

The TAAI Magazine

NamasTAAI

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TAAI Mumbai Secretariat
TRAVEL AGENTS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA
2-D Lawrence and Mayo House
276, Dr. DN Road, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001
T: +91-22-2207 4022/8184
Fax: +91-22-4083 6767
E: taai@taai.in

Dear Colleagues,

At the outset, I wish to thank all of you for your support to organise the TAAI Convention in Sri Lanka. However, post speaking to our counterparts in Sri Lanka, and given the circumstances and situation, we at TAAI decided to reschedule the Convention to a future date. And, therefore, will share the new dates for the Convention at appropriate time.

Going along the lines of our possible collaboration with regional counterparts, TAAI is putting its best efforts to help revive the sector. And, therefore, giving special imputes on MICE, Aviation, and Weddings. For instance, I was invited to address the travel fraternity of Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Ireland, etc to promote destination weddings concept.

A staggering 1 crore weddings take place in India every year and the wedding industry is growing at 25-30% annually. Indians as we all are aware spend lavishly on weddings, and we wish to encash such endeavours in a more sophisticated manner by developing or maintaining existing markets that are on the list for destination weddings. India's current wedding industry market is pegged at USD 50 billion and growing. With more organised players entering the business, I see this as the most sought-after business model in the coming years.

Further, despite all the challenges, we have been receiving constant queries from the corporates to organise events, seminars and in-person interactions. MICE, which includes all such activities, is one such sector that is expected to boom in a big way in the coming months. Global mice industry is estimated at \$ 700 bn + and is expected to double in the next five years.

India's share is quite low in all sub segments of MICE and India needs to focus on each vertical. Recently, the real growth propellers of the sector have been seen as the government initiatives such as promotion of MSME and SME's; urbanization; technological advancements, etc.

With the best infrastructure available in all parts of the country, we now need to promote the sector in a collaborative way, which I am sure will provide a plethora of opportunities to both travel trade and allied sectors.

Further, I would like to draw attention to the Indian Aviation industry which is growing rapidly. Be it the domestic or international, sector is picking up fast, rather it has already reached pre-covid traffic. The Ministry of Civil Aviation is doing a wonderful job with the development of new airports, the extension of airstrips to accommodate large aeroplanes, and the constructive implementation of the schemes such as UDAN. With such strategic initiatives, the sector will be a game-changer for the travel industry in the new future.

Similarly, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has taken a few steps in the recent past like tourism infrastructure development, launch of e-visas, efforts to enhance the visibility of brand Incredible India in the overseas market etc, which I believe would a go a long way to boost overall tourism scenario of the country.

Having said that, I strongly believe a lot more needs to be desired from both the ministries which we as an association will continue to work upon to support our members and the industry. According to a RedSeer report, India's travel market will cross \$ 125 billion by FY 27. It is high time to accord Industry Status to the tourism sector. TAAI has been advocating for this and would continue to do so till our demand is met.

To conclude, I wish the travel trade sector humongous growth in the years to come.

Thank you!

Jyoti Mayal
President
president@taai.in



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President
Jyoti Mayal

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Jay Bhatia

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Gurmeet Singh Vij, Nagpur (Co-opted)
Mehboob Shaikh, Pune (Co-opted)

NamasTAAI Coordinator
Executive Director - Dr. Himanshu Talwar

TAAI Secretariat, Mumbai
2-D Lawrence and Mayo House, 276, DR. D N Road,
Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.
Phone: +91-22-2207 4022 / 8184
Fax: +91-22-4083 6767
Email: taai@taai.in

TAAI Office, Delhi
212, New Delhi House, 27, Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi - 110001.
Phone: +91-11-2335 1801/ 6813 / 5389
Email: delhioffice@taai.in

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email to: namastaai@taai.in

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NEW MEMBERS

TAAI President keen on adopting positive approach & preparing for challenges in 2022

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) truly believes that "we will succeed in restoring trust, building confidence, and a more sustainable and successful future for our industry, ourselves and our children in 2022".

"As we turn to face the year ahead, we do so with the midst of a so-called third wave fuelled by a new variant of the Covid-19 virus, however, we can see people are more equipped, vaccinated, trained, and alert to handle any kind of adversity," she mentioned.

The travel trade in general, and specifically TAAI have followed the same policy by equipping themselves with all hygiene and tech-related protocols and tools to offer the best of the services to travellers. "A year of hope is what we are calling the 2022 with the hope of survival, revival, and bringing the industry back on its feet. TAAI is here to continue to support the travel trade in 2022 and will provide adequate support by way of liaising, training programmes, workshops, dissemination of information, etc. to safeguard the interest of the industry," the Association said.

Mrs. Mayal added that she has said this many a times before and will continue saying it until the entire team unanimously resonates with it that, "Keeping a positive



approach and putting our best forth instead of waiting for the right time to come would be the wisest outlook to have. We, as an association, are prepared on our end to face challenges and deal with them as and when they are thrown at us."

"Once again, Happy New Year! I wish happiness and joy to your families, peace, goodness, and new achievements to all of you and may this year be the year of hope we all are expecting it to be," she concluded while sharing her wishes and hope for the New Year. ▲

Post Covid tourism sector has a new definition altogether: TAAI President



Staycations, workations and homestays emerged as the tourism sector watchwords as tourists preferred safety and functionality over luxury in their post-COVID holiday destinations with the sector struggling to recover from the blow of 2020. Sharing her views and discussing about the new industry trends, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that this was the biggest setback the tourism sector has ever witnessed. "Despite all such obstacles, we as an industry never lost hope and worked towards its revival even when the whole world was homebound. Post COVID tourism has a new definition altogether; the environment is totally unprecedented with air bubble agreements, domestic travel rising and the new trends of staycations, workations

and homestays kicking in, the industry could at least breathe a little if not completely," she said.

She emphasised on the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism to continuously organise promotional activities and campaigns with special focus on social media across states and abroad to revive and support tourism simultaneously, with around the clock multilingual tourist helpline, e-visa facilities for 156 countries, training for creating a pool of certified tourist facilitators and new regional routes for better air connectivity.

"Almost all countries would now be competing afresh for inbound tourism, and thus it is also critical to restart our global tourism marketing campaign to start creating awareness. Also, the government is tailoring its promotional campaigns to highlight staycations, focusing on homestays offering personal care and local experience to tourists post COVID -19 pandemic. While there was a demand for such homestays just before the pandemic, during these times the demand has gone through the roof. Travellers want safe environment with big open spaces, personalised care and experience of the local flavour, which I as an industry veteran feel is a good sign to develop sustainable inclusive tourism and create opportunities beyond the regular business which is still struggling to revive," Mrs. Mayal added. ▲

Travel trade reacts strongly to Finance Minister's decision to authorise only 3 agents for govt-funded air travel

Reacting sharply to the workplace memorandum issued by the Division of Expenditure of Ministry of Finance that mandates all Central government employees and the ministries to book government-funded air tickets for official travel only through three authorised travel agents – Balmer Lawrie, Ashok Travels & Tours, and IRCTC, the travel trade fraternity has strongly condemned the directive and termed it “one-sided” and a “cruel blow to the travel agent community”. The order was effective from January 3 and the government said it was taken in view of disinvestment of national carrier Air India.



Reacting on the matter, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, condemned the government's decision and termed it “one-sided”. She said, “This is totally a monopolistic attitude. The government has been advocating for a couple of years very strongly from every platform that it has no business to be in the aviation business. Earlier it was Air India, ITDC and the government agencies

that dominated this monopolistic thought process. Why should IRCTC which is supposed to be selling trains inventory become a competitor of the travel agents?”

Representing the industry and thousands of travel agents across the country, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) and the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) in an exclusive conversation with ETTravelWorld shared their views on the matter and urged the government to withdraw the order and ensure fair and equal policies for all travel agents.

She further stated that a lot of wrong policies and unfair practices have come into existence within this monopoly. “Whenever the government wants to offload a corporate, then the drive of fair practice becomes loud and they look for applause. We strongly believe that the government should give equal business opportunity to every travel service provider, shut down its travel agencies and adopt fair practices in the country,” she concluded. ▲

Curbs & curfews are need of the hour with an upsurge in daily COVID cases around the country during first week of January 2022: TAAI President

With the daily data of positive corona cases rising again, many state governments once again adopted curfew model for stopping the spread of the new variant Omicron, in the first week of January 2022. States like Delhi imposed weekend curfew driven by the fast spreading omicron variant. Government employees, barring those engaged in essential services were asked to work from home, while private offices were allowed to remain open with 50 per cent capacity. Sharing her views on this, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said that even though “we expected better times, such steps are now necessary to take, also it sounds like a good step on government's part as they have maintained a balance in order not to make work suffer.”

Amidst rising cases, Maharashtra considered imposing lockdown if daily Covid cases surpassed 20,000. Rajasthan imposed new curbs on political rallies, fairs, weddings and meetings. Many other states were exploring imposing restrictions to curb rise in cases.

Mrs. Mayal said, “This is such a heart breaking scenario just when things were looking fine and we were hoping for a



good new year, news of rising cases have started to come from everywhere. As a tourism industry insider, I feel really bad for the business which has already weakened over the past two years but nevertheless curbs and curfews are the need of the hour and we should absolutely follow them in order to save the world from further turmoil. With a large population of vaccinated people and decent domestic travel we definitely could hope for better times.” ▲

It's high time we give tourism sector & travel agents its due value and recognition: TAAI President



Tourist circuit trains will be introduced in the North East, covering all prominent locations of the region. Five Vistadome train services have already been introduced towards the goal of giving tourism a boost in the region. Studies are being conducted to establish strategic railway lines to highlight the beauty of the North East region and to start more passenger, intercity and Jan Shatabadi Express-like trains.

Sharing her opinions on "tourism boosting model" Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said, "The North-Eastern part of India is one of the most attractive destinations in context of tourist footfall, and coming up with something additional connectivity would only add to its attractiveness."

"Promoting the rich heritage of the North East and showcasing its beautiful culture to the entire world has been an endeavour of the Railways, and now is the time to fulfil those pending desires and promote our tourism sector," she added.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the new integrated terminal building of Maharaja Bir Bikram International Airport in Agartala, Tripura on 4 January, 2022 which is looked upon as a booster to the tourism in the North East, and now this Vistadome service project; both are excellent steps taken in the way of tourism sector.

"I have always said this and will continue voicing my opinion for the betterment of travel and tourism that it's high time we give tourism sector & travel agents its due value and appreciate its role in contributing massively to the economy. Railways and transportation play a very important role in last mile connectivity to promote tourism and we definitely need to create the value network to bring in seamless travel and adopt one country one tax policy. We also need to appreciate the travel agents who are the true ambassadors of tourism and get the sector included in the concurrent list for industry status. As we are working towards better infrastructure and reinventing tourism, now is the time to further strengthen this sector to work more effectively and reimagine to re-establish travel & tourism to emerge as sustainable and self-sufficient," she added. ▲

UFTAA Extra Ordinary General Assembly (EGA) on 5th January

UFTAA Board convened its Extra Ordinary Assembly (EGA) on January 5, 2022 which was held through the e-platform of Zoom.

The main agenda of the EGA was to update UFTAA's statutes in line with the requirements of Monaco Authorities, with which UFTAA is a registered Association.

The proposed amendments to UFTAA statutes were discussed, deliberated and unanimously adopted at the EGA.

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal & Vice President Mr. Jay Bhatia represented TAAI at the meeting. ▲



Travel & Tourism industry will revive with new opportunities: TAAI

Talking about the resilience of the travel trade in facing difficult times and overcoming challenges with great vigour, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, mentioned that she is very confident that travel & tourism will revive with new opportunities, new zeal and better outlook. "The demographic is totally changed for both the traveller and destination in the current



COVID scenario. We need to adopt the new protocols and procedures. Consumers will want more information about their end-to-end journey, such as which aircraft, which airport to transit and hotel's 'COVID' cleanliness processes. Travellers will want to make their careful decisions to minimise the risk and exposures for themselves and their families. Search engines will need to supply more information to enable filtering and selections. When people feel safe, they will travel more. We'll start to embrace travel in a more conscious way, seeking out smaller brands, hotels and experiences that reconnect us with nature and minimise our footprint," she stated.

have a greater desire to seek out less crowded attractions and destinations, as well as nature-based experiences. Fortunately, some of India's key attributes including our wide-open spaces, our relative isolation and our reputation for being a safe destination, will be attractive to draw international travellers when they can travel here again," she was quoted as

She viewed that short stays and weekend trips will be huge travel trends in 2022. "With international travel limited as of now, travel locally, will be more frequent. Packing up the car, with a flexible itinerary is a great way to explore our amazing country. While it's difficult to predict exactly what tourism will look like in the future, we can expect that travellers will

saying.

"One of the key areas that we are committed to is telling our incredible Indigenous story and celebrating the rich history of the oldest continuous living culture on Earth. Another key focus for us is tapping into an increased desire and awareness of, sustainable tourism products and experiences among travellers," Mrs. Mayal added.

She believes that travel restrictions are the main barrier standing in the way of the recovery of international tourism, along with slow virus containment and low consumer confidence. "The lack of coordinated response among countries to ensure harmonised protocols and coordinated restrictions, as well as the deteriorating economic environment is main obstacles for recovery. The traveller will look for safe-cation, sustainable tourism and proper & correct information on health and medical assistance, and most importantly an environment of staying connected." ▲

Better road infrastructure always goes a long way in serving the country: TAAI

Union Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari, on 05th January 2022, inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of National Highway Projects in Kanpur, Lucknow, Shringverpur Dham, Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh in the presence of Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath and others



Speaking on the government's achievement, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said, "This is another feather in the cap, to bolster the economy; Road infrastructure always goes a long way in flourishing tourism, economy and the country as a whole."

verticals like of economy with the development of leather, glass and bangle industries in Kanpur and surrounding areas," Mrs. Mayal mentioned.

