

Hotels, travel cos rue extended ban on scheduled int'l flights

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NEW DELHI

The hospitality and travel industry on Monday said the Director General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA's) decision to extend the ban on scheduled commercial international flights till further orders will impact the revival of the beleaguered sector.

The industry was anticipating a revival in demand for the upcoming summer holidays as well as for business travel with a resumption in international flights in March.

"While the industry at-large was optimistic of a date being announced for the reopening of flights, (DGCA's) announcement was pretty dampening. The industry was looking forward to full capacity of commercial flights to meet the

demand and supply gap, especially for the upcoming spring and summer holidays," Indiver Rastogi, president and group head, global business travel, Thomas Cook (India) Ltd and SOTC Travel Ltd, said.

"Pent-up demand, vaccine acceptance along with countries reopening their borders is fuelling demand. Customers want to restart travel plans. Segments driving this demand are business travel, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and leisure travel. The increased capacity would have definitely helped stabilize fares and provide the much-needed flexibility or flight options for customers," he added.

While international travellers formed a small part of its customer base, listed hospitality major Lemon Tree Hotels said the ban will have a negative impact on both business



The industry was hoping for a revival in travel demand during the summer holidays if international flights resumed in March. PTI

and leisure travel. "We hope the flights will resume as soon as possible, which will help to boost recovery in the aviation and hospitality industries. As flights restart, we expect that the uptick seen in travel to leisure and resort destinations

will witness a further boom," said Vikramjit Singh, president, Lemon Tree Hotels.

The travel and tourism sector has been a key contributor to India's gross domestic product (GDP). According to the World Travel and Tourism

Council, India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of the contribution by travel and tourism to GDP in 2019. It had contributed 6.8% to the GDP, or ₹13,68,100 crore. The sector has been crippled by the pandemic for the last two years.

With a decline in covid cases the industry expected the ban on flights will be removed from 28 February. "The authorities must take a fact-based view of the declining cases

and immediately resume the flights so that the distressed tourism sector can be relieved. This will really improve the on-ground situation for travel operators," said Aashish Gupta, consulting chief executive of the Federation of Asso-

ciations of Indian Tourism and Hospitality.

K.B. Kachru, vice president, Hotel Association of India, and chairman emeritus and principal advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, said the DGCA may have been concerned over the

rising number of covid cases globally, but hospitality firms were hoping that the resumption in international travel will bring some relief as they had been

relying on domestic tourism for a while. "Extending the ban on regular international flights will definitely leave a dent in the sector's road to recovery. We hope the situation normalizes soon so that the industry can get back on its feet."

With a decline in the number of covid cases, the aviation industry expected the ban on flights to be revoked soon