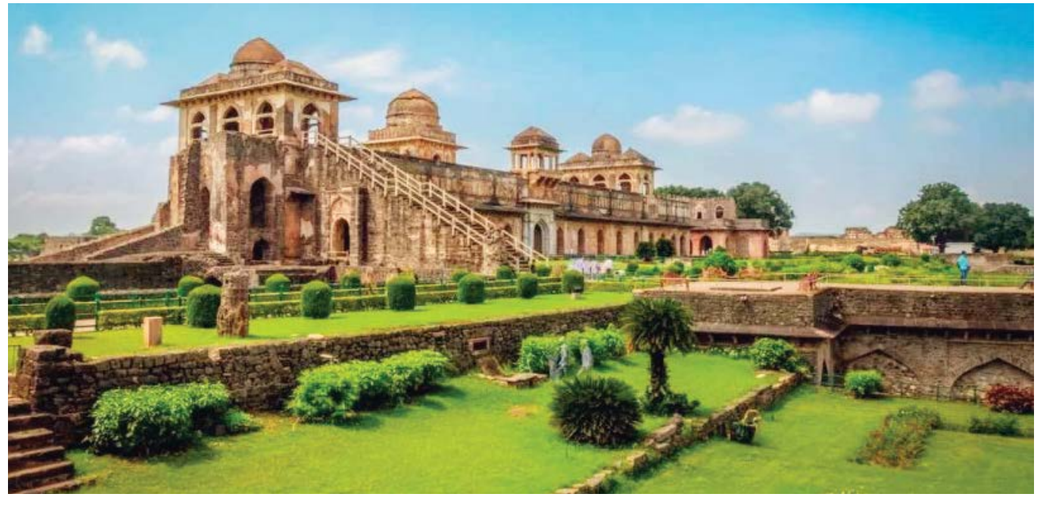


CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh Chapter



TAAI MP & CG members attended a FAM trip to Jalmahotsav at Hanuwantiya in Madhya Pradesh organised by Madhya Pradesh Tourism on January 8. Around 25 agents participated in the event.



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Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter

The Jammu and Kashmir roadshow was held on March 23, at Park Hyatt in Hyderabad. It was well attended by 150 travel professionals of Hyderabad city. Uppala Srinivas Gupa, Chairman, Telangana Tourism was the Chief Guest of the event. Nagesh Pampati, Chairman of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter, spoke about the destination and assured the Kashmir travel partners that TAAI would become the ambassador for its promotion. Javed Bakshi from J & K Tourism also announced that it is the persistent efforts of TAAI that has always resulted in an impressive rise in footfalls. ▲









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Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Chapter

India International Travel Mart (IITM) was held in Hyderabad on March 16 and 17, at the Convention Centre of Hotel Marriot. TAAI AP & TS Chapter Chairman Nagesh Pampati inaugurated the event.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, India Tourism, Karnataka Tourism etc. were among the exhibitors who were participated. The association thanked Surinder Hakdhu, Managing Director and Rohit Hangal, Director of Sphere Travel Media and Exhibitions for their help.

During the event a panel discussion namely, Revival of Tourism was held, in which TAAI Chairman Nagesh Pampati participated as a panellist and complimented the organisers for their initiative during these challenging times. ▲





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Flybig invites

Gujarat Chapter on its maiden flight

Flybig, India's youngest airline which started its operation on January 3, invited TAAI Gujarat Chapter members on its first inaugural flight; Ahmedabad – Bhopal - Ahmedabad on February 5.

TAAI Gujarat Chapter members led by Hon. Treasurer of TAAI, Shreeram Patel; Managing Committee Member, Paras Lakhia and Gujarat office bearers – Chairman, Virendra Shah; Hon. Secretary, Prashant Madlani and Hon. Treasurer, Viral Shah were overwhelmed by the grand reception and warm hospitality of the Flybig team. ▲





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Boosting State Tourism

Gujarat Chapter

TAAI Gujarat Chapter was invited by MOT for the Chhattisgarh visit from 17 to 21 December 2020. TAAI had also invited other chapters of Gujarat to show the association strength & unity. TAAI members were part of the invitee under Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat Roadshow of MOT - Government of India. TAAI team met Union Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel and discussed some core issues regarding the promotion of regional tourism. The team also visited Raipur, Kondagao, Chitrakoot Fall and Tirathgarh fall. The team enjoyed tribal dance and visited the local market. Gujarat and Chhattisgarh are partner states for tourism promotion. ▲









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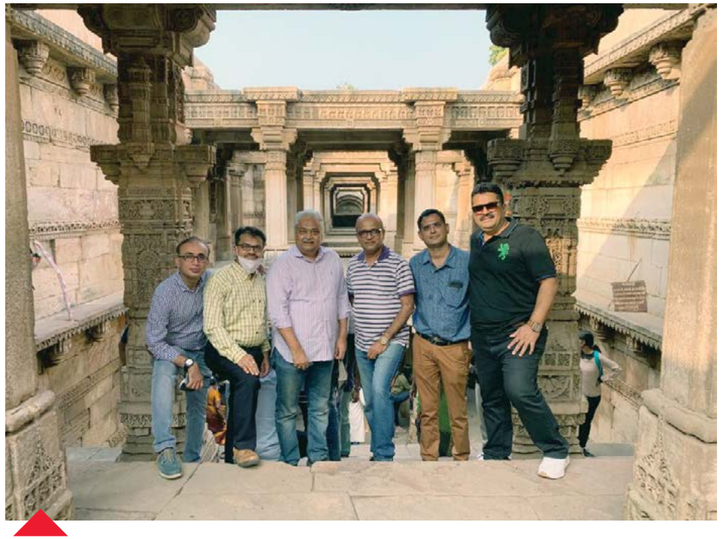
Boosting State Tourism

Gujarat Chapter



15 members of the TAAI Gujarat Chapter, along with Hon. Treasurer, Shreeram Patel; Managing Committee Member, Paras Lakhia and Gujarat Chapter office bearers - Chairman Virendra Shah; Hon. Secretary, Prashant Madlani and Hon. Treasurer, Viral Shah, visited GIFT City Club & Business Centre in Gujarat on January 10. This visit was done in association with TCGL & GIFT CITY.

GIFT City Club & Business Centre is a testimony, reflecting Gujarat's hospitality, entrepreneurial and decadent spirit. GIFT City is a vertical city located on the banks of the Sabarmati River and is also a new financial & technology gateway of India for the world. ▲



TAAI team also visited the flamboyant 15th-century Adalaj stepwell, which represents Indo-Islamic fusion architecture that percolated through many stepwells of the period. Till date, the intricate carvings on the pillars that support the five storeys are mostly intact.

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Boosting State Tourism

Gujarat Chapter

On the invitation of India Tourism Mumbai, TAAI Gujarat Chapter office bearers – Chairman, Virendra Shah; Hon. Secretary, Prashant Madlani; and Hon. Treasurer, Viral Shah travelled to Indore and attended the Domestic Tourism Roadshow event, which was held on January 22, at Sheraton Grand Palace, Indore.

The office bearers interacted and met with Yogendra Tripathi, then Tourism Secretary, GOI and Sonia Meena, Additional Managing Director of MP Tourism board.

The Roadshow was followed by a two day FAM tour to Maheshwar and Mandu, from January 23 to 25. The FAM trip was sponsored by Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board. ▲





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Gujarat Chapter





TAAI members enjoying the scenic view at Maheshwar and Mandu in Madhya Pradesh during a FAM trip

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South Gujarat Chapter



The first quarter of 2021, which was seen as fruitful for business recovery came as a rude shock to the travel agent community. Despite a business surge in January, there was a sudden slump in February. The Gujarat government announced extended lockdown and also imposed night curfew. While locals continued to travel, Covid-19 infections proved to be a dampener with surge in cases in major cities of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Mid-March, the TAAI National Committee announced its Conclave in Kevadia. This news came as a ray of hope for the South Gujarat Chapter members who with great enthusiasm confirmed their presence at the event. The South Gujarat Chapter's Hon Secretary, Kantibhai Sohagia and Treasurer, Vishal Shah took leadership in managing all transportation and taking most of the Chapter members to attend this conclave. South Gujarat Chairman Malcom Pandol couldn't attend the Conclave.

Members from South Gujarat Chapter who attended the Conclave at Kevadia were happy and showered gratitude on the national leadership for having taken the lead in organising this physical event. The three stalwarts of the Gujarat team - Hon. National Treasurer, Shreeram Patel; Managing Committee Member, Paras Lakhia and Gujarat Chapter Chairman, Virendra Shah made all arrangements in organising this event successfully.

Despite the Covid-19 induced lockdown restricting physical meetings, the national office-bearers of TAAI have been in constant touch with South Gujarat Chapter members. ▲



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TAAI Gujarat Chapter arranges vaccination drive for members and their spouses

TAAI Gujarat Chapter led by the Chapter Chairman Virendra Shah along with his team tied up with one of the leading hospitals namely, Samved Hospital for vaccinating accredited members and their spouses. The first round of vaccines was given on April 3, to TAAI members. Along with the members, their spouses also participated in this program. The vaccination drive was a first and a unique program conducted by TAAI in the travel fraternity, which proves the commitment of TAAI towards its members and their families. ▲















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Kerala Chapter



The Chapter, which used to meet online for the first time had physical meeting on April 8. All Covid protocols were followed by the attendees. The over an hour meeting covered the Chairman's report. Members raised various issues including IATA Bank Guarantee, Conversion to Go Lite. "Some of the agents, depending on their business silo, can opt for Go Lite as a cost saving measure", said the Chairman. The assembly was also informed that TAAI is negotiating with IATA for the Joint Bank Guarantee scheme. The insurance scheme is also being explored.

