

MYSTIC EAST

...an unexplored horizon

A Bi-monthly Magazine by HRAEI | Vol 6 | Issue 3 | September - October 2020



UNLOCKING HOSPITALITY

The industry looks for better loan restructuring terms and a robust stimulus package to bounce back

PandaTM treats



Hygienic and processed in
RO purified water

Non Sticky

Healthy and Nutritious

Manufacturer of premium quality Hakka noodles (Chow), Pasta, Vermicelli and 3D Papad (Pellets).
Currently available across Eastern India (General trade) & Modern trade (Pan India).

For Trade Enquiries:

Emery Foods Pvt. Ltd., Vill.: Bansai, P.O.: Kanaipur, Dist.: Hooghly 712234

Contact Person: Alok Kumar Ginodia, Mob: 9903670707

Email: ishaanginodia@emeryfoods.com



T

THE Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) organised an interactive webinar on 'Unlocking Hospitality' in presence of hospitality industry's top professionals on September 19, 2020. The lively interaction gave the opportunity to the fraternity to get an insight on the process of unlocking or staggered lifting of lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic in India and the various obstacles faced by the hospitality industry.

The hospitality sector in the country has a heavy debt burden which is estimated to be around Rs 45,000 to Rs 50,000 cr. It is extremely important to get the loans restructured properly in the current context. At the end of the discussion, the forum concluded that the current restructuring parameters are difficult to meet for the industry in the post-Covid era. The industry associations should

“

The industry associations must unitedly lobby for better loan restructuring terms

”

come together and unitedly lobby for better loan restructuring terms from the banking regulator.

However, despite our association's several appeals to government bodies for moratoriums on excise licence fees and property tax, so far there's response from them. The industry, which happens to be the country's biggest employment generator, also expects some stimulus from the government. A few months ago, the UK government announced every diner will get a £10 restaurant discount and tax slash for the hospitality sector in order to encourage eating out. In absence of such unprecedented support from local governments in India, all the stakeholders in the hospitality ecosystem in the country should realise their collective responsibility to innovate to reignite the confidence of the people in our products and services.

Mr Sudesh Poddar
President, HRAEI



AS covid-19 pandemic dealt a ₹6 lakh crore blow to the hotels and hospitality industry, it has been finding ways to sustain itself, curating offers for not only its loyal customer base but also attempting to win new customers over. Re-inventing their traditional business model, some of the hotels are also exploring newer avenues for revenue generation as well as to stay connected with their patrons.

Food takeaway and delivery business was one of the first opportunities that hotels leveraged amidst the pandemic. Most large hotel chains, such as ITC, Hilton, Hyatt, The Oberoi and Marriott to name a few, and even amusement parks like Wonderland have tied up with food delivery companies such as Zomato and Swiggy to deliver their signature dishes to the customer's home or office. A few hotel chains have gone a step ahead by introducing 'Chef / Bartender on Call' where a customer can enjoy these services in the comfort of their homes.

The pandemic forced the hospitality sector to come up with ingenious ways to utilize their assets to stay afloat. Some of these ancillary avenues are expected to stay even when the pandemic goes away.

MYSTIC EAST

A BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY HRAEI
Vol 6 | Issue 3 | September - October 2020

EDITORIAL BOARD

SUDESH PODDAR
PRESIDENT, HRAEI

MOHAMMED AZHAR
HONOURARY SECRETARY

GOPAL DAS AGARWAL
VICE PRESIDENT

S. H. RAHMAN
MANAGING COMMITTEE MEMBER

EDITOR
ATIKRAM GUPTA

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
SUSMIT BARMAN

CHIEF DESIGNER
SOMU DUTTA

'Mystic East' magazine is printed and published by Atikram Gupta on behalf of Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India.

Printed at CDC Printers Private Limited, No.45, Radha Nath Chowdhury Road, Tangra Industrial Estate-II, Kolkata, West Bengal 700 015

Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India, 18A/1, Everest, 18th Floor, 46C, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata- 700 071; Telephone- +91 33 2288-1742/43, 40035993. E-mail: info@hraei.co.in Website: www.hraei.co.in

THIS ISSUE OF MYSTIC EAST CONTAINS 56 PAGES INCLUDING COVER AND BACK COVER

All information in Mystic East magazine is derived from sources we consider reliable and a sincere effort is made to report accurate information. The publisher regrets that he cannot accept liability for error and omissions contained in this publication that might have crept in inadvertently. Similarly, opinions/views expressed by third parties are not necessarily shared by the magazine. However, we wish to advise our readers that one or more recognised authorities may hold different views than those reported. Material used in this publication is intended for information purpose only. Readers are advised to seek specific advice before acting on information contained in this publication which is provided for general use, and may not be appropriate for the readers' particular circumstances..

No part of the magazine may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publication in writing. The same rule applies when there is a copyright or the article is taken from another publication. An exemption is hereby granted for the extract used for the purpose of fair review, provided two copies of the same publication are sent to us for our records. Publications reproducing material either in part or in whole, without permission could face legal action. The publisher assumes no responsibility for returning any material, solicited or unsolicited, nor is he responsible for material lost or damaged.



“

DOHO offers diners an extra impetus to come out of their homes and enjoy fine dining

The Hotel and Restaurant Association launched an initiative called 'Dine Out to Help Out' (DOHO) to help the F&B industry establishments bounce back to good times. It is also aimed to bring back employees of the F&B sectors, who had lost their jobs in the wake of the pandemic.

Planned on the lines of the initiative in the UK in August, where the government ran the 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme that offered people a 50 per cent discount on food or non-alcoholic drinks (up to a maximum of £10 discount per diner), the participating establishments here can offer a flat 20 per cent discount on food and non-alcoholic beverages to all their patrons from Monday to Thursday, till November 12. Some of the leading 5-star hotels as well as premium restaurants of Kolkata have evinced interest in the unique scheme.

HRAEI's move not only encourages hotels and restaurants, but also for food lovers. The initiative was taken after a survey on regular diners in restaurants who are currently avoiding eating out for fear of the virus, or because they are being restrained about expenses. With the present dip in the economic situation of the country, discount offers like these are expected to be received with immense enthusiasm among guests.

I think such efforts are welcome in the hospitality industry across the country to support all players in the industry and offer diners an extra impetus to come out of their homes and visit restaurants, cafes and bars.

Mr Mohammed Azhar

Honorary Secretary

Cover Story

September 2020

23

UNLOCKING HOSPITALITY

Looking ahead, the hospitality industry should come together and lobby for a better loan restructuring terms



8

▪ **NEWS**

Ginger opens 93-key lean luxe hotel in Kalinganagar, Odisha

9

Confidence in air travel rises, as 42% of early travellers ready to fly

11

Kerala reopens tourist spots, with tourist protocols



▪ **PANDEMIC BLUES**

12

How will South Asia's travel and tourism industry recover from the Covid-19 impact

16

▪ **NEW AVENUES**



The pandemic forced the hospitality sector to think of ancillary revenue streams

20

▪ **TEA RESORT**



Mayfair Tea Resort, a boutique tea resort in Siliguri starts its journey

33

▪ **WHO'S GUIDANCE**



The World Health Organisation issued a guideline for COVID-19 management in hotels

36

▪ **CHEF INTERVIEW**



For Chef Prakash Chettiyaar hygiene is a key tool to attract guests



38

▪ **STATE SURVEY: TRIPURA**

The Tripura Government recently unveiled a tourism revival policy



GINGER OPENS 93-KEY LEAN LUXE HOTEL IN KALINGANAGAR, ODISHA

GINGER announces the opening of a new hotel in Kalinganagar, Odisha. The hotel is designed around the brand's lean luxe philosophy. It presents a co-existence of contrasts through dynamic spaces, seamlessly blending the lines of work and play.

Ginger Kalinganagar hosts 93 lean luxe rooms, Café Etcetera – Ginger's signature all-day diner offering a mix of global and local cuisine, which also doubles up as a workstation, a

meeting room and fitness centre. The new look will bring together attractive public areas as well as spots designed for solitude, allowing the smooth transition from one to the other. They come alive with vivacious high energy glocal music and unique artwork installations.

Commenting on the launch, Deepika Rao, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Ginger Hotels, said, "Kalinganagar is one of the biggest

industrial hubs of the east. We are committed to the state of Odisha as it is an important market for us. With the recently redesigned Ginger Bhubaneswar and now with the opening of Ginger Kalinganagar, the brand's presence is further strengthened with a portfolio of 250 rooms in the state."

With the addition of this hotel, Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has four hotels in Odisha.

CONFIDENCE IN AIR TRAVEL RISES, AS 42% OF EARLY TRAVELLERS READY TO FLY



Ixigo, India's leading AI-based travel app has conducted an in-flight experience survey studying the current and future traveller sentiment and shifts in travel intentions amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey was conducted with a sample of 5000 users also known as 'Early travellers' — a group of flyers who have travelled in July-August-September and are ready to travel again in the next 3 months

The survey results show that as travellers return to the skies, the confidence in air travel is rising. 42% of the respondents who had flown recently in the past three months had a comfortable and safe in-flight experience and are ready to travel again. Likelihood of the respondents to take another domestic trip during the next 3 months (42%) is the highest it has

been as compared to an earlier sentiment survey done in May (16%).

Safety and hygiene measures being adopted by airlines and various properties is the most important aspect for travellers during COVID-19. The survey reveals that queuing during check-in/security (64%) and in-flight social distancing (51%) feature amongst the top apprehensions of air passengers who have travelled recently. Travellers were also concerned about eating on the plane (9%), cleanliness of common areas and washrooms (24%) and arranging travel from the arrival airport (22%).

With the current pandemic there is an increase in anxiety among travellers with respect to planning their next trip. 46% respondents say fully refundable bookings for travel and

accommodation will be the top priority for them while making bookings in the future. To reduce travel anxiety, ixigo has also launched a new air fare feature 'ixigo assured' offering travellers full refunds on cancellations on all new domestic flight bookings.

Rajnish Kumar, Co-Founder & CTO, ixigo said, "As travel demand recovers, we want our users to feel confident and safe and give them a flexible, stress-free booking experience. 'ixigo assured' is already helping our users make smarter travel plans by offering an assured refund on all domestic flight cancellations, for any reason whatsoever, prior to their date of departure."

The survey also asked respondents to share safety tips for fellow travellers to keep in mind while making future tips. Some of the most cited



tips included suggestions to 'Reach the airport in time to avoid rush/panic', 'maintain adequate social distancing' and 'carrying personal safety gear including PPE kits' to minimise exposure to COVID-19.