"With better infrastructure and development, there will be convenience in the movement of devotees and tourists during the Magh Kumbh and Mahakumbh. The benefits are not only confined till tourism, but also extends to different

She added that during hard times such as COVID, when flights and railways become unpredictable modes, roadways always come to the rescue to carry out the work. "India has a huge scope for drive cations and we need to invest in the same; open more road side amenities along with like I have said many a times 'one country one tax' & 'seamless no boundary travel'. The reason I like to be repetitive at times is that maybe the government missed hearing us the earlier times," she was quoted as saying. ▲

Coordination & relationship between Centre, states & countries is very vital & the need of the hour: TAAI President

In January 2022, the travel, tourism & hospitality industry was once again struggling with lockdowns, over-information, wrong protocols & no coordination between Centre & State Governments domestically & countries with each other at a global level. Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President of Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) believed that coordination & relationship between centre, states & countries was very vital and need of the hour

She further added that domestic tourism would be the catalyst of growth & to transform this sector into long-lasting strength, we need to put our resources of thought to work effectively. "We need specific MICE infrastructure, incentivised trade fairs, training specific to avenue of tourism, conservation development, branding, marketing, intra-ministerial coordination, PPP model, country-wise B2B meets, guides strategy, travel marts, helplines, local officers' orientation & sensitisation and most importantly taxes & specific infrastructure for this huge value chain," she said.

"Secondly, incentives in different formats are the need of the hour, Private Partnerships will play a major role. Travel agents to be a partner in all initiatives to build infrastructure, market products & sell Lower taxes & seamless credit inputs need to definitely put in practice as India struggled with the new variant of COVID & third wave.

"Thirdly, the government must organise the travel agents'



industry. Travel agents & intermediaries need to be defined to get them to be included in the concurrent list to avail industry status. It must identify emerging trends in travel agents and other intermediaries and ensure parity of policies between travel agents & other intermediaries for survival. Key issues & challenges impacting the survival of travel agents & intermediaries in India should be covered, and immediate & medium-term milestones to be laid out for the recovery of this industry. The government needs to give heed to developing a sustainable model for this sector. This sector deserves correction, support which will help India to develop economically & create more & more employment. This is the strength of this sector which is undercapitalized," Mrs. Mayal added. ▲

'Just when we thought we are on the road to recovery, we now have another mountain to scale' says TAAI President

The Omicron variant started impacting domestic air travel in January 2022. With cancellation cases escalating, airlines started feeling the heat of the third wave in the domestic market. The leading airline operator in the country, IndiGo, which has more than half of the total domestic market share, while announcing a free date change facility to travellers who want to reschedule their travel to a future date, indicated cutting down the capacity in such scenarios.

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President of TAAI said that this whole scenario is really heart sinking. "The worst-hit sectors during the pandemic have been travel and tourism, hospitality and aviation. Just when things started to look fine, and the world thought this might be the end to this deadly virus, a new variant emerged and washed away all the hopes, and once again made us all home-bound, blurring our vision hitting the economy. It was predicted that the road to recovery might be near after the last quarter of 2021, but after this new wave, it seems



like another mountain has emerged to climb and need to continue to be strong, resilient, cautious & remain motivated with positivity," she said.

Most of the airlines had announced that they were waiving change fees and will offer free date changes for all new and existing bookings made up to January 31, 2022, for flights booked up to March 31, 2022. With market leader IndiGo announcing capacity reduction, it was expected that other airlines would follow suit.

"Variable costs go up or down, depending on how much the aircraft is being used. It also includes fuel, landing charges at airports, and crew allowances. It makes sense for an airline with substantial cash to keep as many planes flying as possible even with less capacity, rather than paying high rentals and keeping them grounded due to pandemic fear. Business needs clarity & certainty & we together need to ensure a positive business environment," she added. ▲

Time for us to encash the lost opportunity to make India the largest aviation hub: TAAI

COVID19 has had a terrible impact on the aviation industry and significant reductions in passengers numbers have resulted in flights being cancelled or planes flying empty between airports, which in turn massively reduced revenues for airlines and forced many airlines to lay off employees or declare bankruptcy. Some even attempted to avoid refunding cancelled trips to diminish losses. But with two years into the crisis, we now have better knowledge, a handful of experiences and better implication ideas with all the necessary precautions. Business is gearing up and we have seen a lot of action in the aviation industry in the last quarter of 2021. Commenting on this, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said, "As the pandemic progressed, we saw a drastic decline in the movement of flights. By April 2020, over 80 per cent of flight movements were restricted across all regions. But nevertheless, bad times are always followed by good times, so is the world recovery of passenger demand which is expected to pre COVID levels in the last quarter of 2022. Although nothing could be taken as the gospel's truth with such uncertainties around, we can still have hope, faith and decisiveness to take things forward."

About the new airline 'Akasa' which is expected to begin operations soon, she said it's a welcoming move and will certainly open a plethora of opportunities. "Indian aviation industry, going by the spending power and population



of the country, has a huge scope of growth and with the Government of India developing new airports and parking space increasing in the country, aviation is coming back on track. Competition is always healthy & not only will the consumer benefit from this but so will the Tier-II & Tier-III cities by giving more opportunities for employment, infrastructure & economic development.

"News of airlines launching in the coming time is doing the rounds and there are speculations whether COVID is a good time for this step or not. But as an industry veteran, I think that launching at this time will give airlines more opportunities to cater not only to the domestic market but also to the international market. Any new entrant will help expand the market and encourage customers to take airlines as the most preferred mode of transportation amid this pandemic. I strongly believe it is time for us to encash the lost opportunity to make India the largest hub between the east & west," Mrs. Mayal further mentioned. ▲

'It's time we strive to revive instead of waiting for things to get better', says TAAI President

In January 2022, Spain called for COVID-19 to be treated as an endemic disease, like the flu, becoming the first major European nation to explicitly suggest that people live with it. The idea has gradually been gaining traction and could prompt a re-evaluation of government strategies on dealing with the virus. If European countries manage to relax restrictions in the coming weeks, last year's experiences will remain a cautionary tale. Countries like Denmark removed all COVID restrictions last fall, while the Netherlands dropped all masking requirements.

Sharing her opinion on the same, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that COVID 19 is a part of our lives now, and we need to learn to live with it instead of delaying things and waiting for the situation to get better. "Travel and tourism industry among others was the worst hit during the pandemic, we simply cannot let it weaken any further. It's time we strive to revive and plan our goals accordingly, in order to gain momentum in the present scenario. Every country is standing on the



same starting line today. All of them want to open up after the pandemic and are waiting for customers. There is a huge opportunity for incredible India. The government needs to grab the opportunity and bring tourists back in a sustainable manner. The revival of tourism in a post-pandemic world would require good promotion and marketing, to send out a message that the country is safe for travel and tourism," she said.

Mrs. Mayal further suggested that through a digital campaign that is popular on social media, we need to drive home the message that India is open for tourism. "The most important thing is to have smart marketing companies aboard, who can carry the message that India is safe and secure across geographies. Speaking from experience, I could say that the recovery of inbound tourists into India is expected soon, and once the recovery starts, we can expect a steady growth by 2023-24. The aim is to bring growth back to 2019 levels, the best year ever for tourism, by 2024," she said. ▲

We are confident, that India shall once again acclaim the title of “Sone Ki Chidiya”: TAAI

TAAI mentioned the need for government policies to be aligned with the travel trade for better sustainability, and also extended its gratitude to the authorities, for providing a helping hand in tough times of COVID.

Highlighting the key points, where the focus was mainly on boosting the tourism sector in 2022, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that we as travel agents association, request the government to relax norms in a collaborated way to be accepted globally, for our 1,400 IATA accredited agents, so as to save them from any rigorous process in the future. “Undertaking a city/state wise registration drive along with us, for the trade members to register and also automating the registration process of members with MoT, would be highly appreciated,” she said.

Further talking about airport passes and outbound tourism desks, she mentioned, “As the President of one of the oldest travel associations of India, and an industry veteran, I urged the government to ensure a smooth handling of inbound/outbound and domestic special groups, children, seniors and other travellers, to be able to apply for facilitation permits like before.” She also added that we need to plan collectively a way forward to skill, insure & market to lure the incoming traveller back. We need to be ready for tomorrow & not miss the opportunity to re-establish.

Adding to which, Mr. Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI



mentioned that there is an urgent need to open an outbound tourism desk, which shall support and regularise the operations for outbound travel from India. “Taxes like GST, TCS etc. also need to be abolished, so that our Indian travel trade can compete in the international market and generate a huge foreign exchange for the exchequer,” he said.

Travel Agents Association of India unanimously appealed that these key points must be addressed jointly, so as to ensure that India leaps into the future to regain its past glory, and under the esteemed leadership of the Ministry, the association is confident, that India shall once again acclaim the title of “Sone Ki Chidiya”. ▲



‘Happy to see India gearing up on both international and domestic fronts of Tourism’, says Mrs. Jyoti Mayal

Speaking about Air Bubble Agreement with South Korea, and international flights linking Bangkok, Bangladesh cities which are starting from Agartala’s Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) Airport in Tripura, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said it gives her immense happiness to see tourism developing on all fronts, especially during such tough times when all they have faced is a major setback. “This has been repeated several times but the fact of the matter is the harsh reality the tourism sector is facing during the ongoing pandemic. Nevertheless, where there is a will, there is a way, and with air bubble agreement with around 40 countries and soon to be plus one, and starting of international flights from Agartala

airport in the near future, shall definitely add to the revival of tourism,” she said.

“The Indian government had proposed an air bubble agreement to the South Korean government in July last year, and the Centre has been waiting for its response. We are very much hopeful to add one more country to the list of air bubble agreements. Also, the soon to be starting international flights from the Agartala airport would increase the footfall of tourists, which would give a necessary boost to the drowning structure of the industry, caused by the global pandemic,” commented Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI.

Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI quoted that the MBB airport in terms of handling of aircraft and passengers is the second busiest airport in North-Eastern India and would definitely garner good footfall. “As far as the international front is concerned, I am hopeful that our government will keep on expanding the air bubble list, in order to provide the travel industry and the travellers a sense of confidence and the power to travel, until the international barrier is not lifted,” he said.

“I extend my gratitude to the government for actively working in such times, and engaging with countries on air bubble and its expansion, and also working simultaneously to uplift the travel and tourism sector in the country by welcoming international traffic, and calibrating its approach in accordance with the global Covid-19 situation is a commendable move,” Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI. ▲

Installing body scanners at airports would bring uniformity, smoothen the travel process: TAAI

The Centre-run Airports Authority of India AAI is yet to procure and install a single body scanner for its 200 plus airports across the country. Aviation security regulator BCAS had in April 2019, directed 84 hypersensitive and sensitive airports across the country to install body scanners by March 2020, replacing existing door frame metal detectors, hand-held scanners and pat-down searches of passengers to detect metallic objects at the airport during security checks.



explosives. Body scanners detect both metallic and non-metallic items concealed on the body, thus making the safety of passengers a priority which would further boost footfall, as safety is on everybody's mind these days," Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI mentioned. He further added that AAI in 2020 issued a tender to procure 198 body scanners for 63 airports, but later it was cancelled due to some

reasons. "This time we hope things get better post-pandemic and we start afresh with new facilities on board." Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI said, "We always welcome such steps which reflect good technology and a sense of responsibility. We as an association urge the government to bring such ideas to concrete so that passengers could bask in the easiness and smoothness of security checks minus the havoc."

Whereas Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI added that passengers have to remove their jackets, thick clothing, shoes, belts as well as all metallic items before entering into the body scanner at the airport. "A mannequin-like image is generated by the machine, and if there is a yellow spot on the screen, it means that area on the body may need further screening. Once the body scanners are installed at an airport, pat-down searches will not be required for all passengers, easing the security check process," he said. ▲

Commenting on which Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that this might prove to be a great move as several checking and scanning methods create a sense of restlessness among the travellers, which somewhere down the line discourages them to take flights and take up other modes as and when possible. "The government should ponder upon it and make through it as soon as possible, as it will provide a smooth checking and travelling passage to the passengers which somehow shall definitely work as a tourism booster. When it comes to travelling we should not ignore the fact that the majority of the people pay attention to such small details while choosing destination and mode of transportation, so the government needs to make sure that no stone is left unturned when it comes to traveller's satisfaction," Mrs. Mayal added.

"Walkthrough metal detectors and handheld metal detectors cannot detect non-metallic weapons and

'Vistadome coaches offer a break from the monotony of Covid', said Jyoti Mayal

The Vistadome coaches on Central Railways have received an overwhelming response from passengers. Sharing her views on the same, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that it's the high time since this Corona havoc, people have become tired of it now and are stepping out to beat that stress. "The severity and harm are still as much as it was before, but people have now learned to live with it, so they don't want to miss out on the fun and other things in life, but of course with proper safety measures in place," she said.

The unique Vistadome coaches, apart from having a glass rooftop, has a number of extra-ordinary features like wide window panes, LED lights, rotatable seats, pushback chairs, GPS based info system, multiple television screens, electrically operated automatic sliding compartment doors,



toilet with ceramic tile flooring and the viewing gallery.

"With such attractive features and facilities onboard, it is bound to attract more and more tourists. People are keen to have a ride as firstly, they want to step out and break the monotony of their Covid schedule, and secondly, such features are irresistible so it is bound to garner good attention and footfall," commented Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI.

Adding to this, Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI added that whether it is the breathtaking view of the valleys, rivers and waterfalls along the Mumbai- Goa route or the spectacular views of the Western Ghats along the Mumbai- Pune route, these coaches with glass tops and wide window panes have proved to be a hit.

Discussing Vistadome history, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI shared that such coaches were first introduced on the Mumbai- Madgaon Janshatabdi Express in 2018. "The immense popularity of these coaches led to the introduction of these coaches in the Mumbai-Pune Deccan Express followed by Deccan queen. The Vistadome coaches have boosted tourism and have revolutionised the concept of luxury travel in Indian Railways," he said. ▲

A total loss situation, whether the booking cancellation money is refunded or not: TAAI

Less than one third of the people who cancelled their flights owing to the emergence of the Omicron variant-led third pandemic wave were able to receive refunds. For those who were forced to cancel their hotel bookings on account of the same reason, 34 per cent of people could get the refunds.

"This feels personal and heart breaking. Speaking from the industry veteran's perspective, the refunds would further weaken the fiscal grounds of the business, and nobody knows how and when the recovery will start; looking at passengers who were forced to cancel bookings, and now are unable to fetch returns is demotivating," commented Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI on the issue. "It's a total loss situation and I strongly urge to the airlines, managements and other concerned authorities, to bring correct policies & guidelines at the earliest, and make sure that the losses are reduced to the minimum level possible. Today we are standing exactly where we were two years back, advocating for refunds & policies. I urge MoCA once again specially, to work with us to standardise this industry, or else there will no industry" she added.

Speaking on which Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said that the rapid rise in the Omicron variant-led Covid cases in India



have prompted many citizens, who have booked from January to March to revisit their plans, and a subset of them have also approached airlines and hotels for cancellations. "When compared to the second wave, over 2.5 times as many citizens were able to get a hotel booking refund due to third wave related cancellation, however majority still ended up losing money to hotels" he further said.

