

HOSPITALITY

Talk

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HANDICRAFTS INDIA YEAR BOOK

New Delhi: 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Phone No: +91 11 233 44179, Fax: +91-22-22070131
E-mail: hospitalitytalk@ddppl.com

Mumbai: 504 Marine Chambers, 43 New Marine Lines
Mumbai 400 020, India
Tel: +91-22-22070129, 22070130, Fax: +91-22-22070131
E-mail: mumbai@ddppl.com

UAE: P.O. Box: 9348, Sharjah, UAE
Tel: +971 6 5528954, Fax: +971 6 5528956
E-mail: uae@ddppl.com

Editor & Publisher
SanJeet

Managing Editor
Peden Doma Bhutia

Associate Editor
kanchan.nath@ddppl.com

Assistant Editor
tripti.mehta@ddppl.com

Senior Correspondent
anupriya.bishnoi@ddppl.com

Director
gunjan@ddppl.com

Advertising : Delhi
jaspreet.kaur@ddppl.com
Dinesh Sharma
+91-9810264368

Advertising : Mumbai
harshal@ddppl.com
susan.eapen@ddppl.com
priyanshu@ddppl.com

Advertising : South
shraddha.kapoor@ddppl.com

Design
Yogendra Baghel

Advertisement Designer
Vikas Mandotia
Nitin Kumar

eCommerce
Ashish Chakraborty

Production Manager
Anil Kharbanda

Circulation Manager
Tarun Jain

Business Manager
Ashok Rana

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Editorial enquiries:
(concerning reproduction of articles)
talk@ddppl.com

Advertising enquiries:
gunjan@ddppl.com

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SOUTH INDIA

The Den, Bengaluru, opens with 226 rooms

The Den, a state-of-the-art luxury hotel has opened in Bengaluru. With 226 rooms and suites and an array of delicious dining options, The Den is positioned well for millennials and globetrotters. **Vinesh Gupta**, General Manager, The Den, says, "The Den prides itself as being a cultural touchstone that provides state-of-the-art-facilities. The Den, Bengaluru, will be the epitome of our vision, combining rich local traditions with renowned contemporary touches to deliver a fresh perspective on world-class service. Our aim is to offer our guests a unique blend of modern and traditional aesthetics that create memorable experiences for millennials and globetrotters."



WEST INDIA

Cygnett Inn opens in Dwarka, Gujarat

Cygnett Hotels & Resorts inaugurated Cygnett Inn, Dwarka, on December 15, adding 48 keys to its repertoire. The new hospitality property in the spiritual town is expected to add an iconic destination for business travellers and tourists alike. A bouquet of services is ready to unfurl new experiences for patrons. The hotel is strategically located, a mere 10-minute drive from the Dwarkadhish Temple. The hotel emphasises approachable design, has spacious and modern rooms, including suites, and offers an all-day dining service.



NORTH INDIA

5th Global Hospitality Conclave on January 6

Delhi-NCR is all set to witness yet another dynamic event in hospitality, the fifth Global Hospitality Conclave (GHC). The conclave is one of the finest platforms in the industry to share and gain knowledge and an opportunity to network with the best in business. Global Hospitality Conclave 2018 will be held on January 6 at The Leela Ambience, Gurugram. The conclave, an independent initiative by the alumni of The Oberoi School of Hotel Management (OSHM), now The Oberoi Centre for Learning & Development (OCLD), brings together a host of industry leaders to discuss the trends and developments in the hospitality, travel, and aviation industry.

NORTH INDIA

IHG debuts in Varanasi with Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza

InterContinental Hotels Group has signed a franchise agreement with JHV Group for two new properties in the heritage city of Varanasi. The 300-room Crowne Plaza will accommodate guests filtering in through the business traffic at Mall Road while the 180-room Holiday Inn will serve the Buddhist Circuit and offer excellent connectivity to the airport. Serving a wide range of leisure and business travellers between them, both hotels are expected to be operational by 2021. Commenting on the announcement,

Sudeep Jain, Vice President, Development, South West Asia, IHG, said, "We are thrilled to open our first Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza hotels in Varanasi in partnership with a recognised conglomerate like JHV Group. It is great to be bringing our established brands to new markets with both new and existing partners, as we continue to drive scale and brand preference in India."