'Workcation' emerges as a big travel trend for the season: The trend report also reveals the changing preferences of Indian travellers post domestic flights resuming operations. With travel re-opening, work vacations aka workcations have become the biggest travel trend of the season. With a majority of Indian companies announcing WFH till the end of the year, 30% of recent travellers revealed that they have already been working remotely from a leisure destination of their choice.

"Working from popular leisure destinations aka 'workcations' has emerged as the biggest travel trend of the season. We have seen a 27% MoM increase in search queries for popular destinations and get-aways such as Goa, Jaipur, Shimla, Udaipur and Uttarakhand. Most of

the travellers have opted for home rentals / service apartments / villas as their preferred choice of workation accommodation followed by resorts and eco-friendly properties with distant cottages. Attractive hotel deals and flexible cancellation policies are further encouraging travellers to embrace this new trend " avers Alope Bajpai, CEO & Co-Founder, ixigo.

Institutional quarantine — a satisfactory experience for most travellers: Travellers also shared their top concerns when they arrived at their final destination. While the majority of the travellers had initially reported concerns around being quarantined, more than 51% of the respondents who had to undergo mandatory institutional quarantine were very satisfied with the overall experience.

When asked about their preferred communication channels for receiving new quarantine protocol/ guidelines on destination states, 40% respondents said they received their information while booking via ixigo

from the app's COVID-19 info page.

23% of the travellers got their information online or through news while 17% got it from the airline of their choice. Only 13% travellers were still unaware of the latest protocols and got the information directly at the airport.

Last-minute bookings to dominate air travel: Due to the current uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, travellers are also booking closer to the actual trip date than usual, with less advanced planning. ixigo has seen an increase in searches to travel within a week in 2020 as compared to last year.

With the establishment of travel bubbles, international leisure travel queries and bookings are also picking up. "We have seen a 57% MoM increase in search enquiries in September for international destinations which indicates a strong interest in international travel in coming months. Increase in queries were for destinations like Dubai, London, Bangkok, Maldives and Kuala Lumpur among others." adds Bajpai.

KERALA REOPENS TOURIST SPOTS, WITH COVID PROTOCOLS

KERALA has reopened its tourism destinations, barring beaches, for visitors by strictly adhering to COVID-19 protocol, signaling the revival of the revenue-generating industry that remained shut for the last seven months following the outbreak of the pandemic. As per the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) issued by the government in this regard, the visitors will have to follow Break the Chain norms including wearing of masks, use of soap and sanitizer and social distancing.

The destinations and services that have resumed receiving guests include houseboats in backwaters, personalized boating and adventure tourism spots, which normally have controlled access where it is easy to implement the SMS (Social distancing, Mask and Soap Sanitizer) norm. Hill stations will also be made accessible to tourists, ensuring that there is no overcrowding.

Destinations which have uncontrolled access like beaches will be opened from November 1, where also the SOPs will be implemented strictly. "The State Tourism Department and service providers are totally committed to ensuring a safe and happy stay for guests. Directions have been given to officials also to see that the safety protocols are fully complied with", State Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran said. "The stakeholders in the tourism sector have to follow the SOPs and Guidelines and make Kerala a responsible tourism destination to welcome tourists. The tourists are also required to follow the Guidelines and support the measures taken by the State Government to combat COVID-19," said Tourism Secretary Smt Rani George IAS.

The domestic tourists coming for short visits of less than seven days are exempted from quarantine but they should register in COVID Jagratha portal. If tourists plan to extend their stay for more than seven days, they have to undergo a test at their cost on the 7th day at ICMR/ state government approved laboratories. The visitors are advised to avoid travel if they are symptomatic.

Hospitality facilities, tourism transport operators and other services such as hotels, resorts, house boats, ayurveda centres, homestays, service villas and adventure activity centres will have to go by the SOPs. The service

providers should ensure that health and safety parameters such as temperature check, wearing of masks, frequent sanitization, disinfection and contactless screening for guests are followed.

Health declaration forms should be maintained. Hotel bookings will be allowed only online and a 24-hour gap between check-out and check-in has to be followed. Guests should not be allowed to take up high risk activities like pool swimming. Tourists have to skip public places/ congregations other than the planned purpose of visit and avoid public transport. They should avoid handling cash as far as possible and make payments through digital modes. They may contact the health department helpline DISHA 1056 in case they feel symptoms of any illness. The domestic tourists who visit the state more than seven days have to produce a COVID negative certificate.



PANDEMIC BLUES

How will South Asia's travel and tourism industry recover from the Covid-19 impact



► **Taj Mahal reopened for visitors with strict Covid-19 protocol on September 21**

As Europe's journey with the COVID-19 pandemic enters its next phase, many have embarked on their summer adventures to Greece, Italy or Spain, riding the wave of optimism offered by EU recommendations on opening borders. So what is in store for this sector in South Asia and what can the path to recovery of the industry look like in the region?

Travel and tourism snapshot

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the travel and tourism sector accounted for 10.3% of global GDP and 330 million jobs in

2019. In South Asia, WTTC estimates that the sector contributed \$234 billion, or 6.6% of the region's GDP in 2019. Within the region, the pandemic could not have come at a worse time for Nepal's tourism industry, which has almost entirely shut down since the outbreak. The government had declared 2020 as the Visit Nepal Year, announcing a national campaign with an annual target of achieving 2 million tourist arrivals. With the country's borders closed to adventure-seeking mountaineering crowds, the direct actors along in the tourism value chain (tour operators,

trekking agencies, mountain guides and Sherpas) have lost their only source of income.

Similarly, the Republic of Maldives is uniquely vulnerable to external shocks, and tourism constitutes a third of the small island state's national revenue. As a result of the ongoing crisis, the International Monetary Fund has projected that the country's economy will contract by 8.1% in 2020.

First steps to recovery

After four months of lockdown, the Maldives welcomed tourists back to

its resorts and hotels, after publishing a comprehensive sector reopening strategy aimed towards building trust and credibility among potential tourists. Resorts opened on the 15th of July 2020. Tourists were assured that the Government has put into place strict safety and hygiene standards to ensure the safe reopening of the country to tourists from around the world when travel restrictions begin to ease.

Globally, in an effort to establish a harmonized approach towards setting guidelines around the reopening of the sector, WTTC launched the “Safe Travels” stamp, which has been designed to allow potential travelers to recognize establishments around the world which have adopted standardized health and hygiene protocols. Backed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the stamp may be used across the travel and tourism value chain to certify hotels, restaurants, airlines, cruise lines, tour operators, restaurants, outdoor shopping, transportation and airports. Since its launch on 27 May, the WTTC established protocols have been adopted by destination countries and cities around the world such as Turkey, Egypt, Portugal, Seville and Cancun.

Regional cooperation towards restoration

Based on current trends and survey studies of consumer preferences and behavioural patterns, projections on resumption of travel indicate that recovery will be proximity-based, gradually moving from domestic to regional and lastly intercontinental. As part of the institutional response to the COVID-19 crisis, the World Economic Forum regularly convenes a multi-stakeholder community of prominent experts, policymakers and



► Maldives welcomed tourists back to its resorts on July 15

businesses from the region as the Regional Action Group for South Asia, which met virtually most recently in July to discuss the impact of the pandemic on the travel and tourism industry and the measures that need to be adopted to support recovery efforts.

Public sector representatives and businesses from the region agreed that domestic tourism will lead the way in this recovery journey. This puts countries with a large domestic market, such as India, at an advantage since they will be able to create more favourable fiscal conditions

for stimulating growth in the sector while actively promoting local and regional tourism

As a first step towards recovery, the possibility of establishing travel bubbles (see Box) or corridors – which would allow countries in the region to put in place protocols for opening up channels for air travel on a reciprocal basis – was also discussed among members of the Forum’s Regional Action Group for South Asia. Establishing these safe zones bilaterally or among a group of countries with similar recovery trajectories would build focused capacities to safely manage

the flow of tourists and allow testing of the framework for reopening on a larger scale at a later stage.

This approach would also permit a higher degree of control over a smaller tourist flow, which would enable faster rollback of open channels in the event of unanticipated spikes in the number of infection cases. Most recently, India and Maldives announced that they will be establishing a travel bubble to strengthen connectivity and tourism ties. Such agreements are likely to come up with other countries in the region as terms and conditions of establishing these safe travel zones are negotiated.

Niche tourism push

The World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report published in 2019 attributes natural and cultural diversity along with price competitiveness for the emergence of South Asia as an attractive tourist destination. This is where the region can leverage regional cooperation towards building a sector revival strategy. For example, India could explore an Adventure Tourism circuit with Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, where travellers get to experience the enthralling Himalayan landscapes, followed by a trip down south to explore some of Sri Lanka's best surfing spots. Similarly, a Spiritual Tourism circuit could offer the international traveller a well-marketed package to discover the historical monuments of faith systems that bind the region together.

An opportunity that can be explored to bring back the international traveller to India is the niche segment of medical, wellness and Ayurveda tourism. Had the COVID-19 pandemic not erupted when it did, the medical tourism space would have touched the \$9 billion mark in 2020.

India has been a long-preferred destination for medical tourism but with the COVID-19 pandemic, this sub-sector is now one of the worst-hit. As restrictions on international air travel begin to ease from select countries, adequate support from the Government will be needed to further facilitate medical travel, with SOPs and safety protocols across each stage of patients' care continuum.

Long-term measures to build resilience

In an effort to build back better in the post-COVID world, it would be critical

TRAVEL BUBBLES

Travel bubbles, also known as travel corridors and corona corridors, are essentially an exclusive partnership between neighbouring or nearby countries that have demonstrated considerable success in containing and combating the COVID-19 pandemic within their respective borders. These countries then go on to re-establish connections between them by opening up borders and allowing people to travel freely within the zone without having the need to undergo on-arrival quarantine. Those looking to enter the travel bubble from the outside must undergo strict preventive measures which include a 14-day isolation, an official document stating they have not been infected with coronavirus and have not come into contact with anyone who has.

India has entered into bilateral air bubble agreements with 18 countries. Under these agreements, two countries agree to operate direct passenger flights both ways in order to operate normal flights between them once things get back to normal after the pandemic.

The list of countries India has a travel bubble with are the US, the UK, Germany, France, the UAE, Maldives, Canada, Japan, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Qatar, Iraq, Oman, Bhutan, Kenya, Bangladesh and Ukraine.

to retain and inject capital investment in the sector so that it can achieve its true potential as a vehicle for growth and development. In June, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) announced that it is making a \$175 million investment in John Keells Holding. This will go towards expanding the company's supermarket chain in Sri Lanka and funding the development of hotel properties in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, making it IFC's largest ever investment in Sri Lanka and the first supporting investments in the Maldives in a decade.

