

HOSPITALITY

Talk

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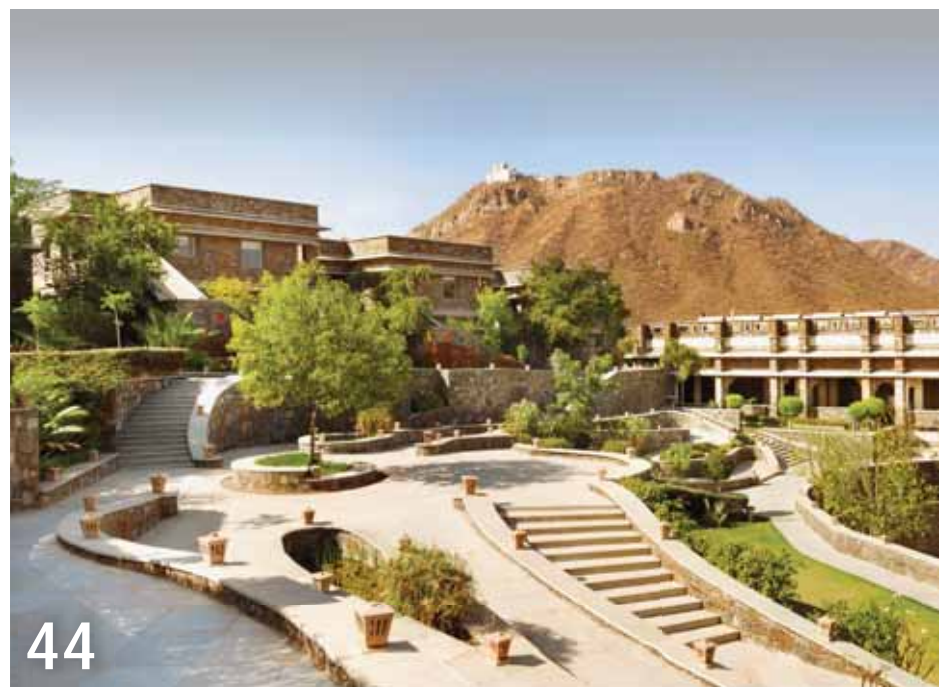
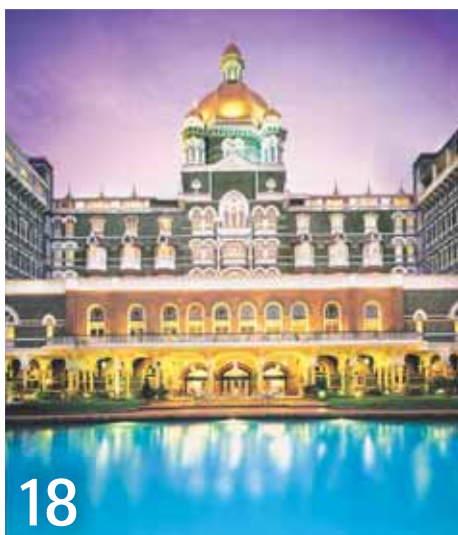
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HANDICRAFTS INDIA YEAR BOOK

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NORTH INDIA

The Oberoi, New Delhi reopens after a two-year renovation

An iconic hotel of the capital city, The Oberoi, New Delhi has reopened after an extensive renovation of two years. The interiors of the hotel have been redone, including the refurbishment of its soft furnishings. The hotel has started taking reservations as well. Despite being

contemporary, The Oberoi, New Delhi has managed to retain the essence of heritage within its premises. The hotel has 220 rooms and suites inspired by Lutyens' New Delhi design, with authentic furnishings and handpicked artwork.



WEST INDIA

ibis debuts in Hinjewadi, Pune, with 136 rooms

InterGlobe Hotels and AccorHotels have announced the opening of ibis Pune Hinjewadi (IPH), AccorHotels' third property in the city. Featuring 136 well-appointed rooms, the hotel is strategically located in close proximity to the Mumbai-Bengaluru highway, the International Biotech Park, and various multinational corporations.

Jean-Michel Cassé, Chief Operating

Officer, India and South Asia, AccorHotels, says, "This is our first ibis property to debut in Hinjewadi Phase-II. India is a core expansion market and we are delighted to see the demand for international hospitality brands grow in the country. The key to our development over the last 10 years has been the iconic acceptance of the ibis brand by Indian consumers. The launch of ibis Pune Hinjewadi gives us an opportunity to showcase the 18th ibis hotel in the country and highlight AccorHotels' growing network in the western region."



SOUTH INDIA

Hyatt Place opens in Hyderabad with 147 rooms

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has opened its first Hyatt Place hotel in Hyderabad. The hotel offers 147 rooms and suites, more than 5,000 sqft of indoor meeting space, as well as a pre-function area measuring 3571 sqft. The meeting spaces are spread over two floors and each floor has a large meeting room measuring 2475 sqft and 2528 sqft, respectively, to be used as a whole or divided into three equal parts for smaller meetings and events. The 5,000-sqft open terrace is the ideal space to host corporate and social events. "We are excited to introduce Hyatt Place Hyderabad/Banjara Hills as the third Hyatt-branded hotel to open in the city of Hyderabad, joining Park Hyatt Hyderabad and Hyatt Hyderabad, Gachibowli, which have already created a strong affinity for the Hyatt brand among travellers. Hyatt Place Hyderabad/Banjara Hills has been designed specifically with our guests in mind, blending comfort with convenience. Our guests are constantly on the move and we want to make sure they can easily accomplish what they need to do while on the road, making their journey easier, more productive, and successful," says **Kurt Straub**, Vice President of Operations for India, Hyatt.

PAN INDIA

Lemon Tree India plans big for this financial year

Lemon Tree is set to open five hotels in the management and four in the ownership space. **Rattan Keswani**, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels, says, "In the management piece, we are opening around five hotels in the next three and a half months and in the ownership piece, this financial year we are opening four hotels. We will be opening a hotel in Sohna Road, we have taken on two running hotels in J&K, and there is another one in the build. So, we are opening up in Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Jammu. All three should be ready in the first week of March. In the summer, we are opening in Aligarh and Coorg and will open towards the end of February or early March in Siliguri. In the owned piece, this fiscal we have Pune, we have our first hotels in Mumbai, Kolkata, and then we have a hotel in Dehradun coming up. These are the committed pieces that will come along."



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PAN INDIA

Hotelivate expands India operations

Hotelivate has formally launched in the Asia Pacific region. It presently has offices in Delhi and Mumbai, with Singapore and Bangkok opening soon. This announcement comes on the heels of HVS restructuring its business in India earlier this year, whereby it moved its non-core services to a separate entity, Hotelivate. Now, with the launch of the expansive role of Hotelivate, the entire erstwhile team of HVS India will cease to exist under the HVS trademark and will operate under the new brand identity of Hotelivate. Speaking on the occasion, **Manav Thadani**, Founder Chairman of Hotelivate, said, "As HVS, we were able to bring in systems and processes never seen before in the region and that helped us establish a niche for ourselves as consultants. It's with great pleasure that we announce the expansive role of Hotelivate, adding more services to our portfolio as we begin a new journey in consulting. A change in name does not change our commitment to excellence and passion for all things hospitality."



Some of Asia Pacific's most successful conferences, previously hosted by HVS, will now continue under the Hotelivate banner, namely Hotel Investment Conference – South Asia (HICSA), Hotel Operations Summit India (HOSI), Tourism Hotel Investment & Networking Conference (THINC) Indonesia & Sri Lanka, and the inaugural THINC Innovate, Bangkok.

PAN INDIA

Hyatt revises minimum cancellation policy

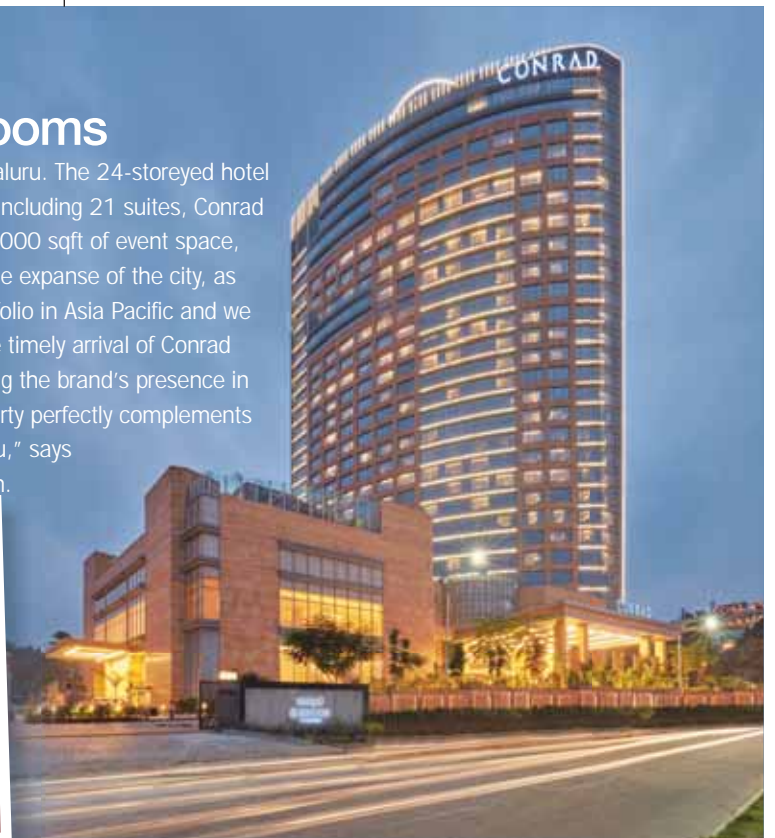
Effective for reservations made or changed on or after January 1, 2018, Hyatt will implement a revised minimum cancellation policy that allows hotels to manage guest room availability more effectively, including offering rooms and upgrades to rooms that would have otherwise gone unoccupied. This new default cancellation policy requires guests to cancel their reservations at least 48 hours in advance to avoid a cancellation fee. Each Hyatt hotel may continue to set its own cancellation policy based on local market dynamics and expectations, hence, guests are encouraged to check the cancellation policy at the time of booking. It will continue to be transparently communicated at the time of booking and in guest emails.

While this change is designed to improve room availability, the group recognises that flexibility is also important and will offer relaxed criteria for its most frequent guests. Beginning with reservations made or changed on January 1, 2018, World of Hyatt Explorist, Globalist or Lifetime Globalist members will be able to cancel up to 24 hours before arrival when the hotel's cancellation policy is 48 hours. This relaxed criteria will apply to all hotels excluding Hyatt Residence Club resorts, Miraval resorts, and M life resort destinations, and exclude pre-paid and non-refundable rates. It will also not apply when a hotel's cancellation policy exceeds 48 hours.

SOUTH INDIA

Conrad Bengaluru opens with 285 rooms

Conrad Hotels & Resorts has expanded in India with the opening of Conrad Bengaluru. The 24-storeyed hotel is owned by Prestige Group and managed by Hilton. Featuring 285 guest rooms, including 21 suites, Conrad Bengaluru offers five dining and bar experiences, a full-service spa and salon, 17,000 sqft of event space, a 24-hour fitness centre, and a temperature-controlled infinity pool overlooking the expanse of the city, as well as a dedicated kids pool. "Conrad Bengaluru is an addition to our luxury portfolio in Asia Pacific and we are delighted to be partnering with the Prestige Group on this exciting project. The timely arrival of Conrad Bengaluru in India demonstrates Conrad Hotels & Resorts' commitment to growing the brand's presence in the country, complementing its sister property, Conrad Pune. This landmark property perfectly complements the vibrant city and will set the benchmark for luxury accommodation in Bengaluru," says **Daniel Welk**, Vice President - Operations, Luxury and Lifestyle, Asia Pacific, Hilton.



WEST INDIA

Royal Orchid Hotels opens new property in Dwarka, Gujarat

Royal Orchid Hotels has opened its new hotel in Dwarka, Regenta Inn The Dwarika, taking the number of properties under Royal Orchid group to 46. Situated at a walking distance from the main shrine of Dwarkadhish Temple also known as Jagat Mandir, the hotel offers a range of rooms under the categories of Deluxe, Executive, Royal Suites, Club, and Family Suites. **Chander K. Baljee**, Managing Director, Royal Orchid Hotels, says, "We are taking continuous steps towards expanding our presence all over India. The new hotel launch in Dwarka is one such move towards our aim. By now we have added five properties – Mysuru, Ahmedabad, Dehradun, Kanpur, and Dwarka in the current fiscal year. We are on target to take the number of properties to 50 under the Royal Orchid group before the end of this fiscal year. We will continue to pursue our model of management contracts to build our hospitality business."

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PAN INDIA

Country Inns & Suites by Carlson is now Country Inn & Suites by Radisson

Country Inns & Suites by Carlson has changed its name to Country Inn & Suites by Radisson. This change will allow the brand and the individual hotels to leverage the global recognition and strength of the Radisson brand.

The consumer-facing changes will be made in stages throughout the first half of 2018. Changes will include a new visual identity, updated logo, and refreshed marketing and hotel collateral. "We are thrilled that Country Inn & Suites will have a new name aligning it more closely with our Radisson brands. The hotels will benefit from increased name awareness among new and prospective guests, while retaining the brand essence of modern country warmth enjoyed by our current guests," says **Ken Greene**, President, Americas, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group.