The Past Chairman. James Kodianthara, Concord Tours and Travels, briefed the members, about the Honorable High Court judgment in favour of tour operators regarding SEIS benefits. This was a KTM initiative and he opined that TAAI should take some judicial step for getting benefits from the government. The Chairman conveyed the message again that TAAI is totally against judicial approach and they are in continuous dialogue with the authorities for getting some relief for the travel fraternity.

Members at the meeting suggested to organise an overnight trip to nearby hill station. The Chairman said that the month of May will be ideal to go subject to Covid restrictions.

During the dinner K Thomas, Past Secretary of TAAI Kerala Chapter, entertained the members with songs in his melodious voice. ▲



The members of the TAAI Kerala Chapter actively participated in the IITM held on February 5 at Gateway Hotel, Cochin. This was the first event held by IITM in South India after the Covid breakout. The two day event attracted a lot of travel professionals. TAAI looks forward to more such events which will reactivate the tourism industry.

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Jammu & Kashmir Chapter

TAAI Jammu & Kashmir Chapter held its bi-monthly meeting on April 3, at Hotel Asian Park, Munawar Abad, M A Link Road, Srinagar. The members discussed the Chapter's role in making all the Tourism roadshows successful in Amritsar, Pune, Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Indore and New Delhi. The respective chapters of TAAI actively participated and became part of the roadshows. All chapter members extended their thanks to TAAI President, Jyoti Mayal and her team for their personal participation at the Delhi roadshow. Mayal was greeted with a bouquet of flowers and delivered her wonderful speech wherein she highlighted the problems faced by tour operators of Jammu & Kashmir due to hike in hotel rates and non-availability of rooms for local agents.

The members condoled the demise of Irfan Gosani of Johansen Travel Agency and Abdul Aziz Guroo of Columbia Tour & Travels, who passed away in the month of March.

The members also remembered Shahul Hameed, Southern Region Chairman for his rich ideals, compassion, and contribution to TAAI. He, along with his region members were actively involved in Jammu & Kashmir Tourism roadshow organised in Chennai on March 12. ▲







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Jammu & Kashmir Chapter

TAAI J&K Chapter worked hard in association with United Tourism Forum comprising 8 leading Travel associations (TASK, JKTA, PILTOF, TTIG, DTOAK, and National Chapters of IATO, ADTOI and TAAI) of the Valley in addressing several issues related to travel and tour operators. The Chapter was at the forefront in helping the stranded tourists during the heavy snow fall in January 2021, and contributed for their free boarding and lodging in the Valley.

TAAI became the active participant of all road shows held at different cities of country by the J & K Tourism Department in association with different travel associations of the state. A sincere thank you to Chapters of Pune, Bengaluru, Amritsar, Indore, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Delhi. Jammu & Kashmir Chapter thanks the TAAI President Jyoti Mayal for her personal presence at Delhi road show along with National office bearer and MC members. She had detailed discussion with Commissioner/Secretary Tourism Sarmad Hafeez and Director Tourism Dr. G N Itoo, and assured them full support of TAAI for promotion of tourism for Jammu & Kashmir. The President delivered a speech at this road show, and highlighted the priorities of Union Territory for promotion of tourism and the problems faced by travel trade operators related to their hotel bookings where local agents are getting ignored and rates are being hiked by more than two times.

The J&K Chapter members, including all three office-bearers attended the TAAI Conclave at Kevadia, Gujarat, and had a rich experience of having visited at such a beautiful destination which in addition to tourism importance is having historical back ground as well.

TAAI office-bearers along with the members of United Tourism Forum had meetings with Lt. Governor, Parliamentary Committee, Divisional Commissioner, Commissioner/Secretary Tourism and Director Tourism regarding tourism promotion. ▲











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Rajasthan Chapter

The Rajasthan Chapter organised its 9th General Meeting and a FAM trip to Ranthambore's Tiger Kingdom Resort to beat the pandemic blues. It was a two-night three days historical, entertaining, adventures, sporting and knowledge-gaining FAM cum meeting trip.

The Chapter is thankful to the Tiger Kingdom who hosted the meeting and FAM for members along with a stay in their their artistically designed, newly constructed huge resort with all meals. The Rajasthan Chapter members were exhausted with the ongoing pandemic and slow business.

Hence, members were excited and really enjoyed this out station meeting in an entertaining, sporting and rejuvenating atmosphere of nature and wildlife. ▲











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Rajasthan Chapter

The TAAI Rajasthan Chapter held a physical meeting at Surabhi, Jai Club, Jaipur on March 3. Office-bearers of Rajasthan Chapter invited sales and airport managers of IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air India, Air Asia, GoAir and other business partners of the trade. Overall 35 people attended this knowledge-sharing meeting. Members who were present at the event, enjoyed the musical evening followed by cocktail and dinner. ▲





Members having a great time during the physical meeting after months of lockdown.

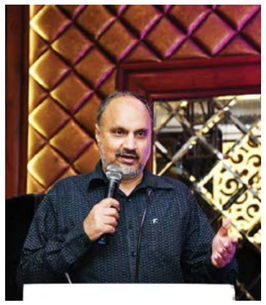


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Punjab Chapter







Gujrat Tourism conducted a roadshow at Amritsar to promote The Statue of Unity at Kevadia.The roadshow was attended by many travel agents. G. S. Sekhon, Chairman of TAAI Punjab Chapter addressed the gathering and spoke about allied membership of TAAI available to travel agents. He also thanked the Gujarat Tourism Board and Incredible India officials from Delhi. ▲





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The TAAI Punjab Chapter meeting was held physically on February 20 in Jalandhar. G. S. Sekhon, Chairman of TAAI Punjab Chapter took the first agenda of the meeting, i.e., outstation trip/meeting of the chapter.

Sekhon sought suggestions from the house on how the chapter's membership can be enhanced. Gagan Sharma suggested that the chapter's meeting would become more attractive by inviting spokespersons in meetings and organising various recreational activities like sports events or family functions. It was decided that Non-IATA members will be educated by communicating the benefits of TAAI and enrolling them as allied members in the association. It was also decided that the house will conduct a travel trade show for educating and guiding the general public about the various services rendered by TAAI members.

The matter related to the renewal of Punjab Government travel agent licenses was also discussed. Rajeshwar Dang informed the house that even after several rounds of meetings with the officials, the Government offices located in the different districts of Punjab were unable to guide the applicants, as there was no uniformity and clarity among them about the application process. Moreover, application process is manual. He suggested to put a writ in the Honorable Punjab and Haryana High Court for seeking relief regarding the uniformity, clarity, and online application process.

The chapter decided to invite the officials from the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India from New Delhi, to become part of Incredible India. ▲

Khalsa College, Amristar



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Pune Chapter

Pune Chapter conducted a membership drive in Aurangabad on February 12.

Bahram. P. Zadah, Chairman, TAAI Pune Chapter, and Mehboob Shaikh, TAAI Managing Committee Member gave details & provided information about the benefits of TAAI membership to the applicants who attended the meeting. All queries on documents, process, fees etc. were answered at this meeting.

TAAI Pune Chapter members, Zakir of Wonder Travels and Ashutosh Badve of Pushpak Travels organised the event and provided support for this membership drive and meeting in Aurangabad. ▲





TAAI Pune Chapter Chairman, Bahram P. Zadah travelled to Kolhapur and attended a meeting with Kolhapur based members of TAAI Pune Chapter.
The meeting was arranged with the help of TAAI Member from Kolhapur, Baliram Warade of Trade Wings Travels, for increasing TAAI members in Kolhapur.



Jammu & Kashmir Tourism organised a promotional roadshow in Pune on Feb 25 at Hotel Crown Plaza, Pune. TAAI Pune Chapter Chairman, Bahram P. Zadah was the Chief Guest of the event. In his address, he wished all the success to the roadshow. The roadshow was attended by 100 travel industry agents from Pune.

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Bahram, Mehboob and Krishna visited the stall of Gujarat Tourism and posed with the Cutout of Statue of Unity at the IITM Opening Ceremony.



Bahram P. Zadah, Chairman of TAAI Pune Chapter, Mehboob Shaikh, Managing Committee Member and Krishna Gopalan, Past Chairman of TAAI Pune Chapter attended the opening ceremony of IITM Pune held on February 23. They, along with Rohit Hangal of IITM had the privilege of lighting of the lamp at the inauguration.



Bahram. P. Zadah, Chairman of TAAI Pune Chapter was felicitated by the India Tourism Mumbai Office.



TAAI PUNE CHAPTER MEMBERS AT TAAI GUJARAT TOURISM CONCLAVE

TAAI Pune Chapter was represented by Managing Committee Member, Mehboob Shaikh; Pune Chapter Chairman, Bahram. P. Zadah along with his spouse; Hon. Treasurer of Pune Chapter, Sateesh Bhambure along with his spouse; Past Chapter Chairman, Krishna Gopalan and Members - RP Singh and Asif Patel. ▲

The Pune Chapter members arrived at Ahmedabad Airport on March 9.

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Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter

The Directorate of Tourism Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir (UT), along with the association of Jammu travel agents, organised a roadshow on March 16 at Hotel Marriott, Lucknow. The event was supported by TAAI Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter.

The Chief Guest of the event was Y P Singh, Director Ayodhya Research Institute, Department of Culture, Uttar Pradesh, while the Guest of Honour was S M Akhlaz Sheeraz, Chairman of TAAI Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand chapter, who was also one of the guest speakers.

Other prominent members who attended the meeting were Rajesh Chandan, President, Association of Jammu Travel Agents; Shahnawaz A Shah, Marketing Head, SKICC Srinagar; Swati Dimri, Secretary, TAAI UP & UK Chapter; Mohd Khalid, Treasurer, TAAI UP & UK Chapter.