Commenting on the whole scenario, Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI quoted that on an aggregate basis, of those who cancelled flight tickets due to the third

wave, only 29 per cent were able to get a full refund from the airlines or travel agents. "In comparison to the second wave, over twice as many citizens were able to get a flight ticket refund due to third wave related cancellations," he said.

"I, on behalf of my association would suggest that the government should come up with a special policy for travel booking refund till the Covid pandemic is going on, especially for airlines and hotels, so as to reduce the losses to the least. Due to lack of uniformity in cancellation charges by different airlines and hotel operators, the majority don't approve the existing travel booking refund policies during the pandemic," stated Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI. ▲

Let the industry decide if it needs to die of hunger or the virus: TAAI President to Mr. Scindia

In the wake of continuing COVID - 19 scare, the government had decided to further extend international travel and visa restrictions till 28th February 2022.

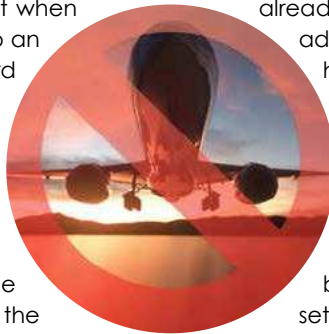
Sharing her views, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) expressed her concern over the rising cases of Omicron variant and sinking international travel business. She said that just when one thought that the restrictions had come to an end and we would be able to move forward another variant has evolved putting a halt on emerging expectations. "As an industry insider, it scares me to see such a weak state of business, this is the third consecutive year by far of business declining. I strongly believe business should not be curbed because closing borders and travel is certainly not the solution. If this continues after every variant the industry will die of hunger instead," she added.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said that with the extension, scheduled international commercial flights will not operate to and from India. "The international air operations will

continue to ply on the basis of the air bubble arrangement till February 28, 2022. All cargo operations will also continue as usual, despite the restrictions," he mentioned.

"Though the air bubble arrangements are working fine and countries are enjoying the dual benefits, we still are concerned about the extensions. Air bubble travel has already reached its threshold limit and it is difficult to add more countries now in view of the virus. We had planned bigger things but seems like it is time to once again re structure and rethink," said Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

Commenting on the development, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI put forth his opinions and said that although the extension on the travel restriction was expected, the ban on the regular international flights is a big setback to the travel and tourism industry. "With no international tourism business for the third consecutive tourism season, the travel trade and the industry in the country will continue to face challenges for their survival which is scary," he stated. ▲



Tourism will bounce back quickly: TAAI echoes PM's statement



A statement of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on January 22 was well received by Indian travel trade and their partners abroad, that tourism will quickly bounce back. "TAAI being the leading body representing travel & tourism fraternity wishes to convey its appreciation to the PM and government for stating the much-needed words at an opportune time when the sector is struggling to survive by confused protocols & no clear direction on support & revival." said Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI.

"The sector now needs beyond words & an effective plan of revival as a wholesome, not MoT, MSME, MoCA, MEA, MoF etc. individually. Why as the most relevant sector, do we need to run from pillar to post to get a clear direction when we all along with the Prime Minister recognise the importance of this sector & vis a vie its direct influence on the growth of economy & multi value generation of jobs," she added.

TAAI President continued to state that, travel agent and tour operator are not just a term to facilitate air travel and tourism, holistically it is an industry. "With the increase in air traffic and ever-expanding development of new airports and tourism infrastructure, the role and responsibilities of the agent/operator has also expanded in a big way. They are a value-add facilitator of travel & tourism rather than just making bookings. Be it an up-dation of the travel protocols, hygiene, safety, and health; the facilitator is the face of the aviation and tourism industry to bring in sustainable inclusive growth. We need a long-term robust revival strategy in place for the Indian aviation & and tourism industry & our immediate objective is to recover the Indian tourism industry from the pandemic and to rightfully move forward with socio-economic contribution towards Indian economy and on the world stage. We surely have the potential of becoming the largest inbound, domestic and even outbound tourism markets of the world & also the largest hub between the east & west. After IT industry, Indian tourism is the next growth engine on the world stage which can leverage a combination of tourism, technology, and technical skilling.

"Our vision & mission are all aligned with the government and we ensure full support and cooperation to the Indian travel trade and community, but surely feel the need of an effective task force to adopt a collaborated long-term robust revival strategy in place for the Indian aviation & and tourism industry under the aegis of the Prime Minister," she concluded. ▲

Domestic business only way of revival until regular international flight ban is lifted: TAAI

Speaking about the domestic passenger growth especially in 2021, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that the domestic business has come to the rescue when all other hopes were drowning.

Commenting on the same, Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI also said that this is a good sign so to speak. "The international travel ban which was there until January 31 has been further extended for another month, so domestic business is the only source of revival for travel industry at these times. The Indian domestic carrier carried 307.03 lakh passengers in the last quarter, which was the best after the first quarter of the calendar year," he further added.

Adding his views on the same, Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI quoted that on a month on month basis also, compared to December 2020, the domestic carriers carried over 52 per cent more passengers in December 2021. "Over 112 lakh people travelled domestically in December 2021 compared to 73.27 lakh in the same period last year. In November 2021, the passenger numbers were 105.16 lakh," he stated.



Speaking on comparisons and business, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI further said that on a quarterly comparison, the fourth quarter of the calendar year was so far the best in terms of the passenger traffic. "The entire increase in numbers is paving the way forward for TAAI members to take a conscious decision to invest their resources in the domestic tourism. We hope for the continuous growth, at least in the domestic sector, till international business does not revive," he mentioned. ▲

Bringing facilities under one roof would definitely smoothen the travelling passage: TAAI



Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has set the ball rolling for a complete revamp of its digital platforms to make them the best in the world. This will include the Incredible India website, the mobile app and all other digital modules deployed to provide information and services to the tourists across the globe.

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI extended her best wishes to the Ministry and spoke about the idea of bringing all the facilities under one roof. She said that the objective of the revamp, to make the Incredible India digital interface more tourist centric and make it one-stop shop for information and services through a traveller's journey of dreaming, planning, booking visiting and returning is a great move. "I think this is a fantastic idea, We as a travel body wanted something like this "one roof" facility for quite a long, and now the government has finally decided to come up with the idea which is sufficient in itself to smooth out travelling process," Mrs. Mayal said.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI commented that the mission of the government is to make its digital platforms the focal point for information, experiences and services. "The Ministry is said to

have benchmarked various features and studied various best practices of international portals of counterparts like the USA, Australia, Switzerland, Japan, Dubai, Singapore and others," he added.

"This is a welcoming move, and I, as a part of travel fraternity feels that this is the need of the hour. Also, the government promises to integrate the information and services from various states in the country, destinations and travel, tourism and hospitality stakeholders which is something innovative and would definitely prove to be a milestone in itself," said Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

Sharing his views on the revamp, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI commented that the ministry had invited RFP for setting up digital marketplace platform for Incredible India, to help connect digitally with the travel and tourism partner abroad. "The IIDMPP was intended at connecting with and engaging and educating travel partners, about Indian destinations and travel products at a time, physical meetings and road shows are challenged because of the global pandemic," he said. ▲

Traveller's satisfaction should be the top most priority: TAAI on Akasa Air

Seeking to further democratise air travel with dependable and affordable services, Akasa Air is expected to start flight services in May -June after getting its first Boeing 737 MAX aircraft in April.



Commenting with an optimistic approach, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that if we look at the long term future of commercial aviation in India, it is as exciting as anywhere in the world. "The Indian aviation pie is growing and the idea of Akasa Air is to look through what we are currently facing. This is temporary, this too shall pass. Akasa Air, which will take off as a low cost carrier, has placed an order of 72 Boeing 737 MAX planes as per the reports, which are fuel efficient as well. Post pandemic, traveller's satisfaction is the top most priority now and elements like reliability, small queues, affordability from the customer's perspective should be taken care of," Mrs. Mayal added.

Speaking on which Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said that the civil aviation space, especially the airlines, has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, and the emergence of the Omicron variant has dealt another blow to the recovery

path of the sector. "But nevertheless, we as an industry are hopeful enough to bring back things on the path again as and when possible," he commented.

"I think this is a great move and keeping customer satisfaction in mind as the key element would surely go a long way, as this will attract more and more

passengers to take flights. Elements like flights from metros to metros, being professionally managed, competitive cost structure, customer satisfaction, employees being happy and airline being financially healthy are sound steps that could really play a vital role in its emergence as one of the biggest carrier," mentioned Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

Putting forth his views and talking in context of future of Indian aviation sector, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI said that surely things are going to change now, with bag full of experiences post Covid. "We are ready to take on challenges and start a fresh. We unanimously want to enable the change and democratise air travel. Also, if going by the reports, international services are very much part of Akasa Air's future plans, which is a fantastic news for travel and aviation fraternity," he added. ▲

TAAI sought immediate attention/ action on GST rationalisation, TCS, industry status among other recommendations before presentation of Union Budget 2022 – 2023

Sharing its expectations and recommendations for Union Budget 2022-23, the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) said that getting industry status and inclusion in the Concurrent list are very important to make the Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality sector in the country more structured. This would pave the way for central and state governments to work in tandem and help in revival, survival and economically support India.

In a letter addressed to the Union Minister of Finance Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman couple days before the presentation of Union Budget 2022 – 23 in Parliament, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) sought withdrawal of TCS and GST rationalisation.

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said "As the President of one of the oldest travel associations of India, I would like to bring into notice, inbound tourism business; GST competition internationally: there is a huge gap between what overseas agents charge and what our members - tour operators and travel agents are required to charge.

She further spoke about GST input credits as to how hotels be allowed to charge IGST, which will enable seamless availability of credit across India. "Tour operators to be enabled a special presumptive GST rate of 1.8 per cent with full GST setoffs, travel agents to be allowed the option of exploring the reseller model for charging," she said expressing concerns on various other matters and seeking an immediate action.

Adding to which Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI further said that tourist transporters should also be allowed the provision for availing GST setoffs on the interstate tourist transport taxes, taxes on parking fees and taxes on fuel which is their biggest input costs. "GST on travel and tourism related services must be given a tax holiday for atleast two years, so as to increase the business and bypass the competition, due to the pandemic concerns, where business has dropped to nearly zero," he said.

Talking about TCS Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI

commented on some points like ease of doing business, displace business from Indian travel companies to companies out of India, removing the safety net from Indian travellers and further explained other points as well with their cons and pros. He added that under the points mentioned, and due to the waste of time in ensuring compliances, loss in business due to inflated pricing due to GST and TCS, deviation of business from TAAI members to online companies and other travel agents overseas, we the association once again appeal to abolish TCS.

Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI put forth his views and mentioned "We as an association are fully aligned to the nation's need of enhancing tax compliance. Ensuring tax compliance on travel can effectively be done through pan cards, Aadhaar cards and passport detail records of the travel Booker, as an alternative, which is already being done.

TAAI's other recommendations called for concrete steps to improve the cash flows, reducing working capital burden on start-ups, existing MSMEs & SME, access to easy credit, reducing income tax rates, revival of Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) for technology up-gradation, visa fees waiver for all tourist visas for 2022-2023, export status for tourism export earnings, ECLGS extension for tourism & hospitality and ATF ought to be brought under the ambit of GST

Mentioning measures which can greatly help the travel trade fraternity especially the tour operators and travel agents, Mrs. Mayal opined that a structured mechanism to future secure travel agents' payments, ensuring security is crucial for their survival. "Travel agents' payments to principals is unsecured credit and we need to ensure that some form of mechanisms whether escrow or guarantee or underwriting based mechanisms are in place to ensure that travel agents money stays secure," she said. ▲



Ministry of Tourism celebrates National Tourism Day

Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India celebrated National Tourism Day on 25th January 2022 under the aegis of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav with the theme 'Rural and Community based' tourism. The Ministry organized a two-hour programmes and lot of events were held across the country.

Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is an initiative of Government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements. It's also an embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-



cultural, political and economic identity Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Maharashtra organized an event to celebrate the National Tourism Day at Sahyadri Guest House, Malabar Hill, Mumbai in the presence of Hon'ble Minister of State (Tourism) Maharashtra Policy. Due to COVID -19 protocols, only 50 persons attended the event. TAAI VP

Mr. Jay Bhatia and Western Region Chairman Mr. Sameer Karnani participated in the event.

Certificates were distributed to the registration holders under the Caravan & Adventure Tourism. ▲

Air India finally back home after 7 decades is a historic moment for Indian aviation, says TAAI President

The Tata Group on January 26, 2022, regained ownership of Air India, 69 years after the airline was nationalised. The handover has come as a culmination of the government's attempt to transfer the ownership of the loss-making airline to a private owner.

Speaking on the ownership by the Tata Group, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI extended her heartiest wishes to the group and

said that the acquisition gives TATA's 100% ownership in Air India, its low-cost subsidiary Air India Express and 50% stake in ground handling firm AISATS. "It was more of an emotional connection so to speak, the group was keen on Air India for a long time if we go by the reports. The financial sweetener allowed them to take over the airlines with the right kind of debt," Mayal said.

"With Air India and Air India Express, the TATA Group now has four airlines and around 23 per cent market share, becoming the second-largest operator in the domestic sector behind IndiGo. It is the largest player on international routes and the only Indian carrier on long haul routes like Europe and USA" she added.

Speaking from the commercial perspective, Mrs. Mayal said that the AI doesn't have the required technology or employee training to do route analysis, pricing and booking curves. "Currently it's a very manual process, which impacts



commercial performance as airline pricing is dynamic in nature, and they will have to augment the team and software in that area".

"Nevertheless, as an industry veteran, I could gauge that there is a potential to improve cash flow by a billion dollars per year if the planned strategy of TATA's to improve revenue and cost can be implemented. While the initial plan of the conglomerate is to

work towards enhancing the soft side of the existing product as per the reports, the TATA group has also identified other areas as well, which I have already spoken about, that needs to be improved to turn around the company," she added.

Remembering the past, she stated that "Air India was actually a Maharaja brand with excellent services not close to any other airline. The old travellers have beautiful memories & as an industry, we are confident that it will once again regain its lost glory."

"As TAAI President, I must appreciate the Air Indians that with their commitment & passion kept the airline flying till date & were able to deliver it in good hands to keep the Indian flag flying high. I would also hope that through this platform, strong connections with the agents & the airline will become stronger to build a robust product & the benefit of both," she concluded. ▲

It's time to hustle and do what best could be done to rebuild things: TAAI President

2020 was no less than a disaster, as the world saw one of the deadliest viruses humanity has ever witnessed. It took a toll on people's lives and livelihood and affected the world as a whole. After two years straight into the pandemic, and with baggage full of experience and patience and the idea to deal with it, the world has now learned to live with it.