WEST INDIA

The Fern – An Ecotel Hotel opens in Akota, Vadodara

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has launched The Fern - An Ecotel Hotel, Akota-Vadodara. This is the second Fern property in the city. The hotel offers 72 rooms in two categories- Winter Green and The Fern Club Rooms. Dining options include Zeste, a multi-cuisine, all-day dining restaurant and 24-hour in-room dining service. The banqueting facility comprises Magnolia and Terraco banquet halls and a meeting room, Aster. **Suhail Kannampilly**, Chief Operating Officer, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, says, "The Fern, Akota-Vadodara gives us another opportunity to host our guests in Vadodara. We have a strong presence in Gujarat with nine hotels operational in seven cities and we look forward to further consolidate this."



NORTH INDIA

Relish Cantonese cuisine at Andaz Delhi's 'The Hong Kong Club'

Andaz Delhi has announced the opening of The Hong Kong Club, a multi-level evening destination that promises to take guests through the exciting dining experiences and nightlife of pulsating Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Club features modern Cantonese dishes and small plate servings prepared by authentic Chinese chefs, a contemporary bar that elevates to a club lounge, and exciting live entertainment that is reflective of the energy and striking contrasts of one of Asia's most buzzing cities. The Hong Kong Club aims to be a premiere location for the finest entertainment in the capital. A large variety of spectacular acts, including exotic dancers, themed shows, aerialists, and acrobats will be seen performing regularly.

Speaking on The Hong Kong Club's food philosophy, **Alex Moser**, Executive Chef, Andaz Delhi, says, "Working with Chef Fuhai, Chef de Cuisine at The Hong Kong Club, we have created a menu inspired by Hong Kong Cantonese cooking, using carefully sourced ingredients, many from our local partners and time-honoured techniques brought up to date. As a result, we have created a modern menu with punchy flavours and the occasional edgy twist."



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EUROPE

Mandarin Oriental, Paris, launches the Christian Louboutin experience

Inspired by Valentine's Day, Mandarin Oriental, Paris, is offering guests a Christian Louboutin manicure experience as part of a romantic accommodation package. Guests booking this February's 'Be my Parisian Valentine by Christian Louboutin' offer will receive beauty products and a lip and eye application at the luxury accessories brand's Christian Louboutin Paris Beauté boutique. Also available in February is the hotel's special 'Treat for Two' spa offer for couples.



EUROPE

Hilton Lake Como, Italy, opens with 170 rooms

Hilton Lake Como, Italy, Hilton's first property in the region, has recently opened. The property features 170 guest rooms from which visitors can enjoy a spectacular view of the lake. It is the largest hotel in Lake Como. The hotel has 21 suites, three of which offer lake-view private terraces complete with private whirlpools and sunbeds. "The opening of Hilton's first property in Lake Como exemplifies the brand's commitment to expanding its presence in iconic and exciting destinations that matter most to travellers from all over the world. This new hotel, with its remarkable rooftop and impressive lake views, serves as the perfect addition to our expanding portfolio of hotels and resorts. We are excited to offer guests an unforgettable stay as well as our trusted service and hospitality," says **Andreas Lackner**, Regional Head, Full Service Brand Management, Hilton.

ASIA

St. Regis to open in Hong Kong with 129 suites

St. Regis Hotels & Resorts has collaborated with China Resources Property and is slated to bring the legendary St. Regis brand to Hong Kong by early 2019. Marriott International has nine properties in Hong Kong, but this will be the first property for the St. Regis brand in the city. St. Regis Hong Kong will offer 129 guest suites, many of which will feature stunning views across Victoria Harbour and Kowloon Bay. The property will also have a 320-seat banquet hall among other amenities. "Hong Kong is a bustling centre of commerce with an incredible mix of glamour, culture, history, and tradition. This vibrancy makes it an ideal destination for St. Regis," says **Lisa Holladay**, Vice President and Global Brand Leader, St. Regis Hotels & Resorts.

EUROPE

Radisson Blu opens in Vienna with 233 rooms

Radisson Blu has opened its second hotel in Vienna, Austria. Radisson Blu Park Royal Palace Hotel, Vienna, is a rebranding of an existing hotel and has opened its doors under a new umbrella to offer memorable and unique experiences that meet the promises of the hotel brand. At the 233-room property, guests have an all-day restaurant and lobby bar, executive lounge, gym, sauna, and relaxation area at their disposal. The property also features a ballroom, with more than 600 sqm of space and a total capacity of 500 people, along with nine modern seminar rooms.



EAST ASIA

W Hotels scheduled to debut in Osaka in 2021

W Hotels Worldwide has signed the W Osaka, slated to open in 2021. Owned by Sekisui House, this opening will be the first-ever W in Japan. The 27-floor, new-build hotel will boast a bold W design, sparking imagination in each of its 337 guest rooms and suites. "In 2020, Japan will welcome nations for the 2020 games. This is a great build-up to the launch of the first-ever W in Japan," says **Anthony Ingham**, Global Brand Leader, W Hotels Worldwide.

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Deep Kalra, Chairman & Group CEO, MakeMyTrip

Deepak Bagla, Chief Executive Officer & MD, Invest India

Dr. Ankur Bhatia, Executive Director, Bird Group

Gaurav Bhushan, Global Chief Development Officer, AccorHotels

Katerina Giannouka, President - APAC, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group

Kenneth Macpherson, Chief Executive Officer - EMEA, IHG

Nakul Anand, Executive Director, ITC Limited

Patu Keswani, Chairman & MD, Lemon Tree Hotels Limited

Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO, Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris

Ritesh Agarwal, Founder & CEO, OYO Rooms

Siddhartha Gupta, Managing Director Real Estate, The Blackstone Group

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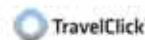
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SOUTHEAST ASIA

ONYX partners with JR Kyushu for Shama Lakeview Asoke Bangkok

Thailand-based ONYX Hospitality Group and JR Kyushu Business Development (Thailand) have entered a partnership for Shama Lakeview Asoke, a 429-key serviced-apartment complex in the prime central Bangkok business, entertainment, and residential district of Asoke. Following JR Kyushu's purchase of the existing property on Sukhumvit Soi, the company has appointed ONYX Hospitality Group as the hotel management service provider for this property under its Shama brand. The launch of the property as Shama Lakeview Asoke Bangkok is scheduled for April 1, 2018. This project signifies the first major investment in Thailand by JR Kyushu, and ONYX Hospitality Group's first collaboration with a Japanese institutional partner.



EAST ASIA

Carlson Rezidor signs Radisson Zhengzhou in China

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has signed a management agreement for Radisson Zhengzhou with Henan Longzhu Hotel Management. Scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2022, the 210-key property is located at Zhengdong New District in China. A capital city of Henan province, Zhengzhou is an emerging Tier-I city that serves as a hub for the nation's railroad, aviation, highway, electric power, post, and telecommunications. "Zhengzhou is an important



economic epicentre in central China. Zhengdong New District has transformed itself into a thriving global metropolitan, an upcoming financial and business hub demonstrating its dynamic drive and vitality in the region. Carlson Rezidor is confident in the future growth of Zhengzhou and we are honoured to partner Henan Longzhu Hotel Management in the development of the city," says **Katerina Giannouka**, President, Asia Pacific, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group.

AFRICA

Radisson Blu opens second hotel in Lagos

Radisson Blu has opened its third hotel in Nigeria, and its second hotel in the country's largest city, Lagos. Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group now has a portfolio of 85 hotels and over 17,800 rooms in operation and under development in Africa. **Tim Cordon**, Area Senior Vice President, Middle East, Turkey and Africa, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, says, "We are thrilled to be expanding our presence in Nigeria, one of Africa's economic powerhouses, with the opening of Radisson Blu Hotel Lagos Ikeja. We have identified Nigeria as a key country for scaled growth, and the addition of our second Radisson Blu in the megacity of Lagos perfectly complements our development strategy. We are confident the appeal of the international upper-upscale Radisson Blu brand and the excellent location of the hotel will attract strong business from both international and domestic travellers."





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SOUTHEAST ASIA

Mövenpick signs new property in Manila with 350 rooms and 250 residences

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has signed a new property in Manila, expanding its portfolio in the Philippines to three properties. Due to open in the fourth quarter of 2021, Mövenpick Hotel & Residences Quezon City will feature a combination of 350 contemporary hotel rooms and suites and 250 stylish residences. All 600 units will offer state-of-the-art technology and upscale amenities, making the hotel ideal for both short and extended stays in Quezon City. Located in Metro Manila and featuring a business centre and extensive meeting space, the modern hotel is expected to appeal to leisure and corporate guests, as well as groups. "The Philippines, which is emerging as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, is a target development market as we continue our expansion drive across Asia," says **Andrew Langdon**, Global Chief Development Officer, Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts.

EUROPE

Revamped Kempinski Hotel Bahia to open in February

January marks another milestone for the hotel, which is currently closed for a redesign and will open on February 16, 2018. The renovation will provide the 145-room hotel with a new lobby and unveil the new food and beverage project- El Paseo del Mar. **Carla Lopes**, General Manager, Kempinski Hotel Bahia, says, "I am extremely proud to lead this project, where we will bring our next vision and bold new approach to such a sought-after and vibrant destination as Costa del Sol." The project will enhance the hotel's quintessentially elegant status with modern and opulent characteristics, embracing the very essence of Kempinski Hotels.



MIDDLE EAST

Le Grand Amman opens its doors in Jordan

AccorHotels has rebranded a prominent landmark hotel in Jordan to Le Grand Amman. The property, consisting of 298 rooms and 67 serviced apartments, is situated in close proximity to the upcoming Abdali Downtown Project, a groundbreaking development that is set to become Amman's premiere leisure, tourism, and business hub. Catering to a growing number of business travellers, the hotel is located at the centre of the Shmeisani commercial hub, close to key ministries. **Sami Nasser**, Chief Operating Officer, Luxury Brands, AccorHotels Middle East, says, "This opening signifies the strategic expansion of our luxury portfolio in Jordan. While this property will be operated as Le Grand Amman - Managed by AccorHotels, we are delighted to announce that it will transition into Sofitel, making way for the entry of one of our most prolific luxury brands in Jordan."



EUROPE

Hyatt Place enters German market with hotel in Frankfurt

Hyatt Hotels has opened Hyatt Place Frankfurt Airport, marking the introduction of the Hyatt Place brand to Germany. Hyatt Place Frankfurt Airport joins six Hyatt Place hotels across Europe. The growth of the Hyatt Place brand in Europe highlights the growing importance of Hyatt's select service properties across the region. "We are delighted to welcome guests to Hyatt Place Frankfurt Airport. The hotel has been designed specifically with our guests in mind, blending comfort with convenience. Our guests are constantly on the move and we want to make sure they can easily accomplish what they need to do while on the road. We are confident that Hyatt Place Frankfurt Airport will help make our guests' journey easier, more productive, and successful," says **Ines Bruenn**, General Manager, Hyatt Place Frankfurt Airport.



M Greener pastures for Marriott

Gaurav Apte, General Manager, Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad, enlists the unique selling features of the property and how the region's hospitality industry has grown in the past few years. He goes on to talk about the expectations in 2018.



HT Bureau

TELL US ABOUT THE USP OF THE PROPERTY.

Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad is one of the few hotels in the city to offer an Executive Lounge facility that is ideal for business travellers who prefer working in privacy, as the access is restricted to only guests staying on the Executive floors.

The hotel's extensive reach in the market and reputation for providing customised services have also established it as the preferred hotel for long-stay business travellers from around the world. Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad is also the only hotel in the city to offer mobile check-in and cars equipped with Wi-Fi. The hotel also houses Beverages & Wines, a retail liquor store. In the dry state of Gujarat, this serves as an advantage to foreign guests by presenting them with more than 300 labels of beverages from around the world.

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN THE CITY?

The rapid expansion of industrial areas on the western periphery of Ahmedabad has contributed to the

hotel market's growth in the recent past. Looking ahead, this area is likely to continue driving business in the city, albeit at a slower pace, as demand from the region is expected to plateau in the short term. The city benefits from the events sector to fuel demand and better business. The underlying message is the power of MICE and creation of events by the government, manufacturing, BFSI and services sector, chambers and institutions, sports bodies, etc. As more branded hotels enter the market with supply evenly paced, we expect the market-wide performance to continue improving in the coming years.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS IN TERMS OF ARR AND OCCUPANCY IN 2018?

Depending on market conditions and the competition in the market, the expectation from 2018 would be to match the 2017 revenue, if not exceed it. Citywide events will attract business travellers from all over the world, which will help occupancies and average rates for all the hotels in the city. We have renovated our rooms and common spaces, and with our focus on training our associates, we are confident on delivering both fantastic business

results and enhanced guest experience. The hotel's main strategy will be to offer flexible and value for money packages for transient and group business to drive volumes through the year.

WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?

An increase in the number of competing hotels is a big challenge. It is difficult to be able to retain the clientele with bigger and better products entering the market. Driving the average rate is also a concern, considering the additional supply in the market.

WHAT WILL BE YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY THIS YEAR?

Our focus remains on digital marketing, covering all possible channels for quick understanding of our customer needs and their feedback. We do some key room and F&B promotions through the year in order to attract local food connoisseurs and bloggers, both of which are constantly updated through our website and social channels. A lot of our focus has been to develop our relationship with key opinion leaders of the city, as the trend for marketing seems to be shifting towards more real-time interactions.