Bhutan – which is the only South Asian country to have zero COVID-19 related fatalities to date – is also looking into how it can take this pivotal moment in the region's shared history to strategize growth in the sector. The country's "High Value, Low Volume" tourism policy anchored in promoting sustainable tourism makes it a unique and exclusive travel destination. Though well managed in Bhutan, the COVID-19 pandemic has of course still had a negative impact on key national earnings from tourism. The Government of Bhutan is working on strengthening the tourism infrastructure, developing new tourism products and services and increasing entry points for tourists. This investment will go a long way in building the required ecosystem to support the intra-regional demand for tourism and promote sustainable job creation in the sector.

As South Asia continues to face the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, it is evident that there is immense potential in the travel and tourism sector, which can be harnessed to contribute to the region's economic recovery.

SOURCE: World Economic Forum

JOIN US AT PETER CAT
FOR A MEAL PREPARED
IN THE TRUE HONOURED
TRADITION OF INDIA. BEGIN WITH
A FISH MAKHMALI AND A
TANDOORI BROCCOLI FOLLOWED
BY THE MOUTH WATERING DUM
KI RAAN. A PORTION OF
VEGETABLE MALAI KOFTA
OR IF YOU PREFER OUR
CHICKEN RISHMI BUTTER
MASALA. THEN OUR SIGNATURE
ORIGINAL CHELO KEBAB AND
LAST BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST
A MERINGUE WITH ICE CREAM
AND HOT CHOCOLATE SAUCE
TO MAKE YOUR LUNCH AND
DINNER COMPLETE EVERY
COURSE A SPECIAL TREAT.
EVERYDAY AT PETER CAT.



18A, PARK STREET, KOLKATA-700016, INDIA
+91-33-22298841, +91-33-22172942
INFO@HERITAGEDINING.IN

IN CALCUTTA THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE MEAN BY A WELL-BALANCED MEAL



JOIN US AT MOCAMBO
FOR A MEAL PREPARED IN THE TRUE
HONOURED TRADITION OF EUROPE.
BEGIN WITH A DEVILLED CRAB,
GARLIC HERB PRAWNS, FOLLOWED
BY A CHICKEN PAPRIKA, CHICKEN TIRAZZINI
AND ASPARAGUS CREAM, ELSE A VEGETABLE ALA KUV
OR IF YOU PREFER OUR BECKY MEUNIER,
LOBSTER THERMIDOR, AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST
A BAKED ALASKA TO MAKE YOUR
LUNCH AND DINNER COMPLETE.
EVERY COURSE A SPECIAL TREAT.
EVERYDAY AT MOCAMBO.

Mocambo's

25B, PARK STREET, KOLKATA-700016, INDIA
+91-33-22290095, +91-33-22654300
INFO@HERITAGEDINING.IN

NEW AVENUES

The pandemic forced the hospitality sector to come up with ingenious ways to utilize their assets to stay afloat



► **Food takeaway was one of the first opportunities that hotels leveraged amidst the pandemic**

AS covid-19 pandemic dealt a ₹6 lakh crore blow to the hotels and hospitality industry, it has been finding ways to sustain itself, curating offers for not only its loyal customer base but also attempting to win new customers over. Re-inventing their traditional business model, some of the hotels are also exploring newer avenues for revenue generation as well as to stay connected with their patrons.

Food Delivery: Food takeaway and delivery business was one of the first opportunities that hotels leveraged amidst the pandemic. Most large ho-

tel chains, such as ITC, Hilton, Hyatt, The Oberoi and Marriott to name a few, and even amusement parks like Wonderland have tied up with food delivery companies such as Zomato and Swiggy to deliver their signature dishes to the customer's home or office.

Marriott on Wheels, Marriott International's home delivery service has seen growth and is providing the hotel with a steady, intermediary revenue stream in the current times. It was launched in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Kochi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and in over 55 hotels. After getting an overwhelming response

Marriott added more verticals to this delivery platform expanding into corporate outdoor catering services, Bento Boxes and Grab & Go meal options.

For an enhanced food and beverage experience, The Lalit has been providing Home Delivery and Grab & Go options through Food Trucks parked at the hotel Porch in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) developed its own online food delivery platform to cater to the growing demand for gourmet food delivery. They launched an online food delivery platform called Qmin.

Consumers can use the platform to order food from eight restaurants in Mumbai including Golden Dragon and Souk from Taj Mahal Palace; Thai Pavilion and Trattoria from President; and Ming Yang from Taj Lands' End, among others. Qmin will scale up in the months ahead to include the gourmet Qmin Shop with delicatessen-based food choices.

Luxury Dining and Bar at Home:

A few hotel chains have gone a step ahead by introducing 'Chef / Bartender on Call' where a customer can enjoy these services in the comfort of their homes. Some are offering pre-mix cocktails and meal ingredients in boxes (along with recipes) so that guests can enjoy making these signature dishes at their home. Meanwhile, some are even offering professional culinary lessons.

The Lalit started Chef on Call and Bartender on Call for its patrons – wherein, they can savour delicacies and delicious cocktails in the comfort and hygiene of their homes.

DIY- Do It Yourself: Not just home delivery but some of the luxury hotels are also finding innovative ways to engage with their patrons even by sharing their best kept secret recipes. Ritz-Carlton Bengaluru has come up with an innovative 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) initiative under which the hotel home delivers all the ingredients with a special recipe note from its executive chef explaining step-by-step on how to make some gourmet dishes at home. The DIY concept was well-appreciated, with families sharing stories and videos of cooking dishes together and bonding.

Grooming & Wellness Services:

Hotels are also offering grooming and wellness services such as Ayurvedic consultations at home. The Lalit start-

ed Ayurvedic consultation and Salon at Home experiences for their guests, to ensure they reach out to them if they can't come to us.

Laundry Services: Hotel chains have started providing hygienic and professional laundry services to customers at their doorstep, which helps them utilize their large industrial washing machines sitting idle due to lower occupancy at the property. Some have tied up with residential associations, retail outlets and corporates for this purpose. ITC Hotels launched 'Lavanderia', a contactless laundry service to allow customers to handover the items at a designated point at the hotel and pick up the laundered clothes within 24 hours. The customer would be intimated via a message which would include

a payment link to enable contactless payment.

Housekeeping, Maintenance & Sanitization Services: Hotels are known for their impeccable housekeeping and in the COVID era hotel staff have also received special training on cleaning and disinfecting common touchpoints. Hotels should utilize their expertise in these areas to generate additional revenue by providing housekeeping and sanitization services to offices, malls and other public places and even homes. In some other countries, hotel maintenance teams are also providing building and household repair work services at an hourly rate.

New Delhi-based Le Meridien started to offer sanitation services to corporates on a contractual basis. Since they have house-keeping



► **Hotels have all the facilities and infrastructure needed by professionals to conduct their businesses**



► Some hotels provided professional laundry services to customers at their doorstep and utilize their industrial washing machines sitting idle

staff available at their disposal, they started offering this service to many corporate offices.

Co-working and Office Space: Hotels already have all the required facilities and infrastructure needed by professionals to conduct their businesses. They can, therefore, repurpose certain areas for boutique corporate offices. They can also lease out or partner with organizations in the Co-working industry to develop special packages

for professionals looking for an 'office' space near their homes.

Guest Houses: Long-stay guests, foreign professionals who have had to vacate company guesthouses and those going on self-quarantine. One of the new revenue streams that Savarav group, and possibly other hotel chains too, have hit upon is the long-stay business of foreign professionals working in the IT and MNC sector who were staying in company guesthouses which have had to be shut

down due to government restrictions. The rates fixed were low, but that is enough to survive the difficult times.

City Warehouses: Branded hotels purposefully follow high compliance standards and enjoy the benefit of a great location and infrastructure with good back-end facilities which may be repurposed as city warehouses for ecommerce organizations. The public areas of the hotel can be dedicated as pick-up points or retail kiosks for ecommerce giants,



► IHCL developed its own online food delivery platform to cater to the growing demand for gourmet food delivery

as hotels will not only institute best-in-care hygiene practices, but will also practice strict social distancing norms – both of which will remain unmatched in any other commercial development.

Facility Management of Corporate Offices: Hotel companies should seriously consider venturing into end-to-end facility management of boutique and corporate offices, providing the complete gamut of services such as front office management, housekeeping, maintenance, F&B management, and allied services. Hotel companies are already the 'experts' in this field, as they manage a 'live' 24X7 environment with their well-defined SOPs and specialized training. This coupled with their passion for customer service gives them a competitive edge over the other players present in the facilities management industry today, especially with respect to clients looking out for that differentiator to manage their offices with the touch and feel of a hotel-like environment and levels of service. The current scenario of lower demand at properties provides an excellent opportunity for hotel companies to test the waters in this field.

Quarantine facilities and satellites of hospitals: In Kolkata, Delhi and some other metro cities many hotels tied up with local government health departments to open their rooms to facilitate quarantine of people who arrived from abroad. The rooms were offered at pay-and-use mode with a highly subsidised rate. All types of hotels, ranging from five-star properties to budget hotels, participated in this project. In addition to this, many hotels served as satellite centres for hospitals when their patient counts went up. The hotel staff were trained properly to look after the facilities while doctors and nurses offered healthcare to the ailing.

NEW PROPERTY

‘The first boutique tea resort of the country’

Mayfair Hotels & Resorts offers some of the best luxury hotels in India in captivating settings like mystical mountains, tranquil beaches and vibrant cities. The latest feather in its cap is Mayfair Tea Resort, a 154-key property nestled amidst a 170-year old tea garden in the Terai region. In an exclusive interview, Souvagya Mohapatra, Executive Director, Mayfair Hotels & Resorts spoke about this unique new property.



What is the exact location of the new property? Why did you choose this spot for a resort? Did you set up in an existing tea garden?

Mayfair Tea Resort is situated at Sevoke Road Siliguri. The Property which happens to be the first Boutique Tea Resort of the Country is majestically nestled amidst Chumta Tea Gardens which also happens to be the first Tea Garden in the Terai (foothills) region with origin dating back to the 1850s.

As to what prompted Mayfair to choose this particular spot for the Resort, there can be no one answer to it but the decision was based on interplay of several factors that include the physiography, the climate, the legacy of the place, convenient connectivity with nearby tourist destinations, the landscape among others.