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said, at the beginning of February, that it is a way of life now, the world is slowly coming to its terms and learning to live with it. "If we go by the reports, most of the countries worldwide are easing out the Covid curbs, scrapping the rules and lifting up bans that were put in the wake of the virus. European



countries like England and Spain have eased out Covid restrictions, by removing the mandatory rule of getting RT-PCR done for fully vaccinated and not making it compulsory to wear masks respectively. This was followed by Denmark.'

Further speaking on curbing the restrictions, she said that not just other countries but India also has taken a step forward, and scrapped certain curbs as the daily number of active cases are declining especially in metros, to normalise the situation. Many States including Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal etc. issued guidelines easing and relaxing COVID restrictions signalling a return to pre COVID level. ▲

Fresh fillip for battered tourism

Looking at the scope and some important developments in the sectors like MICE, Aviation and Weddings, it is believed that these sectors, apart from giving new opportunities, will also facilitate the travel and tourism industry towards growth.



After having dealt a body blow in the past two years, the MICE segment in Asia in general, and India, in particular, has started afresh with a mix of in-person and hybrid events. Now with markets opening up, there is much banking on the MICE segment. Businesses are yearning for in-person interactions and meetings with employees, suppliers and clients alike. The two long years of the pandemic have been back-breaking and nerve-biting for a segment dependent largely on the physical movement of people. With tourism players now banking on pent-up demand, an added push is needed to drive the segment back towards its former growth path. This will be supplemented by the various new applications and software available for cost optimisation and tracking movement, eventually augmenting MICE.

India already has a strong reputation in the corporate events space and will be building on this to win business as corporate travel ramps up. It is been observed that India's travel ecosystem continues to develop with new airlines starting up, and routes ramping up all such developments making India an Asian hub, an even more attractive place to do business.

According to a report by Research Drive, the global MICE industry is anticipated to witness remarkable growth during the period 2021—2028 time frame. The rising adoption of virtual MICE meetings by businesses is driving the growth of the market, and the meetings sub-segment is projected to lead. The Asia-Pacific market is anticipated to be at the

forefront valued at USD 295.1 billion in 2020 and is estimated to observe speedy growth with a CAGR of 6.7% and hit USD 501.3 billion in the forecast period. As per this report, the growth of the regional market is mainly because Asian nations have undergone speedy globalisation, significantly boosted infrastructure development, and surged the development of the hospitality industry. Moreover, reasonable hotel rates, easy access to transport facilities, affordable human resources and rapid technological advancements in the region are some other factors boosting the market's growth.

Though Asia is the dark horse for MICE as of now, but it is indeed a fact that the future lies with Asia, which is reporting the highest growth rate. The top 3 MICE segments where growth is the fastest are Medical (22.2%); Technology (17.3%) and Science (11.8%). These three segments combined hold 51.8% of MICE events worldwide. India, being a market leader in all these segments and having huge human capital and knowledge know-how will definitely take a lead in the coming years and play a major role in driving the growth.

Be it inbound or outbound, MICE has always been an important component in promoting tourism and supporting the travel trade. The sector has huge potential. It will certainly lead to recovery. A closer look says that domestic tourism opened new avenues for Indian tourism, and likewise once fully started, MICE will act as a catalyst in the growth of tourism.

Some of the factors that will lead to the growth are strong

economic growth, an increase in disposable income, political stability, aggressive tourism campaigns by the Government, along with social media influence in the recent past. Besides this, changes in lifestyle, rise in tourism promotion, and increase in accessibility of transport facilities have driven the growth of the travel & tourism industry in Asia, which in turn supplements the growth of the MICE industry in this region.

AVIATION GAINING MOMENTUM

Indian aviation is another sector which is entering a new era with important developments like Tatas taking over Air India, Jet Airways (2.0) resuming its operations, and Akasa Air taking to the sky. Existing Indian Carriers like Indigo, SpiceJet, and Vistara expanding their fleet and reach within and outside the Indian airspace. All these augurs well and also show that there is demand for travel. At present, Indian air carriers have a combined fleet of 710 aircraft, up from 400 eight years ago. Not only that, Indian carriers intend to add 110-120 planes a year as they look to rebuild their business after the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. It translates to more business/ flights and destinations.

However, India now needs more airstrips too, which the Government of India is already ensuring to invest into. A much bigger infrastructure to handle such traffic. And, above all, a unified policy for the entire country. The industry has seen in the last two years how states and centre had their issues in terms of delivering at the grass route level. Yes, that's true that if cases are more than a vigilant and strict administration is required, however, not having a unified policy is the biggest hindrance for both trade and travellers.

TAAI, being the nodal Association has suggested and requested in the past to have a Joint Working Group in place to tackle such challenges.

Secondly, the country needs a more skilled workforce to



handle operations now. Having an aeroplane is something entirely different from having a team of experts managing the entire ecosystem. "It is high time to have more flying schools, skill development institutes – especially aviation, and a robust back-end infrastructure to supply the workforce on regular basis," pointed out a travel industry veteran.

Interestingly, the process has already started. Take the example of the first-ever Flying Training academy in Assam's Lilabari. This was inaugurated a few days back by Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. The academy has been established in line with the government's announcement of developing nine new academies in addition to the existing 34 academies.

"This is a historic day for Assam as the country had 34 flying academies till recently. We have added nine more academies in the first phase and this is the first time in 75





years that we are starting a flying academy in the state of Assam. We will add 15 more flying academies in the second phase and Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh will have one flying academy," Scindia said.

Another interesting development in the recent past is the growing spiritual tourism which in the process in process infusing growth to the aviation sector. Airstrips launched lately are more towards promoting the real strength of India which is Spiritual/ Religious tourism. Destinations developed in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Manipur, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra will play a crucial role in further developing the Indian aviation market.

Further, the way the private sector has come forward to invest/ re-start/ start a new venture in the aviation business is indeed a commendable move. "We have the presence of almost every conglomerate in India in the aviation sector. These conglomerates will lead the recovery and develop sustainable business models which will have a major impact on the growth of the travel trade in India. We are quite positive and hopeful that Indian aviation will soon be the frontrunner for job creation, GDP, and the overall growth of the Indian economy," said the industry veteran.

Another important development on the aviation front is the launch of India's first commercial Indian-made aircraft for civil operations at Mohanbari Airport in Dibrugarh, Assam. The aircraft has been named Dornier 228 and it is operated by Alliance Air. It was launched for its first-ever commercial flight on the Dibrugarh-Pasighat route. Alliance Air also said that the development of the North Eastern Region (NER) is a part of India's growth story, apart from the region being strategically important.



A LUCRATIVE SEGMENT IN THE MAKING OR UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL

Weddings have also emerged as a lucrative segment that can provide much-needed momentum to the tourism industry. India is known for its vibrant and colourful weddings and its spectacular palaces and rituals can form an attractive proposition for destination weddings. The potential (wedding) of the segment could be realised if there is a proper synergy among wedding planners, tour operators, hoteliers etc.

The best part of what people have observed lately is that entrepreneurs with brilliant ideas and concepts have ventured into these businesses. These young minds first of all turning this un-organised sector into an organised one. Stakeholders involved are getting/ offering the best of the services. And, above all, because most of the ideas are IT-enabled and tech-driven every person is getting their due share with a clarity of their role in the ecosystem.

The wedding planner now works in tandem with every counterpart and is taking a shape of a sector in itself. With more than 1 crore weddings happening in a year, the magnitude and depth of this vertical are immeasurable.

While there are plenty of options when it comes to wedding venues in India, the trend of destination weddings in India is winning hearts. As far as competition in tourism is concerned, it is not confined to tourism service providers, but the most decisive competition struggle takes place between the destinations. In order to enhance competitiveness and achieve sustainable, responsible and inclusive growth of tourism destinations, it's important to create synergy and convergence in the efforts of various agencies like hoteliers, Destination Management Organizations, Wedding planners etc. The success factors require a collective vision and strong partnerships to ensure the highest possible satisfaction.

It is imperative to develop new wedding destinations in India through infrastructure growth. There are many destinations in India which are very good in terms of location and beauty but lack of air connectivity, and fewer options for hotels marred the prospects to emerge as a wedding destination. Perhaps, this is the reason why big weddings are limited to major cities only.

It is time to address the issues to make the wedding segment truly vibrant which will ultimately help the tourism, hospitality and other related sectors. ▲

Budget 2022: Travel and Tourism ignored once again, says TAAI



Our trade has been ignored once again, stated Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, Travel Agents Association of India.

In the statement released post-budget on 1st February 2022, by TAAI, India's premier and largest travel and tourism Association, it stated that our trade has suffered tremendously due to the pandemic. It was expected that the Government would at least work towards positive upliftment of travel and tourism in India, which they always portray as a priority.

Mrs. Mayal mentioned that in our representations to the Finance Minister over the last two months, we had requested for GST input credits be made available across states for hotels and travel-tour operators and abolishment of TCS. There are many aspects on which the budget could have provided a helping hand and helped the travel and tourism sector to get up and recover. Direct wage support to the employee of tourism & travel and hospitality companies till tourism revival happens, abolishment of TCS on outbound travel to prevent travel expenditure shifting from Indian travel companies to offshore travel companies, E- visa fees waiver for all tourist visas for 2022 and beyond to support inbound revival are some of the spheres, the budget could have been lenient on

TCS has been a hindrance to the growth of outbound tourism making Indian tour operators less competitive in the international market due to the 5% being levied on all package tour options over and above the GST. We were also expecting at the least that Travel and Tourism be brought under the concurrent list for industry status, she added.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, Vice President - TAAI stated that it is frustrating that the Government's focus is on 2047 rather than looking at current challenges faced by the travel and tourism trade in India.

In the budget speech, the Hon'ble Finance Minister set out "Amritkal" being positive for the growth of the country, we feel that this is not Amritmanthan but "Mahapralaya" – the dissolution of the travel and tourism trade in India. Our appeals to the government to liberalise taxes and grant tax holidays on GST for boosting travel and tourism has been ignored. Further, Mr. Bhatia stated that it was also expected that earnings from inbound travel would have been supported by Export Status, which would have enabled trade growth enhancing the economy.

Travel and Tourism contributed nearly 10% of India's GDP, being one of the highest in the service sector and not a mention for development and prosperity of the trade, stated Mr. Bettaiiah Lokesh, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI. We had appealed for opening up of the sector and making it more liberalised for ease of doing business, but it seems that the focus was only to present a populist budget and not growth-oriented.

Hon. National Treasurer – TAAI, Mr Shreeram Patel stated that the Government has totally sidelined the trade and the only point mentioned was in GATI Shakti which would relieve foreign travellers. TCS and GST being the biggest hindrance were not considered. ▲

Re-introducing meal service on trains is a good idea, authorities should resume other services as well, says Jyoti Mayal

In a significant decision, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) resumed catering services on the Rajendra Nagar Terminal- New Delhi Tejas Rajdhani Express (12309/12310) beginning February 1 from Patna and February 2 from Delhi. Since 22nd March 2020, the IRCTC had suspended catering services on the Rajdhani Express due to COVID induced lockdown across the country.

"Speaking from experience and assessing the current scenario, the catering service should have been resumed earlier when the government lifted the dining ban from hotels and restaurants a long time back. Such a long time span before resuming the service must have definitely had an impact on the footfall of passengers, who depend on catering and other services being provided by the train, for a smooth and hassle-free journey. But



as they say, 'better late than never', so we as an Association, welcome this move and also urge the authorities, to consider re-opening of other services as well, of course with all safety measures, as COVID is here to stay and we all have learned to live with it," said Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI.

"Merging the meal system with ticketing is a good idea, as it will help the authorities in planning and preparing food with full safety measures beforehand. Those who have already booked their tickets may visit the IRCTC website to specify their meal preferences, IRCTC would also serve meals on payment to elite passengers on the train, beginning February 1 itself, and following all necessary safety protocols and COVID appropriate behaviour," she mentioned.

Speaking further, she narrated that while reopening meal serving is a good idea, the authorities should also ponder upon resuming other halt services too. Train is one of the most used mediums of transportation in our country and making its journey smooth and hassle-free would definitely result in increased footfall. "There should also be re-introduction of blankets and beddings in air-conditioned coaches of the trains now, as people are facing problems, especially in these harsh winters. The industry, some way or the other is coming back on track, to its pre- COVID levels if I may say, and this is a very good sign from the business point of view," Mrs. Mayal concluded. ▲

Aviation and tourism are two sides of the coin, the success of one is dependent on the other, says Jyoti Mayal

Addressing the PM Gati Shakti Conference virtually from the Central Zone on 31st Jan'22, Union Civil Aviation Minister Shri. Jyotiraditya Scindia said that the success of the Gati Shakti will catalyse the multi-modal connectivity in the country, leading to realising the vision of a USD 5 trillion economy. On the occasion, the Minister informed that 16 new airports will be built in all five states of central India, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra.

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI extended her wishes to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and commented that Tourism and Aviation are two sides of the same coin, the profit associated with one directly uplifts the other sector. "In one of the darkest times the tourism sector has ever witnessed, advancements like such assures that better days are ahead. Central India is hugely populated and sees a large number of footfalls of people migrating for work, studies & experiential tourism. Building of airports at these locations would surely prove to be an added advantage, which will contribute immensely to the revenues of these states," she said.

"Uttar Pradesh has already achieved the milestone of



being the only state with five international airports with the Jewar Airport soon to come up. Many countries of the world have focused on investment in the infrastructure sector in the last 6-7 decades, and all of them have become developed countries now. Going by the stats and success models, policies like Gati Shakti is indeed a campaign to transform India into a global superpower," Mrs. Mayal mentioned.

"Central India is already an attraction for its beautiful monumental sites, history, lakes and much more; building of airports would definitely add to its glory and generate other opportunities like cargo, industries, transport demand which will eventually give rise to the employment ratio in the country. It's a multi-layered benefit scheme, which has its own share of providing profit to different sectors at different points in time. Such historical milestones cannot be achieved alone and require the coordinated efforts not only of all the States and UTs but also travel agents & tour operators. Hope the government & policy setters recognise this sooner than later," she concluded. ▲

Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is process, working together is success: TAAI President

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, was invited as the guest speaker at ICCI Annual Global Tourism Summit held on February, 6, 2022. The topic that was discussed on the event was "Travel Trade Facilitating Investments in the tourism & skilling sector". Speaking on the event, she conveyed her gratitude to ICCI for extending this invitation & applauded their initiative of organising the Annual Global Tourism Summit 2022. Further speaking she said that TAAI continues to maintain its legacy, of most effectively managing the quality growth and ability, to support the Indian travel and tourism industry.

