

OTOAI hopeful of International Operations restarting soon

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It has been over two months since the lockdown has been in place and there is no doubt left that the Travel and Tourism Industry has been one of the worst hits sectors. Not only have the people lost almost all of their existing business but the future too looks grim, given the norms of social distancing. However, a silver lining on the cloud has been the recent announcement regarding opening of the Domestic flights, which is something that many people were looking forward to.

“Yes the move regarding opening of Domestic flights is a welcome one but I am a little cautious and would rather wait and see how things will function. The first people to travel, in my opinion, would be those who are stuck away from home – people who were travelling before lockdown, students and similar such, once this traffic is taken care of, then the real picture will surface. Are people ready to travel for work? For leisure? To take a break? All these questions will be answered once the initial couple of weeks of domestic travel is over. Having said this, I do hope the government will look into opening International flights also soon,” says Riaz Munshi, President, OTOAI.

The Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI), like many others, is also disappointed with not being considered as part of the Government’s stimulus package and is in talks with senior officials in the government to request for certain things. “We have written to the PMO and asked them to grant us relief on five fronts – **roll-back of the TCS, not make Pan Card mandatory for foreign remittances for foreign nationals and non-resident Indians, grant relief from GST, allow outbound tour operators to take interest free loans and expansion of working capital,**” adds Riaz Munshi.

“We at OTOAI are constantly striving to work for the benefit of our members and our industry. These are exceptionally challenging times and we each need to stand for the other otherwise we will all come crumbling down. It is tough but the travel fraternity should collectively try to boost domestic tourism and give it the push it needs. Once international skies open – which I think will happen in a phased manner, maybe in another month or so, we must practice responsible tourism and offer our customers safe and new options where the scare of virus is not threatening. Going forward, we have to be patient and outbound travel will definitely revive soon,” shares Himanshu Patil, Vice President, OTOAI.

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