

'Refund tickets issued & not used'

Biji Eapen, President, IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI), talks about issues at hand for travel agents as airlines restart operations. He also explains what the association is doing to solve these problems for the industry at large, and provides a step-by-step account of all that has transpired.

During March 2020, complaints regarding airline ticket cancellations/refunds started pouring to IAAI's innovative initiative - 'IAAI Passenger Rights Forum', and we noticed that many of the passenger grievances were about bookings done through Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) or airline websites, as tickets fall under 'non-refundable' category. Since the 'Force Majeure' clause executed in the contract of the carriage is conveniently interpreted by airlines to evade refunding and retain ticketed amount as a stream of revenue, IAAI wrote to Minister of Civil Aviation on March 26 with the request to allow full refund for all tickets or allow the convenience of rescheduling without any additional charge, considering the current COVID-19 pandemic.

MoCA's order of April 16 directing airlines to make a full refund of



tickets issued after March 24 was only an eyewash and discriminatory, and did not mention anything about refund of tickets issued before the lockdown or not availed due to flight cancellations, travel bans, or lockdown in India and other countries. Understanding the gravity of the situation, IAAI called the attention of government authorities to the U.S. Department of Transportation's enforcement notices directing that all US and foreign carriers remain obligated for a prompt refund on flights that

were not operated due to COVID-19 public health emergency. The EU Law (European Union) on reimbursements is crystal-clear. The media reported that India's airline companies are estimated to be holding about Rs6,000 crore from refund payments to passengers.

On behalf of the IAAI and Air Passenger Rights Forum, we approached Minister of Civil Aviation on April 18 to safeguard the consumer rights of air pas-

sengers and to secure their hard-earned money paid for air tickets.

IAAI submitted an appeal on April 4, 2020 to the Hon. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, on behalf of the stakeholders of travel and tourism sector, with a request to support the sector, which is the backbone of Indian economy, by way of assigning resources

✂ We are optimistic and waiting for a positive outcome in this legal battle ✂

and coordinated efforts to rescue major travel and tourism businesses such as travel agents, tour operators, GDS and technology companies, travel & tourism training institutes, tourist guides and entire supply chain to save the jobs of millions of people

and their families who depend on travel & tourism sector for their livelihoods. Accordingly, we submitted a follow-up appeal to the Hon. Prime Minister on May 14, 2020, containing thousands of e-signatures obtained as a conclusion of IAAI's online Email Signature Campaign for the travel and tourism stakeholders across the country. IAAI also wrote to the Central government and state governments to form tourism task forces at national and state levels, with proper representation of the travel, tourism, aviation and hospitality segments. In India, we lack a united organisational setup.

Post COVID-19, travel will be an age of sanitised travel with stringent regulatory formalities and regulations. IAAI is working on a unique initiative to getting the travelling public in India comfortable with travelling

again when the industry opens up for business, by launching a public awareness mission with the message, 'Consult your travel advisor, not internet'. IAAI has formed a working group to spearhead this task and currently is in the process of soliciting patronage from international organisations like ASTA/PATA/ECTTA as well as national and international media for this novel mission.

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



Biji Eapen
President, IATA Agents Association of India (IAAI)



Hotel & Resort - Management / Franchise / Leasing & Advisory Consulting Solutions

Your Trusted Hospitality Advisors

Get in Touch - to gear up your Teams for the New Normal Online Trainings also available.

SOP Development & Implementation

HACCP - Food Safety, Sanitation, Serve Safe & Hygiene Training; Infection Prevention & Control Training - for Hospitality Industry.

Are you looking for your Hotels, Resort Brand Conversion/Association - or Re Association, to Refresh the product and put you ahead in the competition

SOLUTIONS

- Hotel, Resort, Restaurant Brand Tie Ups Management / Franchise / Leasing / Revenue Share MG Agreements (Associated with 20 Plus International & 50 Plus Domestic Hospitality Brands) - Successful Tie Ups Facilitated till date - 70
- HACCP - Food Safety, Sanitation, Serve Safe & Hygiene Training; Infection Prevention & Control Training - for Hospitality Industry
- Concept Development - Hotels / Resorts / Restaurants
- Feasibility Reports
- On-going - Advisory Support - MIS Structuring / Training / Operational Audits
- Brand Creation - Pre-Opening Advisory Support
- Facility Planning / BOH / Kitchen Designing
- Creative Designing Support
- Procurement Consulting Support
- Hotel / Resort Asset Management
- Architectural & Interior Design Consulting

M: +91-9711070213 | E: talloakhospitality@gmail.com | W: www.talloakhospitality.co.in
OUR PRESENCE: New Delhi / NCR | Lucknow | Goa | Pune | Bengaluru | Dehradun