Esteemed travel agents, Sunil Satyawakta from Civica Travels, Anupam Shukla from Holiday Makers, Rajiv Arora from Rayhan Travels, and Vivek Pandey from Ebix Travels were also present at the event . The presentation done by the Tourism Board was very informative and captivating. The event was attended by many travel agents. ▲





Members of Jammu & Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapters at the roadshow in Lucknow

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TAAI plays an active role for the success of ITM 2021 edition







India Tourism Mart (ITM) 2021, was held virtually from February 18 to 20, which was jointly organized by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and FAITH. The edition witnessed a grand ceremony at ITC Maurya Hotel, New Delhi on February 19, and attended by Tourism Minister virtually, Secretary, DG Tourism, Joint Secretary Tourism, ADG Tourism and Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog physically along with Jyoti Mayal, President of TAAI & Presidents of TAFI, FHRAI, IATO, ICPB, ADTOI, ATOAI, HAI, IHHA & ITTA and about 150 delegates including travel and electronic media.

Subhash Goyal, Chairman, ITM-2021, welcomed all the delegates, Amitabh Kant delivered the keynote address and Nakul Anand, Chairman FAITH, introduced all 10 Presidents of FAITH member associations and spoke about the vision of the Tourism Industry and the road ahead.

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The new Secretary of Tourism, Arvind Singh assured the industry, that he is working closely with all the concerned ministries to restart e-visa and international flights and also released the road ahead vision document prepared by FAITH & KPMG. ADG Tourism, Rupinder Brar delivered the vote of thanks. The event was held slightly hybrid, but 90% was virtual.

It was a huge success with online B2B interactions between Indian tourism exhibitors in an elite group of global buyers selected from over 90 countries with a very engaging virtual knowledge tourism conclave. Domestic Buyers, reflecting a mix of Tourism Trade, Corporate and Institutional Buyers were invited.

TAAI played a prominent role with President Jyoti Mayal at the forefront right from planning, negotiations, operations and conclusion of the event.

TAAI Office Bearers & Managing Committee Members were part of established working committee(s).

- Hon. Secretary General - Bettaiah Lokesh -Domestic Hosted Buyer Committee
- Hon. Treasurer - Shreeram Patel -International Hosted Buyer Committee
- Anoop Kanuga-Exhibition Committee
- Paras Lakhia-Cultural Committee
- Devesh Kumar Agarwal-Technology & Website Committee
- Mehboob Shaikh-Logistics Committee

Tourism Leadership Conclave held during the India Tourism Mart - 2021 Virtual had a session on "India, The New Age Tourism & Aviation Hub of Asia" which addressed on the immense opportunity that can emerge for Indian Tourism when India is positioned rightfully as the aviation hub of Asia connecting the Eastern and the Western world. This Leadership session was moderated by Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI. ▲

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TAAI Conclave
Focus on Domestic Tourism



The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) conducted a four-day Conclave from March 9 to 12 in Kevadia, Gujarat to educate its members and promote the state as a tourism destination for domestic as well inbound tourists. TAAI members from 20 regions and chapters across India joined the Conclave.

Members of the trade were going through challenging times due to the Covid-19 pandemic and this gave an opportunity for transformation, and ability to explore, said Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI.

Talking about the Conclave, Mayal said, "Tourism is one industry which is first to hit and last to revive during tough times. However, time and again, travel agents have proved their worth during these tough times. During Covid times, TAAI was constantly in touch with ministries to open domestic borders and help tourism revive. With this Conclave, we intend to open new avenues of domestic tourism for our members. TAAI will always be the industry leader to drive change for the growth of our members."

Delegates experienced accommodation options at the sight with visit to the Statue of Unity, Sardar Sarovar Dam and the nearby attractions. Besides a range of discussions on topical issues kept the members engaged on the way forward. Union Tourism Minister, Prahlad Singh Patel joined the Conclave via video conferencing.





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Member delegates experienced the accommodation and facilities at Tent City 1 and Tent City 2 at Kevadia along with evening dinner cruise along the River Narmada with dinner in 2 groups. Besides Statue of Unity, visit for Jungle Safari, Valley of Flowers, Cactus & Butterfly Garden was undertaken. Delegates also visited the 5 gardens inside Arogya Van (Herbal Garden), which exhibits a wide range of medicinal plants and health related landscapes. Members also visited the cultural shopping arena of Ekta Mall in the SoU region.

This initiative by TAAI ensured members were familiarised with the region to promote *Dekho Apna Desh* and revive the promotion of domestic and inbound tourism through skilling and personal experiencing, said Vice President, Jay Bhatia.

Bhatia added, "We are happy to connect with our member colleagues across India for the TAAI Tourism Conclave being held at Statue of Unity, Kevadia, Gujarat in association with Gujarat Tourism. All of us had been indoors for over 6 to 7months, hence we decided to educate, skill and empower our members through this outdoor experience. Domestic Tourism in India has seen a jump multi-fold in the last 6months. We wanted our members to get familiarised with this region and promote it more to domestic as well as gear up for the inbound tourist soon. Similar Conclaves are being planned across the country which shall give insight and knowledge of our rich heritage, culture and diversity in tourism products."

A half-day business session was organised which was addressed by Union Minister of Tourism Prahlad Singh Patel, via a video message. He welcomed the initiative of India's largest and premier travel-tourism association, TAAI, which has set an historic example of positivity due to the changing times. He added that TAAI membership has all aspects of tourism professional organisations and in the coming future the responsibility and challenges shall increase when

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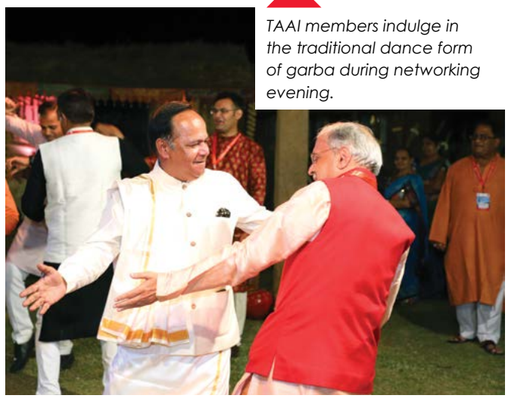
President Jyoti Mayal seen engaging with members and speakers in a fun-filled atmosphere.



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TAAI members indulge in the traditional dance form of garba during networking evening.



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COVER STORY





The entire TAAI national, regional and chapter-wise leadership in unison to mark solidarity for Gujarat Conclave.

The TAAI national leadership lighting the traditional lamp in the presence of former Presidents Sunil Kumar and Balbir Mayal.



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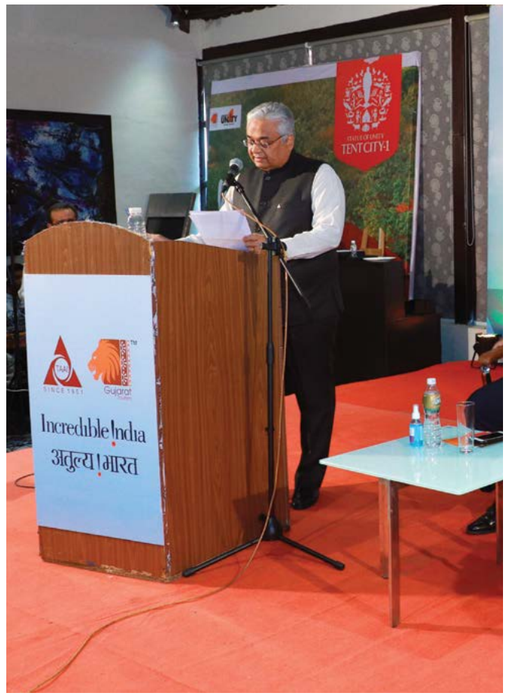
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inbound tourist commence their India visits. TAAI members must be ready with newer ideas and statergies to ensure Tourism to India is facilitated by them in a smooth manner.

Jenu Devan, Commissioner of Tourism and MD, Gujarat Tourism, addressed the Conclave via live video call wherein he highlighted the initiatives of the government in promoting Gujarat to the world and thanked the TAAI committee for bringing their members to SoU, in Gujarat and also assured full support and encouragement to the members in promoting Gujarat as a wholesome destination.

Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI, gave an overview of the business sessions stating that, the inaugural address was an eye-opener. A panel discussion moderated by Bhatia on Bharat ka Vikas – Empowering Domestic Tourism, had Dr. Achyut Singh Jt. General Manager- Indian Railways (IRCTC) who spoke about connecting tourist up to the last mile and how TAAI members could promote rail packages to travellers across India. A presentation was also made by Dr Singh for members to register and connect with IRCTC. Ajay Kumar Wadhawan, Chief of Sales, Air Asia India, participated in the panel citing views of newer airports and air connectivity across smaller airports in India as well. Past President of TAAI, Balbir Mayal gave his views on the changing dynamics in the travel and tourism field of the last few decades, and how India shall be a top tourist destination in the world with the joint initiatives of TAAI on skilling and educational capabilities with state tourism boards, airlines, railways etc.

This was followed by a discussion on "Where Winners Play"



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a panel moderated by Ashish Gupta, Founder – Strategy Pluto and Consulting CEO of FAITH. A healthy debate with IATA and its functioning was undertaken with Rodney Dcruz, Asst. Director IATA who presented the views, perceptions and future of IATA. Lokesh represented TAAI and was vocal in representing the core issues of the membership with IATA and the airlines. Sunil Kumar Rumalla, President, UFTAA, gave a global view of the challenges faced by agents across the world with IATA and made suggestive recommendations to IATA so as to ensure survival of the airlines as well as the agents.

A discussion moderated by Amish Desai, TAAI Karnataka Chapter Chairman along with Parineeta Sethi, Chief Editor & Publisher of Pinnacle Connect, with Vasudha Sondhi, MD, OMPL Group. Mayal, Chairperson Tourism and Hospitality Skill Counsil (THSC), also participated in the panel discussing customer satisfaction in tourism through technology, marketing and skilling. With their expertise in sales, marketing, PR and social media, technology and skill development, the panellist suggested how today's evolving TAAI member must pursue and be empowered with all the skills apart from delivery of service. She also updated on the upcoming initiatives of WITT (Women in TAAI and Travel), where TAAI shall give back to society and empower the women to become entrepreneurs through skilling and work towards making India a safe and secure tourism destination.