INDIA TO SEE MORE OF IHG

IHG recently conferred degrees to 11 students as part of its I-Grad programme aimed at preparing students for professional competition and enriching the hospitality industry with skilled individuals. **Pascal Gauvin**, COO, IHG, India, Middle East and Africa, tells us about the future plans of IHG in India and more.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE I-GRAD PROGRAMME.

I-Grad is a programme to develop our future leaders in the company. We select them in the university in India and we bring them after 18 months to managerial jobs. It's a part of our strategy; we are growing our business in India and we have 38 hotels to open, out of which 31 are already open. We need to have more talent. We have many programmes like this to develop people's skills at different levels; it's part of our DNA. When people learn, they deliver what is needed to succeed in this business. If students want to come and work abroad, they can do that; if they want to change a brand, they

can do that. We are the enablers of their career. That said, these students need to acquire the skills, the right leadership, and the right experience to make sure they can continue evolving.

HOW WAS 2017 FOR IHG?

The previous year was great for IHG and the business is still growing. We have opened many hotels, we have signed a new deal with SAMHI where we are going to open 14 Holiday Inn Express properties next year. That's important for us; that's the way we want to grow. It is a big reward for IHG to be chosen by such a great group like SAMHI to represent their hotel in our brand, Holiday Inn Express. We are really excited about this opportunity.

WHICH BRAND OF IHG IS THE BIGGEST REVENUE GENERATOR?

In India, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express are our core brands. We also have Crowne Plaza and InterContinental. We don't really look at it from revenue per se, we look at it to ensure we can deliver it to our guests. Also, we want to make sure that each of our brands is delivering specific needs of our guests.

IS THERE ANY NEW IHG BRAND THAT INDIA WILL SEE IN THE NEAR FUTURE? WILL YOU CONSIDER TERTIARY MARKETS FOR YOUR NEW BRAND?

We hope to bring our lifestyle brand, Hotel Indigo, in the coming years. Each time we launch a brand, we look at mega cities, but with



time, it can go to multiple locations. It depends on what our owners want to do with the brand. I am very hopeful about our Indigo brand for this market. This brand features unique design at every turn without compromising guest comfort. A vibrant modern colour palette, complemented by natural light and locally influenced design and décor, make for an inviting, stylish, and refreshing atmosphere for everyone.

HOW DIFFERENT IS INDIA AS A MARKET FROM THE MIDDLE EAST OR AFRICA?

Every region is different, every country is different. In India, IHG has been investing for many years because we believe it's a fast-growing market. It's a unique market; all our employees are Indian. It's very important to have an Indian team to run a property in the Indian market. We are learning every day. I come to India on a regular basis and I discover a lot. I help the team to grow the brand, making sure we are responding to the guest's needs and that our owners are happy with their investment and the return on their investment.

ARE THERE ANY CHALLENGES SPECIFIC TO THE INDIAN MARKET THAT YOU FACE?

There is no challenge specific to the Indian market; it is a beautiful market. The growth in the Indian market has been consistent in the last few years and is continuing. It gives us a lot of hope for developing our brand here uninterrupted. India is diverse from North to South and from East to West. We want to make sure that we develop relevant brands for guests who want to stay with us.



We hope to bring our lifestyle brand, Hotel Indigo, in the coming years. This brand features unique design at every turn



In the future

IHG has appointed **Vivek Bhalla** as Regional Vice President, South West Asia (SWA). Bhalla succeeds **Shantha de Silva**, who will now be the Senior Director, New Hotels - Australasia and Japan for IHG. Shantha de Silva gives us a brief look into the future.

2017 for IHG

2017 has been a fantastic year if you look at how we performed and if you look at IHG PLC, every quarter, India has been singled-out for its phenomenal RevPAR growth. This shows our business is growing. On the one hand we have good growth in terms of our personnel and on the other we have good growth in business.



New role

I am going to be running the best resorts in the region, from Indonesia and Thailand to Fiji, Vietnam, and Tahiti. I am looking forward to creating a difference with our resorts. It will be hard to beat India, with the love of the people here and their passion, but it is going to be an exciting role.

Goals 2018

In India, IHG is going to have a phenomenal year. Our hotel portfolio is going to grow by one-third in 2018. That alone is going to bring us huge growth. We signed one of the biggest deals in the hospitality industry with Wyndham. This growth is going to continue.



This is how they

It is that time of the year when couples are exchanging tender whispers of a lifelong pledge. Behind the scenes though, things are a bit chaotic. We speak to top planners to find out how many notches the wedding segment has climbed and the client's evolving needs.

“do’ it



Mahesh Shirodkar



Hazel Jain

Wedding, the ultimate life event, remains one of the most aspirational moments in the life of Indian couples. These days, anything less than a destination wedding, even if it's close by, is not brag-worthy. With millennial couples though, things get edgier and that's when event planners can test their mettle.

Tamarind Global, one of the foremost event companies in India, undertakes an impressive number of weddings, especially high-end celebrity weddings. **Mahesh Shirodkar**, Managing Director, Tamarind Global, has a beautiful take on what weddings are like these days. He says, "Hybrid weddings are the new thing this season where the larger functions like engagement, wedding, and reception are in the family hometown and a smaller select

group is taken to an exotic destination for the *sangeet*, *mehendi*, cocktail, and other peripheral functions. Nowadays, clients are putting less emphasis on décor and more on experiential elements like food and entertainment. The regular format was three nights, but due to various reasons like escalating costs and pressure of entertaining guests, most people now tend to stick to two nights."

Tamarind works closely with most of the big hotel chains, especially those with great outdoor venues and sizeable banquet halls. Shirodkar also talks about the impact of GST on the wedding business. "Weddings are a recession-free business. The variances in spending may occur with budget cuts. While tax percentage on rooms is up, the percentage on F&B is

definitely down. Hence, there is no major concern for a direct impact of GST on wedding spends," he says.

Having said that, the wedding business is no piece of cake. "Hand-holding and nurturing is a given. We handle weddings on a turnkey basis. We become the single point of contact, from hospitality and guest relations to logistics, RSVP, event production, décor, entertainment, and artists. Bringing the smallest of elements together in a seamless way is what we bring to the table. The wedding business is a growing vertical for us and the size and scale of weddings is getting bigger, evolving with the new trends. The pitch is what I like when you meet the family for the first time and they are assessing you and your abilities. From then on, once we are on board, the entire journey up to execution is what is exciting and the culmination of a

successful event with gratification is the best part," he adds.

Shirodkar expects the next few years to see an emergence of wedding 'curators' rather than wedding 'planners'. "The business of weddings will get even more demanding and clients will want newer destinations and value for money. However, the cumulative value turnover for weddings will always be fairly exponential," he says.

EXPERIENTIAL WEDDINGS

Just over a year old, Milestones to Memories (MtoM) is a sister company of Harvey World Destinations, collaborative strategic business partners, so to speak.

Aarti Manocha, Managing Partner, Harvey World Destinations, feels that the trend has been to host weddings in India and destinations close by. "However, people are happy to go to newer and experiential destinations for their weddings. The previous year has been relatively slow for weddings as compared to the one before. Fewer auspicious dates and demonetisation are to blame. Weddings the year before were on a smaller scale with tighter budgets and mostly within India," she says.

There is also more emphasis on entertainment, especially the *sangeet* night that is bound to have a Bollywood music band and a trend of international DJs for after-parties. The company curates the entire project, from destination selection to finalising the décor designer, and from selection of artists to creating

special menus and food experiences. "We have an experienced and passionate team dedicated to wedding projects. I am personally involved in most of the projects. We ensure that we do limited and quality work, as the wedding season is short. We also do not take overlapping projects," Manocha adds.

MtoM likes to work in destinations such as Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Goa, and Hyderabad. They have partnered with most of the hotels in these destinations. "In the wedding business, the selection of the hotel depends on a lot of factors, including the client's dream venue and where they get a positive vibe," Manocha says.

With the GST going up by three per cent for events business, the impact has not been direct, wherein the clients have an objection to pay the GST on their wedding billing. "Indirectly, it has affected business as the spend on weddings has reduced," she adds.

LUXURIOUS WEDDINGS

Destination Globe is well-known for dreamy weddings and they do one grand wedding in a year. **Parul Mehta**, Partner, Destination Globe, says, "That is the intention and we are good with that since it is not the only aspect of our business. We cater to the segment by putting in the right amount of time and energy. Since all our weddings are very high-profile, I get involved personally."

Speaking about the trend that is getting popular with such weddings, she says, "Pre-wedding shoots, themed youngster parties, brunches, *ghazal* nights, Bollywood star appearances, shooting the entire wedding like a movie, drones for aerial photography, full buyout of the resort or a small town and making it their home for the next few days mark the luxury in weddings. Most Indian couples want a grand wedding ceremony away from city life and so, choosing a beautiful wedding destination has become a trend."

Mehta loves to work with hotels like The Oberoi Rajvilas, Leela Palace Udaipur, Taj Falaknuma Palace, and Umaid Bhavan in Jodhpur. "Having said that, we don't do weddings only in India. We try to suggest destinations where no Indian weddings have taken place, particularly places that have direct flights," Mehta adds.

RECESSION-PROOF INDUSTRY

If there is any industry that is almost recession-proof, says **Birju Gariba**, CEO & Executive Director, Platinum World Group, it is the wedding industry. This is because it is usually a once-in-a-lifetime expense and has a prestige value attached to it. "Although the industry currently shows a bit of slowdown, the coming months will show a good spurt in spends. This segment, especially from a destination perspective, is exploding and the banquets of local cities are now passé. The options have expanded from within and around India to places like Europe,



Aarti Manocha



Parul Mehta





Birju Gariba

Australia, and the Americas. The change has also prompted a shift of functions and themes to bring alive a local flavour," he says.

Of course, GST has had its effect. Gariba says, "It has taken our industry by storm, however, for a lot of HNIs who engage wedding planners, GST has already made its place and hence, it soon will for the industry as well."

Speaking about some of the favoured hotels for weddings, Gariba names Umaid Bhavan Palace, Rambagh Palace, and Jagmandir Palace in Udaipur in India. "Each of these hotels has the most spectacular space and their grandeur brings a different level of visual appeal. Otherwise, the most conducive hotel chains are The Taj, The Leela, and of course, The Oberoi, with some Hyatt and Marriott properties providing good support, given the logistical requirements," he says.

Platinum handles services from scouting venues to the honeymoon, only leaving out the matchmaking process. They have a special Operations and Client Servicing team that takes care of this segment. "The beauty of this business is that it works with the word of mouth and efforts to do BDM are minimal. The entertainment part takes a lot of focus. Reality TV shows have exploded the choice of entertainment. We have seen artists from Bollywood to international pop stars perform



at weddings, but most popular are the playback singers on *sangeet* nights or performers from various dance reality shows. Foreign performing artists, too, are popular," Gariba says.

ABSOLUTE WOW!

Chennai-based Baywatch Travels, meanwhile, has taken a different route to stand out in the wedding segment. It usually undertakes the core of the wedding requirements, like ticketing, logistics, accommodation, banqueting, designing, and decoration. **Manish Kriplani**, Managing Director, Baywatch Travels, says, "We are an IATA agency, so our ticketing and visa department is our strength over other wedding planners. Our DMC arm helps us connect with hotels that we deal with on a daily basis for our leisure segment."

Destination weddings are ruling the roost right now and most of his clients from Chennai are looking for new locations in Sri Lanka, Langkawi, Bali, Phuket, and Dubai. They prefer direct flights and visa on arrival. "When clients attend other weddings, they are convinced that this is the way to go as it's practi-

cal and surprisingly cheaper than having it in their hometown, as they filter the crowd and get to spend time with people who matter," Kriplani says.

Baywatch has organised weddings that have no emphasis on entertainment, but the basics need to be provided, like in Phuket they have Simon Caberet and a Russian aerialist in Bali. "What is important is a luxurious venue, grand banqueting, and a lavish *mandap*. Initially, there was a slowdown because of GST as nothing was clear. However, parents don't hold back when it comes to weddings," he adds.

Speaking about his preferred hotels, he says that there are a few hotels that have weddings booked every single day during the season. But if it's out of India, there are several options. "Whether in India or overseas, we are comfortable with Marriott and Starwood because the GSO not only connects us to the right people in the hotel but also helps us with negotiations and hand-holds us until the end of the wedding," he says.

TOP FIVE PLACES IN INDIA FOR A DESTINATION WEDDING – BY MAKEMYTRIP EXPERT

Goa
Goa is perfect for a romantic wedding by the beach. It is undoubtedly a great choice when it comes to tying the knot and couples will be spoilt for choice for the kind of wedding they want – a beach wedding, a garden wedding or even a sunset wedding.

A Goan wedding can be revved up with Portuguese music and dance, fireworks and even fire jugglers. Popular wedding venues in Goa include The Taj Exotica, The Leela, and the Turiya Villa and Spa. Beach weddings require a permit, which the wedding planner or hotel can help with.