PAN INDIA

Kamat Hotels wins trademark infringement case against Royal Orchid Hotels

The Supreme Court (SC) has dismissed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) filed by Royal Orchid Hotels Limited (ROHL) and upheld the February 11, 2015 order of the Madras High Court restraining ROHL from using the word 'Orchid' or mark or logo that amounts to infringement on the trademark of 'The Orchid' belonging to Kamat Hotels (India) Limited (KHIL). KHIL is the owner and registered proprietor of the trademark/logo 'The Orchid' and promotes two five-star ecotel hotels under the brand 'The Orchid' in Mumbai and Pune. The SC bench chaired by Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice R. Banumathi decided to dismiss the petition of ROHL. Disposing the case the SC said in its order, "Having considered the matter we are of the view that the conclusions reached by the Madras High Court cannot be said to be, in any way, unreasonable and/or unacceptable. Rather, we are inclined to hold that the view recorded by the Madras High Court is a perfectly possible and justified view of the matter and the conclusion(s) reached can reasonably flow from a balanced consideration of the evidence and materials on record. We will, therefore, not consider the present to be a fit case for interference with the order of the Madras High Court. Accordingly, we dismiss the Special Leave Petition and refuse leave to appeal."



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NORTH INDIA

Lucknow gets its first Hilton Garden Inn

Hilton has announced the opening of Hilton Garden Inn Lucknow, the first Hilton Garden Inn and second Hilton property in Uttar Pradesh. It boasts 125 contemporary guest rooms, including four junior and executive suites. The hotel also offers vast meetings and events spaces spanning 1114 sqm to host small and large meetings and events such as wedding banquets for up to 1000 guests. Facilities include a ballroom, two flexible meeting rooms, two boardrooms, and two outdoor areas. "India is an important growth market for Hilton Garden Inn and we are delighted to expand our portfolio by opening our fourth hotel in the country. We remain committed to giving our guests exceptional experiences while staying true to our brand promise to make the guests' stay better and brighter through our high standards of comfort and thoughtful touch. With Hilton Garden Inn Lucknow now open, we look forward to being the first choice of travellers to this city who seek midscale accommodation," says **John Greenleaf**, Global Head, Hilton Garden Inn.



NORTH INDIA

The Fern Hotels & Resorts debuts in Himachal Pradesh

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has marked its entry into the state of Himachal Pradesh with the launch of The Fern Surya Resort, Dharampur (Kasauli Hills). With idyllic and tranquil surroundings, the resort offers the best of modern facilities in the friendliest environment. The Fern Surya Resort currently has 22 operating rooms in two categories- Winter Green and Winter Green Premium. "It is a big moment for us as we are entering a new state. This takes the tally of hotels managed by the company to 52. We will be opening a few more properties in the North in the near future," says **Suhail Kannampilly**, Chief Operating Officer, The Fern Hotels & Resorts.

NORTH AND WEST INDIA

Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts' roadshow in Mumbai and Delhi

Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts conducted a two-city roadshow in Mumbai and Delhi to strengthen the brand's ties with the Indian travel trade. The roadshow was part of Jumeirah's newly enhanced focus on India as a source market for its hotels in the UAE, Europe, and the Maldives. In the first half of 2017, 1.3 million travellers from India visited Dubai, making it the emirate's top source market. The brand is dedicated to understanding the intricacies of traditional Indian weddings and is mindful of every important detail that forms part of the culture.

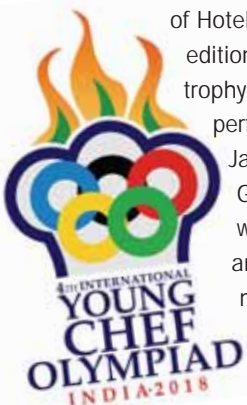
Speaking at the roadshow, **Linda Lewis**, Vice President - Global Sales, Middle East and Asia Pacific, Jumeirah Group, said, "The India market has witnessed a considerable rise in outbound luxury travel in recent years. Given that this demographic seeks superior travel and stay experiences, our current portfolio includes hotels and resorts within a number of favoured locations."