How many rooms and suites does the new property offer? Are you targeting MICE tourists?

Mayfair Tea Resort is a 154-Key Property that offers accommodation choices across Seven categories of Rooms and Suites.

Yes, MICE will be our prime target and accordingly has the Resort been designed. Be it a small intimate event or a grand wedding, with the presence of an exquisite range of state-of-the-art venues, the resort is a one stop solution for events of all kinds and scales.

What is the USP of this property? Tell something about its architecture.

Being the first boutique Tea Resort of the Country, Tea Tourism and Destination Wedding we consider will be our USP.

As it is a tea-themed resort and given that tea is by and large considered



to be introduced by British across the globe, to give guest a genuine make-feel experience of the bygone days, the architecture of the resort is based on Tudor style which though originated in the 16th Century was very popular in the early 20th Century-the phase that saw the development of Tea from a largely unknown beverage to the most consumed brew. Reason for selecting Tudor style was its charming old-world feel that very few other architectural styles can offer.

How do you plan to tackle the challenges posed by Covid-19?

From a revenue perspective, we plan to tackle the challenges posed by Covid through cost-cutting and prudence measures. From a health perspective, we intend to cope with this crisis by ensuring that our practices are abreast with the highest standards of safety and hygiene that accords an added layer of security to guest's experience.

However, having said so, regardless

of how much prepared we are, as an Industry that depends on discretionary spending, we cannot expect much relief at least not until the threat of virus considerably subsides or a vaccine is made available for public use as people are unlikely to indulge in discretionary spending as they used to prior to this outbreak.

Do you think domestic tourism will help the travel and hospitality industry recover from the slump? What measures are the Mayfair group taking in this direction?

Domestic tourism has always been the saviour and this time too it will rescue us from this crisis. As a group we have always attached great priority to this segment of the tourism industry and nothing speaks of this better than the fact that most of our properties are established at locations where there were hardly any properties earlier. Be it in Gopalpur, Puri, Sikkim or Rourkela, our proper-



ties have played a very notable role if we may say so in promoting domestic tourism in these locations. In Siliguri too, the very purpose of establishing Mayfair Tea Resort is to take the domestic tea tourism in India to gold standards and bring it at par with the global leaders in this segment. Our commitment to promote domestic tourism has been unwavering and we shall continue to promote it in every possible way going ahead.

What is your experience of running hotels in Kalimpong and Darjeeling?

Kalimpong and Darjeeling are great destinations and our experience of

running hotels in these locations have been very satisfying and rewarding. Both Mayfair Darjeeling and Mayfair Himalayan Spa Resort which were formerly the summer house of Maharaja of Nazargunj and the first hotel in the Himalayan region respectively are our prized possessions and we pride ourselves for having been able to add meaningfully to the tourist footfall growth in these regions with our presence.

What are the challenges for the growth of the hospitality industry in the East of India?

Lack of Core Tourism centric Infrastructure, Inadequate marketing of

destination and most importantly the absence of the required thrust at the policy level is what I considered hindered the growth of Hospitality Industry in East India. However, with the gradual acknowledgment of the importance of tourism in the large socio-economic growth of the country by Central as well as State Governments, these bottlenecks are now a thing of the past, though much yet needs to be done. As the core infrastructure improves along with the creation of an enabling investment environment by the Government, we shall witness the rapid development of the hospitality industry in the East of India.

UNLOCKING HOSPITALITY

REIMAGINE, REBOOT AND REBUILD

HRAEI organised a webinar on 'Unlocking Hospitality' attended by the industry's top professionals on September 19. The forum concluded the current loan restructuring parameters are difficult to meet for the industry in the post-Covid era

THE Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) organised an interactive webinar on 'Unlocking Hospitality' in presence of hospitality industry's top professionals on September 19, 2020. The lively interaction gave the opportunity to the fraternity to get an insight on the process of unlocking or staggered lifting of lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic in India and the various obstacles faced by the hospitality industry.

At the end of the discussion, the forum came to the conclusion that the current restructuring parameters are difficult to meet for the industry in the post-Covid era. The industry associations should come together and unitedly lobby for better loan restructuring terms from the banking regulator.

Following is an excerpt of the discussion:

Debt-EBITDA ratio tough

The discussion was kickstarted by Mr Vijay Dewan, Managing Director, Ap-

eejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited. Mr Dewan began with a compliment to HRAEI's dynamic activities during the lockdown and its coordination with State governments on behalf of the hospitality industry in the region. He mentioned how most of the big hotels were hit hard in the first quarter of 2020, facing degrowth ranging from 80 to 85 percent. He said that the hospitality sector in the country has a heavy debt burden which is estimated to be around INR 45,000 to Rs 50,000 cr. He added that it is extremely important to get the loans restructured properly in the current context. The restructuring parameters, especially the Debt-EBITDA ratio of 5 is not easy to achieve, he said, and therefore the industry associations should approach the government and the regulator to get it modified.

Mr Dewan said that the pandemic has resulted in job losses in both the white collar and blue collar segments and that will adversely impact the consumer demand in the post

covid market. Low level of consumer demand will affect the business prospects of travel and hospitality businesses as these are more discretionary in nature, he added. He suggested some stimulus package on the part of the government to generate consumer demand in the market.

Mr Dewan said that the post pandemic hospitality market will throw a lot of opportunities for online food businesses. He mentioned how the QSR side of hospitality has done brisk business despite lockdown. Many big hotels have also started paying attention to food delivery and have launched online food delivery platforms.

He said the pandemic has brought about a significant change in the consumer behaviour. Since safety and hygiene is of utmost importance, the industry must have the highest degree of safety to build trust among the consumers. If possible use of technology, such as digital platforms aided by face-recognition can be used for touchless check-in and check out.



He mentioned that many entrepreneurs are looking for acquisitions while some others are planning for an exit route from the hospitality business. He reiterated while the first quarter of the financial year was complete wash out for the sector, with the unlocking the business has slowly started looking up in the second quarter. He expects the market to further

stabilise and then revive in the third and fourth quarter. He pins his hope on the festive season ahead and expects business to be back to 2019-level by 2022.

He ended his talk with a positive note that green shoots have started appearing in leisure tourism, such as Goa hotels have got back 75 per cent room occupancy on weekends. The airline industry is also recovering from downside by December more than half of total flights should resume.

Mergers & acquisitions ahead

Participating in the panel discussion, Mandeep Singh Lamba, President - South Asia, HVS Anarock said that while the leisure market has started picking up through various unlocking phases, the hospitality business is bound to struggle as long as corporate travel demand starts happening. Lamba said that the demand is expected to be normalised by middle of next year as global medical fraternity gains required exposure to the virus, standardised treatment protocols are established and a vaccine is available.

He said that the industry will take some time to get back on its feet because still there are quite a few restrictions in certain areas of the country. There's a limit of the number of people gathering in a hotel or a restaurant. He expects "revenge travel" in the leisure side and postponed weddings happen in the next quarters.

He mentioned that in the hospitality sector in India, there's a lot of individual capital of HNIs, rather than institutionalised capital. He said that for a large section of the hotel owners in India, hotel business is their secondary or tertiary business and therefore, they will consider exiting the hotel business to support and repair the primary business (such as, in real estate) for debt servicing at times of distress. That is why he expects many mergers and acquisitions in the sector in the coming days.

As far as valuations and the acquisition market is concerned, Lamba said that actual distress scenario will only emerge after the moratorium period gets over. Lamba expects the valuations to drop between 15 and 25% depending on the location, future business prospects, etc.

Rebuild consumer's confidence

Anjan Chatterjee, CMD of Speciality Restaurants said that ever since unlock started weekend business started picking up at his restaurants. They have also started getting queries on Durga Puja bookings in no time.

He mentioned how the UK government announced every diner to get a £10 restaurant discount and tax slash for the hospitality sector in order to encourage eating out. He said that in absence of such unprecedented support from local governments (in India), all the stakeholders in the hospitality ecosystem in the country should realise their collective responsibility to innovate to reignite the confidence of the people in the products and services.

According to him, the biggest challenge is to get people to come out of their homes and enjoy fine dining in restaurants. He expects people to eventually get bored at home after staying glued to their screens for



► **The biggest challenge is to get people to come out of their homes and enjoy fine dining in restaurants**

months. People are bound to go out and eat out and go for a kind of “revenge eating out” after having stayed bottled up for months. One can’t hold Bengalis back in the Puja and in order to bring them out multiple sectors can work unitedly to rebuild consumer confidence by bucking up the safety and security measures.

In Specialty Restaurants the staff have been maintaining virus treatments, social distancing between the tables and other required protocols to keep protected from the virus. The staff are regularly tested for the virus. We need to do this to rebuild consumer confidence; give them reassurance of safety and hygiene.

We have been doing a lot of delivery at home. At a stage we were doing 100 per cent delivery. Delivery surged during lockdown, but F&B cannot survive on delivery. Now after unlocking it’s about 60 per cent dine-in and 40 per cent delivery. The crisis did help us to strengthen our delivery arm.

Finally, while talking about the future of restaurant business he said that those who own the properties are better off, compared to those who operate restaurants on rented properties. He also expressed his gratitude to those property owners who have cooperated with restaurant operators during the period of crisis.

Reimagine, Reboot and Rebuild

Mr Gaurav Singh, Multi Property VP, East India & Bangladesh & GM, JW Marriott, Kolkata started his talk expressing gratitude to HRAEI for taking a dynamic role during the pandemic as they coordinated with several government agencies to help hospitality players during a period of acute crisis. He also shared encouraging news that chain of JW Marriott hotels have bounced back quite strongly in China, the country where the pandemic started, with over 65 per cent room occupancy by September.

According to him, the virus has affected different parts of the world differently. For instance, its effect is



The Debt-EBITDA ratio of 5 is not easy to achieve

Vijay Dewan, Managing Director, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited



Expect many mergers and acquisitions in the sector in the coming days

Mandeep Singh Lamba, President - South Asia, HVS Anarock



The biggest challenge is to get people to come out of their homes and enjoy fine dining in restaurants

Anjan Chatterjee, CMD of Speciality Restaurants



Chain of JW Marriott hotels have bounced back quite strongly in China

Gaurav Singh, Multi Property VP, East India & Bangladesh & GM, JW Marriott, Kolkata



The pandemic has forced hotels to think of ancillary revenue streams

Sandeep Johri, General Manager, Accor Hotels India and Novotel Hotel & Residences, Kolkata



Flight Kitchens are considered the benchmark of food safety and hygiene

Shekhar Mukherjee, General Manager, Taj SATS Air Catering Limited

different in Kolkata and Mumbai; as a result restaurants and bars have been allowed to open in Kolkata and West Bengal with certain restrictions and protocols, but still restricted opening in Mumbai and Maharashtra.

