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TRAVEL AGENTS FEDERATION OF INDIA

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EDITORIAL



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The travel industry continues to evolve amid both challenges and opportunities, and this edition of the newsletter reflects that dynamic landscape. The ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have led to significant flight disruptions and uncertainty across several sectors, reminding the travel fraternity of the importance of responsible communication, passenger support, and financial prudence during sensitive times.

Alongside these developments, the industry is also witnessing encouraging progress. New airline connectivity, improved ticket cancellation norms for passengers in India, and growing tourism initiatives across states highlight continued momentum in the sector. Global tourism engagement remains strong with major international travel events and expanding hospitality investments.

Within the TAFI fraternity, chapter activities, industry interactions, and familiarisation trips demonstrate the strength of collaboration and knowledge sharing among members. Emerging destinations and evolving travel trends continue to open new opportunities for the travel trade.

We invite you to explore this edition for insights, updates, and developments shaping the travel industry today.

Disclaimer: The information sent to the members is from various sources. Information is posted in good faith and for general information purposes only. TAFI does not make any warranties about the completeness, reliability and accuracy of the information.

NATIONAL NEWS



TAFI Leaders had the privilege of attending an exclusive, by-invitation interaction hosted by VFS to discuss opportunities and preparedness for the upcoming peak visa processing season for travel.

Regional Head VFS Sharad Govani invited Jitul Mehta, Joint Secretary of the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), along with his team, and acknowledged TAFI's valuable contribution to the partnership with VFS. The evening concluded with engaging conversations, networking cocktails, and warm camaraderie among industry colleagues.



Our Vice President Anil Kalsi was invited for a luncheon reception bringing together Iceland's landscapes, culinary heritage, and contemporary travel narratives - "Taste of Iceland" on 5th March at The Roseate House, Aerocity, New Delhi. H.E. Mr. Benedikt Höskuldsson, Mr Mukesh Sharma VP Bird Group and Ms Nutan Gupta VP EaseMy Trip, Ms Radha Bhatia Chairperson Bird Group , Mr Mukesh Sharma and Ms Pratima Thakar, VP Make my trip were present.

TAFI ADVISORY TO MEMBER AGENCIES



Dear Esteemed Members,
In light of the ongoing geopolitical developments in the Middle East region, which have resulted in airspace restrictions, flight cancellations, and operational suspensions across several international sectors, we understand the immense pressure and uncertainty currently faced by travel agents across India.

At this critical juncture, TAFI urges all member agencies to

1. Prioritize Passenger Support Over Profit

This is the time to build trust, not margins. Assist passengers with rebookings, refunds, advisory updates, and travel alternatives with empathy and clarity.

2. Maintain Transparent Communication

Keep customers informed about airline policies, cancellation procedures, and possible delays. Proactive communication reduces panic and builds confidence.

3. Exercise Financial Prudence

Manage cash flows carefully. Avoid speculative commitments. Coordinate closely with airlines, consolidators, and suppliers.

4. Avoid Opportunistic Marketing

Refrain from aggressive promotions during this sensitive period. Instead, focus on genuine service. True goodwill automatically transforms into long term brand strength.

5. Stay United as an Industry

Engage with fellow members, share updates, and support each other wherever possible. Collective strength ensures industry stability.

Patience, professionalism, and compassion will be our strongest tools during this period. TAFI stands firmly with every member agency. We will continue monitoring the situation closely and provide updates as required.

Together, we will navigate this phase responsibly, ethically, and resiliently.

With solidarity,

PAULOSE K. MATHEW – TAFI NATIONAL MC

CHAPTER NEWS

ANDHRA PRADESH



Mr. Syed Hashmi, Past President of our chapter, hosted an Iftar gathering and invited Mr. M. U. Salman, Vice Consul at the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey. The evening saw the presence of chapter members, airline representatives, VFS staff, the Immediate Past President, aspiring new members, and other distinguished guests, fostering warm interactions and camaraderie within the travel trade community.

TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu Chapter Chairman C.K. Raja along with members attended the Global Panorama Showcase (GPS) Travel Roadshow held at Hotel Green Park on 6th March 2026. The event brought together travel industry stakeholders, providing a valuable platform for networking, knowledge sharing and strengthening partnerships within the travel trade.



KARNATAKA



TAFI Karnataka organised a Familiarization Educational Trip to Lakshadweep from 05th to 08th March 2026, sponsored by Praveg Limited (Praveg Atoll). Around 18 members from the Karnataka Chapter participated in the trip.