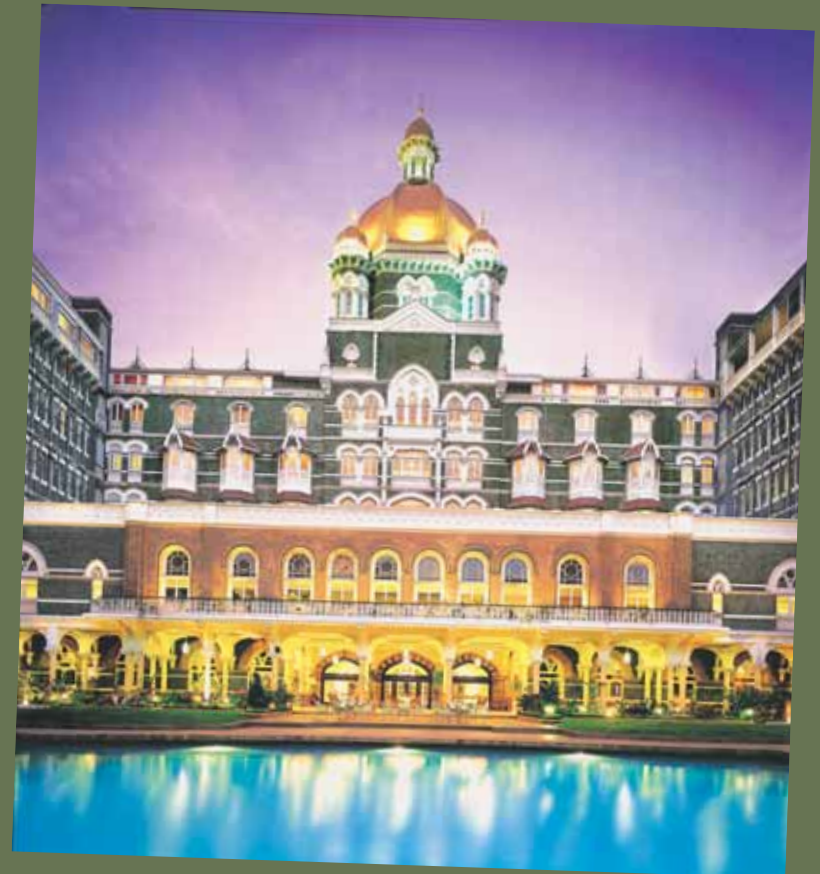
Rajasthan
From grand havelis to royal palaces, couples have a plethora of choices here for a royal wedding. Udaipur remains a popular venue owing to its romantic ambience and many beautiful lakes and royal palaces. Also known as the Venice of the

East, Udaipur has many gorgeous wedding venues such as Devi Garh, a rambling eighteenth-century fort and palace, or the City Palace Com-

plex, where the Mewar royal family still resides. Jaipur is another wonderful city for weddings with venues such as the Jal Mahal Palace, situated in the middle of a lake, or the Samode Palace – a heritage venue nestled in the Aravalli Mountains.

If opulence is what couples are looking for, then the spectacular hill top Umaid Bhavan Palace or the majestic Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur is beautiful. Those on a modest budget can choose between the equally impressive Ranbanka Palace or Ajit Bhavan.

Kerala
God's Own Country is ideal for couples looking for a quiet, yet picturesque wedding. Many hotels and resorts here assist patrons with wedding planning, and the beautiful Zuri Kumarakom resort near Alleppey is popular. The Leela in Kovalam is a great venue for a beach wedding. In case your clients opt for an elephant-themed wedding, there is a traditional Malayalee wedding ceremony available, complete with food served on a plantain leaf and a classical dance performance by a local troupe.



Agra
What better way to help your clients tie the knot than with the symbol of eternal love in the backdrop. Hotels like the Jaypee and Radisson have special wedding packages.

Andamans
Planners can choose between a beach wedding, a resort wedding, a high adrenalin adventure wedding

on a speedboat or even while swimming with elephants in the sea.

The Havelock Islands are a popular wedding venue in the Andamans, and hotels and resorts like Bare-foot at Havelock can help planners plan the wedding, from arranging the wedding ceremony to caterers, florists, and decorators.



YOUR ADVICE TO HOTELS



"Some of the hotels we have worked with have tried to deal directly with clients, which I feel is not ethical. The hotel should exhibit integrity and in fact, encourage the client to communicate through the planner."

MANISH KRIPLANI



"Hotels should have professional event managers on payroll who can focus on wedding requirements, as just sales and operations managers at unit hotels are not enough. Flexibility of buyouts, flexibility of outside catering, and having qualified Indian specialty chefs, helps. Also, hotels must adopt technology to make process implementation in this segment more effective."

MAHESH SHIRODKAR

"Hotels should be flexible and understand the sensitivity around Indian weddings. They should look at having an expert in their team who can be the point of contact just for weddings."

AARTI MANOCHA





"Hotels that are geared up to do Indian weddings are doing a fairly good job already."

PARUL MEHTA



"The biggest challenge with hotels is the venue and banqueting space. They must first plan venues keeping in mind the average size of Indian weddings. Also, they should not look at weddings as another P&L account, as the involvement of emotions is bigger. They must step into the shoes of the family and try to work around their dreams without comprising on revenue."

BIRJU GARIBA

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TOP 8 HOTELS AROUND THE WORLD FOR DESTINATION WEDDINGS

BALI

KOMANEKA BISMA, UBUD

Location: Ten minutes from Ubud Market.

Why destination wedding: Celebrate your big day in a stunning Wanasmara wedding chapel. A terrace restaurant and mini amphitheatre for live music make the occasion perfect.

Wine and Dine: Lobby and pool bars; fine-dining restaurant with Indonesian, Asian, and Mediterranean delicacies.

Hotel USP: Treetop picnic lunch, Balinese cooking class, pool villas overlooking river valley and rice fields.

THE ROYAL PITA MAHA, UBUD

Location: Five minutes from Royal Palace and Ubud Market.

Why destination wedding: Say 'I do' in an intimate setting at Sacred River Pavilion amidst tropical gardens and spring water pools.

Wine and Dine: Three gourmet restaurants with the best of traditional and global food; Dewata Lounge for evening cocktails.

Hotel USP: Balinese-style villas with sun terrace and canopy, Royal Kirana Spa, classes for wood carving and painting.

MALDIVES

ADAARAN HUDHURANFUSHI

Location: Near Kani Beach on Lhohifushi Island.

Why destination wedding: With a cool breeze, sound of the ocean waves, and an air of romance, your wedding will be a memorable event.

Wine and Dine: Four bars (including poolside ones) and four restaurants offering international cuisines.

Hotel USP: Uber-cool villas with private sundeck and 24-hour access to the surrounding ocean; volleyball, surfing and more to keep guests busy.

VELASSARU

Location: Few minutes from Laguna Beach.

Why destination wedding: The perfect beachfront ceremony with Maldivian Boduberu folk music, followed by a sunset cruise in a traditional Doni.

Wine and Dine: Five restaurants that offer pan Asian seafood, Spanish tapas, Mediterranean, and international favourites; sundeck and beachfront bars for a night out also available.

Hotel USP: Spa treatment in over-water rooms, night fishing and snorkelling, the hotel's very own PADI-certified dive school.

UDAIPUR

RAMADA UDAIPUR RESORT AND SPA

Location: Near Sajjangarh Fort (Monsoon Palace), Lake Pichola.

Why destination wedding: Ten venues with traditional stonework, a central courtyard and lawns on three levels to host your royal wedding.

Wine and Dine: Myra for all-day dining, Amber for poolside dining, and Liquid Lounge Bar.

Hotel USP: City-facing swimming pool and Sohum Spa, cocktail making and cooking sessions, eco-friendly resort with themed rooms.

PURPLE SEAS HERITAGE RESORT

Location: Near Eklingji Temple.

Why destination wedding: If saying 'I do' in a heritage property has been your dream, then an outdoor ceremony against a scenic backdrop will be perfect.

Wine and Dine: A multi-cuisine restaurant with vegetables and fruits sourced from farms; barbecue and bar.

Hotel USP: Luxurious rooms with *jharokhas*, pet-friendly accommodation available.

GOA

RESORT RIO

Location: Five-minute drive from Baga Beach.

Why destination wedding: Whether you choose a grand celebration or go simple, the wedding planners here will make it a success.

Wine and Dine: Four dining options (pure vegetarian, multi-cuisine, Goan, Italian) and a lounge bar for drinks at night.

Hotel USP: Ayurvedic and herbal treatments at Zaara Spa, yoga centre, in-house salon with mineral makeup products.

PHOENIX PARK INN

Location: Close to Calangute beach and Candolim beach.

Why destination wedding: Make it a stylish affair in North Goa, along the shores of Candolim.

A perfect beach wedding indeed!

Wine and Dine: Multi-cuisine restaurant, snacks and light bites, poolside bar and barbecue with al fresco setting.

Hotel USP: Proximity to popular Goa beaches, landscaped outdoor pool.

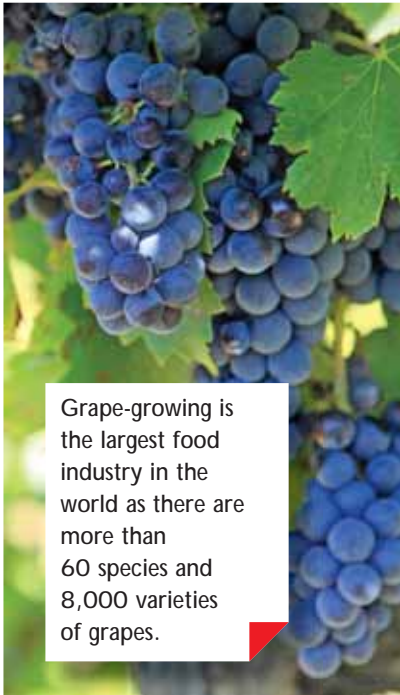


Source: www.thefactsite.com

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



If you boil beetroot in water and then massage the water onto your scalp each night, it works as an effective cure for dandruff.



Grape-growing is the largest food industry in the world as there are more than 60 species and 8,000 varieties of grapes.



Almonds are a member of the peach family.



There are more than 7,000 varieties of apple grown in the world.

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Transforming spaces

Ayuni Aziz, Project Director, Studio HBA, shares her thoughts on hotel designs of today, what makes the Indian hospitality sector stand out in this space, and design trends we may see this year.



HT Bureau

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROJECTS YOU HAVE WORKED ON.

In the past couple of years, we have had the opportunity to work on various types of projects ranging from midscale hotels to show flats, sales galleries, and wellness and fitness clubs. More importantly, we recently

completed our first hotel in Singapore; it is a midscale business hotel in the district of Little India in Singapore, where we have successfully refurbished the tiny guest rooms into very efficiently-designed guest rooms for users. The rooms have been styled with touches of vibrant colours and elements from the neighbourhood. A second hotel in the City Hall district, with influences

of colonial décor, is scheduled to be opened by the second quarter of this year.

HOW DIFFERENT IS WORKING IN INDIA AS COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES?

One great thing about working in India is the wide availability of artisans in various types of crafts, as well as an access to the expansive



textile industry. To achieve a design aesthetic that is deeply rooted in age-old traditions is still very much possible in India while it is not necessarily the same elsewhere.

WHAT MAKES INDIAN HOTELS UNIQUE?

India itself has thousands of distinct and unique cultures and communities present throughout the country, providing endless inspiration and influences in many hotel designs, from architecture and food to art and elements of fashion.

WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DOES THIS BUSINESS ENTAIL?

Every project has its own set of challenges; from a tight timeline and budget to differing opinions over designs, materials, etc. To overcome these challenges, it is important to first identify why it is a challenge and then understand the reason behind it by listening and asking the right questions. By having a two-way communication street even with the most conflicting of opinions, solutions can arise in the most unexpected manner, eventually helping overcome these challenges.

WHAT KIND OF TRENDS WILL BE SEEN IN HOTELS IN THIS YEAR WITH REGARD TO STYLE AND SUSTAINABILITY?

One of the trends that is emerging is equipping guest rooms with only the

basics or bare essentials. Designs such as open-concept wardrobe or a bedside shelf without drawers (as opposed to a freestanding nightstand) are no longer perceived as design-compromised solutions but practical ones, especially in smaller rooms. This is especially evident in focused service hotels where less is actually more. Stripped-down guest rooms not only appeal to the millennial demographic, but also appeal to hoteliers who can save costs on construction.

Another trend that is making waves is making the lobby a hang-out. By blurring the lines of a formal check-in area and a mundane seating lounge, hoteliers are now trying to reinvent these pragmatic spaces into a more warm and inviting space to make guests feel comfortable and linger a little longer, enough to make it a hang-out. By introducing sit-down check-in areas accompanied by a nearby F&B offering, the lobby no longer becomes a transit area but a destination to be seen.

IS THERE ANY CHANGE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN TERMS OF DESIGN IN THE INDIAN HOSPITALITY SPACE?

By making use of the next big thing in technology, Virtual Reality (VR), guests can get a chance to experience a 360-degree view of a room prior to booking their stay.



SHANGRI-LA'S HOSPITALITY

A conversation with **Timothy Wright**, Vice President & General Manager, Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo, gives us a clear picture of the Sri Lankan hospitality space for the group. He also explains why Asia is one of its leading markets, and how this particular property brings the best for guests to the table.



Priti Khanna

HOW WAS THE YEAR 2017 FOR THE GROUP?