Appreciating the efforts and initiative of Gujarat Government and Gujarat Tourism to invite TAAI and its members to SoU, Hon. National Treasurer-TAAI, Shreeram



Patel in his vote of thanks emphasised TAAI's role in growth and development of the trade. He thanked the vision of Gujarat Minister of Tourism Jawahar bhai Chavda, who along with Principal Secretary Tourism - Gujarat, Mamta Verma, Commissioner Tourism and MD of Gujarat Tourism, Jenu Devan and Nirav Munshi – Manager Commercial (Travel & Marketing) along with other officials gave full support to TAAI. He also thanked IndiGo who were the sole airline which ensured delegates from every corner of India connected to Gujarat for this Conclave. ▲

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Discussion on Karnataka Tourism Policy



Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon. Secretary, TAAI was the Chief Guest at an event conducted at St. Joseph's College of Commerce in Bangalore on March 30. He moderated a panel discussion on the present Karnataka Tourism Policy.



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Welcome to our New Members

TAAI continues to grow. More industry leaders from all segments of the industry are embracing TAAI - for TAAI offers the unique opportunity to support stakeholders, get connected and progress.

TAAI welcomes its new members. It is a pleasure to invite these companies join us in our industry initiatives including training, learning from updates and getting connected through our networking opportunities with colleague agencies and industry leaders from all departments of our growing industry - travel, tourism, hospitality, travel technology, etc.

TAAI offers three categories of membership - Active, Branch Associates and Allied.



SR. NO.	NAME OF AGENCY	CITY	REPRESENTATIVE I	REPRESENTATIVE II
1	Globetrot Holidays	AHMEDABAD	Mr. Ankit Agrawal	Mr. Adit Agrawal
2	Interconnect Travels	AHMEDABAD	Mr. Rubin Christy	Mr. Shrinivasan Iyer
3	Live Travel	AHMEDABAD	Mr. Nirav Jain	Mr. Bhavin Shah
4	Inncrewin Technologies Private Limited T/A Instagathering	BANGALORE	Mr. Rituraj Gupta	Mr. Mahesha Reddy
5	Comfort Journey	BHOPAL	Mr. Sharadendu Kumar Mishra	
6	Balaji Air Travels	BHUJ	Mr. Sanjaykumar Gadhvi	Ms. Bansari Gorasia
7	Rajasthan Magic Tours	BIKANER	Mr. Kailash Chandra Tiwari	Ms. Sunita Tiwari
8	Satnaam Travels	CHENNAI	Mr. Mahesh Kumar Ramchand	Mrs. Shalini Mahesh Kumar
9	Vay2Go Travel Private Limited	HYDERABAD	Mr. Ganesh Rao S.	Mr. Kareem Hussain Shaik
10	Insta Bhraman	INDORE	Mr. Amol Kataria	Mrs. Minal Jain
11	Vistaar Travels	INDORE	Mr. Ullas Nair	Mrs. Pratibha Nair
12	Chahat Tours And Travels	INDORE	Mr. Satish Dewani	Ms. Aarti Dhurwey
13	A2 Tours And Travels	JABALPUR	Mr. Aklank Jain	Mr. Aditya Jain
14	Beyond Vacations	JALGAON	Mr. Pritesh Ratanshi Ved	Mrs. Sonia Pritesh Ved
15	Kenya Tourism Board	KENYA	Ms. Irene Katumo	Ms. Elizabeth Odada
16	Rehmat Holidays	KURUKSHETRA	Mr. Jaspreet Singh	Mr. Pahulpreet Singh

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17	Charson Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd.	MUMBAI	Mr. Carl Vaz	Mrs. Sonalee Vaz
18	Destinations Travel & Vacation Planners	NAGPUR	Mr. Rajendra Akolkar	Ms. Rajshree Anand
19	Mishrikotkar Travels Pvt. Ltd.	NAGPUR	Mr. Tushar Mishrikotkar	Ms. Prachi Dhote
20	Amaan Tours	NAVSARI	Mr. Zuber Iqbal Ruwala	Ms. Fazin Zuber Ruwala
21	Lionel India Limited	NEW DELHI	Mr. Sumit Sabharwal	Mr. Lalit Kumar Newatia
22	Hindustan Air Travels	NEW DELHI	Mr. Rajiv Aggarwal	Mr. Manish Aggarwal
23	Jetsave India Tours Pvt. Ltd.	NEW DELHI	Mr. Anil Sharma	Mr. Kartik Sharma
24	Coterie Tours Private Limited	NEW DELHI	Mrs. Reetu Jain	Mr. Ranjan Kumar Jain
25	Chahna Tours And Travels Private Limited	RAIPUR	Mr. Manoj Kumar Khatore	Mrs. Sarika Khatore
26	Saarth Holidays Ventures Private Limited	RAIPUR	Mr. Gautam Kakar	Mrs. Sakshi Kakar
27	The Travel Craft	RAJKOT	Mr. Sagar M. Jani	
28	M.B. Travel & Trade Links	RAJKOT	Mr. Dipen Vinda	Mr. Mohanlal Vinda
29	Travel Mentor	RAJKOT	Mr. Sajju Kanabar	Mr. Amit Trivedi
30	Honey Air Travels	RAJKOT	Mr. Rajenkumar A. Madani	Mrs. Vaishali Madani
31	Travel Impression	SRINAGAR	Mr. Mohammad Junaid Dar	Mr. Shakeel Ahmad Wani
32	Travel Xtreme	SRINAGAR	Mr. Adil Altaf	Mr. Asrar Kar
33	MSM Tours & Travels	SRINAGAR	Mr. Muneer Ahmad Kabli	
34	Varni Travel World LLP	SURAT	Mr. Kalpesh K. Gabani	Mr. Hardik B. Italiya
35	Network Tours and Travels	SURAT	Mr. Rajiv Shah	Mrs. Hetal Shah
36	Crescent Al Ameen Haj & Umrah Services	TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	Mr. M. A. Mohamed Farrook	Mr. M. Mohamad Nizar
37	Opulent Travel	TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	Mr. N. Raees Ahamed	Mr. I. Mohamed Rizvaan
38	Indo Nepal Tour And Travel	VARANASI	Mr. Rakesh Kumar Rai	Mrs. Mamta Rai

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Travel Trade Reporter

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TAAI Appeals to IATA to Waive Annual Fees & Extend Financial Security Deadline

TAAI organised a interactive webinar for its members on Friday, 7th May, 2021 along with IATA on GoLite Accreditation v/s Standard IATA Travel Agency Accreditation & IATA Easy Pay. Over 250 members attended the session from across India's 20 Regions & Chapters of TAAI.

IATA-India was represented by Amitabh Khosla, Rodney Dcruz and Ritham Saha who presented the accreditation options available to agencies under the NewGen ISS.

The presentation featured comparisons on accreditation models to the members. Due to the pandemic lockdown, travel agents across India were undergoing challenging times on IATA's stringent and rigid compliances.

The comparison shared by IATA on GoStandard v/s GoLite, stated that members opting for GoLite would be exempt from providing to IATA, Financial Statements, Annual Financial Review and Financial Security. The GoLite agents would be required to make payment for its sales on cash and carry basis only from the funds available in its EasyPay account, which are held with two empanelled banks with IATA, being Yes Bank and Standard Chartered Bank in India.



Although with no assurance from IATA or any operating airline in India that Ticketing Authority would be made available to all agents. The airline/s reserve their right to allot the same to agents on a selective basis. Jyoti Mayal stated that the same has been placed once again in the forthcoming APJC – India meeting for consideration.

The Financial Security renewal is scheduled for 30th June, 2021 and this year due to the withdrawl of Iffco Tokio General Insurance from providing extension/renewal of securing the the airlines against agency defaults, the burden of the member travel agents has fallen on the Association to include members into its Joint Bank Gaurantee Program. Agents can also provide their own Bank Gaurantees to IATA but, the banks are asking for over 100% as co-lateral to provide the same.

Over the last two years TAAI has been appealing to MoCA and IATA to rework Financial Security towards protecting the travel agents from Airlines defaults and its suspension of services, which has impacted the travel agents by several hundred crores.

TAAI- President, Jyoti Mayal during the interaction has strongly voiced the concern to IATA, to reconsider the extension of Financial Security by one more year and also asked for a waiver in Annual Fees considering the global pandemic.

Sales of member agents over the last one year has dropped to less than 5% of the total sales it conducted in financial year 2019-20. Due to the same TAAI too has rebated its members on its annual membership fees.
TAAI and IATA ensured that individual questions of all members present were taken and answered to the satisfaction and clarity of all agents, during the interactive session. Rodney Dcruz and Ritam Saha were prompt in answering all queries and acknowledged suggestions put forth.

More such interactive sessions and training programs are on the anvil between IATA and TAAI for its members in the coming months.

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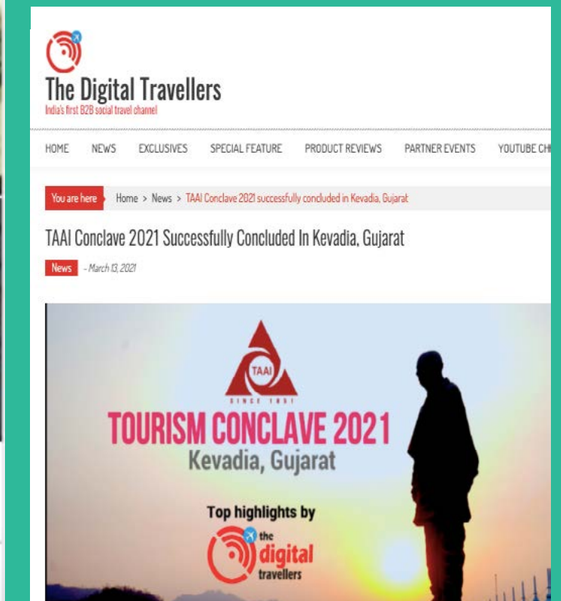


With an aim to revive domestic tourism and build confidence among the travel fraternity, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) recently concluded 'Tourism Conclave' at Tent City in Kevadia, Gujarat. Organized between March 9-12, the conclave was a perfect mix of networking sessions, destination tours and panel discussions. The agenda of the conclave was to promote Kevadia as the next big tourist hotspot in India and also boost domestic tourism by encouraging members to focus on local destinations.