In Kolkata unlocking has been happening in a staggered way; first 50 people were allowed, then 100. We expect 200 people will be allowed in banquets soon. But we shall have to abide by all the safety protocols

laid down by the government strictly. As an industry leader in hospitality we must ensure our customers as well our associates are safe. I look at unlocking three words with the prefix "Re". Reimagine, Reboot and Rebuild.

Also the focus needs to be on customers—who are well-travelled, well-educated, and well-informed. Thanks to the online media they are always connected to what's happening across the world. They know what's the highest standards of hygiene and sanitation. We need to work hard to maintain the highest standard.

And not just guests or customers, we must also never forget the importance of our associates, suppliers and vendors who provided us support during the period of crisis in the past six months. The vendors offered us discounts and credits. Our associates took the brunt of all trouble, some of them accepting pay cuts, furloughs or sabbaticals. We must try to bring back the jobs as soon as possible. Reinstate them in the positions and rebuild a stronger team.

Slowly we can see how we are returning to business. On weekends people are coming for lunch and dinner. JW Kitchen is getting full house on weekends with social distancing protocols in place. Demand for booking is rising with the festive season ahead. Weddings postponed in the last six months are ready to happen in the next six months, in the winter. But we must be cautious in our approach so that we reach a period of stability by 2021.

Survive, Revive and Thrive

Mr Shekhar Mukherjee, General Manager, Taj SATS Air Catering Limited, started with an extremely positive note expressing that hospitality is perhaps the most resilient and spirited industry. He mentioned the three prong strategy of IHCL, the parent company of Taj SATS, in the successive stages of pandemic and lockdown: Survive (April), Revive (June) and Thrive (September). He believes

the industry has left the worst phase behind and things are only going to improve in the coming days.

He said how the passenger load factor (an airline industry metric that measures how much of an airline's passenger carrying capacity is used) of Kolkata NSCB Airport had come down to 0 in April, but by September it was 30; he expected this to cross 70 in December.

He described why Flight Kitchens are considered the benchmark of food safety and hygiene. The standard followed by air catering is the ultimate as the food has to be served to customers at 31,000 ft above the ground level. Since the food has to go from the kitchen to the sky, in order to maintain shelf life and survive changes in temperature, humidity and other factors they are taking extra care.

According to him, to maintain the high standards of hygiene and avoid cross contamination, chefs are mandated to take out their gloves and wash their hands every hour. Moreover, as always their work in the kitchen and other key areas of operation are constantly monitored through high definition CCTV cameras.

Innovation and positive thinking

Mr Sandeep Johri, General Manager, Accor Hotels India and Novotel Hotel & Residences, Kolkata lauded the role played by the HRAEI in support of the hospitality industry during the pandemic. In the initial stage, the association coordinated with the State government to organise hotels as quarantine centres; HRAEI opened a desk at the NSCB Airport to facilitate travellers who arrived in chartered flights to move to hotels for quarantine; and finally helped hospitals, running short of beds, to turn rooms

of many hotels into satellite treatment centre for Covid-19 patients. In this way, HRAEI not only helped out hotels bleeding in the lockdown period, but shoulder social responsibility during the acute crisis.

He said that Novotel Kolkata never closed as it offered rooms for quarantine at a pay-and-use basis. He also mentioned that leisure travel was increasing gradually after unlock was announced. He pins a lot of hope on the upcoming wedding season in the winter and informed that they are getting enquiries for weddings to be held in May! According to him the demand for MICE customers is also rising, albeit at the local level. Hotels need to tweak their offerings for local customers.

The pandemic has forced hotels to think of ancillary revenue streams to maintain the bottomline. During the time of distress even 5-star hotels learnt that keeping a bakery van in the corner of a Sunday marketplace for retail sale can buck up the revenue. He believes some of these innovations are going to stay. He reiterated that the hospitality industry will be back on its feet by 2022.

The webinar was organised by HRAEI, under the leadership of Mr Sudesh Poddar, President, HRAEI. Mr Poddar was re-elected the President shortly before this event. Mr Poddar rued the fact that despite the association's appeals to government bodies for moratoriums on excise licence fees and property tax, so far there's response from them. However, he is hopeful that HRAEI will be able to convince the government and help out the industry at a critical juncture.

Dr Suborno Bose, Founder and Managing Director of IndiSmart Hotel Worldwide and Senior Vice President of HRAEI moderated the webinar.

Dine-out to Help Out, an HRAEI initiative to help F&B industry bounce back

THE Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) conducted a Zoom webinar on October 12 evening announcing the launch of their latest initiative called 'Dine Out to Help Out' to help the F&B industry, support local restaurants and help establishments bounce back to good times. It is also aimed to bring back employees of the F&B sectors, who had lost their jobs in the wake of the pandemic

Planned on the lines of the initiative in the UK in August, where the government ran the 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme that offered people a 50 per cent discount on food or nonalcoholic drinks (up to a maximum of £10 discount per diner), the participating establishments here can offer a flat 20 per cent discount on food and non-alcoholic beverages to all their patrons from Monday to Thursday, till November 12. The offer is valid from the time the restaurant opens. The discount, however, can be availed on a minimum bill of Rs 500 and above

The initiative is a welcome move for hotels and restaurants across eastern India. While members of the body have been actively working together in the past few months of the pandemic, to benefit from government schemes and interventions, the association further hopes to bring the establishments back to normality as soon as possible.

Though the offer will be on from Monday to Thursday every week, it will not be on during the five days of Durga Puja. The offer will also not be valid on alcoholic beverages. Some

of the leading 5-star hotels as well as premium restaurants of Kolkata have evinced interest in the unique scheme.

HRAEI's move is not only good news for hotels and restaurants, but also for food lovers. The scheme has been designed as a pull-mechanism for diners to come out of their homes and patronise their favourite restaurants, cafes, bars and hotels



"We have done a survey in the market among regular diners in restaurants who are currently avoiding eating out for fear of the virus, or because they are being restrained about expenses. With the present dip in the economic situation of the country, discount offers like these will be received with immense enthusiasm among guests. This will gradually increase the footfall in our members establishments, which is imperative for businesses to succeed," said Sudesh Poddar, the president of the HRAEI.

Mr Poddar said the scheme, designed exclusively by the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India, will be successful and will give the hospitality industry the much-needed thrust to bring it back into normal motion

Member establishments are free to run the scheme at all or some of their outlets, depending on their preferences. "The offer will not require any voucher and can be clubbed with other offers and schemes running in the restaurants. Diners coming in as many numbers can avail the offer. The participating members can be hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars and food halls," informed Md Azhar, Honorary Secretary, HRAEI.

"This year, the festive season will be extra special for both the diners and restaurateurs. Such schemes will add more happiness to the festive celebrations," said Suborno Bose, senior vice-president of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India and the CEO of IAHM

"The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India has taken a commendable step to help restaurants, hotels and other such establishments in the eastern part of the country to bounce back on their feet in these times. I think such efforts are welcome in the hospitality industry across the country to support all players in the industry and also give diners an extra impetus to come out of their homes and visit restaurants, cafes and bars," said T.S. Walia, The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI).

INDUSTRY WOES

Demand for EMIs

Since the period of moratorium granted by RBI ended by 31st August 2020, the banks have started demanding for EMIs and interest on loans from 1st September onwards without even considering the fact that the industry is under severe liquidity crunch due to zero business, but under severe stress to manage the huge operational costs even at this dormant state.

Increased Threats of NPAs

The surging numbers of corona infections in the country have totally shattered the hopes of revival of the industry which has been reeling under the stress of no income and increasing burden of overhead expenses and the revival of the industry would take more time than what was expected initially. Today the industry is glaring at the grave threats of insolvencies and bankruptcies leading to acquiring of the hard-earned assets by fund houses & financial institutions.

Extension of Moratorium Period

Extend the RBI loan moratorium period for the worst affected hospitality industry till March 2021 irrespective of availing RBI restructuring package by eligible companies.

Interest Waiver

Interest for hospitality establishments for the lockdown period. We urge the Government of India to come out with a concrete policy to support the hospitality industry which is the most affected sector due to the pandemic that also faces a bleak business scenario at least for the next six months to one year.



Working Capital Requirement

The working capital requirement of the sector needs to be supported by the government through a soft loan with low rate of interest to reach the pre-Covid levels. This will help the hospitality establishments that are struggling due to negative cash flows to restart and sustain their operations.

Interest on Loans

We are aware that banks cannot waive interest completely for the lockdown period though hotels incurred a loss during this period. However, RBI can mandate the banks to charge interest on hotel loans at the base rate / MCLR rate without any spread on top, for the lockdown period. In this manner banks still make enough interest to pay their depositors. By waiving the spread on

top of the MCLR rate, they forgo their profit which everyone did during the lockdown period. There will be equity in sharing the loss arising out of the lockdown.

Emergency Credit Line

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) funding in itself is quite burdensome for the borrower with repayment to be done in 4 years with 1 year's moratorium, this increases the burden on cash flow substantially. Under the scheme, the lender will create a second charge on the mortgaged assets and only if the underlying asset is incapable of realisation the Central Govt guarantee would be invoked. In other words, if the borrower defaults on payment of this ECLGS liability, then the underlying asset would be acquired by the lender and sold. The lender can fall back on the Govt only if the realisation of the asset is not enough to cover the loan under ECLGS. This could have dangerous implications. If the 80% of the credit is not restructured, the MSME will be in difficulty. Resolution of restructuring is of critical importance.

Another major initiative launched by the Government to provide relief to the stressed MSMEs in the form of ECLGS has also seemed to lose its steam. As per data emanating from the ground, only 2.4 million or 53% have secured loans, out of the about 4.5 million MSMEs eligible for relief under this scheme. With the specific design of this scheme, it caters to a certain segment of the MSMEs and a larger chunk of the distressed industry members are not able to avail its benefits.

Problems of RBI Debt Restructuring Plan

In order to provide relief to covid affected companies, RBI on 7th September 2020 under the ambit of Kamath committee recommendation, allowed corporates to avail one-time loan restructuring for a period of two years. Borrowers need to meet five sector specific threshold ratios by March 2022 as per RBI (Kamath Committee recommends by March 2023). Most of the hospitality companies unable to meet the said parameters. There are challenges in following financial parameters to be met in the hospitality industry.