PAN INDIA

4th International Young Chef Olympiad from January 28 to February 2

The fourth International Young Chef Olympiad (YCO), organised by International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM), promises to be bigger and better than all previous editions, with teams from more than 50 countries competing for the winner's trophy, a cash prize of \$10,000, and unparalleled international acclaim for the perfect kick-start to their careers. The event is scheduled to take place from January 28 to February 2, 2018, and is supported by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and various state tourism departments. Contestants will be marked on a host of parameters, including their culinary skills and technique, adherence to good health and hygiene practice, working methods, minimal waste and best use of ingredients, professional appearance, attitude, dish presentation, taste and flavour. Ten celebrity chefs from across the world will jointly shoulder the responsibility of selecting the winner of YCO 2018. The opening ceremony will be held at Talkatora Stadium in Delhi. The first round of competition for each team will take place in Delhi, Pune, and Bengaluru. Round two and the grand finale are scheduled to take place in Kolkata at the Hyatt Regency and the IIHM campus.



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NORTH INDIA

Marriott's South Asia Market Place, a great success: Hema Hariramani

Delhi conducted its first South Asia Market Place on November 17. **Hema Hariramani**, Director, National Sales – India, Marriott International, said, "Delhi reception has been overwhelming. The number of meetings and the turnout has been amazing. We have a lot of customers who have come from the MICE, travel trade, and the corporate segments. The idea behind this entire concept was basically for South Asia hotels to get focus. Apart from India, we have had Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka who have participated in the event. We have the presence of 50 hotels in total over here. The idea is to make sure that there are meaningful discussions and meetings. The idea behind this event is to seal and confirm business, which is exactly what happened."



SOUTH INDIA

SaffronStays targets southern Indian expansion

By taking over more than 2000 homes in the next three to four years, SaffronStays has set its target to an inventory of over 10,000 rooms. With an ARR of ₹ 7,500, SaffronStays aims to compete with global giants based in Europe, USA, and China. The brand that has acquired more than 30 exclusive homes across the country is now looking to replicate its successful model in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry, with a target of acquiring and managing 45 homes with 180 rooms across six states by the end of FY 2018. The steady pace and strong dedication to the brand philosophy has ensured a controlled expansion of the company that is actively eyeing the southern states of India and has opened a southern regional office in Bengaluru to manage operations and maintain SaffronStays standards across the country.



NORTH INDIA

Preferred Hotels opens Shahpura House, Jaipur

Preferred Hotels & Resorts has added Shahpura House, Jaipur, to its ever-increasing portfolio. Once the royal palace of the ruling Shekhawat clan of the Rajputs, this magnificent heritage hotel presents a mixture of Mughal and Indian architecture, with intricately carved stone pillars, domes, and precious artefacts from a bygone era. Located in a plush residential area of Jaipur, the hotel is flanked by a maze of lanes that offer up their secret stash of colourful stalls, temples, verdant gardens, and lakes. The 65 haveli-style guest rooms feature Rajput-inspired decorations embellished with marble and semi-precious stones, and come with private verandas and modern amenities. There is also an on-site spa offering specially curated signature treatments.

SOUTH INDIA

Alfresco by Bene opens at Bengaluru's Sheraton Grand hotel

Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway has launched an open-air Italian venue, Al-fresco by Bene (AbB). AbB is a casual dining extension of the Italian restaurant Bene. The venue is conceptualised with the need for having an outlet for informal get-togethers where guests can relax and unwind after a day's work, while Bene provides a formal atmosphere for a course-wise fine dining Italian meal. The restaurant flaunts a casual and contemporary interior, with exposed brick walls, rustic furnishings, and wooden furniture, coupled with a lot of green elements like pot-ted plants in an outdoor setting.

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EUROPE

Four Seasons Hotel Megève opens in the French Alps

The first Four Seasons mountain experience in Europe is now open in one of the most beloved resort areas in the French Alps. Four Seasons Hotel Megève, the only hotel located directly on the slopes of Mont d'Arbois, is just five minutes from the medieval town of Megève. With direct access to more than 400 kilometres (277 miles) of skiing and the region's only in-house ski valet and ski concierge services, Four Seasons is also inviting skiers to experience more remote runs with the new helicopter ski safaris. Back near the hotel, other winter recreational pursuits are virtually at one's doorstep, from snowboarding and sleigh rides to ice fall climbing and ice sports including hockey, skating, and curling.



