

Hospitality Industry is joining forces with the Indian Government to combat COVID-19

By Ritvika Sethi

Nothing could have prepared us for the COVID-19 outbreak. It is hard to determine the true impact of this pandemic until the dust settles and the virus is completely contained, but until then, we have to prepare and come out of this stronger than ever. To win the battle, it's essential to join it and fight it together. The hospitality and food & beverage (F&B) industry in India, along with the government, are constantly working to alleviate the impact.

As per the latest HVS Report, the overall revenue of the Indian hotel sector in 2020 is set to decline by anywhere between USD 8.85 Bn to USD 10 Bn, reflecting an erosion of 39% to 45% compared to last year. Besides the actual business loss, the hotel owners will incur losses due to fixed operating expenses, debt repayments, interest payments and several other compliances required of them. In such a scenario with plummeting occupancies and revenues, the hotel leaders, operators and staff across all levels are constantly in fear of layoffs and salary cuts.

Even during such uncertain times, the hospitality industry in India is working tirelessly and has left no stone unturned when offering its services. Hotels are preparing fresh, packed meals for the needy and offering hotel rooms as quarantine centers across the nation. Every individual is doing what they know best — serving their guests and their country to the best of their abilities, while putting their own needs on hold.

The Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), through its member hotels, has voluntarily offered the Government access to over 45,000 hotel rooms from across the country. The rooms have been set aside for inbound tourists who may require quarantining, tourists who are stuck in the country because of the travel ban, and doctors and healthcare workers. These hotels range from five-stars to standalone properties and have been selected based on the cluster regions identified by the Government authorities. A few examples of how

the industry is stepping forward, in this hour of need, have been mentioned below.

Hotels as quarantine facilities:

- 182 Hotel rooms across the IBIS, The Lemon Tree Premier and Red Fox in Aerocity near Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, New Delhi, have been set aside as paid quarantine facilities, at minimal rates, for those flying-in from abroad.
- Nine hotel chains, including Lemon Tree, Radisson Hotels and Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG), are collectively offering 392 rooms as paid quarantine facilities in Gurugram.
- JW Marriott Sahar Mumbai and Renaissance Powai are offering 300 rooms to the BMC for quarantining passengers at deeply discounted rates.
- Apart from ITC Maratha in Mumbai, ITC Hotels has set aside rooms in its Bengaluru hotels for quarantining people.
- Zostel is providing its properties as quarantine centers, if needed by the government. Zostel Srinagar has already been set aside to serve affected people in Kashmir.
- OYO will be offering sanitized beds and facilities in certain Covid-19 exclusive hotels that have been identified within the proximity of Apollo Hospitals in 6 cities namely, Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru and Kolkata for self-quarantine and isolation of suspected Covid-19 patients, requiring medical observation and supervision.
- Meanwhile, the Mahindra Group has offered to convert Mahindra Holiday Resorts as temporary care facilities.

Providing food for the needy:

- Besides offering rooms to the BMC, JW Marriott Sahar Mumbai and Renaissance Powai are also distributing food to various organizations such as Seven Hills Hospital,

Police Stations and BMC workers daily. Personal protective equipment (PPE) were also distributed to several Police Stations.

- Pullman and Novotel Aerocity are working with the Earth Savor Foundation to organize food for 300 destitute people in Delhi NCR.
- Ritz-Carlton Bangalore recently joined the gargantuan effort of the authorities to feed the homeless and migrant workers, as well as people quarantined in hospitals.
- The Pride Group of Hotels is distributing 1,000 food parcels every day till 14th April 2020 (lockdown period) in the cities of Pune, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, and Nagpur.
- 700 members of the Kerala Hotel & Restaurant Association (KHRA) are supporting the state government in their community kitchen initiative. The government is providing provisions and fuel, while the KHRA members are contributing their kitchens, utensils and vessels for this noble cause.
- The Oberoi Gurgaon and Radisson Gurgaon have partnered to send 500 daily packed meals to the under privileged in Delhi NCR.
- The Park Hotel Hyderabad is distributing hygienic and fresh meals to the greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation cleaners and workers, along with under privileged people and traffic police. Twice a week, over 50 meals are distributed to all in need.

Providing rooms for the medical facility:

- IHCL is offering rooms at 8 of their hotels across India for the medical fraternity to stay while they combat the spread of the virus. The company is also providing complimentary meals, daily, to all the medical staff and patients admitted in Kasturba Hospital and other Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) hospitals, through its subsidiary Taj Sats.
- The Hyatt Regency, Lemon Tree, The Piccadily and Fairfield by Marriott in Lucknow have been converted into quarantine zones by the government for the medical staff who are in constant contact with the coronavirus patients.
- All doctors serving in Delhi's Lok Nayak Hospital and GB Pant Hospital on COVID-

19 duty are housed at The Lalit New Delhi. The Lalit is also working with the Delhi government in providing meals to the stranded laborers & migrants. The Lalit Group has been distributing ration to the Transgender Community who are otherwise left out of most welfare programs.

- 300 rooms per day have been offered to Medical staff of Seven Hills Hospital by Renaissance Powai.

Wellness initiatives and other contributions:

- Six Senses Hotels Resorts and Spas has started a live selection of #AtHomeWithSixSenses meditations with Six Senses hosts, including Director of Training, on the Facebook Page.
- The Radisson Hotel group has contributed INR 35 lakhs to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund and also donated to United Way Delhi for Covid-19 related initiatives. The Group's Gurgaon, Delhi, Lucknow and Chennai hotels are also offering free meals to the needy and animals in the area.

A few hotel chains have gone a step further and entered partnerships to find more creative solutions. IHCL, through its Taj Public Service Welfare Trust, is joining hands with Chef Sanjeev Kapoor to provide nutritious meals to doctors and medical staff at hospitals. Ginger has partnered with MakeMyTrip to provide rooms to the medical professionals and support staff who are at work. Meanwhile, Oyo with Zomato are providing food at the isolation rooms offered by them.

Indian Food & Beverage Industry has also joined the fight against Covid-19

The Indian F&B industry and local restaurant businesses, employing over 7.3 million people, have been severely impacted by the nationwide shutdown aimed at checking the Covid-19 outbreak. Numerous restaurants across the country have created funds and are distributing meals to the needy whilst practicing safety and hygiene SOPs.

- The National Restaurant Association of India has launched a "Feed the needy" campaign where donations are being used to serve meals across the country. As of 5th April 2020, over 3.5 lakh meals had been served.

- Dineout has launched "Restaurant Vouchers" that customers can purchase now and redeem later at 20,000+ partner restaurants in the next 6 months once the pandemic subsides. The funds from these vouchers are being directly transferred to restaurants without any charge.
- Beyond financial support from customers, Dineout has also started an online petition to support NRAI, requesting the Finance Ministry and Government of India to help restaurants with employee unemployment pay cover, moratorium on upcoming statutory dues, delay in utility bill payments, holiday/temporary stoppage on EMI payments & interest, freezing rental dues & restoration of Input Tax Credit on GST for all restaurants.

Our hotel and restaurant heroes' commitment to serve the society remains undeterred, even during these unprecedented times, as they work together to help the country tide over the current crisis.

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