From the National Management Committee, Mr. Khushvender Sarna, Mr. Paulose Mathew, Mr. Bright Manohar and Ms. Sumita Kashyap also joined the visit, making it an engaging learning and networking experience for the members.

CHAPTER NEWS

G U J A R A T



The TAAI Saurashtra-Kutch Chapter recently organized a box cricket tournament for the travel trade fraternity and invited our chapter to participate in the event. Our Chapter Chairman Mr. Dilip Masrani (TAFI Gujarat) and Committee Member Mr. Keyur Gondalia represented the association at the program.

During the event, Mr. Dilip Masrani (Chairman of TAFI Gujarat) was felicitated by TAAI in the presence of Mr. Sunilkumar (President - TAAI), Mr. Shreeram Patel (Hon. Secretary General - TAAI), and Mr. Paras Lakhia (Treasurer - TAAI). It was a wonderful initiative that brought together members of the travel fraternity in a spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie.

M A D H Y A P R A D E S H



The 3rd Chapter Meeting of the Travel Agents Federation of India - Madhya Pradesh Chapter was successfully held on 9th March 2026 at Bookmark Resort, Jogi Mahal, Ranthambore. A total of 20 travel agents from Madhya Pradesh Chapter attended the meeting. The members enjoyed a 2-night hosted stay at the beautiful Bookmark Resort, which provided a wonderful setting for interaction and discussions. During the meeting, various trade-related matters, industry concerns, and ideas for strengthening our fraternity were discussed in detail.



A coffee meet in Indore brought together the team of Fly91 Airlines and members of the Travel Agents Federation of India - Madhya Pradesh Chapter. Fly91 plans flights to Jalgaon and Hyderabad in April and Goa in May, subject to Directorate General of Civil Aviation approvals. Thanks to Shailendra Khare (National Management committee member) for facilitating the interaction.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AFFECTING TOURISM

The 2026 Middle East conflict has severely disrupted regional tourism, with Dubai hotel occupancy plunging to ~20% and air travel facing massive cancellations, mirroring disruptions not seen since the pandemic. Inbound arrivals could decline by 11-27% in 2026, causing a \$34-\$56 billion loss in revenue. Major impacts include reduced safety perception, cratering hotel rates, and a diversion of tourists to European markets like Spain. India's medical tourism sector is seeing a decline in patients from the Middle East (Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen), forcing a pivot to other markets. Countries like Jordan are seeing a halt in tourism growth, with the industry facing severe, long-term economic consequences.

Over 5,000 flights were canceled in the first two days of the conflict, with widespread airspace shutdowns across Iran, Israel, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Syria .

More than 30,000 flights in and out of the Middle East have been canceled since the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran, stranding over a million passengers globally.

Travel sentiment scores for the Middle East plunged to levels not seen since early COVID, and major airlines and cruise operators have suspended or reduced routes to conflict-affected areas.

Tourism contributed an estimated 6.7% of total GDP in the Middle East and 8.1% in North Africa in 2023, so current declines directly hit employment, small businesses, and foreign exchange earnings.

Hotel operators, guides, restaurants, pilgrimage-related services, and transport companies in frontline and nearby countries are reporting closures, layoffs, and cash-flow stress as bookings evaporate

Many analysts believe the current intense fighting may last several weeks to a few months before de-escalation or negotiations. Military operations and retaliatory strikes are still ongoing between Israel, Iran, and allied groups.

Oil prices could exceed \$100 per barrel if shipping routes such as the Strait of Hormuz are disrupted. Closure of this key oil route could cause higher food prices and inflation worldwide. Global financial markets have become volatile due to geopolitical risks. Economic uncertainty and rising energy prices may continue until tensions decrease.



THE UNTOLD STORY OF TRAVEL AGENTS: FIRST HIT IN EVERY CRISIS, LAST TO RECOVER.