"Going by the theme of the event and to disclose certain schemes, incentives, rewards and opportunities for tourism industry, based on global investors for India, India is targeting to become a \$10 trillion economy. In recent years, the government has scrapped over 25,000 compliances to improve ease of doing business. The ease of doing business includes several dynamic parameters and digitise the system" she said. At the event, she also discussed about some of the most important and relevant schemes and incentives, being offered by the Government, like viability gap scheme for revenue generating tourism project, assistance for organising fairs/ festivals/ tourism related events, fiscal incentives provided by Ministry of Tourism, develop villages for rural tourism, etc.

Commenting on the current scenario, Mrs. Mayal said that post pandemic, countries are doing their level best to pump up the tourism sector which got affected badly due to the global pandemic. "The strategies adopted by different countries may be different, but the purpose is same, to rebuild tourism and make it flourish again."



"Speaking in Indian context, not just the government but also high profile associations like TAAI also came forward and put forth their best for the revival. The initiatives of TAAI are not confined but extends to different spheres as well, like signing of MoU's with different countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Kazakhstan to promote bilateral tourism, in the times of tourism sector's biggest setback. India is a plethora with wide stretch of destinations, diverse cuisines, culture & six seasons, domestic is going to always be a fall back & we are resilient country with resilient people."

"Another aspect I would like to emphasis is the skill landscape, as I am also the Chairperson of THSC, working under the Ministry of Skill Development, and it is very important aspect to bring tourism shine in the best light. Also, the rapid adoption of digital technologies is redefining business globally, however, in the current business environment, digital is not only about technology, but it also encapsulates how work is done, how data lies at the core of

decision making, how innovation is approached, how best practices are applied, and how cost and efficiencies are rationalised," she emphasised.

In the concluding part, she mentioned, "I hope the sector will revive and thrive soon, and initiatives like such would play a crucial role, in bringing the industry back on track in the near future. Another point that comes to my mind very often, is how to create a national tourism fund or safety fund, for our members, to give them support, to invest in technology, and protect them from any other crisis. Let us together work towards making this sector, a fully robust industry." ▲

Ministry of Tourism convenes meeting on ECLGS Scheme on 09th Feb

Mrs Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI and Mr. Mehboob Shaikh, Chairman Taxation Council represented TAAI at a meeting convened by the Ministry of Tourism on 9th February to deliberate upon the benefits availed, issues, and challenges faced by the travel trade industry since the ECLGS scheme was launched and further editions were introduced under Loan Guarantee Scheme for COVID Affected Tourism Service Sector (LGSCATSS)



TAAI resonates with IATA and ACI's demand of lifting of all travel restrictions: Mrs. Jyoti Mayal

Expressing strong displeasure over restrictions on travel and closure of borders by various countries, stating as a measure to check spread of COVID 19 variant Omicron, the Airport Council International (ACI) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) had urged European governments, in first week of Feb'22, to lift all travel restrictions, for fully vaccinated and recovered individuals, holding a valid COVID vaccination certificate. Expressing her views on the same, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that it's high time that we should all unanimously think about lifting certain restrictions, which were put to curb the virus in the first place.

"We all have seen and experienced lockdowns and travel bans globally, but taking the liberty of speaking, I would say that such restrictions have not really worked the way we had predicted, in fact, it has rather resulted in an economic downfall. Not to delay any further, the restrictions must be lifted at least for fully vaccinated, so that the flow of business continues" she emphasised.

The restrictions set out by an EU Council recommendation



adopted on 25th January, IATA says it was based on the health status of travellers, rather than the epidemiological situation of their country or area of origin. New analysis produced by some of the running agencies reveals, that pre-departure testing requirements are likely to be ineffective at stopping or even limiting the spread of the Omicron variant.

Commenting further, Mrs. Mayal said that taking decision on such loosely based data may result in further downfall of the business, rather than turning out to be a safety measure. "Yes, definitely its government's responsibility to ensure public safety amid this pandemic, and take necessary actions as when required, but at the same time they should also think about the future & the bread-butter of the people, which is way more concerning than the virus itself."

"We at Travel Agents Association of India unanimously urge that the restriction to be lifted, because on the contrary, these restrictions are resulting in significant and unnecessary economic hardships, not just for the travel and tourism sectors and their work force, but for the whole economy," she concluded. ▲

VisitBritain launched multi-million pound global campaign to drive inbound tourism on February 9 in Dubai

Great Britain marketing campaign 'Welcome to Another Side of Britain' was formally launched by The Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) at VisitBritain reception on 9th February in Dubai, UAE. The event, hosted by British Tourist Authority chair Dame Judith Macgregor and included top travel trade and tourism industry representatives from the GCC and India, was in support of the wider programme for UK National Day at Dubai Expo 2020. TAAI Managing Committee Member and Chairman of Tourism Council Mr. Anoop Kanuga represented TAAI in this event.

Visit Britain's international campaign was putting the spotlight on Britain's cities, hit hard by the absence of international visitors, as well as on messages of welcome and reassurance. It is also capturing the major events this year, set to be global tourism draws, including HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and



'Unboxed,' the UK-wide celebration of creativity.

This campaign, which was a part of UK Government's refreshed GREAT campaign, ran till the end of March 2022. ▲

India vision @2047 for tourism: TAAI seeks measurable targets for FTAs & FEEs



In a meeting called by the Ministry of Tourism in Feb'22 with travel trade associations to discuss and develop India vision @2047 for the tourism industry, industry bodies including FAITH, Travel Agents Federation of India, and Travel Agents Association of India shared their inputs on suggestions through which tourism can flourish in India and the country can achieve desired targets and make India the most favourable nation for tourist arrivals.

The virtual meeting chaired by Shri. Arvind Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism emphasised inputs shared by the industry stakeholders and sought detailed recommendations from associations on the way forward. Representing policy body, Mr. Nakul Anand, Chairman, Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH) put forward a vision document that envisaged a series of initiatives to facilitate 100 million inbound tourists at the 100th anniversary of India's independence in 2047.

TAFI mooted the idea of a regional visa for neighbouring countries. Mr. Ajay Prakash, President, TAFI, sharing his inputs suggested that generating 100 million tourists would require a new mindset among all stakeholders – from luxury hotels and tour operators to the taxi drivers, guides, and all other segments of the trade.

"India has a unique position in the global imagination, he said, and we need to step up our efforts at 'Cultural Diplomacy' to claim our rightful place in the global tourism space. The government should actively look at a combined visa for India and the neighbouring countries, like the Schengen visa, as that would substantially grow the pie. India is a long-haul destination, he said, and the lure of being able to visit neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka could significantly increase inbound numbers," he said.

Commenting on the vision@2047, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, extended her gratitude to the Ministry, for taking such an initiative for the Indian tourism industry, and put forth her response regarding the vision. Emphasising the key points, she mentioned that there should be a set of measurable targets in the context of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs), employment generation, and contribution to India's GDP for framing the vision for the tourism sector. "Gap analysis, identification of strategic areas, tourism products for development - there should be infrastructure development, availability of accommodation units, development of specific tourism products, and leveraging technology for better execution of the vision," she said.

"I believe that we need to foster economic growth and development; harness production, use and sale of local produce in tourist destinations, and its full integration in the tourism value chain, and also we certainly need to develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism, which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products. Tourism is very important for the country, and the deliverance of the vision is in the eye of the leader. It should be under the tenure of a minimum of five years, to see the vision through. I would like to advocate all, not just as the President of TAAI, but also as a woman, who believes, in eats and drink tourism. I believe in private partnerships incentivised with set milestones," Mayal further added.

Mr. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, who presided over the virtual meeting, welcomed suggestions and said the combined visa idea is worth exploring. ▲

It's time that India's total share in International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) should increase: TAAI

Subjects such as role of Indian overseas tourist offices and Indian embassies, to make the new arrangement of tourism marketing and promotions, through the Indian embassies to work efficiently, and produce results in the long run – had come for suggestions. In this context, the report has recommended fixing the targets for tourism growth, for embassies and assessing the efficacy of the system, under the tourism officers in Indian embassies periodically.



Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that she fully agrees with what the report suggest. "It's time that we take the plunge, and Indian Ambassadors as leaders of the Indian missions abroad, must set targets for growth of Indian tourism in key markets across the world, with the objective of increasing foreign tourist arrivals to the country, thus increasing the share of Indian international tourism from the current paltry 1.5 per cent to at least 5 per cent in the coming years. It's high time that India's total

share in the international tourist arrivals should increase, with country having a huge variety of tourist places to offer. India's total share remains a modest 1.24 per cent, which is certainly below India's huge potential. Marketing and promotion efforts go a long way in promoting the growth of inbound tourism to India. Apart from that, Indian embassies abroad should also improve the visa facilitation, and also take interest to see that air connectivity is improved, with key markets in the world,

making the involvement of Aviation Ministry even more important," Mayal emphasised.

Adding further she said that the Ministry should formulate an integrated marketing and promotional strategy, to position India as a favoured tourism destination, with its huge potential as a tourist destination, in tourism generating markets overseas, and work upon increasing India's total share. ▲

Travel Trade is grateful to the Government for waiving off Home Quarantine for International Passengers: TAAI

TAAI's efforts finally yielded fruitful results on 10th February 22 when the Government announced waving off the home quarantine for international passengers starting from February 14th. A special appreciation goes to the Ministry of Tourism from the Travel Trade for their sincere and well-coordinated efforts to help combat aftermath of the pandemic and revival of businesses.



TAAI had communicated with the Ministries of Health & Family Welfare, External Affairs, Home and Tourism on 09th February to consider waiving off the quarantine request, said Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President. A much-awaited move that will certainly boost the morale of travellers planning to visit India, and open up employment and business opportunities for the travel trade fraternity which is on the verge of collapse due to the pandemic, she added.

To ensure that Indian tourism can regain and then build on its market share of 1% which was pre-COVID in the global inbound travel, such a move shall infuse confidence in the industry, as well as the travellers, to look at India as a must-visit destination, especially post-pandemic, said Mr. Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI.

Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI highlighted that a lot of countries have now opened up or have announced opening up their borders to fully vaccinated travellers with the impact of Omicron subsiding. And, therefore, the resumption of full commercial flights with zero quarantine to fully vaccinated travellers across all Indian ports was a much-needed move.

We are indeed grateful to the Government, for the response to the travel trade's request for waiving off the quarantine requirement, commented Mr. Shreeram Patel, Hon. Treasurer, TAAI. ▲

TAAI team's meeting with Mr Ajay Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, SpiceJet

A virtual meeting with Mr Ajay Singh, CMD, SpiceJet was convened on Friday, 11th February 2022. The agenda of the meeting was to clarify the ambiguity around the airline's future and also of the Indian aviation sector, SpiceJet's plans for 2022, launch of new flights and destinations, the airline's logistics arm SpiceXpress and other concerns raised by TAAI members.

TAAI team was led by President Mrs. Jyoti Mayal and included Mr Shreeram Patel - Hon. Treasurer; Mr Paras Lakhia – Chairman of TAAI Airline Council, Mr Sameer Karnani – Chairman (Western Region), Mr Amish Desai - Chairman (Karnataka Chapter) and Dr Himanshu Talwar, Executive Director, on priority while SpiceJet team included Mr. Ajay Singh and Ms. Shilpa Bhatia - Chief Commercial Officer, SpiceJet.

Welcoming and thanking Mr Singh & Ms Bhatia for taking out time for the meeting, Mrs. Mayal shared concerns on the continued challenges faced by the travel, tourism and aviation sectors, which are worst hit by COVID. While many airlines across the globe had shut down operations, Mrs Mayal said it was a relief that no such airline collapse was witnessed in India and it was a big achievement that our airlines had weathered the storm and continue their operations. She noted with satisfaction and appreciated the fact that there was zero retrenchment in SpiceJet and it had taken care of its employees.

She sought clarity on the future plans of SpiceJet, its focus on commercial passenger operations and its fast growing logistics business, refunds, credits of TDS and incentives to members, if any, to members due to cancellations, and also a plan to further strengthen the relations between SpiceJet and TAAI and make it mutually beneficial. She also asked for inputs of the relevance of IATA for the Indian market as she had already had a meeting with the earlier Minister of Civil Aviation. At the meeting, Mr. Paras Lakhia pointed out various issues concerning agents, operational issues, changes in flight schedules etc.

Mr Singh explained the challenges faced by Indian airlines & addressed all queries. Ms Shilpa Bhatia clarified that there were no pending refunds to any agent.

Mr Singh informed that under SpiceJet as the parent entity a new company has been incorporated in the name of SpiceXpress which will exclusively focus on Cargo. He went on to invite the TAAI members to come forward and leverage the opportunity by venturing into Cargo business bookings, for which mutually agreed commercial arrangements can be worked out.

He narrated how the pandemic had disrupted Indian aviation, tourism and travel sectors in ways no one could have anticipated. But challenges like this bring the best out of an airline like SpiceJet. SpiceJet has always looked for opportunities in the face of adversity, he said. SpiceJet built

SpiceXpress during the pandemic and has grown that business from a \$30-40 million a year to a \$350 million a year business.

With aviation slowly coming back on track, especially the domestic operations, a window of opportunity is open to both airlines and travel agents to work in tandem and reap the attached benefits, which could be a stepping stone to revive fast.

He emphasised the need for having a domestic entity like IATA in place to have a more robust in-house management of issues and challenges. He suggested that Indian aviation and travel trade have its own issues and the way of handling them, and therefore having in place a domestic arrangement like such would be much helpful in dealing with the same, which was seconded by all present.

He acknowledged the importance of travel agents & reiterated that SpiceJet would be happy to collaborate in revenue sharing of all ancillary products & also help to build a healthier & technology-driven environment.

Mr Singh said the government realises the importance of the aviation sector and has taken many initiatives in the last five

years to help the sector, but much more needs to be done & it can be achieved by working together.

In India, aviation fuel is taxed at the highest level in the world, airport charges are extremely high and there are all forms of other taxes and duties and regulatory complications which make us uncompetitive. These need to be resolved because India has this phenomenal potential of being an incredible aviation space given its geographic location, and the demand and the population that we have, he said.