Total Debt / Ebidta: During pre covid period itself the said ratio of the average hotel industry is more than 6. Hospitality industry's existing bank sanction itself allows 6.5 till loan tenure. In order to meet the said parameters, hotels need to achieve higher financial metrics than pre covid by 2022, which is not possible and practically defeats the whole purpose of providing the said relief.

- The capital investment (land / Building/Plant & Machinery) in hotels are reflected at their historical cost in the accounting books whereas the intrinsic value of such asset is almost 2-3 times the historical book value of the asset. Lot of hotel companies are unable to meet this criterion. So, the Government needs to allow flexibility wherever the current value of an asset is appropriate to meet the parameter.

- In the hotel industry, the said ratio generally is in the average range of 0.75. It needs to be provided with flexibility in the same.

- Terminal date of loan restructuring –

To allow extension of loan for 5 years instead of 2 years.

- Waiver of Requirement of Additional Provisioning for Restructured Loans: RBI has allowed banks to restructure existing loans (that are not NPAs) to hotels with a principal repayment holiday for two years. However, this exercise will increase the interest cost to hotels as banks need to provide higher provisioning when a loan is restructured. The current restructuring exercise is warranted because of the pandemic. So, RBI should waive banks from the requirement of providing for additional provisioning for restructured loans. This will help hotels to have their loans restructured without increase in interest cost.

Credit Rating System

Stringent Credit Rating System is impacting the Loan availment of the industry. This might also impact the Loan Restructuring incentive offered by the Government and RBI. We are requesting to delink the Credit Rating with loan sanction process at least till the entire industry in India is revived and the economy is back on track. This would stimulate the Industry where existing genuine entrepreneurs in the market would be able to borrow funds and contribute towards revival.

Enhanced Roles of Banks and Financial Institutions in the Restructuring

As per the Kamath Committee recommendations ratified by the RBI, the Banks and NBFC are given the discretion to decide the modalities of implementation of the restructuring. In the given scenario when the banking institutions are shying away from their responsibilities, an effective implementation of the restructuring

plan seems doubtful.

Apart from the stringent restructuring parameters that will be exercised by the banks, the time-consuming exercise would also get complex with many probable riders and conditions imposed by banks on promoters like equity infusion, pledging of promoters shares and additional mortgage of assets etc.

Extension of Borrowing tenure permissible be increased to 5 years for Hospitality Sector

The general guidelines suggested by the Committee include extension of residual tenure of loan by a maximum of two years (with or without payment of moratorium). For the hospitality industry which faces such a severe impact, this period of 2 years, is likely to be woefully inadequate. Therefore, we request that this extension in borrowing tenure permissible be increased to 5 years. This will reduce the likelihood of further restructurings being necessary in the future due to the paucity of sales and actual cashflows.

Special Redressal Online Cell / Forum

Special Redressal Online Cell / Forum to be set up for reporting and resolution of inactions on part of the Banks, especially actions that are not in line with the RBI Circulars during COVID times.

Penal Action Against Erring Banks & Financial Institutions

Due to heightened stress in the hospitality sector and large-scale reports of Banks not complying with RBI directions, there is an urgent need for putting some penal measures in place against Banks and other financial institutions who are not following the RBI guidelines.

WHO'S INTERIM GUIDANCE

The World Health Organisation issued a guideline for COVID-19 management in hotels and other entities of the accommodation sector. The guidance also included an advisory for guests staying at hotels and accommodation establishments



► Staying behind masks or plexiglass boards at reception and concierge desks can prevent droplet transmission.

The guidelines were issued in August 2020 and were revised as several countries were going through unlocking. Here's an excerpt from the guidance:

FOR THE STAFF

What can staff do to stay safe while working at a hotel or other accommodation establishment?

Everyone should follow basic precautions:

- Wash all parts of your hands frequently (at least 20 seconds if using an alcohol-based hand rub, and at least 40 seconds with soap and water), including after exchanging objects such as money or credit cards with guests.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a bent

elbow or tissue and throw away the tissue in a closed bin.

- Maintain at least a 1 metre distance from other staff and guests. This includes avoid hugging, kissing, or shaking hands. If you can't guarantee the distance, wear a fabric mask. Be sure to check local and national guidelines on the use of masks.
- Staying behind plexiglass boards at



► **Swimming pool, gym, beach, spa, sauna and steam bath facilities can be used safely with certain restrictions**

reception and concierge desks can prevent droplet transmission.

- Teleworking may be a possibility for some jobs, which can help reduce physical contact with others.

Should staff wear a mask while working?

In areas where the virus that causes COVID-19 is circulating, staff aged 60 or over, or who have any underlying

health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes or lung cancer, should wear a medical mask because of their higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

Staff under the age of 60 and who are in general good health can wear fabric masks when they cannot guarantee at least a 1 metre distance from others. This is particularly important for staff who are in close contact or

potential close contact with others. Everyone should follow local policies and regulations.

What should staff do if a guest becomes sick at an accommodation establishment?

If a guest at the accommodation develops symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, dry cough or tiredness, staff at the accommodation establishment



► **Indoor dining spaces should have a maximum of 4 people in 10 square metres**

should contact the local health authority and follow their instructions. The sick person should be isolated in a room, alone, or at least 1 metre away from others, according to local health authorities' instructions. No visitors should be permitted to enter the room occupied by the affected guest. Staff should also move people traveling with the sick person to a different room, if possible.

It is usually the relevant public health authority, not the management of the hotel and accommodation establishment, which has the authority to demand sick guests to temporarily remain in their room or to prevent them from receiving visits from other

guests. National law will guide the rights of the guests to refuse or not the recommended measures.

Staff entering the room of an ill person should maintain at least a 1 metre distance from the ill person, and request that the ill person put on a medical mask.

If staff need to assist an ill guest within a 1 metre distance, they should clean their hands before putting on appropriate personal protective equipment (medical mask and eye protection, gloves and isolation gown), and clean their hands after providing assistance. Training should be provided on how to avoid contaminating themselves.

What should staff do if they have symptoms?

If staff develop COVID-19 symptoms while at work, such as fever, dry cough or tiredness, they should immediately stop working, put on a medical mask and isolate in a suitable room while medical services are notified. Disposable tissues and an appropriate waste bin with a lid should be available in the designated isolation area while waiting for medical assessment or transfer to an assessment facility.

If staff develop symptoms while at home, they should stay at home and seek medical attention, following instructions from a health worker

that will include a period of time for self-isolation away from others, including family members, according to local guidance. The staff member should inform the management accordingly.

FOR GUESTS

Following is the excerpt of an advisory for those staying at hotels and accommodation establishments and COVID-19

What precautions should everyone take in a hotel or other accommodation establishment?

Everyone should follow basic precautions:

- Wash all parts of your hands frequently (at least 20 seconds if using an alcohol-based hand rub, and at least 40 seconds with soap and water), including after exchanging objects such as money or credit cards. Look for hand sanitizer stations and use them before going into dining halls, restaurants or bars.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a bent elbow or tissue, and throw away the tissue in a closed bin.
- Maintain at least a 1 metre distance from staff and other guests. This includes avoiding hugging, kissing, or shaking hands. If you can't guarantee the distance, wear a mask. Be sure to check local and national guidelines on the use of masks.

Are pools and water areas safe to use?

Gym, beach, swimming pool, spa, sauna and steam bath facilities can be used safely with certain restrictions, as determined by national guidelines. In particular, look for the following measures:

- a maximum number of people allowed to ensure adequate physical distancing

- fabric mask policies required by local or national regulations
- hand washing stations, especially in the toilet and change room areas
- single use towels only
- a bin for guests to place their towel after use for laundering
- individual use drinking water
- tissues and waste containers with lids
- high touch areas such as door handles disinfected regularly throughout the day

Are there precautions to take while eating in a restaurant?

There is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 is transmitted by food, including fresh fruits and vegetables. The virus can be killed while cooking food at temperatures of at least 70°C.

Food buffets are not recommended because of the risk of close physical contact with others, shared serving implements and multiple people touching the surfaces on the buffet. Indoor dining spaces should have a maximum of 4 people in 10 square metres. The distance from the back of one chair to the back of another chair should be at least 1 metre apart for both indoor and outdoor dining, and guests that face each other should also be at this distance.

Guests should be reminded when entering and leaving the area to clean their hands. When the physical distance of at least 1 metre cannot be guaranteed, masks are recommended to be worn by staff and guests.

Is it safe to use fans or air conditioning in an accommodation?

Ventilation is an important factor in preventing the virus that causes COVID-19 from spreading. Recirculated air from split air conditioning units, fan coils or any system that runs with a recirculation mode should

be avoided where possible, unless in a single occupancy room with no one else present. If recirculation is unavoidable, increase outdoor air exchange by opening windows, if possible and safe to do so, and minimize air blowing from one person directly at another. (More on ventilation in the information box).

Floor or ceiling fans can provide ventilation when the people occupying the room are from the same household, but are not recommended when travelers from different households are together.

Can you get the virus from people who were in the room previous to you?

Hotels and other accommodations should have procedures for cleaning, disinfecting and ventilating the room properly between every guest's stay. These processes allow the accommodations to be used immediately afterward. If these procedures are followed, there is no need to leave the room empty between guests.

What should travelers do if they get sick while at an accommodation facility?

A: If a guest develops symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, dry cough or tiredness, they should notify the facility manager and seek medical advice by contacting local health authorities.

The guest should isolate themselves from others, including fellow travelers. If the guest cannot be isolated or staff need to enter the room, the ill person should put on a medical mask, and people nearby should also wear a mask. If the medical mask cannot be tolerated by the ill person, then he or she should cough or sneeze into a bent elbow or use tissues to cover the mouth, and discard the tissue immediately into a closed waste bag.

“TODAY HYGIENE IS A KEY TOOL TO ATTRACT GUESTS”



With over 14 years of culinary experience, Chef Prakash Chettiyar brings a dynamic and innovative energy to JW Marriott Kolkata’s diverse culinary scene. Armed with a degree in Hotel Management from IHM, Chennai (2000), Chef Prakash started his culinary journey from Trident Cochin. Chef Charlie Trotter and Chef Eric Ripert have been his inspiration which has led him to continuously learn and explore the culinary craft that resulted in his double graduation from The Oberoi Centre of Learning and Development (2002-2004). Since the year 2004, he has undergone specialized training in several premiere properties across India like – Marriott Kochi, Oberoi Bangalore, The Oberoi Grand Kolkata, The Oberoi New Delhi and The Oberoi Udaivilas.