In the last few years, we have seen China (we have a large part of our portfolio here) recover from some pretty difficult times and business in China has recovered. In some of the tertiary cities it is still quite challenging, but in our key cities like

Shanghai, Beijing, and Hong Kong business is buoyant. In 2017, the key challenges we had were in the Middle East; due to various political interactions, the whole region was a lot more difficult business-wise. In summary, a good part of our business was buoyant but there were some parts that were challenging.

WHAT WILL BE THE GROUP'S EXPANSION PLANS THIS YEAR?

Shangri-La Colombo is the 101st property of the group. There are still a number of properties in the development pipeline. We do have ambitions to expand considerably, but perhaps not in the same manner as we have expanded so far.



Up until now our focus has been to grow organically, so we are building our own properties and developing our own projects. This is highly capital-intensive and does take a lot of time. Now that the brand is well established, we are looking at possible management contracts. We are a little concerned that through franchising you lose control of the brand and we are learning to work with different partners.

WHAT EXPECTATIONS DO YOU HAVE FROM 2018 FOR BUSINESS AT THE PROPERTY AND GLOBALLY AS WELL?

I think we will still continue to be challenged unless the political situation changes dramatically or oil prices rise considerably. I think the rest of the world, as far as where we oper-

ate, will be positive. In India itself, our properties are doing very well, South-east Asia seems to be doing well, and China continues to strengthen.

In Colombo, the business environment is a little challenging, but I think we do have a product that we can showcase and it will attract people who are willing to spend a little more for some quality and for the facilities we provide.

WHICH ARE SHANGRI-LA'S PRIME MARKETS AND WHY?

China is our prime market because of our experience there; India, because of proximity and the close ties between the two countries that make it a key area of focus. From the leisure perspective, we have a lot of opportunity from Europe

but that is quite seasonal. From a corporate or MICE perspective, we want to help Colombo position itself amongst key MICE destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Up until now there was no facility to attract international events. This is something we are working hard to develop.

HOW DOES SHANGRI-LA, KNOWN FOR LEVERAGING ITS LEGACY OF ASIAN SERVICE SENSIBILITIES, ACHIEVE THIS?

I think it is all about the people, it's all about the software, and we have gone to great lengths to try and hire for attitude and not necessarily for experience. Although Asian in essence and DNA, we have managed to adapt our style of hospitality to some Western countries. So, we don't necessarily call it Asian hospitality anymore but call it 'Shangri-La hospitality'. Sri Lankans are inherently hospitable and content, and what we are trying to achieve is this blend of the natural, warm hospitality of the Sri Lankans with an essence of Shangri-La in it.

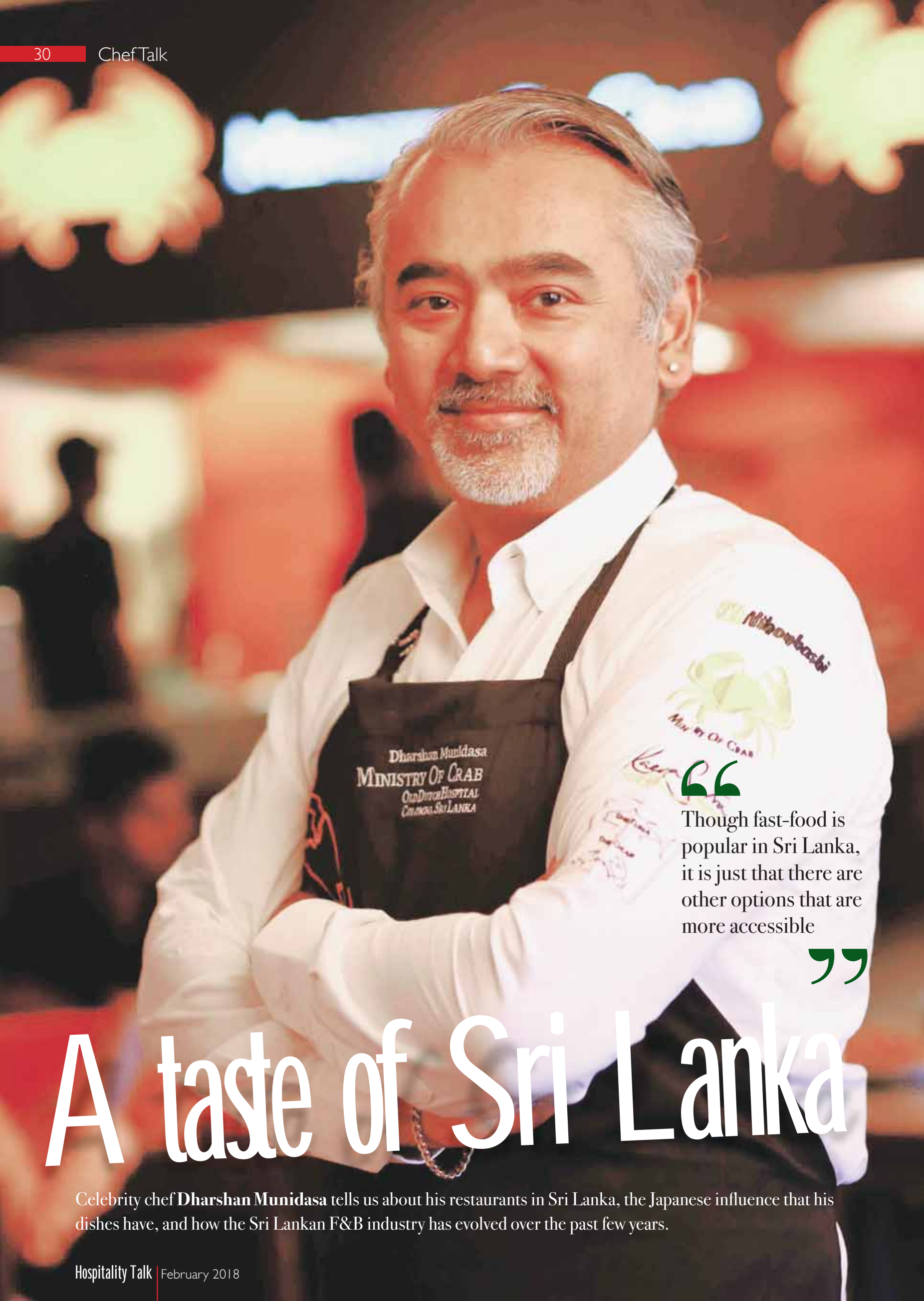
WHAT ROLE DOES TECHNOLOGY PLAY IN HOSPITALITY?

There are many technological opportunities that are mere fads. Does the guest really want to be able to control every light switch and every curtain from their mobile phones? What we are looking at is much more technology behind the scenes to help our people to be more efficient, to be able to deliver guest requests quickly.

TELL US ABOUT MICE AND THE GROUP.

Outbound from China has always been an area we have focused on and it has been an area we benefit a lot from due to our large presence in China. An area we are beginning to realise that has a big potential is India. Here in Colombo we see a combination of leisure, MICE, and wedding clientele. Owing to its proximity and ease of doing business between this property and the one at Hambantota, a wedding or MICE group can have two destinations with one brand. The one challenge is accessibility, as it is either through scheduled flights through Colombo or charters.





“
Though fast-food is popular in Sri Lanka, it is just that there are other options that are more accessible

”

A taste of Sri Lanka

Celebrity chef **Dharshan Munidasa** tells us about his restaurants in Sri Lanka, the Japanese influence that his dishes have, and how the Sri Lankan F&B industry has evolved over the past few years.



Priti Khanna

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CULINARY JOURNEY.

I started cooking out of necessity, as a college student in the United States. It was not about missing home food but about eating good food. I had a weekly grocery list and started with a dollar a meal. I pickled my own vegetables, but I got salt from Sri Lanka as American salt is iodised and like sugar crystals. As a kid, I watched how food was done in a Sushi restaurant.

YOUR COOKING STYLE HAS A JAPANESE INFLUENCE. IT IS SAID THAT THE JAPANESE DO NOT ALTER DISHES PER CUSTOMER DEMANDS. YOUR TAKE?

Restaurateurs cook what they want and it is up to the customer to like it or not. It is not a restaurant if you are being told what to cook. That said, this problem does exist, mainly in South Asia. It leads to stifling of creativity and brings a caste structure to the kitchen and table. One is welcome to enjoy the experience but not to tell how to make something. That is the biggest reason that South Asian restaurants are not dynamic.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT NIHONBASHI, THE RESTAURANT THAT YOUR MOTHER STARTED.

When my father passed away six months before I graduated, I encouraged my mother to start a Japanese restaurant and Nihonbashi was born. What we started and what we are today is poles apart. I went to culinary school but how to grade a crab I learnt from the traders on the roadside who were grading for export. They taught me what no culinary school in all of South Asia could teach me. I had the privilege to see the whole fish. These days, everything is caught, cut, packed, and frozen. Unless you read the name on the packaging, you do not know what it is.

We started Nihonbashi in 1995, and subsequently, other branches came up; we had three branches at the most. One branch was at the Hilton Residency and another in a departmental store, Odel. The branch at the Hilton Residency

shut after 13 years but the one at Odel is still there. The Ministry of Crab started six years ago, Kaema Sutra started three and a half years back, and The Tuna & The Crab, a mix between Ministry of Crab and Nihonbashi, opened in Galle, three years ago.



HOW HAVE THE TASTE AND FOOD PREFERENCES OF PEOPLE IN SRI LANKA EVOLVED?

Though fast-food is popular in Sri Lanka, it is just that there are other options that are more accessible and am glad that is so. In Sri Lanka, fishing is so easy; what we fish, we eat. Some 20 years ago, we did not have many Sri Lankans coming to eat raw fish but now we do. Sri Lanka always had a Japanese restaurant. When we were kids, an elderly Japanese gentleman and his wife had a Japanese restaurant that was frequented mainly by the Japanese and the Sri Lankans who had travelled to Japan.

WHICH CUISINE IS POPULAR IN SRI LANKA?

Chinese cuisine is popular in Sri Lanka. Like in India, we have a Sri Lankan-Chinese version. Restaurants selling this kind of food are very small and pocket-friendly. However, proper Chinese restaurants are now being set up, as there are several Chinese projects coming to Sri Lanka. Nihonbashi, in Colombo, is the oldest restaurant in the city to be recognised as one of Asia's 50 best, and also by the government



of Japan, which is a big achievement. People say that London is the food capital of the world because of the variety it offers. I do not believe that a food capital is based on options available; it should be based on availability of good food.

A SRI LANKAN INGREDIENT OR DISH THAT IS FAMOUS WORLDWIDE?

For Sri Lanka, it will be crab. Singapore made it famous for us. It was known before as well, but there was nothing to house that ingredient. That is why the Ministry of Crab came into being. It had to have a powerful name to claim that title from Singapore.

HOW IS SRI LANKAN FOOD PRICED?

The price of crabs and prawns is set overseas in foreign currency, and this is true for all South Asian countries that produce them. Rice and curry pack is a dollar, but that is basic and one can improve on that.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE RESTAURANTS THAT YOU RUN HERE AND THE USP OF EACH.

As mentioned earlier, Nihonbashi is a Japanese restaurant; Ministry of Crab is, as the name suggests, known for crabs; Kaema Sutra literally means the 'Art of Food' and is known for its authentic Sri Lankan cuisine; The Tuna & The Crab fuses fresh Sri Lankan seafood and Japanese culinary principles, a few dishes that can work in a smaller environment. Then we have Café Nihonbashi that is a smaller version of Nihonbashi but a quick-service restaurant. Here we have one big section that has Alexander & Ward, a restaurant that serves Western dishes for which I had a place in mind but not one on the menu of my other restaurants.

KNOW YOUR CHEF

- **Influences**
Ingredients
- **Signature dish**
Garlic Chilli Crab @ Ministry of Crab
- **Favourite cuisine**
Japanese and Sri Lankan



DRIVING A CHANGE AT AEROCITY

Being in proximity to the international airport, the hotels at New Delhi's Aerocity don't have it all bright and sunny. Repeatedly struggling with government regulations, the most recent setback being the liquor ban, the hotels here have had to assess the market and find new avenues of revenue. We speak to some prominent players of Aerocity to understand their struggles and resolve in getting where they successfully stand today.



Anupriya Bishnoi



RANJAN MALAKAR

Area General Manager, Central India & Holiday Inn Express
General Manager, Holiday Inn New Delhi International Airport

OCCUPANCY ON THE RISE

Aerocity hotels enjoy the patronage of a wide variety of traveller segments, thanks to a wide range of quality accommodation to suit various needs and price points. It has now become the hub for transit, leisure, MICE, and airline crew, and is also seeing a healthy mix of corporate clientele due to its proximity to both Gurugram and New Delhi. Occupancies continue to grow, although rate growth has been slightly moderate due to the increase in supply, which is likely to end in 2018.

We are expecting to grow our occupancy by about 0.3 per cent, as we are already running almost at capacity and grow predominantly by driving ARR's.

NOT MANY MNC ACCOUNTS

Aerocity's advantages are the proximity to the airport, proximity to the central business district of Gurugram, and being the preferred location for travellers who have to meet clients or partners in all parts of Delhi-NCR. There is no significant disadvantage as such, however, there are not as many anchor MNC accounts that provide thousands of room nights to hotels, which is a benefit Gurugram enjoys.