The 3-days TAAI conclave gave the attendees an opportunity to explore Kevadia by visiting Statue of Unity, dinner cruise, aarogya van, jungle safari, cactus garden, butterfly garden, the valley of flowers, Ekta mall and much more. The event also featured half-day business sessions with 3 different panel discussions focused on domestic tourism and marketing.

Talking about the conclave, Jyoti Mayal, Chairman, TAAI said, "Tourism is one industry which is first to hit and last to revive during tough times. However, time and again, travel agents have proved their worth during these tough times. During Covid times, TAAI was constantly in touch with ministries to open domestic borders and help tourism revive. With this conclave, we intend to open new avenues of domestic tourism for our members. TAAI will always be the industry leader to drive change for the growth of our members."

Adding further, Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI said, "Covid proved to be one of the blessings in disguise for the domestic tourism industry and even for travel agents. It's because of these tough times that travellers now trust travel agents more than online portals. We, as TAAI, will continue to work together with our partners and ministries to educate our members on multiple growth avenues. Gujarat, especially Kevadia proved to be an amazing example of how a destination can play an important role in taking domestic tourism to next level."



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TAAI brings the spotlight on Kevadia, Gujarat with its four-day Conclave

TBM Staff | Mumbai


Pic Courtesy: The Digital Travellers

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) conducted a four-day conclave from March 9 to 12 in Kevadia, Gujarat to educate its members and promote the state as a tourism destination for domestic as well inbound tourists. TAAI members from 20 regions and chapters across India joined the conclave.

Members of the trade were going through challenging times due to the Covid-19 pandemic and this gave an opportunity for transformation, and ability to explore, said Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI.

Talking about the conclave, Mayal said, "Tourism is one industry which is first to hit and last to revive during tough times. However, time and again, travel agents have proved their worth during these tough times. During Covid times, TAAI was constantly in touch with ministries to open domestic borders and help tourism revive. With this conclave, we intend to open new avenues of domestic tourism for our members. TAAI will always be the industry leader to drive change for the growth of our members."

Delegates experienced accommodation options at the sight with visit to the Statue of Unity, Sardar Sarovar Dam and the nearby attractions. Besides a range of discussions on topical issues kept the members engaged on the way forward. Union Tourism Minister, Prahlad Singh Patel joined the conclave via video conferencing.

Member delegates experienced the accommodation and facilities at Tent City 1 and Tent City 2 at Kevadia along with evening dinner cruise along the River Narmada with dinner in 2 groups. Besides Statue of Unity, visit for Jungle Safari, Valley of Flowers, Cactus & Butterfly Garden was undertaken. Delegates also visited the 5 gardens inside Arogya Van (Herbal Garden), which exhibits a wide range of medicinal plants and health related landscapes. Members also visited the cultural shopping arena of Ekta Mall in the SoU region.

This initiative by TAAI ensured members were familiarised with the region to promote Dekho Apna Desh and revive the promotion of domestic and inbound tourism through skilling and personal experiencing, said Vice President, Jay Bhatia.

Bhatia added, "We are happy to connect with our member colleagues across India for the TAAI Tourism conclave being held at Statue of Unity, Kevadia, Gujarat in association with Gujarat Tourism. All of us had been indoors for over 6 to 7months, hence we decided to educate, skill and empower our members through this outdoor experience. Domestic Tourism in India has seen a jump multi-fold in the last 6months. We wanted our members to get familiarised with this region and promote it more to domestic as well as gear up for the inbound tourist soon. Similar conclaves



Pic Courtesy: The Digital Travellers

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A solid TAAI with domestic tourism

Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) recently collaborated with Gujarat Tourism to host its Tourism Conclave for the year at Statue of Unity, Kevadia, from March 9-12. The Conclave brought members from all regions together to brainstorm on new ideas and opportunities in domestic tourism in the new normal.



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Knowledge boost for TAAI members

Organising its first physical event in the COVID-era, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) recently conducted a Tourism Conclave from March 9-12, 2021 at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Gujarat. The event saw participation from more than 200 members and also included a tour of the area.

Manas Dwivedi

Members from 20 regions and chapters across India gathered and experienced the newest tourism attraction of the state. Organised in association with Gujarat Tourism and supported by Ministry of Tourism, the conclave's focus was to educate travel trade members and promote Gujarat as a tourism destination for domestic as well as inbound tourists, stated **Jyoti Mayal**, President, TAAI. "Members of the trade are going through challenging times due to the pandemic and this offered them an opportunity to adapt to transformation, and explore possibilities. It was necessary to take our members out after a long hiatus because we need to motivate not only our members but consumers as well to travel and explore domestic destinations. Our conclave provides more avenues to our members and gives them the hand-holding they need to revive themselves and help them move forward. I am happy that we got such a great reception from more than 240 members who participated and showed enthusiasm during the conclave and enjoyed their stay at the destination. I would like to thank Gujarat Tourism and MOT for their assistance and support in organising the TAAI Tourism Conclave," she added.

> It was necessary to take members out to motivate them and the consumers to explore domestic destinations
> – Jyoti Mayal

Delegates experienced the accommodation facilities at Tent City 1 and Tent City 2 at Kevadia along with a visit to the tallest statue in the world. They also visited nearby attractions such as Jungle Safari, Aarogya Van and many more apart from enjoying a dinner cruise on river Narmada.

Talking about the success of the event and the prospect of organising more such conclaves elsewhere in the country going forward, **Jay Bhatia**, Vice President, TAAI, said that the success of conclave in Gujarat depicts the need to impart skills, educate and empower members. "This initiative of TAAI shall ensure members were familiarised with the region to promote 'Dekho Apna Desh' and revive the promotion of domestic and inbound tourism through personal experience. The idea was to ensure that our members know more about the products and offerings at Statue of Unity before they start promoting it. Apart from familiarisation, we had three informative knowledge sessions that focused on how we can move forward after the pandemic. All participating members gave good feedback about their trip. Going forward, we are going to tie up with more states and tourism boards to work together and to provide members with more practical experiences," Bhatia mentioned.


(L-R) Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI and Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI

> We are going to tie up with more states and tourism boards to provide members with more practical experiences
> – Jay Bhatia

Jenu Devan, Commissioner of Tourism and MD, Gujarat Tourism, addressed the conclave via a live video call wherein he highlighted the initiatives of the government in promoting Gujarat and thanked the TAAI committee for bringing their members to SoU. He also assured support and encouragement to members in promoting Gujarat as a wholesome destination.

South India gets exclusive GSA

TravelBullz has signed on Bangalore Classic Tours and Travels as its GSA for the South Indian market. The move will help the company expand its reach across the region, including tier-II and III cities.

Manas Dwivedi

With an aim to expand its reach to tier-II and III cities across South India, TravelBullz has announced Bangalore Classic Tours and Travels as General Sales Agent (GSA) for expanding its reach in the southern market of the country. This move will allow travel partners to increase their product portfolio and earn more revenue with the advanced B2B booking engine provided by TravelBullz. It will also help in management of agent and sub-agent accounts, which will make transactions smooth and hassle free.

Bangalore Classic Tours and Travels, founded by **Amarnath N**, has been serving the industry since 1983 as a ticketing agent and tour consultant, helping thousands of clients plan their customised international tours. The company now aims to support the fraternity with easy and reliable travel solutions, joining hands with another expert in this domain, TravelBullz, a company that has helped millions of passengers plan their tours with ease.


Amarnath N
Founder, Bangalore Classic Tours & Travels

Bangalore Classic Tours and Travels is IATA-accredited, an active member of TAAI, and even licensed by the RBI as a full-fledged money changer, helping many travel agents to get best B2B rates. Its Founder, Amarnath, was recently elected unanimously as Treasurer of the TAAI Karnataka Chapter. A great networker, he is also the co-founder of BNI Nakshatra Chapter and a member of FKCCI.

A recent study by ANAROCK suggests that in the newly-forged post-pandemic world, fractional ownership of vacation homes or high-worth resorts can potentially gain popularity.



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TAAI 'Knowledge Conclave' in Kevadia, Gujarat garners good response

Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) along with Gujarat Tourism held a FAM trip and Knowledge Conclave from March 9 – 12, 2021 for select media and TAAI members. The event was organised to boost the domestic tourism post pandemic. Unique and one of a kind, this was TAAI's first conclave after the pandemic and offered the much needed breather for all. Here's a detailed report of all that took place over an interesting span of three days…



Arushi Bajaj in Kevadia

TAAI in association with Gujarat Tourism conducted a FAM trip and conclave in Tent City 1, Kevadia, Gujarat. With massive participation of 200 delegates and media of repute, the event successfully showcased that things are picking up and getting normal again. Keeping in mind the norms of new normal, the event was systematically organized, well hosted and well attended.

The first two days were scheduled for the sightseeing and were geared at showcasing the best that Kevadia as a destination has to offer. The attendee's group was taken to different tourist destinations and treated to fun activities such as Jungle Safari, Cruise on Narmada, Laser show at Statue of Unity, tour of Ekta Mall and more.