He informed that at a post-budget interaction, on behalf of the civil aviation, travel, tourism and hospitality sectors, he had raised with the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Ms Nirmala Sitharaman the difficulties being faced by these sectors because of Covid. He had requested the Hon'ble Finance Minister to consider granting Infrastructure Status to these sectors to facilitate lending by banks and financial institutions. He has also requested the Hon'ble FM's support inclusion of Aviation Turbine Fuel under GST.

He updated that SpiceJet had successfully reintroduced Boeing 737 MAX aircraft into operations and 11 of its 737 Max were already operational. The return of the MAX will help SpiceJet add new routes and destinations, and improve operational efficiency. He believed that the worst is behind us and the road ahead is full of opportunities and a bright future awaits our airlines, travel and tourism sectors.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks from all present on assurance to each other for working towards the industry & to have regular quarterly meeting with Chairman & to have a physical meeting soon to take all talks forward by exploring new opportunities as discussed. ▲



Air travel is expected to revive soon irrespective of all the uncertainties & extending bans: TAAI



According to the International Flight Transport Association (IATA), the total number of air passengers in the world will approach four billion in 2024. "This is expected to improve to 83 per cent in 2022, 94 per cent in 2023, 103 per cent in 2024 and 111 per cent in 2025," IATA said.

Commenting on the development, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that according to the IATA's statistics, expectations for the near term recovery of air travel have shifted slightly, reflecting the evolution of government-imposed travel restrictions in some markets. "The overall picture presented is however unchanged, from what was expected in November 2021, prior to the emergence of the Omicron variant. The numbers and data shared by IATA look encouraging but with restrictions placed on scheduled international commercial flights in India, airfares are skyrocketing and with limited seats and ongoing cancellations due to the Ukraine-Russia crisis, the situation looks grim. Our industry is always the first to be hit & last to recover. We hope our Indian numbers will grow up and become a part of the recovery of the air traffic. We are resilient & need to be optimistic & show a little more patience to be on

track & revive," she said.

Adding to this, Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said that, "People want to travel, and when the travel restrictions are lifted, they return to the skies. There is still a long way to go to reach a normal state of affairs, but the forecast for the evolution in passenger numbers gives good reason to be optimistic".

"Fortunately, more governments have understood that travel restrictions have little to no long term impact on the spread of the virus. Slowly things are getting back to normal, which has ignited a ray of hope, in the travel and tourism industry. Though the extension of the ban in India on international travel is still a setback, especially when others are opening, we still have hopes for good days and business," Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI mentioned.

Speaking from the fiscal perspective, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI mentioned that the economic and social hardship, caused for very limited benefit, is simply no longer acceptable in a growing number of markets. "As a result, the progressive removal of restrictions is giving a much-needed boost to the prospects for travel," he emphasised. ▲

Morale boosting initiatives like ‘Swadesh Darshan Awards’ are a great way to acknowledge work in the field of tourism: TAAI

To acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the state governments, Union Territory Administrations, and various implementation agencies, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India constituted 'Swadesh Darshan Awards' in different categories.

Appreciating the efforts of the Tourism Ministry for taking such an initiative, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI commented that it's a great initiative to boost the morale of the travel and tourism industry. "In my earlier statements, I have mentioned many a times that the tourism sector should be appreciated as it not only fosters the economy but also promotes the overall well-being of the society by connecting people & a long value chain of livelihood. Recognitions like these would be a motivator to pave the path to building a productive sector. The entire travel tourism & hospitality industry has gone through prolonged suffering in this ongoing pandemic & it's time for the regulators to start investing in this sector starting, with appreciation," she stressed.

Expressing his views and talking about the awards, Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said, "As per the sources, the awards will highlight the best practices including achievements of planned objectives, planning, design, ability to attract private investments in peripheral development, maintenance etc. I think this is a very good idea to reap good results and have a planned tourism structure for the future."

"MOT has announced that the awards will be distributed



in different categories, like best tourist interpretation centre, best log hut facility, best souvenir shop, best waterfront development etc. I think creating such categories, would ignite a spark of being better than before in these segments and people associated, and the scope of improvement will be enhanced regularly," emphasised Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

"The Swadesh Darshan Scheme received the highest allocation in the MOT budget this year. Out of the ministry's total allocated budget of INR 2,400 crores, the flagship scheme of the Ministry, under which 76 projects in 13 thematic circuits have been sanctioned received INR 1,181.30 crores, registering a growth of almost 88 per cent from last year. 55 new destinations are being planned to be developed under the Swadesh Darshan scheme," concluded Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI. ▲

Amid uncertain international travel restrictions, domestic travel has proved to be a game-changer: TAAI

The domestic aviation market in the country showed a strong recovery in March 2022, on the back of an increase in the number of flights and more passengers travelling by air.

Commenting on the good results and progress shown by the domestic market, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that amid uncertain international travel restrictions, domestic travel has proved to be a game-changer. "We as an industry are eager for international travel to open soon so that there is a balance of travel in both, inbound & outbound as we certainly need foreign exchange earnings too. There is a huge potential & opportunity to explore domestic travel & we have been encouraging our members in these long two years to explore & promote. Covid has been a game-changer for domestic tourism & India being a vast country with unexplored opportunities needs to be visited & revisited again & again. We surely need to encash on the opportunities lost all these many past years. Domestic tourism & travel will always be a game-changer & a saviour as witnessed during Covid times,"



she said.

Adding to which Mr. Jay Bhatia VP, TAAI said, "As per the stats, looking at the monthly traffic data in January 2021, total passengers for the month came in at 6.4 million, down 17 per cent, Year-on-Year on account of COVID curbs imposed by some of the state governments. However, February 2022 has seen a sharp recovery which is a good sign altogether".

"I completely agree with what Mrs. Mayal has said. It was domestic travel that saved the business in the previous year as well when the

news of the opening of international travel was not even miles around. Although domestic has its limited options, it has always helped the industry to revive, and still is doing its level best to bring back the business", said Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

Speaking about the airline's business and its market share, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer of TAAI said, "The domestic market has shown a good recovery, and the credit goes to the airlines and their strong relationship with the industry & our TAAI members." ▲

Heart of India wholeheartedly gearing up for tourism: TAAI

Delhi Tourism is motivating markets and associations to highlight the key features and places of their areas through photographs on the "Dekho Meri Dilli" app to help tourists locate popular and prominent destinations easily, which will increase footfall. The initiative has been taken to mark the 75th year of independence.

Talking about this and extending her good wishes to the government of Delhi, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said that this is an innovative and new concept, which will definitely add charm to Delhi's tourism. "Being a Delhite myself, I know about the charm and popularity of Delhi. Delhi is not just another place, but a vibe, an aura in itself. Delhi is famous for its monuments, street foods, shopping hubs and what not, and also among the favourite tourist spots. I extend my support to the government, for coming up with such an easy-on the go idea" she said.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said that the app is definitely a good idea, and one step forward in making tourism an enjoyable experience in Delhi, as it celebrates the 75th anniversary of India's independence. As per the sources, a special feature of the mobile app is ease of online bookings to specific sites, like Mughal Gardens, etc. "The move has been welcomed by traders associations, who claim that this will boost their sales and footfall after a long lull due to the pandemic," he added.

"Though I haven't used the app personally, but as far



as I have heard, it is the best possible practice in the way of boosting tourism. The idea of the app is to highlight the potentials of various places, facilitates available and get feedback from visitors about the upkeep and hygiene, as well as their wholesome experience. Best part is that user can be anyone, including a resident, unaware about other parts of Delhi and want to know about things," Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI mentioned.

Speaking on the launch, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI, commented that we admire the move to include markets option in the app, as it will help visitors from other states as well. "Considering the industry has suffered a lot during the pandemic for the past two years, this move will help in boosting some sales too," he emphasised. ▲



Dublin / India International Women's Day Panel Discussion on 8th March, 2022

Mrs. Jyoti Mayal – President, TAAI was a distinguished speaker for the webinar "Dublin/India International Women's Day Panel Discussion" webinar held on 8th March, 2022.

It was hosted by Lord Mayor of Dublin, Hon. Alison Gilliland & Ambassador of India to Ireland, H.E. Akhilesh Mishra, and featured female leaders in respective fields. ▲

It's important to take timely steps in order to nourish and sustain: TAAI President on projects to restore Shimla's glory



The Government of Himachal Pradesh has said that it is committed to maintain the old glory of Shimla town, India's summer capital during the British Raj, and the Shimla smart city project is being executed by initiating various works. The foundation stone of the new 147 metres double-lane Dhalli tunnel was laid and once completed, will provide much needed relief to the commuters.

Extending her good wishes to the state government, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, said that Shimla has been one of the most visited hill stations of India and has a rich history besides having its uniqueness. "Whether Indian or foreigners, Shimla has seen a massive footfall in all the seasons, and keeping in mind its popularity, it is very important to maintain it, so as to have an everlasting tourism boost. Shimla town has definitely grown and expanded manifold, thus the steps for effective traffic management becomes a necessity. The initiative of building this tunnel is indeed a welcome move, and other state governments, especially the ones with beautiful hill stations, should also consider the same, as hill stations mostly lag behind in their roads and traffic management system," Mrs. Mayal emphasised.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI, praised the state government

and said that the project was long pending as it was started in 2016, but it gained momentum during the tenure of the present government. "It's good to see that the tourism structure is slowly getting its due value, and the government is ensuring that all works under smart city project are executed at a faster pace," he stated.

"Indian hill stations are the most popular ones among the people globally. Not just in any particular season, but they witnessed a huge number of tourists throughout the year. Their maintenance and proper structuring is very necessary, in order to provide the best of experiences to the people visiting. I whole heartedly support this move and also urge other governments of states to have such timely actions," mentioned Mr. Bhattaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

Putting forth his views, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI, said this step would pave the way for increased footfall. "The tunnel would definitely facilitate smooth plying of vehicle on the national highways. Several works such as widening of roads, construction of foot bridges, pedestrian paths and parkings are also being executed under this project. Better road infrastructure goes a long way in connecting people together and bringing tourism," he concluded. ▲

TAAI President meets Emirates team in New Delhi



Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI met Vice President of Emirates airline and its team from North, West and South in its office in New Delhi on 10th March, 2022

Finally a ray of hope has come: TAAI

Travel Agents Associations of India (TAAI) commenting on the resumption of regular international flights said that finally a ray of hope has come as business is expected to bounce back after two years of long hiatus. The association in a statement said that while expensive air bubble arrangements with 37 key destination countries ensured global connectivity during this period, regular flight resumption was awaited for the reasons like - more connectivity and choices and options to have lower fares on flights.

Commenting on the opening of scheduled international commercial flights, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that the Association appreciates the decision of all concerned government bodies, especially ministries of Health, Civil Aviation & Tourism for a positive decision, which would lead to revival of travel & business for the members. "Better late than never is the first thing that comes to my mind amid this crisis. We have been promised of opening of e-visa soon, and look forward to a normalcy of our lives, and the sector to quickly recover by wooing the travellers, and encashing on inbound, and also plan for our Indian travellers to have ease



of travel, lower costs and more choices, as all countries are now removing strict protocols and opening borders before the holiday season kicks off," she said.

Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said that it's a welcome move, and also regular flight fares will definitely be much lower than exorbitant bubble charges.

"As per the reports suggests, some foreign airlines are not overflying Russian airspace, due to which they have to take longer routes. Taking ultra-long hauls when fuel is so expensive becomes unviable, that too post pandemic which has brought a state of crippled economy, which is something to be ponder upon," stated Mr. Bettiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI.

Speaking about the air fares in post pandemic travel, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI said that resumption of regular flights will mean people can again freely choose the most affordable connection, like a one stop via nearby hubs abroad as they used to during pre-COVID times. But somewhere, the hiked fuel prices is a matter of concern as well. "Nevertheless, the opening of flights is definitely a good sign, and we hope for great business this holiday season; both inbound and outbound," he concluded. ▲

TAAI launched on 23rd March in New Delhi “The Brochure & Theme Logo” for 66th Convention to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka



Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) on the invitation from Sri Lankan Tourism Promotion Board (SLTPB) and Sri Lankan Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO), will be holding its 66th Convention and Exhibition at Colombo, Sri Lanka.

In this connection, TAAI unveiled its Convention Brochure and Theme Logo for its 66th Convention and Exhibition at a Press Conference and Road-Show at Hotel - The Park, New Delhi.

Jyoti Mayal, President TAAI, said, “I am truly delighted for receiving such an overwhelming response from the industry ever since we have announced the Convention in Sri Lanka. In the present scenario, there is an immediate need to build on our regional strengths and to explore more opportunities for growth in travel and tourism. The theme of the Convention ‘Collaborate to Conquer’, will focus to promote and establish travel and tourism between the two nations of Sri Lanka and India. SLTPB being the Main Sponsor for the 3day event in Sri Lanka, is looking forward to showcase their products and services to the Indian stakeholder partners, who shall boost bi-lateral Tourism into and from Sri Lanka. We have survived a tough phase and now have embarked the revival journey with positivity and vigour. Our mission is to build trust and confidence to deal with the challenges that exist in the new normal and move forward with a unified strategy for future sustenance through collaborations.”

“Our Convention logo, theme, brochure and the entire program will revolve around building a positive vibe and brainstorming to find ways and means through which the global tourism fraternity is coming together to embrace synergies for a brighter future,” she added.

Sri Lanka Tourism Chairperson, Ms. Kimarli Fernando stated, “It is a pleasure to partner with TAAI to host its 66th Convention and Exhibition in Sri Lanka. India being one of the main source markets for Sri Lanka, TAAI Convention is a great opportunity to promote tourism experiences of Sri Lanka to the Indian market. Key tourism product segments such as culture, and religious tourism, weddings, films will have a great potential in attracting Indian travellers. India has become a vital market for Sri Lanka Tourism in a post pandemic environment with many airlines operating to major tourist generating cities in India. Sri Lanka Tourism believes that the industry stakeholders will take the maximum exposure by engaging with the Indian travel trade during the upcoming TAAI convention.”



Shri Arvind Singh IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "The dynamic global geostrategic and geo-economic landscape is intensifying competition and redefining principles and values on which the regional order should be based. The apparent barriers of the pandemic have created a new kind of catalyst for greater connectivity, cooperation, and co-existence. The vast Indo-Pacific region is home to more than 64 per cent of the world's population and accounts for 62 per cent of global GDP. India and Sri Lanka are two very important countries in terms of tourism and the 66th TAAI Convention will provide a valuable opportunity to tourism stakeholders to collaborate for trade and business with the fast-growing Indian outbound industry. I am glad to know that TAAI will promote 'Inbound into India' as an important subject at this convention and will strive to attract Sri Lankans to connect well with India."