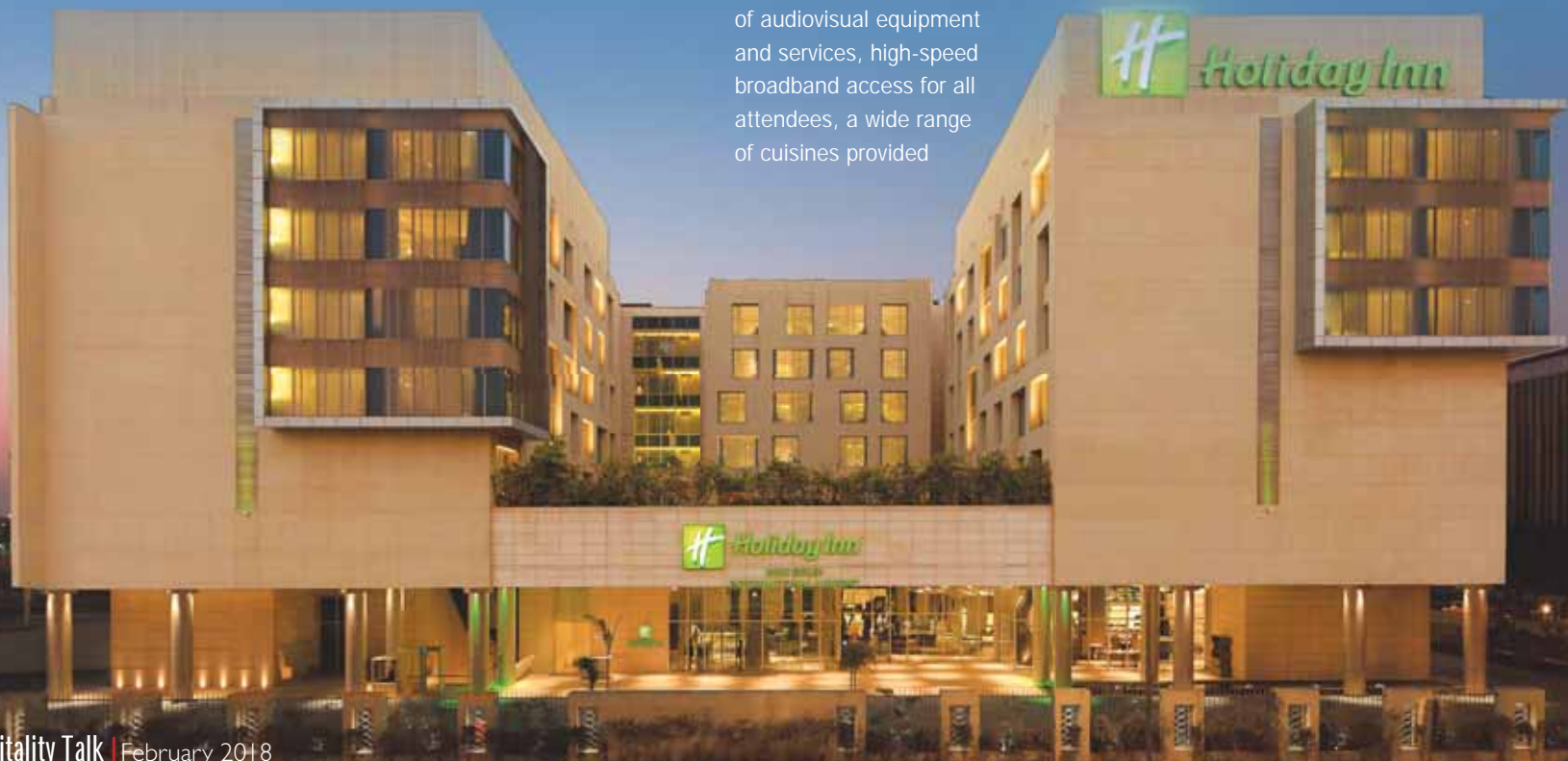
FACILITIES FOR MEDIUM-SIZED MEETINGS

We specialise in medium-sized meetings and events of up to 450 people and have a state-of-the-art ballroom supported by four meeting rooms. Facilities for our guests include a wide range of audiovisual equipment and services, high-speed broadband access for all attendees, a wide range of cuisines provided

by our expert chefs, and the peace of mind of being catered to by an ISO 22000:2005-certified organisation. We were one of the first hotels in Aerocity to get certified on this global food safety standard.

SPECIALISED MICE TEAMS

We have specialised team members who handle the MICE events from start to finish as a one-point-contact for the convenience of the client and have tie-ups with partners to ensure that all elements of a successful event, such as entertainment, technology, decoration, and transportation are taken care of. We also have loyalty and reward programmes from IHG that recognise and reward both organisers and the guests who stay with us.



ANUJ CHAUDHRY

Hotel Manager

ibis New Delhi Aerocity Hotel

A DESTINATION FOR ALL SEGMENTS

Over the last three years, Aerocity has evolved into a mature market offering keys from economy to luxury segments, as well as conference facilities to corporates and large-scale events with an amalgamation of transit passengers, leisure travellers, and airline crews. The occupancy has grown within a range of 7-10 per cent and ADR by 10-12 per cent year-on-year, thereby positioning Aerocity as a destination wherein a customer can choose from hotels across all segments.

COMBINED SPACE, AN ADVANTAGE

The strategy is to increase occupancy levels by 6-8 per cent and ADR between 5-7 per cent. In 2017, we

had an additional inventory of 129 keys added to the hotel, thereby taking the total keys for ibis New Delhi Aerocity to 445. Along with this, our existing meeting rooms were refurbished with an addition of two meeting venues, resulting in an increase in MICE opportunities. Apart from this, AccorHotels also has two other properties in Aerocity- Pullman New Delhi Aerocity and Novotel New Delhi Aerocity, which take the number of keys to a total of 1115. The combined MICE space amongst the three brands provides a unique setting to guests and organisers and acts as a preferred destination for both business and leisure travellers.

MORE ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES NEEDED

Entertainment activities and offer-

ings in Aerocity are the key challenge. Aerocity has a lot of food and beverage outlets along with a few shopping centres, however, we need other entertainment facilities that will entice the customers to choose this destination as a one-stop shop.

ADDING TO MICE

ibis New Delhi Aerocity has a total flexible area of 285 sqm, six meeting spaces, and can accommodate between 6 to 125 delegates. Customisation based on a client's requirements are factored based on their meeting or conference structure. We also provide premium conference packages. A dedicated team member is assigned to a client meeting so that the event is a success. We also recently launched two more meeting rooms.



SUKHBEEN TARA

General Manager

Lemon Tree Premier, Delhi Airport

SURGE IN LEISURE GUESTS

Aerocity has come a long way in terms of attracting business. The ARR and occupancy at Aerocity has shown an upward trend on a year-on-year basis.

During its initial years, the area saw more of transit clientele. Recently, Aerocity has been seeing a surge in leisure travellers due to its close

proximity to the airport. We now expect an upward trend in ARR and occupancy in 2018.

MEDIUM-SIZED MICE

Lemon Tree Premier, Delhi Airport has a conference room which can accommodate 70 to 75 people for formal conferences and more than 200 people for social gatherings.

DEMAND, A CHALLENGE

Proximity to the airport remains one of the biggest advantages for Aerocity, the only challenge we see is the growing demand for rooms.

MORE ROOMS ON THE CARDS

We aim to fulfil the growing demand for rooms in Aerocity arising due to the many conferences and conventions taking place in the vicinity.





TRISTAN BEAU DE LOMENIE

General Manager Delegate
Pullman & Novotel Aerocity, New Delhi

MORE FACILITIES FOR THE LEISURE CLIENTELE

Aerocity is a project formed in April 2016, and designed on the lines of a convention bureau with the three largest hotels of New Delhi Aerocity as the founders- Pullman & Novotel, JW Marriott, and Hyatt Andaz, expanding the scope and visibility of the destination. Most of the events took place in Aerocity because of these three hotels working together. We aim to present Pullman New Delhi Aerocity as a niche F&B destination here. Further, we expect 2018 to be a consolidation of last year and occupancy to increase. Further, we wish to leverage the artists' playground by Pullman and want to expand it in the coming year. This evolution has helped boost and promote the destination as an accessible and comprehensive events hub.

MORE INBOUND BUSINESS WITH INCREASED TRAVEL

We remain upbeat with the long-term growth prospects in the hos-

pitality industry, especially as global travel continues to increase with the rise of the middle class market. The optimistic outlook of the hospitality industry suggests solid growth, with economy and business hotels forming a larger percentage of the total room inventory and accounting for nearly half of all the hotel rooms in the country. There is an equitable distribution of room supply across regions that indicates a maturing hotel market.

We are also witnessing the upscale hotel segment following closely behind. With renewed economic sentiments, momentous growth in the market, and the recent changes in visa policies, we are positive that the country will drive more inbound business travel and a growth of 18 per cent is what we expect.

MORE THAN AN AIRPORT HOTEL

The perception of being an airport hotel and the belief of travellers using the property only as a choice

closer to the airport is a challenge. For instance, Pullman New Delhi Aerocity is a perfect mix of luxury and convenience suited for the seasoned traveller. The hotel offers unparalleled accessibility to the business hubs of Gurugram and New Delhi, fitness and restaurant facilities, an extensive range of dining options, and caters to every need of the evolved traveller. It also offers the most inviting and stress-relieving experience to every single visitor at its spa.

FLEXIBLE MEETING SPACES

Pullman New Delhi Aerocity offers a wide range of facilities catering to MICE. The ballroom area, with 1181 sqm of space, is one of the largest pillarless facilities in Delhi-NCR. We have 13 meeting rooms and three boardrooms with flexible room layouts providing Wi-Fi connectivity all over the place. Not only this, we have a large pre-function area that spreads across 1651 sqm. We also provide tailored solutions to our clients.



WHAT MAKES LOYALTY PROGRAMMES TICK?

Guest loyalty programmes are a crucial component for hotel chains. There is no doubt whatsoever in the fact that strong loyalty programmes encourage existing customers of hotels to stay longer and more frequently with a particular hotel chain. However, is offering customers more points enough to make an impression or does an emotional connect establish loyalty?

ROHIT JHINGAN

Director - Sales & Marketing
The Pllazio Hotel, Gurugram

MORE POINTS, MORE LOYALTY

Loyalty programmes definitely add to the revenue. Also, the levels across membership do help in garnering extra revenue as the cash spent gets a guest to a higher tier, giving him more points as well. Regular loyalty membership guests do help you in getting extra revenue from other points of sale, like restaurant, room service, etc., as they are true patrons of your hotel. They help in forming a crucial market segment for a hotel across

a geographical region. For instance, when a guest is on a tour, a robust guest loyalty programme would ensure that the guest will opt to stay with a single chain across various locations in that region. It enhances guest-repeat ratio, which is very important for a hotel and a healthy guest-repeat ratio talks volumes about the service of a hotel. Many loyalty programmes also have attractive provisions, such as while booking a conference, a guest would be ensured a certain

discount percentage on the total billing for the next booking. All the above factors ensure in pushing the revenues and maintaining a very healthy bottom line.

In case of stand-alone hotels, guest loyalty programmes may not be very effective because of a skewed network. What works in favour of stand-alone hotels is the travel planner loyalty programme, which helps them enhance their corporate base.



VIJAY JAISWAL

Senior VP - Sales & Marketing
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

AN EMOTIONAL CONNECT FOR MORE LOYALTY

If the programme is well managed and is successful in customer retention, then it can definitely be a good revenue generator for the hotel. It is easy to acquire customers but retention is tough. Loyalty programmes make customers feel cherished and valued, which makes them want to continue to do business with you. Retaining customers by rewarding them for repeat purchase behaviour is debatably the number one reason why business undertakings establish a loyalty programme and therefore, the greatest benefit. Today, it's easy for discerning shoppers to compare hundreds

of prices in a few clicks. If they are just thinking of the products you sell instead of your brand, then you will find yourself in a pricing race to the bottom. Adding a loyalty programme stops you from competing on price by giving you another way to differentiate your brand; you can offer an enhanced customer experience by connecting with their emotions.

At the same time, it's very hard for the loyalty context to break away from the transactional spirit. It appears more than often that the one who is a frequent buyer is a loyal one. However, that may not be the case because he may be buying from the company merely

because of convenience or for the benefits that the loyalty programme is giving him in the form of rewards. Thus, loyalty may not necessarily be gauged by the loyalty programmes offered. Out of all the pros and cons of loyalty programmes, the financial component is the most stressful aspect.

It's not enough to launch a loyalty programme; you have to maintain it, create new rewards, and enrich the experience to keep the excitement around it going. If you are not ready to spend time, creative energy, and invest in a team that maintains it, then it is better to avoid having a loyalty programme altogether.



A creative, logical concept



Arcux Bar Zone Impex has brought experience, development, and technology to the Indian market. Clients define bar features that meet specific challenges, creating bars that deliver complex operational briefs.

AFZAL KHAN

Director - Food & Beverage
Taj Bengal Kolkata

With an added feature of a wine cellar, the bar presents a reflection of the city's raw, engaging, and vibrant energy.

A GLIMPSE OF A COLONIAL PAST

The bar at Cal27 engages your senses with Kolkata's rich culture and colonial history. It merges very well with the wide open spaces and high ceilings that are infused with distinct local and colonial architecture of Cal27 in Taj Bengal Kolkata.

A bar is usually known for various characteristics. Cal27 is certainly perceived as a classic, yet modern setup and at the same time, a unique coffee shop. The black and white flooring, gold seating, and the colonial feel make Cal27 the best-looking coffee shop in the city.