ARTICLE BY ARUN IYER

In every global crisis, some industries suffer quietly. They don't protest on the streets. They don't make breaking news headlines. Yet the impact on them is immediate, deep, and prolonged. One such industry is travel and tourism—and within it, the thousands of travel agents and tour operators who form the backbone of the ecosystem. Whenever the world faces disruptions—be it a pandemic, geopolitical tensions, or war-like situations—tourism is often the first industry to be hit and the last to recover. Flights get suspended. Borders close overnight. Visas stop. Travel plans collapse. And suddenly, the phones of travel agents begin ringing endlessly. Not for bookings—but for cancellations, refunds, rescheduling, and emergency assistance. What most people do not see is the extraordinary effort that follows. Travel agents work day and night, often 24/7, coordinating with airlines, hotels, embassies, and local partners to bring stranded travellers back home safely. They help families navigate uncertainty, replan journeys, and manage complex refund processes that can stretch for months. All this happens while their own revenue disappears overnight. Commissions vanish with cancellations. Cash flows get locked in refund cycles. Yet operational responsibilities continue. Behind every travel company is also a team of employees whose livelihoods depend on the industry. Even during prolonged crises, many agency owners continue to support their teams, keeping them motivated and hopeful while searching for alternate ways to survive until travel resumes. Across India, lakhs of travel professionals face this cycle every time a global disruption occurs. But their struggles rarely make headlines. Because unlike shortages of essential commodities or disruptions in visible sectors, the pain of the travel industry remains largely invisible to the public eye. Yet when the world starts moving again, it is these very professionals who rebuild travel confidence, guide travellers through new regulations, and help revive tourism. They may not wear uniforms or stand in emergency wards, but during every crisis affecting global mobility, travel agents and tour operators quietly step up as silent warriors of the travel ecosystem. Perhaps it is time we acknowledge their resilience, their dedication, and the crucial role they play in keeping the world connected. Because behind every successful journey, there is often a travel professional working tirelessly behind the scenes. And their story deserves to be heard.

AIRLINE



Improved air ticket cancellation and refund norms from March 26: DGCA Passengers to get 48-hour free cancellation window. Air passengers in India will be able to cancel flight tickets. If they choose to change flights, only the fare difference will apply.

IndiGo to launch daily direct flights from Kolkata to Shanghai from March 29 A320 services to strengthen India-China connectivity. The services will operate daily and the Kolkata-Shanghai flight, 6E 1709, will depart at 21:45 and arrive next day at 04:40. The return service, flight 6E 1710, will depart at 05:40 and arrive in Kolkata at 09:05.



Akasa Air selects travelport as first global distribution partner. The partnership makes Travelport the first global distribution system (GDS) to sign an agreement with Akasa Air, underscoring the airline's confidence.

IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers resigns; founder Rahul Bhatia to manage airline temporarily following a board meeting of InterGlobe Aviation held on March 10, the airline . said in a regulatory filing.



TOURISM



Centre enhances tourist safety with 24/7 helpline, police units. . Fifteen States and UTs have deployed tourist police, while initiatives such as the 'Safe Tourism Destination for Women' under the Nirbhaya Fund.

Uttarakhand plans ropeway and tourism projects in Tehri region. The government also announced tourism infrastructure projects worth over INR 1,300 crore aimed at strengthening regional connectivity and expanding adventure tourism facilities.



Mizoram records 12.68 lakh tourist footfall in last 2 years: Minister. The state, known for its rolling hills and vibrant culture, saw a massive increase in both domestic and international tourists between 2024 and 2025.

Rajasthan draws 1.94 million foreign tourists in 2025 .Germany ranks third among European source markets. 575,968 visitors came from 25 European countries, accounting for 29.6 pc of Rajasthan's international footfall. Germany contributed 82,703 tourists, ranking third among European source markets after the United Kingdom and France.



VISA AND HOSPITALITY



Five nations unite to launch Africa's first cross-border avi-tourism route
Route links 12 key birding sites across 36 protected areas. It follows major river systems such as the Kavango, Zambezi, Chobe, Kwando and Kafue that support resident and migratory bird populations.

ITB Berlin 2026 Opens with global tourism, AI and market growth. 6,000 exhibitors from 160 countries gather as global travel and AI adoption grow. With almost 100pc of its exhibition space booked, ITB Berlin 2026 the event features almost 6,000 exhibitors from over 160 countries



Langkawi to add 1,750 luxury hotel rooms to cater to booming demand
85 pc rise in existing 5-star hotel capacity within two years. Langkawi has about 20,000 hotel rooms across all classifications, including 2,017 in the five-star segment and 2,376 four-star rooms.



Hilton to debut Waldorf brand in Goa. The 148-room beachfront retreat, developed by West Coast Hotels Pvt. Ltd. -a joint venture between the Dempo Group and Triton Hotels & Resorts-will open in 2030.