CHEF Prakash began his culinary career with specialization in Italian cuisine and began working in the Western section. Gradually, he expanded his cooking skills in Thai, Chinese, Coastal and Indian cuisine.

In his current role, he has joined in the capacity of Executive Chef at JW Marriott Kolkata. His responsibilities include getting the newest trends in Kolkata and offer the best and most innovative food offerings in catering; His aim for JW Marriott Kolkata is to take the Food and Beverage offerings to an all new level, and aim at positioning the upcoming outlets at

the property, to again take the city by storm. He spoke to Mystic East in an interview. Excerpts:

How has your job changed after Covid-19?

Lot of things changed in operations especially in terms of hygiene and cleanliness. We have introduced stricter protocols for hygiene. These also remain one of the most important tools for attracting guests and business.

What made you pursue a Chef's career?

Sheer ability to work with variety of

ingredients, fascinating cuisines and travelling involved in learning the culinary skills. Always felt it's one of the most challenging job –happy to say that after 20 years of work in the kitchen – the passion and drive continues to drive me.

What are your accomplishments as a Chef so far?

There are few accomplishments which are noteworthy and also very satisfying as a chef. In 2008, represented India in an Incredible India campaign at ITB Messe Berlin to showcase Indian cuisine to the



► **Murg Tikka Masala with Naan is one of the signature recipes of Chef Prakash Chettiyar**

visiting functionaries from around the world- catered to close to 3000 guests over a period of a fortnight.

In Kochi Marriott - To name a few, successful F & B concepts like “Jimmy Rocks” (Jimmy takes culinary journey around the world), Cassava (Specialty Kerala restaurant) was listed among ‘India’s Best Restaurants’ by The Week Magazine in year May 2018 & voted as the Best Kerala restaurant by “Metro food awards”.

Samudra – a coastal cuisine restaurant in Trident Chennai, which was awarded the Best Coastal Cuisine Restaurant twice under his leadership in 2011 and 2013. Presently, JW Marriott Kolkata’s Vintage Asia voted as the best Asian restaurant in Kolkata. As a wedding destination – JW Marriott Kolkata voted for food innovation and the favourite is one of the high points. Lastly, being selected as the best Executive Chef of eastern Zone in BW Hoteliers Awards 2020 was a

very gratifying experience.

Who is your inspiration in the trade?

I have followed a lot of chefs over the years – but there are few chefs who have inspired me to do the best and keep pushing my bar higher. Chef George k George (OSHM Alumni, Executive Chef of Oberoi Hotels (previously of Mumbai, Kolkata and Kochi) Chef Raheel Ahmad (Culinary Director, Marriott Apac) and Michelin–starred Chef Eric Ripert. Recently when I met Heston Blumenthal – was completely bowled over by his concepts and philosophy.

Tell about a few memorable guests you catered to? Any other memorable experiences?

Quite a few guests mostly Cricketers—as I love cricket—namely Sachin Tendulkar, Brett Lee, Sourav Ganguly and film actors – Salman Khan,

Abhishek Bachchan and Deepika Padukone. Senior politicians – Pranab Mukherjee and PC Chidambaram. Abhishek Bachchan’s comment on the quality of food whilst dining in Kochi Marriott was one of the most humbling experiences.

What is your signature recipe?

Baked salmon, kasundi, pan roasted potatoes and greens (enjoy fish and seafood). In Indian – Murg Tikka Masala with Naan remains my signature (light tinge of cinnamon and clove, while tossing the chicken tikka (most favourite kebab) with sliced onions)

What’s your advice to aspiring young chefs?

Keep looking for opportunities to learn and continue to be positive for gaining experience as chefs. Need a lot of resilience and passion to be the best. Be honest with yourself and continue to work on your strengths.



STATE SURVEY: TRIPURA

Far from the crowd

The Tripura Government recently unveiled a comprehensive tourism revival policy to develop eco-tourism, adventure, spiritual tourism, ethnic tourism, tea and golf tourism.



THE Tripura Government has recently adopted a new tourism policy for the next five years in order to attract a large number of tourists in the state.

Said Pranajit Singha Roy, the State's Tourism Minister, while launching the New Tourism Policy, "Tourism in Tripura began in a small way and has been growing consistently. Today the state attracts more than 5 lakh domestic and foreign tourists every year and has created a mark for itself on the tourism map of the country. I expect the tourism sector to grow more."

This policy aims at facilitating

growth and at the same time ensuring that this growth is in accordance with the traditional and cultural values of the state. The Government aims to provide an environment conducive to the growth of the tourism sector so that all the stakeholders especially private investors are encouraged.

The policy document has been prepared after consultation with various stakeholders as at various stages and it focuses on identifying thrust areas for tourism in the State, the strategy to be adopted to make Tripura a world class destination, encouraging private partnerships, boosting local entrepreneurship and local community involvement in promoting tourism and all the same preserving the environment, heritage and culture of the state. He added, "I believe that this policy will strengthen the tourism sector of the State and will contribute not only for development of tourism but in overall economic development of the State."

Following is an excerpt of the policy:

Tourism Scenario in Tripura:

Tripura is a hilly North-Eastern State of India blessed with natural rich topography, unique geographical location with the tropic of cancer passing through its heart. The State, an abode of rich floral and faunal biodiversity, unique landscapes and moderate climate throughout the year has immense potential for tourism. Peaceful co-existence of 19 indigenous

tribes along with Bengali and Manipuri communities in the State, their diverse cultural streams and faiths, traditional art, music and festivals, beautiful handloom and handicrafts constitute irresistible charm as a tourist destination. It has spellbound rock cut sculptures of archaeological

significance, Buddhist pilgrimage sites and the royal palaces that add to the charm.

During 2018-19, a total 5,29,879 tourists visited Tripura including 1,12,955 foreign tourists. The bulk of foreign tourists are from Bangladesh followed by tourists from USA, Canada

and the UK. Though in small numbers, tourists from Serbia, Sweden, Hungary and New Zealand visited Tripura in 2018-19. Tourist arrival registered 10% annual growth during 2018-19.

Evolution of Tourism sector in Tripura:

Tourism was declared as an Industry in Tripura way back in 1987. Realizing the potential of Tourism in the socio-economic development of the State, the State Government has set up Tripura Tourism Development Corporation Limited in 2008 for professional management and giving further impetus to the tourism sector in the State. The Corporation was registered in 2009 and since it's functioning the revenue generation is continuously increasing indicating the opportunity for further expansion of this sector.

Earlier Tourism Department was part of Information and Cultural Affairs Department but in 2013 a separate Tourism Directorate has been set up and it acts as an administrative department for the Tourism Corporation.

Need for Tourism Policy in Tripura

Tourism continued to develop in an unorganised manner with various departments engaged in tourism development and facilitation but working in isolation with each other.

Thus, a need for a joint and collab-



► The Ujjayanta Palace is a museum and the former palace of the Kingdom of Tripura in Agartala, the state capital



► **Unakoti Hill is a Shiva pilgrimage with huge rock reliefs dating back to 7th century AD**

orative approach has been felt which would address tourism in a holistic manner through an integrated approach. There is an urgent need to consolidate all existing missions and plans, and together with strong participation of the tourism stakeholders to develop Tripura as a preferred tourist destination. Considering ever

growing and changing tourism industry, the policy shall provide guidance for bringing sustainability through inclusive growth, enhancing capacities of tourism stakeholders as well as for developing regulatory frameworks, which shall ensure quality experience for visitors to the State.

At this stage of tourism development, the visitors' perspectives also need to be factored in. Increasingly people are looking for authentic and distinctive experiences. Additionally, need to conserve the culture and nature has gained even more importance. This requires a comprehensive guiding document in the form of a policy for shaping Tripura's tourism sector, which has been a long felt need in the state.

Vision

To promote sustainable tourism in Tripura, with emphasis on enhancing tourist experience, placing Tripura on tourism map of the world as one of

the leading tourist destinations and also enabling economic and social development by linking tourism with the livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Mission

- a. To make Tripura nationally and internationally acclaimed all-season Tourist destination.
- b. To provide world class amenities and facilities to the tourists at all destinations and also provide well managed public amenities on the highways.
- c. To highlight rich culture, heritage, wildlife, bio-diversity so as to provide a unique experience of unexploited



► Popularly known as Matabari, the temple of Devi Tripureshwari or Tripura Sundari is located at Udaipur

wonderland to the tourists.

d. To disseminate Tripura's rich history, cultural and traditional aspects related to the ancient kingdom.

e. To facilitate involvement of the private sector in establishment and management of tourism infrastructure.

f. To encourage local communities in management of tourist destinations as well as hosting activities like home-stay.

g. To generate employment opportunities for the local communities in

Tourism Department plans to develop Tripura Sundari Matabari Temple as a world class tourist destination in consultation with the Mandir Trust

sectors directly and indirectly linked with tourism.

Strategy

While planning the tourism destinations, Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria will be adhered by the Tourism Department, which is aimed to bring all stakeholders together to achieve sustainable tourism. GSTC Criteria serve as the global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. The Department of Tourism (DoT)

will collaborate with the State Govt. Departments like Urban Development, PWD, Transport, Tripura State Electricity Corporation amongst others for continuous improvement and maintenance of basic infrastructure such as roads, drinking water, power, hygiene, transport, and solid waste management. Priority areas will include setting up of hotels, restaurants, spas and resorts, tourist centres, parking areas, entertainment centres, amusement parks, ropeways, golf courses, standardized budget accommodation etc.

Development of Way Side Amenities

Way side amenities will include setting up cafeterias, souvenir shops, parking facility, toilet complex etc on the major roads leading to tourist destinations. The way side amenities will be developed on the government land along the National/State Highways or near the tourist locations, or developed in private land by the interested entrepreneur.

In case of government land, the tourism department will ensure that land is allotted/leased to the Tourism Department with a provision to be managed by the Tripura Tourism

Development Corporation Limited (TTDCL) and TTDCL will do the bid management for developing the way side amenities in that location. The land leasing will be taken up as per

the guidelines formulated by the State Government from time to time. In case of private land, the owner of the land or any other person after seeking due permission or arrangement with the owner of the land, can propose to set up wayside amenities. The proposal will be given to Tourism Department, which will examine and provide approval. In this case the developer will require to pay a royalty

or commission to State Government, as per the procedure laid down.

Special efforts will be made to develop an international tourist circuit and promote it in Bangladesh. The places involved will be Moynamoti in Bangladesh along with Pilak and

Boxanagar in Tripura that can be developed as archaeological / Buddhist tourist circuits. Similarly, there are 6 Shakti Peethas in Bangladesh which can be linked with Tripura Sundari Shakti Peetha in Tripura and developed into an international religious circuit.