NARESH SRIVASTAVA

Proprietor
ATN Consultants

DUAL FUNCTIONALITY

Bars are known for their offerings. Taking that cue forward, the unique feature that the bar at the coffee shop Palato, Radisson Blu Agra, offers is its operational ability to function from inside the coffee shop as well as outside, with an open courtyard. Its look is very unique when both sides are opera-

tional. The installation of this bar by Arcux Bar Zone Impex has been done in an excellent and proper manner. All equipment installation and balancing of levels has been carried out with precision. The unique part of the bar that would lure customers would be the draught beer dispenser used for this bar, which will dispense beer from the bar on both sides.

I can strongly say that this will raise the bar of beverage service. It is a one-of-a-kind concept. A unique interior has been designed to show a distinguished perspective of this bar.



M. RAM VITTAL RAO

Director
Vital Concept Design

DESIGN-FRIENDLY AND THOUGHT-DRIVEN

Vital Concept Design has always been at the forefront of innovation. Arcux Bar Zone Impex, the beverage holding and dispense equipment specialist, has adapted to the various concept designs where our team has been involved. It makes a lot of difference when your partner showcases qualities of easy understanding of design and adapting it to site conditions, be it a greenfield or brownfield project. Arcux has always shown this facet as their strength. In a bar project, moving beverages from point A to B requires a lot of planning and designing so that there is minimum loss in temperature,

minimal liquid draw-offs, and no inconsistency in dispensing beverages. A product like a Tobin Ellis Bar has all the ingredients, ice in various shapes and forms, and other ingredients and garnishes within an arm's length, making a barman's or mixologist's task efficient and less fatigue-prone.



"THANK YOU, INDIA!"



Michel Koopman joined The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences in April of 2013 as its General Manager. Having recently moved on from The Leela, he tells us about his journey and his immediate future plans.



Nikhil Anand

TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE LEELA.

It has been an amazing journey; time flies when you're having fun and this certainly holds true for me. The Leela has been a great company to work for. It's not your typical hotel, it believes in 'Atithi Devo Bhava', where it goes beyond taking care of its guests and also to empower its people. As the General Manager, I could run the hotel and The Leela was there to lend support always. The property has got great owners and my best wishes go out to them. It has been a spectacular journey, but like every journey must come to its end, it's my time to move on and try new things like growing a ponytail, taking a break to freshen up, and doing something completely different.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

Spending time with my family is going to be the first thing on my agenda. You know, I've told everybody that I will only be available post April 1, 2018; I need a good break. I just want to recharge myself, gather my thoughts, and do different things.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE KEY HIGHLIGHTS FOR YOU?

This industry is all about people and I am extremely proud of my team that has worked so well together and been able to accomplish so many great things over the past few years. It is equally overwhelming to see how far along people have grown within the hotel and also The Leela, in terms of taking on more responsibilities, adapting to transition, and conducting themselves professionally. We believe in showing care; we take care of our guests and we also take care of each other. We believe in celebrating differences; we are all from different regions and have different cultures, but we come together to work as one cohesive unit. Instilling a culture in an organisation is not something that can be done often and the fact that we have been able to do that in the last five years is a crowning achievement for me.

HOW HAS THE SECTOR EVOLVED DURING YOUR TIME HERE?

The transformation has been pretty extraordinary, especially in the field of food and beverage. I think, in India the systems and processes

have really grown and people have realised that we need to work with lesser resources without compromising on end-quality and efficiency. I'm looking forward to coming back five years from now and seeing this next enormous jump that the hospitality industry here is seemingly poised to take. I saw the same during my time in China over a period of 10 years; I saw the same in Japan and Australia as well. The potential that the industry here possesses is colossal and I am certain that this industry will be the largest GDP provider in 10 years from now. Hospitality exists in the hearts of the people here.

HOW DIFFERENT WAS DOING BUSINESS HERE?

Talking about India, people here have great energy and a very positive attitude. If you give them a problem, they roll up their sleeves and are always ready to overcome it. It was an amazing time here, so thank you, India. I'll be back!



I am certain that this industry will be the largest GDP provider in 10 years from now





GLIMPSSES AT GHC

Global Hospitality Conclave 2018 was held on January 6, 2018, at The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences. The conclave is an initiative organised by the alumni of the erstwhile Oberoi School of Hotel Management (OSHM), now The Oberoi Centre for Learning & Development (OCLD). The alumni includes stalwarts like **Rajiv Kaul**, President, The Leela Hotels; **Ajay K. Bakaya**, Managing Director, Sarovar Hotels & Resorts; **Rattan Keswani**, Deputy Managing Director, Lemon Tree Hotels. The conclave seeks to touch upon trends and opportunities in the hospitality, travel, and aviation landscape of the country and the world, as well as discuss priorities to arrive at all potential gateways and drivers of growth in the coming years.





2018 to witness an upswing

At the Global Hospitality Conclave held on January 6, we got in touch with industry veterans who spoke about the GHC, industrial challenges that they foresee, and segments that are on the rise.



Anupriya Bishnoi



JAIDEEP ANAND

General Manager

The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences

OLD COLLABORATIONS

Global Hospitality Conclave is more like a family event; we are all from The Oberoi School. It's a get-together of probably the best in the country. The Oberoi School trains you to be at the top of the league. This event is also a great learning experience and a great

time to catch up with old friends.

BACK ON TRACK AFTER THE BAN

We are working our budgets for every segment. F&B and banqueting is back on track. We are looking at good social and MICE numbers. Also, during the alcohol ban, a lot of

people didn't come and stay with us because of the absence of alcohol. Now, our corporates are back and our long-stay guests are back as well.

EXPANDING BASE

I think the hurdles are past us; we work hard in every segment, we walk the street and make sure we deliver excellence in what we are known for- product, people, and service. We should be able to achieve not just more guest numbers, but even penetrate the market segments of our competitors.

SHARED POWER

Our proximity to Cyber City and Cyber Hub makes us complete. Our luxury level is different so is our price point. What we need to do is to work on our own excellence. We will share our portion of power in every segment this year.



NAVEEN JAIN

Founder and Managing Director

Nouvelle Knowledge Services

A WIDE REACH

GHC is a great platform that The Oberoi alumni has built. The intent was to have something where people could come together on a day that was suitable to all. We have seen such encouraging results over a period of time; people from overseas and other distant places also attend the event. One can see the quality of keynote speakers and panellists that is getting better day by day. I am very happy with the participation and we want to build a much stronger platform in the years to come.

EVERYTHING ON THE UP

I think the longest period of depression, as far as hospitality is concerned, is over. India is a rising economy now with the kind of GDP percentage it has exhibited. Its direct impact comes on the hospitality industry. We are on the rising curve now. There still remain challenges of getting good-quality manpower and enough capital, but for existing hotels, mostly in the mid-scale sector, things are going to be fine. Even in the luxury segment with the increasing volume, things are looking good.

UNORGANISED SECTOR TO SLOWLY FADE

As far as growth is concerned, the mid-scale segment is going to grow; as far as downfall is concerned, it is going to come in the segment of guest houses.

Travellers today expect hygiene, safety and security, and a good bed to sleep on. Hence, the unorganised sector is going to go away in the next few years. It will become more recognised and institutional over a period of time.

RAVISH SWARUP

Chief Executive Officer
Praxis Services - India

ENABLING KNOWLEDGE SHARING

We wanted to have one formal event where there was not just socialising between the alumni of The Oberoi School and senior leadership, but also a platform where industry knowledge could be shared. Every year, GHC gets a round of great speakers who are not necessarily restricted to hotels. For many of us who have moved away from the business, to meet everyone under one roof is an interesting proposition.

ADDRESSING THE GRASS ROOTS

I don't say there are any challenges per se. I think there has to be a good return on all the international travel. Issues such as cities like New Delhi being unsafe, challenges for single women travellers, etc., disrupt tourism. Infrastructure is another challenge. So, if we work on the development of tourism, which everyone talks about, things will be better. Till nothing is done, these things will

continue to be the real challenges in our industry.

MORE FOCUS ON TIER-II

I think the leisure segment has got a lot of potential, stemming from more and more people investing in it. Boutique hotels in leisure markets are coming in. More interest is being taken in Tier-II cities because of increased disposal incomes, which is creating more business for boutique hotels and stand-alone operations.

**RAJIV KAUL**

President
The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts

PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

The idea behind GHC, in addition to networking, was creating a base for knowledge sharing. There is tremendous amount of learning that comes from each other and we are all active participants in the industry. We invite thought leaders to spend a day together to discuss industry trends, crucial issues, and delve into the future together where we can be better prepared for challenges. GHC also helps rekindle friendships that go back decades.

MODEST GROWTH

The fact that people are saying 2018 is going to see an upturn for the industry is based more on optimism than data. GST is continuing to hurt luxury hotels, there is no denying that. MICE will definitely do better than the previous year. Domestic leisure will also do well. There will be growth but I think corporate travel will remain lukewarm. On the whole, it would be a modest, single-digit growth for the industry.

A DELAYED GROWTH

Mid-market hotels will do better because they are largely based on domestic travel and the domestic market is really going to be the growth engine this year.

For MICE events, there will be more overseas visitors than there will be for leisure. The direction is right, the momentum is yet to pick up. I hope it would, but I don't think it will pick up till the third quarter of 2018.





AJAY K. BAKAYA

**Managing Director
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts**

BETTER, YEAR-ON-YEAR

I am very proud that this is our fifth year. I always thought of combining camaraderie and getting people together on a knowledge-exchange platform. I think, year-on-year, we are doing better. Something interesting that we have this year is we have two Assistant Managers from

The Oberoi team. We are bringing more youngsters and it's heartening to see that. With time, GHC is going to get better and more meaningful to people.

A POSITIVE FORECAST

I don't think 2017 was challenging; it was a pretty decent year. Yes, there

was GST which hurt us for a very short time, but otherwise it was very good for the industry. 2018 is definitely going to be a positive year. As long as we have a stable government and as long as there is some rationalisation in the real estate business, where land prices start making more sense, we will be alright.



RATTAN KESWANI

**Deputy Managing Director
Lemon Tree Hotels**

AN ENGAGING PLATFORM

GHC is a great initiative and has grown in the quality of participation it receives. As long as it continues to extend networking, learning, and engagement, it's a platform that will keep growing.

SECOND HALF TO BEAR FRUIT

For the last two years, we have been talking about what we foresee. It will suffice to say that we will keep our fingers crossed and hope everything turns out to be better this year and in years to come.

Not much may change for the first half of the year, but the second half should start bearing fruit. Demand will continue to rise and when price finds an equitable structure, there wouldn't be much to worry about.



DHRUV HOON

**Vice President - Hotel Development, South Asia
Marriott International**

QUALITY SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

This is the fifth year for GHC. I have been a part of the organising committee for two years. Over the last five years, if you look at numbers, GHC has been growing. We are expanding it outside the core management training programme to the kitchen and housekeeping batches, which is good. If you look at the quality of speakers and of the panel discussions, they speak for themselves.

GROWTH ON THE CARDS

There were some bumps with the alcohol ban, demonetisation, and GST. The good news is that the occupancy and RevPAR, which are a metric for how we look at the performance of hotels, have actually gone up. If this trend continues, it is going to be positive. There may be

some surprises but we will survive.

GROWTH IN TIER-II AND III

The mid-scale or the upper mid-scale segment is where we see tremendous growth. If you look at Fairfield hotels, 10 of them have opened in South Asia, including one in Nepal. If you look at our pipeline, you will see a lot of Fairfield, Four

Points by Sheraton, and Courtyard by Marriott properties, which tells us that the growth is in this segment, especially in Tier-II and III markets.

A HOPEFUL 2018

There will be dampeners that will come along the way but overall, we are very hopeful of how it's going to be in 2018.

**SANJAY RAI**

**Executive Vice President - Sales
The Oberoi Group**

MEANINGFUL COLLABORATIONS

GHC serves many purposes. It's the coming together of various facets of hospitality, people from the government, people from private enterprises, and those from the technology world. What you will see at GHC are insightful conversations, which could lead to a wealth of learning. I have learnt a lot from GHC. Full credit goes to the organisers, who have worked tirelessly to make sure that year after year, a good set of knowledgeable speakers comes together and in the spirit of collaboration of ideas and the same is shared with everyone.

THE OBEROI, NEW DELHI, OVERHAULED

The Oberoi, New Delhi has a huge legacy of customer equity. For many, it's been a trip down nostalgia lane, circa 1965, when The Oberoi was launched as New Delhi's first five-star hotel, till 2016, when it was brought down with the intent of bejewelling it again

and relaunching it in a new avatar. These two years that it was closed led to mixed reactions. When we closed the hotel, our regular patrons asked us why we had to close down when our service was impeccable. However, we had to take this brave decision. Relunched now, you will see that we have reduced the number of rooms, the inventory has come down from 283 keys to 220. Based on the feedback from customers, the accommodation

has been made more spacious. The F&B offerings have also been reinvented. What we have tried to do is bring in all the cuisines of the provinces of China, a cuisine that does fairly well in our country. Similarly, we are bringing to life a rooftop bar. With location being a huge USP and the weather gods favouring us, this rooftop bar, with curated music, eclectic cuisine, and service with a difference, will hopefully become a must-visit.



