

NO INTERNATIONAL, DOMESTIC TOURISTS

2 months after reopening, hotels report poor occupancy — below 30%

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HOTELS ACROSS Delhi are reporting low occupancy rates — below 30% — since reopening in August as international tourist visas remain suspended and domestic tourism is yet to see a revival. On August 19, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority permitted reopening of hotels after six months of closure to help revive the economy.

The hospitality sector has

been hit hard by the lockdown as hotels struggle to pay EMIs and rent. As reported by *The Indian Express* in June, sectors dependent on tourism and hotel business such as the hotel employees, laundry services and others have also been hit due to this.

Sandeep Khandelwal, president of the Delhi Hotel and Restaurant Owners' Association, told *The Indian Express*, "The hospitality industry is running on huge losses, and even our employment generation is low. It is a struggle paying electricity bills

and taxes, for which we have not gotten any respite."

On June 4, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued guidelines for hotels to follow on reopening, which include only allowing asymptomatic guests to enter, wearing gloves and other equipment by staff, recording travel and personal details of guests, proper crowd management, among other measures.

At hotels in Paharganj, lack of international tourists is felt as bookings remain low. At Hotel Ritz with 54 rooms, only three-



four rooms are occupied in two weeks, said general manager Vinay Kumar. "There are just no guests, no online bookings now. We used to get a lot of international tourists. Now even domestic tourists are not coming," he said.

At Leela Palace in Chanakya Puri, 15-20% of the 236 rooms and 18 suites rooms were occupied since it reopened, with

Leela Palace has recorded 15-20% occupancy rate

a similar occupancy in the 250 rooms of Taj Vivanta in Dwarka.

"We are getting couples or overnight stays, not business-related guests or domestic tourists," said a manager at the front desk of Taj Vivanta hotel.

At the Taj Palace Hotel on Man Singh Road, only 40 rooms out of 292 are open to guests currently since two floors are under renovation, of which 30-32 rooms are occupied on an average daily. Nitish Mishra, front desk manager, said, "Due to protocol, after a guest vacates, we sanitise it and

leave it empty for 24 hours before offering it to another guest — this is affecting the number of guests."

At Hotel Waterfall in Paschim Vihar, only 5-6 of the 18 rooms are occupied. "Corporate meetings are now online, and domestic tourists visiting Delhi or Manali and Himachal have fallen. We even used to get engineers from abroad staying for some work and used to have 15 out of 18 rooms occupied," said general manager Manpreet Grewal. Now, guests come for family functions or examinations, he said.