

# Agents shall only refund once the airlines pay back

TAAI has asked MoCA to intervene

**T**ravel Agents Association of India (TAAI), the oldest association of the industry, has announced that agents will only refund the booking amount once airlines return the booking amount to agents.

“Due to the ongoing global pandemic Covid2019, airlines have stopped operations. Globally, commercial passenger aviation business has come to a standstill. The worst affected are our members, who are engaged in the business of airline ticketing, package tours, hotel reservations, sightseeing bookings, etc., being the Travel and Tourism Sector,” Jyoti Mayal, President, TAAI said in a communique.

She further added that customers/travellers want to cancel their bookings and claim back refunds for tickets booked by them due to the travel restrictions placed by governments across the world. “The global crisis is scary and to remain healthy and safe people want to ensure they have adequate money to survive as recession has set in. Hence, travellers want their blocked money back for the unutilised services of travel, which shall not be undertaken by them,” Mayal explained.

TAAI states that the Travel Agents/Tour Operators have paid 100 per cent to the airlines, for all tickets that have been issued, till date. “Our member agents are wanting to process the refunds, for the tickets issued by them for their customers, but majority of IATA member airlines, have disabled the refunding mechanism on the GDS systems for agents. Agents are now required to manually process refunds through Refund Authority with IATA, whereby the airlines are being non-committal on the date and amount of repayment of airfare. Most Low-Cost Carriers too are not

refunding the airfares and are creating a credit shell favouring the passenger, to be used for future dates,” the President said.

TAAI has raised strong objections on the same with all airlines, as well as with IATA. It has also asked the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to direct the airlines to refund all money. Most airlines are offering credit vouchers in the name of the passengers which are valid for 365 days and a couple of them are offering credit vouchers for upto 760 days.

“Further, additional funds of the agents are blocked with the airlines which have been paid by way of advances in float accounts of low-cost carriers operating in India. Therefore, all refunds / credits / vouchers shall be given to the customer/traveler, by our member agencies, only after the same is received from the Airlines/IATA,” she added.

Jay Bhatia, Vice President, TAAI, informed that if things come to normalcy, the refund process, if authorised by the airlines, may take from 15 days to atleast 3 months. He said, “Currently, most of the airlines are not giving waivers on the cancellation charges. They are not refunding the amounts in cash. They are only giving credit vouchers favouring the passenger, whereby name change shall not be permitted. During this time difficult time of survival, we are working closely with MoCA and IATA daily, to find a suitable solution, to resolve the refund issue.



**Jyoti Mayal**

- Team T3

# “We are witnessing a revival story in the making”

**W**e are at a juncture of hope and perseverance as the entire world faces an unexpected pandemic. There are no qualms about the fact that a virus of this intensity would prompt people to keep behind closed doors, will cause millions to fear and governments to shut down travel for controlling the spread. But it is also true that we shall sail through this and revive in due time.

What we are facing is a global plight and nothing could be a bigger reason for a collective fight than this pandemic. With the world turned upside-down, we at travel industry are taking all in a stride, staying strong for the country and doing the best we can to pacify the unrest among masses.

Being part of this benign industry, InterGlobe Technology Quotient (ITQ) is taking all necessary actions to persevere and help our community of agents follow the same and continue operating. Our teams across the country have already been requested to work from home and keep offering uninterrupted services to agents across the nation. ITQ is relentless in bringing the latest airline updates to the travel agents and keeping agents updated with developments including on refunds and cancellation policies.

With the latest update from Government of India (GoI) concerning future plans for lockdown - mentioning no apparent plan for extension post April 14, 2020 - we are hopeful for the industry and people at large. Looking at the current number of cases, it is expected that GoI shall be able to curb the spread of novel coronavirus and we will but slowly resume pace of daily routine.

It is important to understand that panic will only drive us so far; that we are part

of an industry that moves people beyond state and national boundaries. We bring a physical connectivity to an otherwise separated world. While the need of transnational and transcontinental travel may pause for a while, it will never cease.

Ours is an industry that is renowned to have survived numerous breakdowns and revived out of renaissance. It is time we recall our industry's revival after financial crisis of 2007, Gulf crisis of early 90's and Asian crisis of late 90's, oil crisis of late 70's and many others. In terms of disease outbreak, previously we have witnessed such outbreaks as SARS in 2003 and Swine Flu in 2009 that have impacted economy and travel industry, post which both the economy and travel industry revived thereby depicting resilience in action. While no two times are similar, they certainly hold the power to teach us most valuable lessons. Let us remember to learn from our past and present and keep going forward.

As an industry that hardly stops serving, unless necessary, despite turbulent weathers figuratively and literally, we should keep matching our steps to the latest developments and keep innovating in face of adversity to serve all those who depend on mobility, one way or the other. It is time for us to set yet another example of strength in unity and power in perseverance; for if there is any industry that knows how to maintain absolute altitude, descent, thrust, lift and arise at the right time, it is travel industry.



**Sandeep Dwivedi**

- Team T3