The **‘Wynd’** of change

Deepika Arora, Regional Vice President, Eurasia, Wyndham Hotel Group, shares her outlook for the Indian hospitality market and the challenges that the industry will be witnessing in the future.



HT Bureau



HOW IMPORTANT IS THE INDIAN MARKET FOR WYNDHAM?

India's hospitality industry is experiencing an upcycle and the next spurt of growth is expected to come from the mid-market segment. The market has witnessed an uptick in domestic travel that includes both leisure and corporate travellers, more Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), as well as a booming airline industry supported by government-led initiatives. The Indian market is also extremely cost-sensitive, offering an excellent opportunity for mid-market hotel brands such as Ramada, which is well-established in the country, along with our other existing brands like Howard Johnson and Days. At the same time, we also feel that the

Indian market is ready to welcome more of our iconic brands and in the next three years we will be introducing our namesake brands, such as Wyndham Grand, Wyndham, and Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham.

WHAT IS YOUR FORECAST FOR 2018 IN TERMS OF BUSINESS, ARR, AND OCCUPANCIES?

In terms of performance, indices such as occupancy rates, ARR, and RevPAR of our hotels in 2017 were at par with the rest of the industry. Our hotels in the region also performed well on customer reviews, quality audits, and the performance of our Wyndham Rewards loyalty programme. Going forward, India's mid-market segment will continue to grow

with the burgeoning middle class having an increasing disposable income. We expect a greater demand for mid-scale hotels, leading to increased occupancy rates as well as ARR, and have adapted our India strategy to accommodate that.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FORESEE FOR THE INDUSTRY?

The industry continues to experience some challenges in terms of workforce training, high taxation, substantial upfront investment, longer break-even periods, and infrastructure challenges, making it difficult for hoteliers. Wyndham Hotel Group takes these gaps into consideration when expanding the footprint of existing brands and determining when to introduce additional brands to the Indian subcontinent, across segments.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPANSION PLANS FOR THE INDIAN MARKET?

At Wyndham Hotel Group, our range of brand offerings is varied and flexible to meet the expectations of today's dynamic traveller. As part of our development strategy in India, we are looking to expand our footprint into secondary and tertiary cities as well as potential leisure destinations. Our upcoming openings will add leisure locations like Kasauli and Lonavala; pilgrim destinations like Dwarka (Gujarat); and business locations like Ghaziabad, Trivandrum, Bhubaneswar and more to the existing portfolio.

WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?

Technology, coupled with the growth of social media, has revolutionised the hospitality industry to a considerable extent in how people book hotels. The industry is also witnessing disruption with the evolution of personalisation, as technology has transformed the way consumers talk

about, search for, book, and experience travel. It is equally important for the industry to craft new benchmarks in guest experience by providing multiple interactive opportunities. In this way, technology adds to the guest experience. However, technology can only go so far and human interface remains at the core of the hospitality business in India as well as globally. Food and beverage is one such part of hospitality which cannot survive without the human touch. Human interactions are necessary to ensure a guest's stay is not just comfortable but also a memorable experience with a sense of welcome that the guest can associate the hotel with. With this growing understanding, hospitality groups across the world are now embracing technology to enhance customer experience rather than replace the human touch.

FOR WYNDHAM, WHICH CATEGORY OF HOTEL IS DOING THE BEST AND WHY?

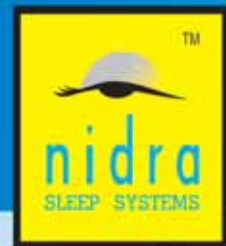
Globally, Wyndham Hotel Group



has 20 brands, of which four are currently present in India: Ramada, Ramada Encore, Howard Johnson, and Days. Ramada is one of the most recognised hotel brands in the world, with more than 850 hotels in over 60 countries. In India, with 26 hotels in 24 destinations, accounting for almost 75 per cent of our India portfolio, Ramada is certainly our most visible brand in this market and is growing at a robust pace with a presence spanning the length and breadth of the country.

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Gel

Fibre Fill

Thick size	Filling Choices available			
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2 inch	✓	✓	✓	X
3 inch	✓	✓	✓	✓



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FHA returns to Singapore



An international food and hospitality biennial trade event in the region, Food&HotelAsia (FHA) will be held from April 24 to 27, 2018, at two venues – Singapore EXPO and Suntec Singapore.

Food&HotelAsia, now in its 40th year, will house its biggest-ever industry congregation with 4000 international exhibitors from more than 70 countries and regions, an increase of over 800 exhibitors (25 per cent) compared to its last edition. "FHA's growth reflects the changing landscape of the F&B and hospitality industries in Singapore and the region over the decades. Having FHA2018 span two of the largest exhibition venues in Singapore proves just how much the event has grown since 1978," says **Rodolphe Lameyse**, Project Director, Food & Hospitality, UBM SES.

Opportunities aplenty

Besides the traditional sourcing ground, FHA also offers many experiential networking and learning opportunities through new and improved speciality zones and

industry-renowned competitions. Close to 78,000 trade attendees from 100 countries and regions are expected at the 2018 edition. In 2016, the event attracted 71,800 trade attendees, including exhibiting staff, trade visitors, conference speakers and delegates, judges and competitors, and members of the media.

Competitions, old and new

There will be a series of activities and competitions targeting professionals from specific sectors of the food and hospitality industries. These competitions include Culinary Challenge 2018, Battle for the Lion, Barista Super Duo Challenge, Latte Art Showdown, Asian Pastry Cup 2018 (APC), Asian Gelato Cup, Roast Master Challenge, Silver Spoon Challenge, Chocolate Chef Competition (held at APC), and Global Star Chefs Pastry Show.

Stage for industry discourse

The three-day FHA2018 International Conference, held in two venues from April 24 to 26, will feature industry experts and business thought-leaders sharing perspectives, tips, and strategies across 10 key tracks, from hotel revenue management and bakery at Singapore EXPO to central kitchen and F&B technology at Suntec Singapore.

ProWine Asia

Held alongside FHA for the first time in 2016, ProWine Asia will return with an 18 per cent increase in exhibition area. To be presented by 300 leading exhibitors, ProWine Asia will bring the world of wines and spirits to Southeast Asia through its extensive representation of international wine and spirit labels, a broad scope of solutions and concepts for the region's diverse consumer markets.



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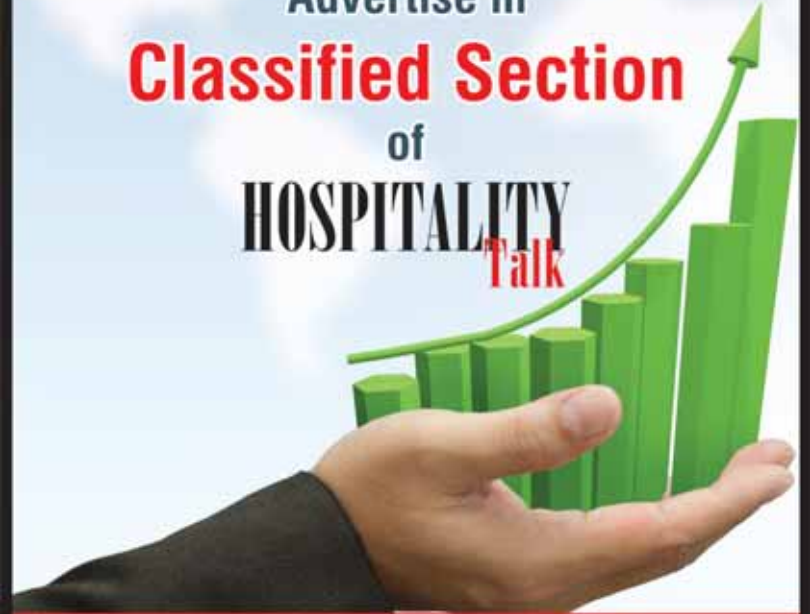


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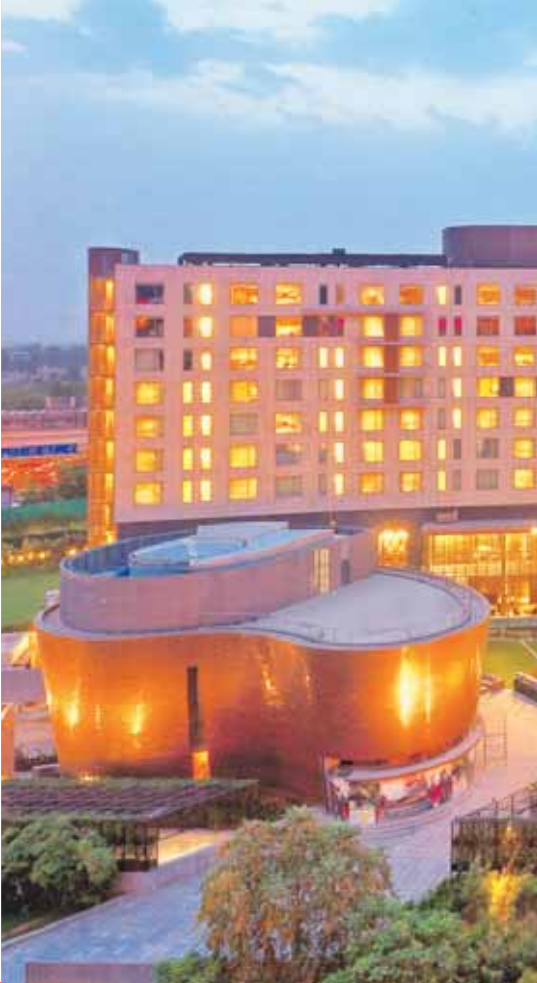


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JAIDEEP ANAND

General Manager
The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences

Jaideep Anand has been appointed as General Manager of The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences. His last assignment was with The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi, as General Manager. Anand started his career with The Oberoi New Delhi in the F&B and rooms divisions. He has also led the pre-opening launch of three Oberoi hotels - The Cecil Shimla, Trident Udaipur, and The Wildflower Hall Shimla.



ANOOP PANDEY

Resident Manager
The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi

The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi has appointed **Anoop Pandey** as Resident Manager. In his new role, Pandey will be responsible for developing business plans and implementing new ideas in order to improve guest satisfaction and profitability. He will oversee daily room operations encompassing front office, housekeeping, spa, and F&B. With an experience of more than 11 years in hospitality, Pandey is a seasoned professional in the industry.



SURAJIT CHATTERJEE

General Manager
Park Plaza Ludhiana

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Surajit Chatterjee** as General Manager of Park Plaza Ludhiana. A passionate hotelier with over 20 years of experience in hospitality, Chatterjee brings with him hands-on experience in operation management, inventory management, quality-customer relationship management, team management, and pre-opening of hotels. Prior to this, Chatterjee worked with AccorHotels as the Operations Manager of Lavasa International Convention Centre.



KUNAL DEWAN

Director of Sales & Marketing
The Westin Pune Koregaon Park

Kunal Dewan has been appointed as the Director of Sales & Marketing at The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. Prior to this role, Dewan was heading the Sales & Marketing function at Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR. His tenure with Marriott International commenced with the role of Sales Manager at the global sales office more than six years ago.

MOVEMENTS
MOVEMENTS

CHANDRAKANT SHETTY

Chief Executive Officer

VITS Luxury Hotels
Worldwide

“

I keep exploring new gadgets and keep myself updated”

I am passionate about quite a few things but electronic gadgets are my priority. I keep exploring new gadgets and keep myself updated. It gives me a sense of achievement and pride. I also enjoy visiting my native town, and spend time farming and sharing new ideas to promote farming. I have travelled almost all of India; I found the Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu to be an awesome destination that one shouldn't miss because of its natural beauty. Internationally, Berlin is my best experience.

**SRIJAN VADHERA**

General Manager

Fairmont Jaipur

“

Sentosa Island has been my go-to place during seasonal vacations”

Riding a bike is not only my hobby but also helps me de-stress. I have always believed that travelling not only helps to relax and rejuvenate with family but also allows the opportunity to broaden our horizon and get to know more. Sentosa Island has been my go-to place during seasonal vacations. At the same time, whenever I get a chance, I set to explore the unknown vistas of our own country. Coorg, therefore, has become one of my favourite places to relax owing to its scenic beauty and peaceful ambience.

**SHIPRA SUMBLY KAUL**

General Manager

Holiday Inn Express
& Suites Bengaluru
Racecourse

“

My favourite destinations are Seattle, Binsar, and Kashmir”

Family is my biggest stress buster. I find these moments every day where I can spend some time with my two-year-old daughter. One thing I am passionate about is travelling. I love to explore hills and nature when on vacation. It gives me an opportunity to leave behind the stress and rejuvenate myself. I recently travelled to USA on a much-needed break. Some of my favourite destinations have been Seattle, Binsar, and Kashmir. I always grab a chance to explore new destinations.

**PUNISH B. SHARMA**

Area General Manager

Meluha The Fern An
Eotel Hotel

“

The mind, once stretched, never returns to its original dimensions”

Health is always preferred over wealth because it serves as the catalyst in allowing a motivated individual to work with fervour and efficiency toward his or her goal. To me, hitting the gym helps in self-exploration. I love to travel to places that have an interesting blend of culture and tradition. I have travelled extensively in Southeast Asia and the UAE. I also believe that the mind, once stretched, never returns to its original dimensions and so, I love reading.



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