

## Transforming Business During Crisis to Serve Communities

Find out how TajSATS, a joint venture between Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) and SATS, turned a crisis around



The TajSATS teams worked round the clock to deliver over 1.68 million meals to healthcare workers and migrants in India during the lockdown.

**W**hen the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in India leading to the lock down, another crisis was developing - meals for doctors and healthcare workers were depleting quickly.

TajSATS, the joint venture between Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) and SATS, came to the rescue.

Being the only flight kitchen in India to not close down its kitchens, TajSATS was the first one to start supplying meals to healthcare workers and migrants when the lock down started on 23 March 2020.

While lock down restrictions were not an issue, getting hold of fresh produce and ingredients to produce approximately 50-52,000 meals per day was a challenge. Maintaining distancing measures in the kitchen while producing the meals to ensure thorough sanitation was another.

With the support of local authorities, staff, and vendors, the team persevered and delivered nutritionally balanced meals designed daily by a team of chefs. To date, TajSATS has delivered over 1.68 million meals to the healthcare workers and migrants across Mumbai, Bengaluru, and New Delhi.

Sagar Dighe, TajSATS Chief Operating Officer, shared how the company transformed its operations to cater to the rapidly evolving situation.

**Q: What were the challenges that the team faced when transforming the inflight catering kitchen to preparing hot meals for healthcare and migrant workers?**

**Sagar:** Flight kitchen meals are created based on a cook-chill process. In order to provide meals to the healthcare workers and migrants, who may not have access to heating facilities on site, we re-engineered the process to factor in time of the meal, distance and time required for transporting the meals, and ensure that they were heated accordingly before dispatch.

Secondary packaging was also implemented to ensure that the food remains hot and fresh by the time it reaches the healthcare workers and migrants. The process was reengineered to ensure the meals are heated and packed in such a way that the beverage served along with the meal remained at room temperature so that the person consuming the meal can enjoy the meal thoroughly.

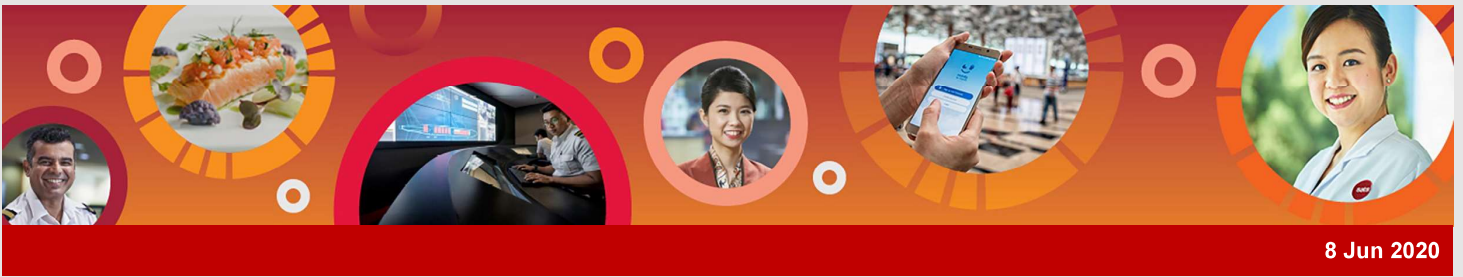
**“It is said “Make friends during peace... not war”. All the friendships and relationships built with our staff and vendor partners came to the rescue of TajSATS in giving us confidence to take on this mammoth challenge and delivering it.”**

**Sagar Dighe, Chief Operating Officer, TajSATS**

**Q: How difficult was it to transport the meals safely across the country and ensuring their freshness upon reaching the recipients?**

**Sagar:** Every facility was catering to their own city hence the transportation was localised to





ensure freshness. We also experimented with and used suitable primary and secondary packaging for optimal freshness. Wherever possible, TajSATS deployed its own vehicles/ hi-loaders to prevent cross contamination. In other instances, TajSATS worked with various NGOs (spell out in full) and transporters to get them to deliver the meals, especially for the migrant workers staying in the slums.

Even for this, we did not allow the vehicles inside our premises. We decided on a loading / offloading point within the city where our vehicles would deliver the food to the NGOs / transporters and they would take over the meals for further delivery. This ensures no imported infection into our facility, and each TajSATS vehicle was thoroughly sanitised before and after each delivery.

**“What kept us motivated was the cause – serving our medical fraternity who are risking their own lives to fight this novel virus. We wanted to show our support and gratitude to these Covid Warriors by serving them healthy, nutritious and safe food.”**

**Sagar Dighe, Chief Operating Officer, TajSATS**

**Q: Given the lockdown restrictions, how did the team work with local authorities to obtain the consistent supply of fresh produce and ingredients?**

**Sagar:** TajSATS worked closely with local authorities to obtain curfew passes for all our vehicles to enable us to pick up raw material and packaging material from our vendor partners. We also managed to pick up packaging material from vendors located out of the state by obtaining inter-district passes. Wherever possible, we also procured passes for our vendor partners to enable them to deliver raw materials to us.

The purchase team of TajSATS was available round the clock to track opening of various vegetable markets and procuring raw materials at the annual contracted rate.

**Q: What factors did you think contributed to this initiative's success?**

**Sagar:** There were quite a few – the strong and ardent belief in the cause of serving the community during difficult times; strong leadership shown by the General Managers, Executive Chefs and their teams; and strong relationships with local authorities, our vendors, partners, and suppliers.

TajSATS is driven by exceptional people; their unwavering spirit and their deep loyalty towards the organisation and that is what sets us apart. The team quickly adapted to the changed conditions, aligned themselves to work harder and support each other during this crisis. In these difficult times, the entire team of associates and vendor partners stood by TajSATS and remained completely dedicated to this cause. Every associate had a sense of ownership, commitment, and cooperation, which led to the success of this initiative.

**Q: What are some key learnings from this massive project?**

**Sagar:** The biggest learning was that with innovation and passion, it is possible to transform a flight kitchen and its processes to an institutional kitchen that can produce and deliver 52,000 meals daily with almost 1/3rd of the required workforce.

This initiative also showed us the importance of brand building. Leveraging on the brand as India's largest airline catering company with 42 years of track record, we were able to convey attributes such as food safety, hygiene, and quality which instills confidence in the consumer.



TajSATS staff working tirelessly to prepare 52,000 meals daily for healthcare and migrant communities in India.

Lastly, managing stress and mental well-being of our staff was our priority by boosting the morale of our associates through constant communication, staying connected, and being available at all times.