Mr. Jenu Devan, Commissioner of Tourism and MD-Gujarat Tourism addressed the conclave via live video call wherein he highlighted the initiatives of the government in promoting Gujarat to the world and thanked the TAAI committee for bringing their members to SoU, in Gujarat and also assured full support and encouragement to the members in promoting Gujarat as a wholesome destination.
Hon. Secretary General, **Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh** gave an overview of the business sessions stating that, the inaugural address was an eye-opener and vision for members on Domestic Tourism by President Jyoti Mayal.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI said that the travel fraternity needs to figure out ways to empower domestic tourism. "India is home to some amazing landscapes, diverse biodiversity, mighty mountains, pristine beaches and therefore now is the time to explore the unexplored. Though we are still struggling on certain areas, but TAAI as an association is doing all that is needed for the upliftment of the sector," he added

Mr. Balbir Mayal, Past President, TAAI, who is a veteran in the travel trade with 40 years of experience took the audience back to a time when lack of funds and infrastructure made travel and tourism an extremely challenging industry. "Over a period of time, things have gone up, there are all categories of hotels and connectivity has emerged. The problem today is marketing of products and I would advise you all to play your role in full efficacy and most importantly guide and educate your people with FAM trips as there is lack of knowledge and information among them," he explained.



The conclave was aimed at focusing on the strategies and operations in pipeline while brainstorming upon the opportunities and possibilities in tourism post lockdown. The sessions were scheduled to make sure all the important sectors such as airways, railways, etc. were given emphasis. Since the domestic travel is the first to open, the main idea was to showcase the immense potential it brings for all the travels aficionados.



Welcoming the delegates and inaugurating the conclave, **Ms. Jyoti Mayal**, President, TAAI said, "Covid was indeed tough, Tourism is always first to suffer and last to recover. But leaving the challenging times behind and looking at the opportunities in the near future it is time to nurture revenues. And, there is nothing better than domestic tourism at the moment! India has so much to offer we as association rely in all positivity on domestic tourism front. TAAI has worked very closely with the Ministry of Tourism and other stakeholders in order to provide the much needed relief to all its members and we will continue to strive for all that we can."

Hon. Minister of Tourism, Government of India, **Shri Prahlad Singh Patel** virtually participated in the half day business session on March 11, 2021. He welcomed the initiative of India's largest and premier travel-tourism association, TAAI, which has set an historic example of positivity due to the changing times. He added that TAAI membership has all aspects of tourism professional organisations and in the coming future the responsibility and challenges shall increase when inbound tourist commence their India visits. TAAI members must be ready with newer ideas and strategies to ensure Tourism to India is facilitated by them in a smooth manner.

Dr. Achyut Singh, Joint GM, IRCTC, said, "Railways is coming forward with new projects. New deluxe AC trains are being introduced for the middle income groups and we are looking forward to associate with TAAI members to market and promote all this."

As part of a panel discussion on aviation in India, **Mr. Ajay Wadhawan**, Chief of Sales, Air Asia, India, said, "Covid was a blessing in disguise as it has given us an all new meaning to life. Since it can't be rosy every day and each one of us need to be healthy in order to be a winner. With our aim to hit all the right chords with connectivity, we cover almost all the destinations today and we are looking at more avenues in the long run."



On a panel that highlighted women power in the travel trade, Ms. Vasudha Sondhi, MD, OMPL, said, "The customer of today is a search engine expert and the first thing he does is visit the company's website and websites that are really good are quite rare. We really need to start blogging and engaging with our stakeholders while posting on social media as it shows how engaging you are."

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TAAI Tourism conclave highlights 'Kevadia' as a holistic destination

The conclave witnessed members from 20 regions and chapters from across India

The latest restrictions imposed by the Maharashtra Government has put the final nail in the coffin for the Hospitality industry in the State. As per the Break the Chain order, restaurants are to be totally shut except for take-away, parcels and food delivery between 7 am and 8 pm on weekdays and on weekends, only food deliveries are allowed. Additionally, the State has mandated all food delivery personnel to be either vaccinated or undergo RT-PCR tests to test negative for COVID-19 at intervals of every 15 days.

In a bid to showcase and promote unexplored destinations, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), recently conducted its annual Tourism Conclave at Kevadia, Gujarat. The event was organised in association with Gujarat Tourism. Kevadia is home to the world's tallest statue, 'Statue of Unity'. The conclave witnessed members from 20 Regions and Chapters across India.

Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said, "We thank Gujarat Tourism and their entire team for their support in putting up such a conclave. We are confident in the revival of the travel and tourism industry. Members of the trade were going through challenging times due to the Covid-19 pandemic and this gave an opportunity for them to adopt to transformation, and ability to explore. Physical events like these are much needed to boost the confidence of the industry."

The Member delegates experienced the accommodation and facilities at Tent City 1 and Tent City 2 at Kevadia along with evening dinner cruise along the River Narmada.

Kevadia has been developed as a wholesome destination with around 30 attractions in and around the Stature of Unity. Some of the major attractions include Jungle Safari, Sardar Sarovar Dam Project, Valley of Flowers, Cactus & Butterfly Garden, etc. Delegates also visited the five gardens inside Arogya Van (Herbal Garden), which exhibits a wide range of medicinal plants and health related landscapes.

Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI, added, "This initiative of TAAI shall ensure members are familiarised with the region to promote Dekho Apna Desh and revive the promotion of domestic and inbound tourism through skilling and personal experiencing."

Jenu Devan, Commissioner of Tourism and Managing Director, Gujarat Tourism addressed the conclave via live video call wherein he highlighted the initiatives of the government in promoting Gujarat to the world and thanked the TAAI committee for bringing their members to SoU, in Gujarat and also assured full support and encouragement to the members in promoting Gujarat as a wholesome destination.

Devan added, "Gujarat tourism is proud to be associated with the Travel Agents Association of India. Two years ago, we had the vision to develop the entire area of the Statue of Unity for tourists to spend at least two to three nights. Now, there are almost 30 attractions in and around the statue. We have something for everyone and all age group, segments to enjoy. Also, in the recent years a lot of accommodation options have been added and the state is now further investing to develop this destination."

On day 3, a half day business session was organised which was addressed by Prahlad Singh Patel, Minister of Tourism (I/C), Govt of India, via a video message. He welcomed the initiative of India's largest and premier travel-tourism association, TAAI, which has set an historic example of positivity due to the changing times. He added that TAAI membership has all aspects of tourism professional organisations and in the coming future the responsibility and challenges shall increase when inbound tourist commences their India visits. TAAI members must be ready with newer ideas and strategies to ensure Tourism to India is facilitated by them in a smooth manner.

Further, the day witnessed three engrossing panel discussions, which very well addressed the challenges and the way forward for the tourism industry.

The first panel discussion was moderated by Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI on Bharat ka Vikas – Empowering Domestic Tourism. The session witnessed panelist including Dr. Achyut Singh Jt. General Manager-Indian Railways (IRCTC), Ajay Kumar Wadhawan, Chief of Sales, Air Asia India, and Past President of TAAI, Balbir Mayal. The speakers gave their views on the changing dynamics in the travel and tourism field of the last few decades and how India shall be a top tourist destination in the world.





The second knowledge session, "Where Winners Play" was moderated by Ashish Gupta, Founder – Strategy Pluto and Conculting CEO, FAITH. The panelists for this session were Rodney Dcruz, Asst. Director, IATA; Bettaiah Lokesh, Secretary General, TAAI and Sunil Kumar Rumalla, President, UFTAA.

Speaking about the relevance of IATA, Dcruz said, "The number of travel agents in India is much more than the total 4417 IATA Agents in the country. The disconnect which the industry feels with IATA is just a perceptional issue. We are not the regulators but just facilitators. We come up with all rules and mandates in consultation with the industry."

Speaking on behalf of the members, Bettiah said, "When there is an issue, instead of dealing with individual airlines, why should I not deal with IATA, which is the representational body for all refunds. We have over 1000 IATA agents in our association and we don't see any benefit. We would consider changing our Association's constitution that IATA accreditation is required."

Rumalla added, "The Covid crisis has shown the inability of IATA to take care of the travel agents. The travel agent is now merely a bank that is funding airlines. The airlines are using up our money for their operations. Today, we need a zero-risk investment and IATA needs to play a balanced role between the airlines and travel agents."

The final discussion was moderated by Amish Desai, Karnataka Chapter Chairman, TAAI. The speakers for this session were Parineeta Sethi, Chief Editor & Publisher of Pinnacle Connect, Vasdha Sondhi, MD Om Marketing and Jyoti Mayal, Chairperson Tourism and Hospitality Skill Counsil (THSC). With their expertise in sales, marketing, PR and social media, technology and skill development, the panelist suggested how todays evolving TAAI member must peruse and be empowered with all the skills apart from delivery of service. Mayal also updated on the upcoming initiatives of WITT (Women in TAAI and Travel), where TAAI shall give back to society and empower the women to become entrepreneurs through skilling and work towards making India a safe and secure tourism destination.

- Akshay Kumar







Rezofy eyes international expansion

The group focuses on bridging gap between the bricks and the clicks

Rezofy, a subscription-based Internet Booking Engine that offers services to upgrade travel business has witnessed a major trend in terms of B2B travel industry looking at technology. Pure offline businesses have started investing into travel-tech for growth

Vivek Sanghi, Co-founder, Rezofy, said, "We have experienced that covid has taught us that there can be an alternate approach to business. Businesses do not necessarily need to be human dependent. This is where digitalization has come into picture. From the travel technology perspective, we have noticed that there are players who have been able to survive, continuously connect and also bounced back quickly. Those who were purely offline it was a challenge to retain their team, etc. Technology has paved that way and some component of the business should be driven by technology. This is what customers and partners are expecting that without interaction business should happen."

The B2B industry is looking at organised and efficient way of selling with affordable tech models. He further said, "The B2B industry is adapting to technology very well and tech is playing a very important role in bringing the content and services. Also, these are affordable models especially the SAS models. B2B businesses including hotel, cruise, car rentals, etc are looking at more tech-driven solutions. These segments are getting more and more matured and closer to being organised in selling."