The dignitaries and officials from TAAI unveiled the Convention Brochure and Logo in the presence of industry professionals, representatives from Sri Lanka Tourism, SLAITO and Sri Lanka High Commission. Officials from MoT, GOI and from SLAITO also joined in virtually to attend the event.

"With the global aviation and economies opening up for tourism, especially in the light of commercial flights restarting from March 27, there is no better time than now to hold this Convention. We – the travel trade of India, can reiterate with confidence to the traveller by ourselves travelling overseas with renewed vigour. TAAI has taken this rightful opportunity to hold this Indian Travel Congress in Sri Lanka, so as to facilitate international mobility amongst our members and the trade at large. This shall give us all a platform to 'Collaborate to Conquer' with all our stakeholder partners in India and overseas," said Mr. Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI.

Mr. Ravindran Veeraperumal, Regional Manager – India & Bangladesh – Sri Lankan Airlines, gave an exhaustive and enlightening presentation on the airline's operations and its expansion plans for the future. The airline is also the official airline sponsor for the 66th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI in Colombo this year.

Concluding the event, Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, Hon. Secretary General, TAAI said, "Sri Lanka has always been one of the favourite destinations for Indians and now with the international skies opening up, it is an ideal destination for hosting the convention. Sri Lanka's close proximity to India along with its focus on boosting regional tourism, strengthening bilateral relations and developing trade,

investments and tourism makes it an important market for our country. The convention will provide a wonderful opportunity for our delegates to experience the serene beauty of this unique island country. We at TAAI look forward to welcoming our member delegates from "Incredible India" into the serene "So Sri Lanka".

A fruitful networking session between a delegation from Sri Lanka and TAAI members took place in New Delhi which was attended by over 200 stakeholder partners/members of TAAI. TAAI Hon. Treasurer Mr. Shreeram Patel was also present on the occasion and felt that with the overwhelming response to the road show; SLTPB, SLAITO and TAAI are excited to welcome all delegates for the Convention in Colombo. ▲



MICE will act as a catalyst in the revival of the tourism sector: TAAI



A positive trend can be seen in the corporate world across the globe, with employees coming back to their offices. And, with their returns, MICE seem to be a vertical, under tourism, which will certainly flourish, once again. The global MICE industry, pre-pandemic, has been the most significant one in terms of the contribution towards GDP and jobs creation.

Citing to the track record of the sector and with supporting numbers, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said that MICE industry plays a crucial role for the businesses embroiled in the travel trade sector. Be it events of national or international level; corporates, industrialists etc. have always been keen to meet and discuss business opportunities. And therefore, support and organises events, seminars, conclaves, conventions, exhibitions which in turn provides

various industries with an opportunity to deliberate upon areas of major concerns.

"Now, post-COVID, when restrictions in terms of travel, hygiene or maintaining a social distance are being liberalised and business is coming back on track, we see a humongous opportunity for the travel trade to serve its old and existing customers by way of providing the best of the best services keeping all protocols and precautions in-tact," Mrs. Mayal added.

"We, at TAAI are ready to hold our annual convention in Sri Lanka this year which would be a steppingstone towards the revival of the MICE sector in both India and Sri Lanka. Also, with the event a new level of confidence is being infused in the travel fraternity which would not only yield fruitful results but be the turning point of revival," she supplemented. ▲

Bettaiah Lokesh represented TAAI at UTFAA AGA held on March 28, 2022

UTFAA Annual General Assembly (AGA) was held virtually on Monday 28th March 2022 virtually. The Budget for 2022 – 2023 was approved in the meeting.

TAAI's HSG Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh represented TAAI and interacted with members. ▲

TAAI President felicitated at Safari India South Asia Travel Awards



TAAI President Mrs. Jyoti Mayal was awarded at the Safari India South Asia Travel Awards 2022 under the Category Leadership Award – Promotion of Tourism. This awards ceremony was held on 28th March at Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi. ▲

TAAI in collaboration with Linkin Representation & Sri Lankan Airlines organised webinar on 30th March 2022

TAAI in collaboration with Linkin Representation & Sri Lankan Airlines organised a webinar for the benefit of Association members on 30th March 2022.

With international flights resuming from 27th March 2022, Sri Lanka Airlines India team took the opportunity to interact with TAAI members and presented Sri Lankan Airlines' way forward for India market for the year 2022.

The webinar was addressed by Mr. V. Ravindran – Regional Manager (India, Nepal & Bangladesh, Sri Lankan Airlines. TAAI was represented by its Vice President Mr. Jay Bhatia and Tourism Council Chairman Mr. Anoop Kanuga.

In the end, there was a raffle draw in which 6 lucky winners were awarded with Sri Lankan Airlines tickets. ▲

Jyoti Mayal invited as a keynote speaker at XXIII NATTA Convention, Kathmandu – 30th March 2022



TAAI President Mrs. Jyoti Mayal was a keynote speaker in the XXIII NATTA (Nepal Association of Tour & Travel Agents) Convention, which was held on Kathmandu, Nepal on 30th March 2022.

The theme of the Convention was "Adapting to the new normal in the Tourism Industry after the global impact of COVID with the role of Associations on it."

Speaking on the occasion, Mrs. Mayal said that for any industry body, conventions are like the best time of the year. Referring to the age old relations with Nepal and NATTA, She added that their relations go a long way. "We have had the pleasure of working with our Nepalese counterparts and invited, hosted scores of delegations. As countries, India and Nepal have always been on cordial terms since time immemorial. Be it physical proximity, cultural similarity or the fact that both have business terms, Nepal is a destination that is easy access to Indian travellers," she said.

Mrs. Mayal cited that when travel was restricted and it was nearly impossible to step out, TAAI was one of the premier organisations which had signed a bilateral agreement with the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), in order to create a smooth travelling passage for the travellers, who were willing to travel. ▲

Its high time now to consider more bilateral agreements for a more flourishing future: TAAI President



Maldives initiated the process of granting Indian nationals visa-free entry for business purposes, for a period not exceeding the visa-free period of 90 days beginning February 1. As part of the reciprocal arrangement, a multiple-entry, non-resident, business visa shall be granted for Indian nationals for a period of 90 days within 6 months.

Backing the government's move and expressing her views on this agreement, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI, commented that finally the agreement has come to the action, which was signed between the governments of both the countries way before in 2018. "This is one of the fantastic decisions which would not only provide a hassle-free journey especially during such times when things are not really open, but also further strengthen the bilateral relations between two countries, that has wide range of tourist attraction to offer," she said.

Any Indian national with an approved business visa, is

eligible to renew their visa up to 180 days within a calendar year. This is in addition to the visa-free period of 90 days stipulated in the bilateral agreement. "The facility for visa-free travel by Indian businesspersons will further enhance bilateral economic cooperation. I think the Government should ponder upon more bilateral agreements, especially with neighbouring countries, so as to provide the ease of travel and trade to the people in business, which would definitely foster the income and economy as a whole," she emphasised.

"Being part of the travel trade, I strongly urge the government for more such initiatives, to make India a powerful nation, and to make strong trade bonds with other countries as well, in order to provide a financially flourishing future to the country and to the people. It gives me immense pleasure to see that India is the first country to which such a facility has been extended by the Maldives," she concluded. ▲

With curbing of international travel restrictions, things are getting back to normal: TAAI

Countries are now taking tentative steps to reopen borders, ceasing their entry restrictions, and opening their doors to international tourists, including Indians. Fully vaccinated passengers flying to countries like Egypt, Lebanon, France, Turkey, Norway, Sri Lanka are no longer required to present a negative RT-PCR test upon arrival at the airport.

Commenting on the relaxations, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI expressed her happiness over the reopening of borders and said that post-Covid such moves seem like a dream come true. "Pre-Covid, had anyone even for a single second thought that a time will come when revival of international flight's normal operation would seem like a herculean task? Today, we are standing at a crossroad, waiting desperately for the commercial flights to start, so that we could work normally again. Welcoming the relaxations of protocols by India & other countries for Indians, one believes it is better late than never," she said.

Adding further, Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI mentioned that this has come as a sigh of relief. "We as a prominent travel Association were continuously urging the government to remove restrictions according to the changing situations. Finally, some of our suggestions are coming into existence and we are happy and ready for smooth travelling options for our travellers," he said.

"According to a survey, the biggest concern of 39 per cent of the Indians travelling internationally in 2022 was



understanding restrictions & frequently changing protocols of vaccination or quarantine requirements. When travellers face such difficulties, they refrain from travelling which creates a negative tourism cycle, but with advancements like such, I hope it provides ease and boosts the footfall," Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh, HSG, TAAI stated.

Emphasising on the fiscal part, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI speaks about all the losses that the tourism and aviation industry has gone through due to changing guidelines every day. "One of the darkest events witnessed in the history of the tourism sector has been COVID19. Thankfully, it has subsided to some extent and things are getting back to normal, which means one can restart thinking about the revival of business," he concluded. ▲

God's own country Kerala, to play host for promoting tourism at its fullest: TAAI



Kerala Tourism will roll out aggressive promotional campaigns across the country, targeting diverse segments ranging from family holidayers to working professionals, from adventure-seeking bag papers to honeymooners. The campaigns to ramp up the state's tourism and hospitality industry will be based on a variety of themes such as long stays, Homestays, drive holidays, and change of air besides new products like caravan holidays.

Commenting on the initiatives that Kerala is taking for promoting tourism to its fullest, Mrs. Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said "Post COVID, I have seen a revolution in the tourism and travel sector. People have become more experimental and trying new options of accommodations, rather than the preferred old ones. As per the reports, promotional initiatives

will be bolstered by a series of travel trade networking activities, including participation in trade fairs, organising B2B partnership meets and roadshows, and promoting events through various media such as print, TV, radio, digital, OTT, and theatre," Mrs. Mayal said.

Adding to which Mr. Jay Bhatia, VP, TAAI said, Kerala has always been a favourite tourist spot, be it for foreigners or Indians, the state has always witnessed huge footfall and enjoyed the attention. "From March to May, Kerala Tourism has identified a number of international and domestic shows, to participate in and unleash to usher interest in God's own country's destinations and products," he quoted.

"Tourism promotion happening anywhere in the country always excites me. This pandemic has taught people a lot, especially to us- the travel and tourism industry. Nevertheless, we have learned a lot and with a bag full of experiences, we are now ready to conduct and promote tourism activities like never before, be it in Kerala or anywhere else in the country," Mr. Bettaiah Lokesh – HSG, TAAI said.

Putting his views forward, Mr. Shreeram Patel, Treasurer, TAAI emphasising on the revival of tourism said that the pandemic had tapered off considerably across the globe, resulting in the lifting of travel restrictions. "This augurs well for Kerala's Tourism and hospitality industry. We are in a resurgent mode now. We believe that the recently launched promotional campaign will woo back the travellers, from both inside the country and outside," he mentioned. ▲

Western Region



TAAI WESTERN REGION (2019-22) CONDUCTED ITS 8TH MEETING ON, FEBRUARY 23 AT JADE GARDENS, WORLI, MUMBAI.

Chairman Mr. Sameer Karnani welcomed TAAI Members to the meeting along with the Saudi Tourism & Royal Commission of Alula and requested the Hon Secretary, Mr. Rajesh Poddar to start the proceedings. All agenda items were completed. At the meeting, chapter members

raised issues of refund of taxes due to rerouting done by the airlines and it is also said that they are supposed to refund the additional airport taxes which are not being used.

Ms. Krupa from Saudi Tourism gave a presentation on the developments by Saudi opening for Tourism while Ms. Rashmi Pradhan from Alula showcased Alula as a destination for Tourism in Saudi. There were also interactions with airline representatives. ▲



TAAI Team consisting of Vice President Mr. Jay Bhatia and Western Region office bearers - Chairman Mr. Sameer Karnani, Hon. Secretary Mr. Rajesh Poddar and Hon. Treasurer Mr. Dharmesh Shan met the Uganda Airways team in its Mumbai Office on February 9.

There were discussions on how to explore bilateral opportunities between TAAI & Uganda Airways to boost tourism between the two countries. ▲

Western Region

TAAI PARTICIPATES IN OTM 2022

OTM has been heralded as the “Gateway to India’s largest travel markets” and has emerged as the largest and most international gathering of travel trade buyers and professionals in India. TAAI was present at the OTM 2022 held on 14th, 15th and 16th March 2022 at the Bombay Exhibition Centre, Goregaon East, Mumbai with a stall to showcase TAAI, which attracted huge attention from large sections of the industry. TAAI Vice President Mr. Jay Bhatia was one of the eminent speakers at the inauguration on March 14. TAAI’s Western Region team office bearers Mr. Sameer Karnani, Mr. Rajesh Poddar and Mr. Dharmesh Shan attended the event and interacted with industry stakeholders. It was a very successful event and featured many interesting and interactive sessions in addition to the B2B exhibition. ▲



TAAI WESTERN REGION (2019-22) ORGANISED ITS 9TH MEETING ON 30TH MARCH 2022, AT GLOCAL JUNCTION, WORLI, MUMBAI

TAAI Western Region organised its 9th meeting on 30th March, 2022, at Glocal Junction, Worli, Mumbai. The meeting started with a welcome address by Mr. Sameer Karnani, Chairman, TAAI Western Region Chapter and after that Hon. Secretary Mr. Rajesh Poddar took up agenda items.

In this meeting, members were updated on issues like E-Invoicing, new BSP Procedures & Training and Neutral Capping.

The meeting also threw light on the upcoming convention of TAAI. All queries raised by members pertaining to the 66th Convention and Exhibition of TAAI scheduled to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka 19th - 22nd April 2022, were answered too. All updated information on visas, hotel accommodation and post tours were shared with members.

Vice President Mr. Jay Bhatia and Managing Committee Member & Tourism Services Council Chairman Mr. Anoop Kanuga were also present in the meeting.

After the meeting, Mr. Karnani introduced Ms. Ellona from Aviareps, to the house. Ms. Ellona and her team gave a presentation on UTAH, Visit Belgium & Budget Rent a car. ▲

Eastern Region



TAAI Eastern Region led by Chairman Mr. Manav Soni has done a couple of events, both virtually as well as physically. Among them, one has been a landmark event - "The Journey of Airlines in Indian Sky" which was partnered and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India Eastern Regional Office in Kolkata. It was a symposium with all Domestic Airlines in India. This event was hosted by The Park Hotel, Kolkata. TAAI Eastern Region members participated and appreciated this symposium.