Improving Connectivity:

Efforts would be taken to ensure direct flights from major cities to Agartala. Operationalisation of Kailashahar Airport, will help to reach Unakoti and Jampui Hills. tourists destinations conveniently. There are 22 helipads in Tripura. Therefore, heli-

copter tourism can be promoted and "Tripura Hawaii Darshan" will be started by using the services of Pawan Hans every weekend. The Tourism Department will also work with the Indian Railways and IRCTC for providing affordable tourist packages. The Tourism Department will work with the NHAI, PWD Department and Rural Development department to improve the connectivity to Tourist Destinations on priority. The Tourism Department in coordination with the concerned departments of the State, will take steps to ensure proper hygienic conditions and to prevent the exploitation of tourists on national and state highways and at tourist places. Police and Highway Patrol to be ensured on all major state and national highways connecting major tourism destinations in coordination with Home Department and Highway Authorities



► **Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary is a woodland with an artificial lake and natural forest**



► Tripura has over 50 tea gardens at picturesque hilly areas

Human Resource Development:

In service sectors like tourism, availability of skilled staff is essential for delivery of hospitality services professionally. The Government will invest in human resource development so that the managerial and technical skill is made available with the State. Tourism Department will facilitate the operationalisation of Hotel Management Institute at Anandnagar at the earliest ii. All the personnel directly and indirectly engaged in the tourism sector will be trained in hospitality related aspects with assistance from National level apex institutes-like IITM, IIFM, IHMs, etc. DoT shall put emphasis on youth, women, underprivileged and disadvantaged sections of the society. Skill training and Capacity Building workshops shall be organized to make them employable in the tourism sector.

Professional guides will be trained, certified and deployed at tourist locations and at arrival points. Service related training will be provided periodically to all the registered home stay owners, restaurant staff and hoteliers and their staff so that the tourists enjoy warm hospitality during their stay in the State. Feedback and 3rd Party Skill Assessment of Training provided and Trainees after completion of training shall be carried out. DoT will also encourage Hoteliers/Travel Operators/ Tour Agents to induct trained and certified guides/workforce for better absorption in the tourism sector. Convergence with Central government schemes like Hunar se Rozgar Yojana of the Ministry of Tourism and other ministries shall be ensured. Special incentive scheme “Paryatan Sahayak Prakalp” has been adopted

to promote entrepreneurship and people participation in development of tourism related infrastructure & services in Tripura, where subsidised interest loans upto Rs. 5 Lakhs are given to youths. Transparent guidelines and standard procedures will be laid down to allow local communities to participate in the management of the tourist destinations and services.

Marketing & Promotion:

Social media and digital media will be used widely for marketing the tourist destinations.

This will be key for advertisement and promotion strategy. Along with this, destination and package wise new brochures, posters will be printed and short films on destinations will be developed. One key area for marketing and promotion is the Information centres situated in airports,

railway stations and integrated check posts. The existing information centers will be upgraded and new such information centers will be planned in major airports and railways stations. The participation in leading national and international tourism fairs will be taken up strategically so as to market the tourist destinations in a better way. Familiarization tours of the leading tour operators of the country and overseas will be taken up in major tourist destinations so that they are marketed well in the State. Road shows in key national and international markets will be taken up to promote the tourist destinations. Signage of the international class will be installed on the national, state and at the important tourist highways and stations.

Attracting Private Investments:

- i. To encourage establishment of tourism projects through private investment, land banks at suitable locations will be identified and created by the tourism department.
- ii. As tourism has been accorded the status of Industry, the Incentives, Subsidies/Concessions will be made available to augment the establishment of various tourism facilities like hotels and resorts in the State, like any other industry.
- iii. Private transport operators will be linked to tourism areas and encouraged to provide quality transport services.
- iv. To encourage MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) Tourism in the State, establishment and management of convention centres with private investment will be promoted.
- v. To provide quality accommodation to tourists in the state, establishment of star category hotels with private investment will be encouraged.

Thrust Areas of Tourism in Tripura

Eco Tourism

Tripura is an ideal place for developing eco-tourism activities like jungle safaris, trekking, rock climbing, forest trails, nature walks, angling, camping etc. All these activities are to be conducted in a manner that promotes awareness of the environment and helps maintain the ecological balance. Wildlife Tourism is an integral part of Eco Tourism. At present there are four sanctuaries, two National Parks. The Department of Tourism proposes to work actively with the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Deptt. to further develop and improve wildlife parks/zoos, bird watching towers and other public utility services for the facility of the tourists. Initiatives shall be taken in collaboration with the Forest Department to preserve/protect these areas from mass tourism flows and development. Development of Lakes and wetlands is also part of eco-tourism. The department will take steps in coordination with the Forest Department to maintain and enhance their beauty by undertaking development in an integrated manner.

Spiritual Tourism:

A detailed infra-gap assessment shall be carried out at major pilgrimage destinations to address the key infrastructure issues in collaboration with Temple Trusts. Tourism Department plans to develop Tripura Sundari Matabari Temple as a world class tourist destination in consultation with the Mandir Trust. Along with tourist amenities, the Tourism Department will also develop Ropeway from Udaipur Railway Station upto Matabari temple, in PPP mode. This ropeway will become a major tourist attraction. Tourism department in collaboration with other States, will market Tripura Sundari Temple as part

of Shakti Peeth circuit. These efforts will be especially with Assam, so that all tourists visiting Kamakhya can also visit Tripura Sundari temple. The Buddhist circuit in Tripura comprising Benuban Vihar, Mahamuni and Nabincharra will be promoted, especially in South East Asia to attract tourists.

Ethnic Tourism:

Tripura is unique in its cultural and ethnic diversity. The State is a home land to 19 ethnic tribes and groups, each having its own cultural heritage, life customs, religious beliefs, language, food habits, folk songs and dances which are rich and varied. A detailed resource mapping study shall be undertaken by analyzing the market potential of eco ethnic tourism TTDCL will also identify in the existing tourist locations and also new locations to provide the experience of local cuisine, handloom and handicrafts, art and dance forms.

Film Tourism:

The objective will be to project and establish Tripura as an ideal shooting destination, and for this an exhaustive publicity campaign shall be taken up by the tourism department. It will also be required to declare Director Tourism as the sole authority for granting all type of permissions related to film shootings and the fee thus collected by the Tourism department could be further remitted to the concerned departments.

Tea & Golf Tourism:

There are 54 Tea Estates in Tripura. Coordination with the management of the tea gardens can effectively do a lot in promoting tea tourism in the State. The Tourism Department will engage and persuade some of the willing tea gardens to be a partner in the tea tourism packages. Traditional



► **Famously known as the 'eternal hills of spring', Jampui Hills is an idyllic hill station**

houses in Tea Estates could be converted into home stays wherein the tourists could enjoy the beauty right from tea plantations upto tea packaging. Many of these tea gardens can be developed to have golf courses.

Wellness Tourism:

A detailed market plan shall be developed to promote medical & wellness tourism in association with concerned stakeholders including reputed medical institutions and practitioners, medical service providers, amongst others. Focus would be towards offering medical as well as wellness facilities to the rural/suburban regions of the State by developing seamless connectivity to the destinations.

The Tourism Department also proposes to develop ayurvedic spa / health resorts in association with the private sector at various locations in the State. Training the youth in Panchkarma and other therapies will also be undertaken by the tourism department through concerned departments.

Heritage Tourism:

Heritage zones will be earmarked around site like Unakoti, Udaipur, Pilak, Baxanagar, etc and accordingly master plans will be developed for comprehensive tourism development of the region. To improve the maintenance of these destinations efforts will be taken to create ownership among locals. Feasibility of creating heritage trails will be also considered. Greater coordination with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will be ensured and all efforts will be taken to make "UNAKOTI"- a World Heritage Site.

Arts, Crafts and Souvenirs:

Promotion of local art and culture, generation of income and employment as it is a major component of tourism policy. The tourism department will endeavour to encourage the development of souvenir industry linked to local crafts, events and places which would promote a distinctive image of the State both within and outside the State. The private sector will also be encouraged to patronize and promote local folk, culture and crafts for the visiting tourists. Development

of the souvenir industry including standardised packaging is of utmost importance for which leading institutions and voluntary organisations in the country like NID, NIFT, IIPD, NCDPD etc will be actively engaged.

Role of TTDCL

The role of Tripura Tourism Development Corporation Ltd (TTDCL) for implementation of Tourism policy is important. While providing tourism services, the TTDCL shall play a crucial role in establishment, expansion, marketing and advertisement of tourism related infrastructure and services. TTDCL shall identify new areas for development of Tourism destinations and facilities through public and private investment. TTDCL shall focus on management of core tourist services, and as per the need will be allowed to hand over its units to the private sector for operation under management agreement or on a long-term lease. It shall set up a Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) for taking up intense promotional activities, attracting private investments, investor facilitation, providing incentives and subsidies to investors.



An invitation to become a member of
Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India

*Yes, the benefits are
Royal*

- 👑 Immediate information of all changes/amendments in laws, bye laws and statutory orders relating to the hospitality industry
- 👑 Regular updates of happenings in the industry
- 👑 Participation in conventions, seminars and symposia
- 👑 Speedy accreditation of star category by the Government of India
- 👑 Redressal of day to day problems and grievances of members
- 👑 Receive complimentary issue of HRAEI bi-monthly magazine Mystic East
- 👑 Access to membership of FHRAI
- 👑 Two 20% and 30% discount cards for use at any member establishments of HRAEI and FHRAI, respectively



For more details contact : Atikram Gupta - 8585015172
HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF EASTERN INDIA
18A/1 Everest House, 18th floor, 46C, Chowringhee Road, Kolkata - 700071
Phone: +9133 2288 1742, e-mail: info@hraei.co.in

INSTITUTE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT, KOLKATA

HOSPITALITY BEGINS WITH US



Service Before self

*IHM, KOLKATA is a
pioneer to open the door for
you in Hospitality
Management Education &
Creates lots of possibilities
without boundaries*

**For all your manpower (internship to experienced) solution for the Industry
Be in touch with IHM, Kolkata**

Your Alma mater is calling !!

Connect back with your batch mates & Institute

BE CONNECTED & RECONNECT WITH US

Through: www.reconnecttoihmkolkata.org | mail@ihmkolkata.org | www.ihmkolkata.org

P-16, TARATALA ROAD, KOLKATA—700 088 | PHONE: 2401-4124 / 2401-4218