ASIA

Beirut gets its second Radisson Blu hotel

Radisson Blu has opened its second hotel in Beirut, Lebanon, the 127-room Radisson Blu Hotel, Beirut. **Tim Cordon**, Area Senior Vice President, Middle East, Turkey and Africa, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, says, "We are delighted to open our second Radisson Blu hotel in Beirut, one of the region's most vibrant capital cities, and one with a rich history. The country's tourism industry has flourished in the last few years and we are confident that the appeal of Beirut's cultural heritage and energising spirit will continue to attract tourists from the regional and international markets. The hotel has a prime location in the city's Verdun district, and the exclusive address perfectly complements the upper upscale positioning of the Radisson Blu brand."



SOUTH AMERICA

Peru's first Radisson RED to open in 2019

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has signed a new Radisson RED in Miraflores, Peru. The hotel will offer 110 rooms and is expected to break ground early 2018 with plans to open mid-2019. Radisson RED Miraflores will be located between Calle Bolivar and Calle Alcanflores in the heart of Miraflores, which is known for its upscale shopping and beautiful coastline. "We are thrilled to announce our first Radisson RED in Peru and further expand the brand in Latin America," says **Ken Greene**, President - Americas, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group.

EUROPE

Indian Accent launches its London outlet

After two successful outposts in New Delhi and New York, Indian Accent is now open in London. Restaurateur **Rohit Khattar**, Chairman, Old World Hospitality, says, "We are delighted to bring Indian Accent to London. After a successful run of our other restaurant, Chor Bizarre, for 20 years at the same location, we hope London embraces Indian Accent with the same warmth." Indian Accent shall open for lunch from Monday to Saturday and daily for dinner. At dinner, a nine-course Chef's Tasting Menu is offered, along with three-course and four-course prix-fixe menu options that include accompaniments. Lunch shall feature a two-course and a three-course menu with accompaniments, a six-course tasting menu, and an à la carte menu.



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ASIA PACIFIC

IHG and Origin Property to bring Staybridge Suites to Asia Pacific

InterContinental Hotels Group and Origin Property are set to bring Staybridge Suites to Asia Pacific. The all-suite, extended-stay brand will launch in Thailand with Staybridge Suites Bangkok Thonglor in 2019, in association with Nomura Real Estate Development Company and Staybridge Suites Chonburi Siracha in 2020. Joining Staybridge Suites' 250 worldwide properties, both new hotels will offer the brand's hallmark warm and residential environment for extended stay guests. Commenting on the milestone, **Rajit Sukumaran**, Chief Development Officer, Asia, Middle East, Africa, IHG, said, "We are delighted to work again with Origin Property to expand our portfolio of differentiated hotel brands regionally. With the rising demand for long-stay accommodation in Bangkok and Siracha, this represents an excellent opportunity for us to introduce Staybridge Suites."



ASIA

4th Holiday Inn Express opens in Bangkok with 206 rooms

IHG has launched its fourth Holiday Inn Express hotel in Bangkok with the opening of Holiday Inn Express Bangkok Soi Soonvijai. Guests at the 206-room hotel can enjoy a good night's sleep, surrounded by the capital's best medical, business, and lifestyle offerings. Ensuring unparalleled convenience for medical tourists, Holiday Inn Express Bangkok Soi Soonvijai is just a two-minute walk from Bangkok Hospital and a short trip to Piyavate Hospital and Rama 9 Hospital. With its convenient location along Soi Soonvijai, which connects to Bangkok's major roads, business travellers can enjoy a hassle-free commute to the main city centre and central business district a stone's throw away. Those on holiday can take a leisurely stroll to some of the city's best malls for shopping, entertainment and dining options, including SHOW DC, Central Rama 9, Terminal 21, and EmQuartier.