The company is focused on helping traditional businesses come online. With digital becoming one of the most important channels for business, travel agents are now looking to have some digital connect.

Sanghi added, "We bridge gap between the bricks and the clicks. We are on a mission to make all reservations online and that is where we help travel companies' setup their online shop. It only takes 24 hours for our partner to come into the online space and start selling, with configured, pre-settled and pre-integrated solutions. We are into the business of bringing travel agents online or digitize or add an online sales channel to their existing business."

Rezofy also caters to international markets with over 30 per cent of its business coming from outside India. The group is looking to further mature and expand in these international markets.

Speaking about the expansion plans, Sanghi said, "We already are present internationally and work with clients in Australia, USA, Singapore, as well. Over 30 per cent of our customer base is out of India. When we go to international market, we need to support the local ecosystem. We are now maturing in these emerging markets. We are very shortly looking to setup US office. We are looking for customers outside India, that is our primary focus."



Vivek Sanghi

Speaking about the strategies to promote their brand he further said, "In terms of marketing, we ourselves are getting more digitized. We are looking at social channels to promote what value we bring. Participating in trade shows like SATTE is where we get some good visibility.

- Akshay Kumar

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SATTE 2021: Strongest voice till date of tourism revival

If Covid-19 was the worst contagion in the last 100 years, the energy and enthusiasm was no less contagious at SATTE 2021, the only major international tourism exhibition in the last almost 14 months, that sent out the strongest message of optimism, revival and what the industry and stakeholders want at the moment



SATTE 2021 will truly be remembered as a historic event. South Asia's premier travel industry exhibition, SATTE took place at a time when industry is faced with its biggest crisis brought upon by the devastating covid-19 contagion. The global lockdown and travel embargos that were imposed beginning March 2020 decimated tourism across the globe, bringing both, the international as well as local and domestic tourism to a screeching halt.

The collapse in international travel represented an estimated loss of US $ 1.3 trillion in export revenue last year, more than 11 times the loss reported in the 2009 global economic crisis. Asia-Pacific saw 84 per cent decline in international travel in 2020, about a staggering 300 million fewer travels than the previous year. UNWTO's extended scenarios for 2021-24 indicate that it could take between two-and-a-half to four years for international tourism to return to 2019 levels. India's story is no different with former Secretary Tourism, GoI, informing the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism & Culture of a loss of 2 to 5.5 crore direct and indirect jobs in the tourism sector and revenue losses running in tens of billions of dollars.

It is in this context precisely that the 28th edition of SATTE that concluded on March 26th will be historic. SATTE 2021 was the first major event towards the revival of tourism that Maldivian Minister of Tourism Dr. Abdulla Mausoom said will "echo across the globe."

Themed around 'Reconnect to revive', SATTE 2021 brought together close to 350 exhibitors including national and state tourism boards, travel and tourism wholesalers, hotels, airlines, cruise lines, DMCs and tour operators and number of international and Indian tourism suppliers. Moreover, the event was attended by 10,000+ visitors, including around 250 hosted domestic buyers. And despite, the near total international air travel embargoes, over a third of the countries still under lockdown there were few NTOs too like Utah (US), Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal and suppliers from some of the CIS countries and Russia.

Domestic tourism was the biggest winner this year. Reeling under the impact of the covid pandemic, domestic tourism was catapulted to the center of the spotlight. And bigger still, was the mandate that the event gave, through the whole-hearted support and participation from industry stakeholders, of tourism revival in India, within the South Asian region and internationally.

Addressing the inaugural function as the Chief Guest of the event, Secretary of Tourism, Government of India, Arvind Singh, sent out a strong message of optimism, hope and revival. He said, "The dark clouds of the last calendar year is behind us. We are surely seeing sign of revival in this calendar year which clearly shows that there is a silver lining to the dark clouds for sure. My compliments to SATTE for organizing this great event. It is recognised as one of the leading travel and tourism exhibitions in the country. You can have business, share knowledge and exchange ideas with all stakeholders, domestic and international, to arrive at innovative solutions. I am sure the event will convey the message of resurgence of travel trade in the country."

While stressing the need to focus on domestic tourism, Singh pointed that the travel and tourism is one of the leading economic sectors in India. "As per World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the travel and tourism sector generated US $ 194 billion or 6.8 per cent of India GDP in pre-Covid 2019 and contributed to 8 per cent of India's employment. That shows the sector's potential of contribution to the growth, not only just locally or regionally but also in terms of national employment and economy," He stressed.

The Secretary also used the occasion to highlight India's successes in approach and action in handling the covid-19 pandemic and asked the stakeholders to spread the word for the benefit of domestic and international tourism. "Despite the constraints of health infrastructure we have successfully been able to manage the pandemic. We have emerged as the leader in global efforts towards vaccination for covid-19. While controlling the pandemic at home, India has also helped other nations with medicines and vaccines to control the disease. Today the world looks at us for direction on vaccination programme," he said.

Lavishing SATTE 2021 for creating hope and optimism for the revival of tourism, both regionally and internationally, Guest of Honour at SATTE 2021, the Maldivian Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, said, "The show must go on. We must find a way. And today as we open SATTE, what do we see? We are coming back! We have found a way to move forward with a crisis. We spent over a year in front of the screen, but tourism is not that way. Tourism involves us to be meeting each other and I am so happy to see the activities here at SATTE. Thank you for bringing the show, first of its kind after a year of closing. I am sure this is a good start. This will echo across the globe and we will slowly start moving away from the virtual meetings. Tourism business cannot happen without meeting each other.

Furthermore, while sharing Maldives recent successes in rebuilding tourism, Mausoom said, "The Maldivian travel trade has played a very important role in the recovery of tourism. But it isn't just that, it is with Indian travel trade that we were able to claim our recovery. Tourism must prevail, because we can't allow tourism to stop. Life and livelihood depend on tourism. That's why on July 15th 2020, our President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih decided to open the Maldivian borders when everybody else's was closed. Today, I can say that Maldives has almost recovered. Safety and security is the main concern and Maldives by nature of its geography has that set up, small islands scattered across the ocean gives the social distancing that all of us are talking about today."

Speaking at inaugural function the Managing Director of Informa Markets in India Yogesh Mudras succinctly captured the mood at the event when he said, "The show must go on." "It was overwhelming to see the entire travel and tourism community standing in such a solidarity of this show at this time. Today I don't want to share any disturbing statistics as we are here with the event to reconnect and revive travel and tourism." Mudras also pointed that as the world's leading event organizer Informa has put in place a set of protocols and measures under its 'Informa AllSecure' programme to provide the exhibitors and visitors the highest end of hygiene and safety and conduct the event in a safe environment.

Also speaking on the occasion, former Secretary – Tourism, Government of India and Secretary General of Hotel Association of India, MP Bezbaruah, said, "Coming here at SATTE this year, it is a pleasure to see such an optimism and the enthusiasm and it is much beyond what I had expected to be almost the first step that the industry is taking after more than a year of pandemic. It is a time to take stock of what has happened and how to go forward and address a few fundamentals that could be very important for future. What has happened today, we hope, will not happen again in future. But experience shows us that this has happened earlier and this can happen again. We had SARS, we had tsunami, but nothing like this pandemic that we are in. It is time to build confidence and contingency plans. And therefore, we look forward to this year's SATTE as the first step towards building that confidence."

Importantly, Bezbaruah also drew attention to be future ready especially keeping in view the way covid-19 pandemic has affected the tourism sector. He said, "Last year was very forgettable, but we must not forget the lessons. And the first lessons I saw for the future was that how fragile is the existence of almost 80 per cent of the industry which is composed of micro, small and medium enterprises. Many have gone under, many are struggling to stay afloat."

Commending Informa Markets in India for organizing SATTE at such a time, Maneck E. Davar, Chairman, Services Exports Promotion Council (SEPC), said, "SATTE 2021 is a sign of coming back, of resurgence. My compliments to them for having taken this major step in restoring some confidence in the travel and tourism industry. No country can ever grow unless it has a very vibrant and strong hospitality industry and today we have the finest hospitality industry in the world. In SEPC, hospitality and tourism is the largest sector from amongst the 12-13 champion sectors and other services which we look at. We know the pain this industry has gone through in the last year and the pain that this industry will continue to go through, but in spite of that it will continue to be buoyant and optimistic as is evident in this exhibition."

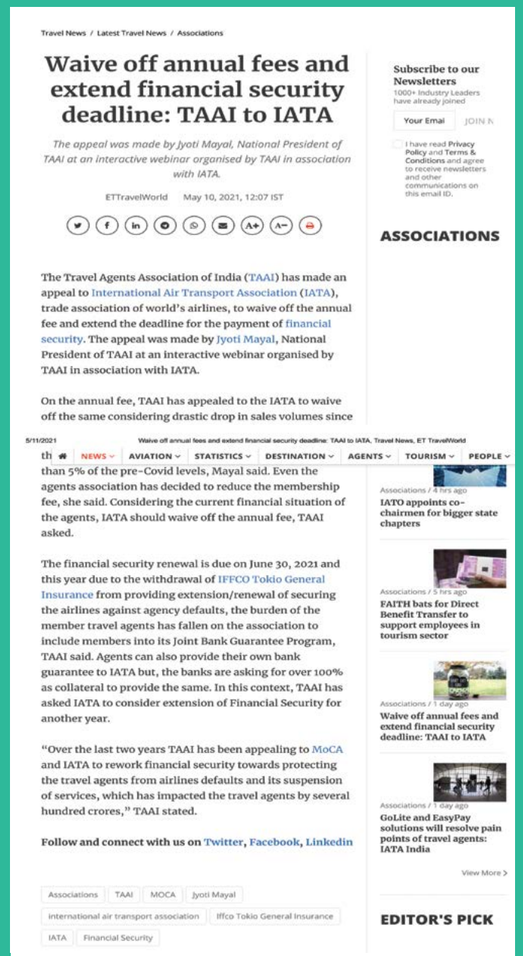
Lauding SATTE for organizing the first physical show post-pandemic and facilitating the much needed networking and business opportunity for the travel and tourism industry, Jyoti Mayal, Vice-chairperson, FAITH and President, TAAI, said, "We need to move stronger and forward, learn from our past to pave the path of the present and to the future. In the current times, states like Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Kerala and Goa have seen multifold growth in tourists which has boosted our morale. It shows that we are a resilient industry, an industry which can and will help itself nurture and grow. At exhibitions like SATTE we come out stronger to create our businesses. Look around you and see how we support each other. Let us learn from our mistakes as we all start from ground zero and build a healthier sustainable environment for our future generations."