LAKSHADWEEP: AN ISLAND ESCAPE

Thinnakara and Bangaram Islands

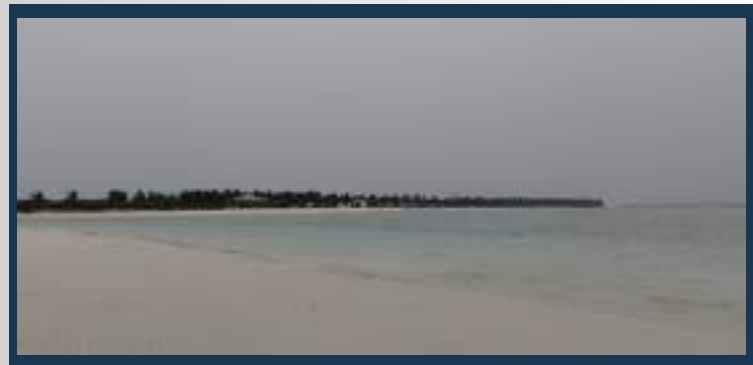


Recent easing of travel permit procedures has made it simpler for agents to arrange visits, allowing Lakshadweep to be promoted as an exclusive yet accessible island getaway.



The Praveg Atoll Resort offers comfortable beachside tented villas designed to blend with the island's natural surroundings. The resort features spacious accommodations, beachfront dining, guided water sports, snorkeling excursions and eco-friendly infrastructure, allowing guests to enjoy a luxury island stay while experiencing Lakshadweep's pristine marine environment.

Lakshadweep offers travel agents a rare opportunity to promote an untouched tropical destination within India. Among its most attractive islands are Thinnakara Island and Bangaram Island, both known for turquoise lagoons, vibrant coral reefs and pristine white-sand beaches.



Thinnakara offers a relaxed "barefoot island" experience with activities such as snorkeling, kayaking, paddle boarding and lagoon swimming. A popular highlight is the Turtle Tour, where guests can snorkel in calm waters and observe sea turtles in their natural habitat.



EVENTS CALENDAR

2 0 2 6

	Event	Date	Place	Website
1	IITM	Mar 20-21 2026	Ahmedabad	https://iitmindia.com/
2	NATAS TRAVEL	Mar 27 - 29 2026	Singapore	https://www.natastravelfair.travel/
3	MATTA FAIR	Apr 3 - 5 2026	Kuala Lumpur	https://www.mattafair.org.my/index.php/en/about/amf.html
4	WTM	Apr 13-15 2026	Cape Town	https://www.wtm.com/africa/en-gb.html
5	ATM	May 4-7 2026	Dubai	https://www.wtm.com/atm/en-gb.html
6	IMEX Germany	May 20-22	Messe Frankfurt, Germany	https://imex-frankfurt.com/newfront
7	ITB China	May 27-29 2026	Shanghai World Expo Center, China	https://www.itb.com/en

TAFI QUIZ TIME

Test your TAFI Knowledge !

Who can participate and how ?

- Should be a TAFI Member (Authorised or Alternative Member) to participate and should have paid the membership Fees up to date.
- First 5 qualified Answers will be considered as winners. Answers to be sent to editor@tafi.org.in ONLY.
- Any other form of communication to the editor will become invalid participation.
- The Decision of the Editor on the Qualified list will be final and cannot be challenged.
- Winners will be communicated and recognized in the next TAFI Newsletter Publication.
- The Winners will get an Amazon Voucher (or Similar) worth Rs 1000
- The cut-off date for Members to send in the answers for every newsletter Publication will be within 24 hours window of the date of 1st Circulation.
- The Editorial Team reserves the right to amend the Terms & Conditions without any prior notice.
- Winners will be considered based on apt and precise answers for all the questions asked.
- Only 1st answer from a company sent to us by mail will be considered for the contest.

What is the minimum Quorum required for Conducting an AGM or EOGM ?

Click to Answer editor@tafi.org.in

Answer to Quiz on 01 March 2026:

Who are Allied Members of TAFI?

Answer: A legal entity in Tour Operations, Technology Partner, Transportation or Hotel Business or Professionals or otherwise having a close relationship with the Travel/Tourism business but whose primary business does not involve issuing of Airline tickets, will be accepted as a member of the Federation with no right to stand for election or vote in any of the proceedings of the Federation.

Winners of 01st March 2026

1. C K RAJA, Airland
2. Srikrishnan – Ebix Travel
3. Praveena – VTT Travels
4. Sidharth Sujith- Benzyleo Holidays

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

We hope you are enjoying the content shared with you through our fortnightly Newsletter. We would like to encourage readers to communicate to “The Editor” and share your views and concerns pertaining to the industry . We will endeavour to address your concerns to the best of our ability. The best “ letter to the Editor” and its response will be published . We encourage you to add your Name , Designation, Company Name and Photo while communicating to the Editor and get recognized.

Email Id to communicate: editor@tafi.org.in

Yours faithfully

The Editor

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**“With age, comes
wisdom. With
travel, comes
understanding.”**

Sandra Lake