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**'CO MAY SELL FLIGHT TICKETS NEXT YR'**

## **Booking CEO: India Vax Drive to Boost Travel**



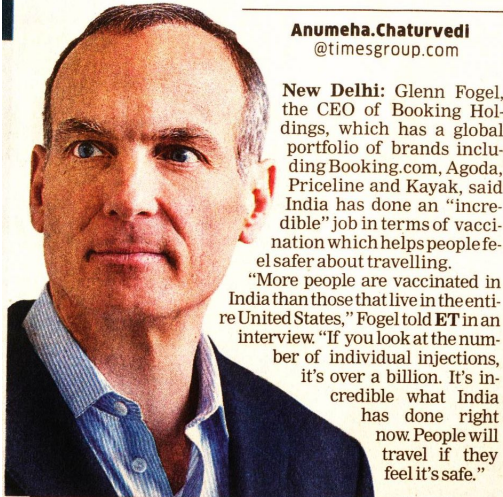
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feel safer about travelling. **Anumeha**

**Chaturvedi** reports. ►► **INSIDE JACKET**

# 'PM's Vision Behind Dekho Apna Desh is Powerful'

**BUILDING ON OPPORTUNITIES** Booking Holdings CEO Glenn Fogel says the company plans to sell airline tickets in India next year



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**New Delhi:** Glenn Fogel, the CEO of Booking Holdings, which has a global portfolio of brands including Booking.com, Agoda, Priceline and Kayak, said India has done an "incredible" job in terms of vaccination which helps people feel safer about travelling. "More people are vaccinated in India than those that live in the entire United States," Fogel told ET in an interview. "If you look at the number of individual injections, it's over a billion. It's incredible what India has done right now. People will travel if they feel it's safe."



## ON INDIA'S VACCINATION DRIVE



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**GLENN FOGEL** CEO of Booking Holdings

He said as the world will get out of the pandemic, India will go back to where it really was — a growth area for travel — as it should be. "The Prime Minister's vision of Dekho Apna Desh, the idea that people should see their own country is really powerful. Get people travelling. There is so much to see in India. Look at all the great things. The number of people in the country who can travel. It's just an opportunity for anybody in the industry to really build a great business," he said. The company, which has been looking at a long-term strategy of a connected trip, bringing together all the elements

of travel, not just hotels and homes but also flights and on-ground transportation, also plans to sell airline tickets in India next year. The company operates its Booking.com brand and the Agoda brand in India. "We have been building Booking.com... about two years ago, we started doing flights. We had done it before but as part of our overall connected trip, we are supporting flights. We are not yet doing flights in India. But we will be. I expect that in 2022, we will also be doing flights in India as we continue to build out our travel opportunities for consumers," said Fogel.

He said: "It's important to provide all the services for travel because it's frustrating if you do one service with one company and another service with another company. It takes a lot of time."

Fogel said while the industry is anxiously waiting for more scientific assessments on the new variant and its implications, more countries around the world should be putting in more efforts to detect variants faster. "It's amazing to me that almost two years into this pandemic, globally we don't seem to have as much surveillance as we should. I am not going to second guess the governments," he said. "What I will say though is after having learnt that it's (Omicron) already there throughout different countries, maybe then we can say okay, now we have to be a little bit smarter and see what type of restrictions. Do we want to do a better job of checking people? Are they sick before they get on the plane? Things of that nature can also be ways to allow for travel

and allow for safety."

That's the type of thing that governments need to do, said Fogel. "I was very disappointed with the United States. The country took so long to allow people as tourists from countries that had

much safer data in terms of infection rates than the US did. I was happy that it finally happened, but now of course we have this new variant and new restrictions, etc."

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Fogel said he hopes scientists will conclude that the new Omicron variant is not more severe. "At which point then, hopefully, governments will react just as fast in taking down restrictions as they were in putting them up. One thing that no virus can defeat is the desire to travel. That desire is there no matter what. If people will find a safe way to travel, they will travel," he said.