In her vote of thanks at the inaugural function, Informa Market in India Group Director, Pallavi Mehra, remarked, "We all know that year 2020 has been the most tormenting year for each one of us with travel and tourism the worst affected. But today's gathering is a testament that the travel industry is eager to bounce back soon and stronger. SATTE 2021 is an attempt to play the role of a catalyst in the revival story. Events like this will be a major confidence booster for the travel and tourism industry."

She also thanked the Union Ministry of Tourism and various other government departments, national and state tourism boards, various national and international industry bodies and associations, exhibitors, buyers and visitors for supporting and participating at SATTE 2021.

- Shayan Mallick

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Waive off annual fees and extend financial security deadline: TAAI to IATA

The appeal was made by Jyoti Mayal, National President of TAAI at an interactive webinar organised by TAAI in association with IATA.

ETTravelWorld May 10, 2021, 12:07 IST

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has made an appeal to International Air Transport Association (IATA), trade association of world's airlines, to waive off the annual fee and extend the deadline for the payment of financial security. The appeal was made by Jyoti Mayal, National President of TAAI at an interactive webinar organised by TAAI in association with IATA.

On the annual fee, TAAI has appealed to the IATA to waive off the same considering drastic drop in sales volumes since than 5% of the pre-Covid levels, Mayal said. Even the agents association has decided to reduce the membership fee, she said. Considering the current financial situation of the agents, IATA should waive off the annual fee, TAAI asked.

The financial security renewal is due on June 30, 2021 and this year due to the withdrawal of IFFCO Tokio General Insurance from providing extension/renewal of securing the airlines against agency defaults, the burden of the member travel agents has fallen on the association to include members into its Joint Bank Guarantee Program, TAAI said. Agents can also provide their own bank guarantee to IATA but, the banks are asking for over 100% as collateral to provide the same. In this context, TAAI has asked IATA to consider extension of Financial Security for another year.

"Over the last two years TAAI has been appealing to MoCA and IATA to rework financial security towards protecting the travel agents from airlines defaults and its suspension of services, which has impacted the travel agents by several hundred crores," TAAI stated.

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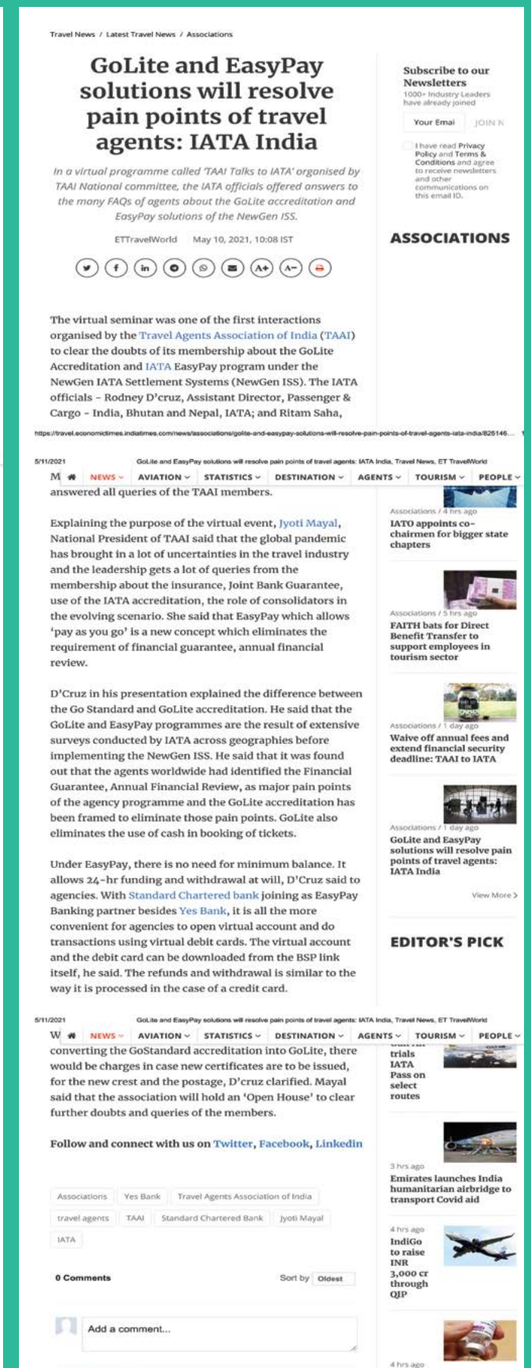
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GoLite and EasyPay solutions will resolve pain points of travel agents: IATA India

In a virtual programme called 'TAAI Talks to IATA' organised by TAAI National committee, the IATA officials offered answers to the many FAQs of agents about the GoLite accreditation and EasyPay solutions of the NewGen ISS.

ETTravelWorld May 10, 2021, 10:08 IST

The virtual seminar was one of the first interactions organised by the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) to clear the doubts of its membership about the GoLite Accreditation and IATA EasyPay program under the NewGen IATA Settlement Systems (NewGen ISS). The IATA officials – Rodney D'cruz, Assistant Director, Passenger & Cargo – India, Bhutan and Nepal, IATA; and Ritam Saha, answered all queries of the TAAI members.

Explaining the purpose of the virtual event, Jyoti Mayal, National President of TAAI said that the global pandemic has brought in a lot of uncertainties in the travel industry and the leadership gets a lot of queries from the membership about the insurance, Joint Bank Guarantee, use of the IATA accreditation, the role of consolidators in the evolving scenario. She said that EasyPay which allows 'pay as you go' is a new concept which eliminates the requirement of financial guarantee, annual financial review.

D'Cruz in his presentation explained the difference between the Go Standard and GoLite accreditation. He said that the GoLite and EasyPay programmes are the result of extensive surveys conducted by IATA across geographies before implementing the NewGen ISS. He said that it was found out that the agents worldwide had identified the Financial Guarantee, Annual Financial Review, as major pain points of the agency programme and the GoLite accreditation has been framed to eliminate those pain points. GoLite also eliminates the use of cash in booking of tickets.

Under EasyPay, there is no need for minimum balance. It allows 24-hr funding and withdrawal at will, D'Cruz said to agencies. With Standard Chartered bank joining as EasyPay Banking partner besides Yes Bank, it is all the more convenient for agencies to open virtual account and do transactions using virtual debit cards. The virtual account and the debit card can be downloaded from the BSP link itself, he said. The refunds and withdrawal is similar to the way it is processed in the case of a credit card.

converting the GoStandard accreditation into GoLite, there would be charges in case new certificates are to be issued, for the new crest and the postage, D'cruz clarified. Mayal said that the association will hold an 'Open House' to clear further doubts and queries of the members.

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May 8th, 2021

Cathay Pacific Cargo delivers medical supplies for India's healthcare emergency

In the face of a grave medical crisis, Cathay Pacific Cargo is flying vital relief shipments to India and it stands ready to do more. Although passenger flights have been suspended between Hong Kong and India, in the past few weeks Cathay Pacific Cargo has been operating freighters and cargo-only passenger flights, delivering to date more than 100 tonnes of much-needed humanitarian and medical supplies to some of India's major centres. These include shipments of specialised oxygen generators, oxygen concentrators and ventilators to Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad. In addition, there has been a sharp increase in volumes for shipments of oxygen, surgical masks, sanitiser, personal protective equipment, pharmaceuticals and vaccines over the past few weeks.

TAAI appeals IATA to waive annual fees & extend financial security deadline

TAAI organised a interactive webinar for its members on Friday, 7th May, 2021 along with IATA on GoLite Accrediatation v/s Standard IATA Travel Agency Accrediation & IATA Easy Pay. Over 250 members attended the session from across India's 20 Regions & Chapters of TAAI. IATA-India was represented by Mr. Amitabh Khosla, Mr. Rodney Dcruz and Mr. Ritham Saha who presented the accreditation options available to agencies under the NewGen ISS. The presentation featured comparisions on accreditation models to the members. Due to the pandemic lockdown, travel agents across India were undergoing challenging times on IATA's stringent and rigid compliances.

India issues guidelines for vaccinating airline employees

As India's vaccination efforts ramp up, the government has issued guidelines to inoculate aviation employees. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has also reached out to states to prioritize aviation staff due to their frontline role in the pandemic. India opened vaccines to all adults from May 1st, allowing all airline staff to be vaccinated now. The major request has been directed towards airports, asking them to set up dedicated vaccine counters for frontline staff immediately. This includes all airline crews, air traffic controllers, passenger-facing staff, and other critical personnel. The price per dose can be set by airport operators and vaccine providers, although many might make vaccines free for their employees.

#FirstOpinion



Ms. Bu Nia Niscaya,
Deputy for Marketing,
Ministry of Tourism and
Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia

"As India battles the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, our thoughts are with everyone affected by this crisis. Together, we stand resolute with you, working to get through this difficult time. We are truly humbled by the heroism of health workers on the front lines of this crisis. As India continues to combat this lethal virus, The MoTCE wishes to convey our prayers and continued commitment to stand with all the people of the nation. It is at this moment, when we need to stay at safe distances, that we are finally brought together as one human family standing together to withstand this."



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