The event was well covered by one of the leading daily News Paper - the Times of India.

"We continue to keep our members motivated & updated and make sure that in these times where our Tourism Industry is bouncing back towards normalcy, we remain Healthy and Happy," said Mr Manav Soni. ▲





Continuity is a chapter whereas a new beginning is an end to the previous one. Rather be a part of a chapter than to be part of an end.

Hand holding and continuing from where we paused is more precious than the new horizon. Walk along with everyone to make sure we all attain the desired results TOGETHER.

A common question was asked to a few of our members....

Start fresh or start from where you left?

Below are their views...

SANJAY KOTHARI, FOUNDER & MD, JUST HOLIDAYS PVT. LTD.



We can now say comfortably that the 'Post-Pandemic Era' for the tourism industry has begun. Restrictions are easing out and scheduled flights are commencing.

For travel agents and tour operators, life will not be the same though like the pre-pandemic era. Still, I will not like to say that we will have to make a fresh beginning. Neither we have the luxury to start from where we left off. This is like: The ship was sailing at a particular speed & direction, suddenly its engine stopped working, the wind and water current pushed it back, the engine started after some time, and now the ship has to find the right direction again. During the last 2 years, most of the industries have moved forward, but our industry moved backwards. Hence, Travel Companies who could manage their finances and human resource well will be the ones who have better opportunities post-pandemic, just this, that they need to adopt changes that are happening everywhere. Most importantly, there is a change in potential travellers' travel and holiday decision-making process plus the way they think. Clients will now prefer to take final decisions closer to the dates of travel. There are enough indications that principal service providers want to cover up the losses accumulated in the last two years, and are pricing their products (airline seats, hotel rooms, etc.) differently and at higher levels. Handling finances will be another big challenge. Clients will try and delay the payments as much as they can but suppliers will prefer to take up-front payments, hence, investments and risk in businesses may go up. There are many more factors that will manoeuvre us and we need to adjust our sails accordingly. In a nutshell, the journey will continue, but another route has to be taken. ▲

MANOJ SARAF, DIRECTOR, GAINWELL ENTERPRISES PVT. LTD.



The last 2 years now seem like a nightmare from which we finally seem to be getting out. The pandemic suddenly hit the travel & hospitality industry like an unexpected bomb from nowhere and caught us completely unawares. The casualty was heavy both in terms of lives and livelihoods.

Companies and individuals who used this time to invest in technology and skill development have now emerged stronger. There was a complete shakeout in the way we were doing business over the last century. Manpower costs and high rentals were slashed and organizations moved towards a lean & thin model.

A fresh start is the call of the day, forgetting the past and looking forward to the future. Now is the time to be optimistic as borders open up, scheduled international flights return and covid restrictions ease out. Revenge tourism both domestic & International is set to peak and seems like happy days are here again for the travel industry! ▲



SANJEEV MEHRA, DIRECTOR, AARYAN LEISURE & HOLIDAYS PVT LTD.

Travel is an ongoing process of learning about destinations. Each day we come across new developments. New destinations are being discovered for short trips as a mode of relaxation.

It would be an understatement to say that 2020 was a year of change and reflection. With the COVID shutdowns,

travellers found their options limited, and it has changed their outlook. People are more cautious about travelling, but they want to travel. After months in lockdown, they're ready to go but with parameters.

The lockdown has given us ample time as a boom to refresh our knowledge and skill with adaptation to new technologies. I would say and prefer to start fresh with the gain of enhanced knowledge and experience. We have gone through tough phases that have made us learn many things.

The ability to travel, however, is still up in the air depending on destination and origin, citizenship and vaccination status, among other factors. Now more than ever, travellers are looking to the travel industry for guidance. We should act as the perfect navigator for them by sharing knowledge about destinations and new variants which have come up in the destinations. We should also tell them about the initial requirements and precautions a traveller has to take for travelling.

It's now time to re-build the Travel Industry and implement fresh new technologies and experiences. The travel industry has embraced new technology and looked for ways to reassure travellers that they'll be safe should they choose to travel.

Contactless technologies, developed during the pandemic period have added a boom to this industry. The pandemic has only accelerated the adoption of these novelties across the travel industry.

We need to change our hiring policy by recruiting quality trained & team members who have sound knowledge about the destination(s) and are always ready to adapt & learn new things to make our travellers experience a real comfortable & safe travel.

So we are starting fresh and generating awareness in the travellers about safety & health. ▲

Southern Region



SOUTHERN REGION ORGANISED ITS 5TH MEETING ON MARCH 17

The Southern region of TAAI organised its 5th meeting of the members on March 17 at Dynasty Hall, Ambassador Pallava, Chennai. Mr. Sakthivadivel, Chairman, Southern Region, chaired the meeting and also welcomed the members. Details of the 66th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI, 2022, in Colombo, Sri Lanka were also vividly discussed in the meeting. ▲

SRI LANKAN TOURISM AND SRI LANKAN AIRLINES UPDATE MEMBERS ON POST COVID 19 MEASURES

On March 17, Sri Lankan Tourism and Sri Lankan Airlines gave presentations before the Southern Region members on post covid-19 measures.

Mr. Nilina Pathirana, Sales Manager, Sri Lankan Airlines, Mr. Suresh Kumar, Sri Lankan Airlines and Mr. Dilanga Hettiarachchi, Second Secretary (Commercial) Office of the Deputy High Commission for Sri Lanka, were introduced to the members.

After exchange of pleasantries, Mr. Hettiarachchi briefed the members about the visa procedures, protocols of Covid and answered the questions raised by the members about the law & order situation in Colombo.

After that, Mr. Pathirana briefed the members about the resumption of Sri Lankan Airlines, long haul flights and the flights to various cities Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai and Trivandrum in India. He assured that he will extend his full support for the flight operations and seat allocation for the convention to be held in Colombo. ▲



Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter



TAAI UP-UK CHAPTER PARTICIPATED IN NATIONAL TOURISM DAY CELEBRATION ON JANUARY 25 IN LUCKNOW

On the occasion of National Tourism Day celebration, TAAI was invited by UP Tourism on January 25, 2022 at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan in Lucknow. TAAI UPUK chapter was represented by Hon. Secretary Ms. Swati Dimri & Honorary Treasurer Mohd Khalid Shah at the event. ▲



Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand Chapter



S M A SHEERAZ PARTICIPATED AS A GUEST SPEAKER AT GUJARAT TOURISM MEET ON MARCH 3

Gujarat Tourism organised a Travel & Tourism meet on March 03 at Hotel Dayal Paradise Lucknow. The Honorary Chairman, S M A Sheeraz was invited as one of the guest speakers at the event. ▲



MEMBERS OF UP-UK CHAPTER PARTICIPATED IN A FAM TRIP IN NEPAL BETWEEN 9-13 MARCH

Nepal Tourism Board invited TAAI UP-UK chapter to participate in the familiarisation trip which took place between 9-13 March. They also participated in the Western Nepal Travel Mart organised at the same time. The familiarisation trip saw enthusiastic participation from TAAI UP-UK chapter. ▲



Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Chapter



TAAI MP-CG CHAPTER CELEBRATED WOMEN'S DAY WITH BLIND GIRLS

TAAI MP-CG chapter celebrated women's day with blind girls of Mahesh Drastihin Sangh, Indore. The members of the chapter spent time with the blind girls and distributed sanitary kits to them. Ms Neetu Ganglani & Ms. Vanita Jain were the main coordinators, besides them, Chapter Chairman Mr. Hemendra Singh Jadon along with other members were also present there. ▲



Kerala Chapter



THE NEW YEAR 2022 WAS A WELCOME CHANGE WITH THE PANDEMIC SHOWING SIGNS OF SLOWING AND THE NATION BREATHING EASY. HOWEVER, KERALA HAD TO WAIT TILL FEBRUARY FOR OMICRON TO SUBSIDE.

The Kerala government relaxed the stringent Covid restrictions by February which helped boost all economic and social activities, albeit with caution. With the news of reopening of international flights, the travel industry could see light at the end of tunnel.

TAAI Kerala Chapter had its meeting on the 14th March at Hotel Yuvarani, in Ernakulam. We had the pleasure of having the august company of Mr P Murugesan, the Managing Committee member at the meeting. He gave us a lot of useful information in his address. He also participated in the entire proceedings of the session, said Kerala Chapter Chairman K N Shastry.

Shastry briefed the members on the upcoming TAAI convention at Colombo in April and urged all to participate, as this convention is taking place after two years of shut down.

The office-bearers participated in the Penang roadshow which was held at Marriott hotel in Cochin. Though Malaysia has been witnessing the peak of Covid, they have announced opening the borders by April 1, 2022.

The Kerala budget announced an allocation of INR 362 crore for the tourism sector in 2022-23. The caravan Kerala project is gathering steam with more entrepreneurs coming forward to invest money for the project. Many Caravans are already on the road. In the coming Kerala Travel Mart, the Tourism Department will project Caravan tourism as the latest product of the state.

Meanwhile a social entrepreneur is leading a movement asking people to open up their toilet facilities to tourists by



charging them a nominal fee. The entrepreneur Ms Lakshmi Menon says this will provide toilet facilities all through the state. The public response is encouraging.

As the pandemic shows signs of slowing down, the state of Kerala looks forward to a massive surge in tourism activities in the coming financial year. TAAI Kerala is gearing to get into more activities as the tourism industry picks up the threads of the business, said Shastry. ▲

Jammu & Kashmir Chapter



THE J&K CHAPTER HAD ITS MEETING ON FEBRUARY 15, 2022, AT THE HOTEL REGENTA CENTRE POINT, RAJBAGH, SRINAGAR.

The chapter extended a vote of thanks to Mr. Sarmad Hafeez Secretary Tourism, Sports and Youth Welfare for his elevation to the senior IAS cadre and mail has been sent to them regarding the same. The meeting and interaction threw light on the steep hike in hotel tariff by some hoteliers which made the business of tour operators very tough as rates get changed day in and day out.

The chapter members met with the Director Tourism regarding the roadshows and the involvement of TAAI chapters at the respective cities and the Director assured that the chapter members have to keep on liaising with the TAAI chapters for having successful roadshows and it is also informed in the meeting that very soon they will be shortlisting the cities for the roadshows.

The Director Tourism apprised about the operation of the Direct Flight between Srinagar- Sharjah – Srinagar as it has been noticed for the last several weeks that return flight is coming via Delhi, TAAI members requested for not having a stopover at Delhi which delays its arrival at Srinagar.

TAAI J&K Chapter had met with SSP traffic Mr. Muzzaffar Shah for smoothening the Traffic system in the valley which has created a mess and also Traffic Police is harassing the Drivers driving Tourist vehicles, as unnecessary checkings are taking place after every 5-10 Kms. They also requested SSP to address this issue seriously and we had a joint press conference at The Hotel Radisson.

The chairman informed the members about the new TAAI app which has a lot of useful information available in it.

TAAI J & K Chapter became part of several events held at NIT and Nigeen Club in which tourist guides were felicitated for their honesty in returning the cash and other valuable items to the tourists while on their trip to Kashmir. ▲





South Tamil Nadu Chapter



7th meeting of TAAI South Tamil Nadu Chapter was held on September 9, 2021, in Hotel Germanus Springs, Kodaikanal (Tamil Nadu) which was followed by knowledge sharing sessions by industry experts which included, Mr. Rajkumar Raman – General Manager, The Carlton Group, Kodaikanal, Mr. Dheenadayalan – HR Trainer, Mr. Anandan – Tourist Officer, Tamil Nadu Tourism, Kodaikanal, Mr. Senthil Nathan – Director, Germanus Springs Hotel, Kodaikanal.

TAAI South Tamil Nadu Chapter held its 8th meeting on March 29, 2022, in Hotel Breeze Residency, Trichy. Members shared their knowledge and interacted on current industry matters. All queries were answered by the office bearers - Chairman Mr. Jaffer Sadiq, Hon. Secretary Ln. S.P. Rajendran and Hon. Treasurer Mr. G. Raveendran. ▲



Rajasthan Chapter



14th meeting of TAAI Rajasthan Chapter was held on March 17, 2022 in Indian Coffee shop, Jaipur and also Holi Milan.

A briefing on the forthcoming 66th Convention & Exhibition of TAAI 2022 in Colombo, Sri Lanka was given to members by Chairman Mr. Manoj Sogani. He assisted them in finalising their respective registration.

Business is gearing up all around and lifting of Covid restrictions attracting people all around to start with their tours, vacation with their families and friends. Airfare are

skyrocketing and simultaneously hotels are still selling in their peak level brackets of price which is to be under control, and members requested TAAI to write to concern authorities for smart regulation.

Members hoped for a grand Convention under the leadership of TAAI's dynamic President Mrs Jyoti Mayal. ▲

Gujarat Chapter



TAAI Gujarat Chapter office bearers – Chairman Mr. Virendra Shah, Hon. Secretary Mr. Prashant Madlani and Hon. Treasurer Mr. Viral Shah, had a courtesy meeting with Mr. Harit Shukla- Tourism Secretary, Govt. of Gujarat on 15th March'22.

New Members of TAAI

SR. NO.	NAME OF AGENCY	CITY	REPRESENTATIVE I
1	99Destinations	BHAVNAGAR	Mr. Fenil Manojbhai Bhayani
2	Voyagers Hub Pvt. Ltd	CHANDIGARH	Mr. Amit Nagpal
3	Neo Majestic, T/A Golden Peace Hotels And Resorts Pvt. Ltd.	GOA	Mr. Ashok Kumar
4	Wow India Travel & Tours Pvt. Ltd.	GURGAON	Mrs. Divya Mathur
5	Travels And More	INDORE	Mr. Rajat Sharma
6	V Connect Holidays	INDORE	Mrs. Vanita Jain
7	AD-IN Travel Holidays	KOLKATA	Mr. Mohammad Intezar
8	Flyking Travels	KOLKATA	Mrs. Mistu Bhattacharjee
9	Jeddah Tours & Travels	MANJERI	Mr. Mohammed P. P.
10	Visit Portugal (Turismo de Portugal)	NEW DELHI	Ms. Claudia Matias
11	Traveloquence	NEW DELHI	Ms. Jyoti Monga
12	Khush Travels	RAJKOT	Mr. Nimesh Keshariya
13	Shree Kavya Tours and Travels	RAJKOT	Mr. Raxit Joshi