ASIA

Marriott and YTL Hotels sign agreements for new hotels across Asia

Marriott International and YTL Hotels have announced agreements for new hotels across Asia, strengthening both companies' presence in the world's fastest growing region. During an official ceremony held at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, the two companies agreed to develop two new luxury hotels in Malaysia under the JW Marriott and EDITION brands and signed Memorandums of Understanding for two hotels in Japan, an EDITION and a W Hotel in Niseko Village, Hokkaido. **Tan Sri Dato' Francis Yeoh**, Managing Director of YTL Group of Companies, said, "We're delighted to expand our hospitality footprint in Asia. Our 20-year relationship has been pivotal to the growth of YTL Hotels in Malaysia, Asia, and in the UK. We currently have 11 Marriott International hotels in our portfolio of 32 hospitality assets, making us one of Marriott's largest owning companies with one of the longest relationships in Asia. Through illustrious Marriott International brands such as The Ritz-Carlton, JW Marriott, and Autograph Collection, we seek to offer our guests experiences that will make memories for a lifetime."

ASIA

The Heritage Hotel Kempinski Yangon, Myanmar, to open soon

Currently in the final phase of restoration, The Heritage Hotel Kempinski Yangon is scheduled to open its doors to guests in spring 2018. Located on The Strand in the heritage district of Myanmar's largest city and opposite the new riverside cruise terminal, this 5-star deluxe hotel will define luxury in the city of Yangon. Built in 1927 as the New Law Courts, The Heritage Hotel Kempinski Yangon was created by architect Thomas Oliphant Foster and built by Doorman Long UK, the builders of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, as the first multi-level steel structure in the Far East. With its imposing columns standing three floors high, the hotel seems to stretch endlessly along The Strand. Over the last five years, the building has been carefully restored from the inside out to preserve the spirit and grandeur of its past. This fine work has been done in partnership with the Yangon Heritage Trust, founded in 2012 by Dr. Thant Myint U. The building is the first property to receive Conservation Management Plan approval from the Yangon Heritage Trust focusing on local artistry and specialist skills by carefully undertaking the transformation into Myanmar's finest luxury hotel.



MIDDLE EAST

Dubai World Trade Centre and AccorHotels debut 25hours hotels, the first of its kind in the Middle East

AccorHotels and Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) have announced the first 25hours hotels properties outside of Europe. The hospitality brand is set to make its debut in the Middle East with the 25hours Dubai Hotel. The 434-room property, which will become the largest 25hours hotel worldwide, is expected to open by 2020. 25hours Dubai Hotel will be located in DWTC's One Central development, which is a premium mixed-use lifestyle destination. With the project's first two phases completed ahead of the delivery schedule, One Central showcases a discerning mix of sustainable commercial assets, diverse hospitality offerings, residential sites, and an iconic multi-purpose theatre.

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NORTH AMERICA

Waldorf Astoria Cancun and Hilton Cancun Resort to open in 2021

Hilton has announced plans to welcome the luxury Waldorf Astoria Cancun and the all-inclusive Hilton Cancun Resort to the global hospitality company's growing portfolio in Mexico. Developed by Parks Hospitality and set to open in 2021, the neighbouring properties will feature distinct characteristics and amenities across 100 acres of Caribbean beachfront. "With more than half of our Latin America portfolio present in Mexico, we are proud to announce the plans for Waldorf Astoria Cancun and Hilton Cancun as we continue to introduce distinguished properties in the world's most sought-after destinations," says **Juan Corvinos**, Vice President, Development, Latin America and the Caribbean, Hilton. Set to deliver a truly unforgettable experience for guests, Waldorf Astoria Cancun will feature 150 guest rooms and suites, with waterfront or mangrove-facing terraces and private balconies. A one-of-a-kind beachfront escape, the neighbouring all-inclusive Hilton Cancun resort property will feature 600 guest rooms offering panoramic views.

EUROPE

Hyatt Centric La Rosière officially opens with 69 rooms

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has announced the opening of Hyatt Centric La Rosière, the first Hyatt Centric hotel in France and the first Hyatt ski resort in Europe. Located at an altitude of 1850 metres, the 69-room hotel boasts an unbeatable slope-side location, offering immediate access to ski lifts. Hyatt Centric La Rosière is operated by Sophos Hotels under a franchise agreement. Hyatt Centric La Rosière brings the Hyatt Centric brand to the French Alps, creating a cosmopolitan vibe that invites exploration and discovery amongst guests who want to be at the centre of action.

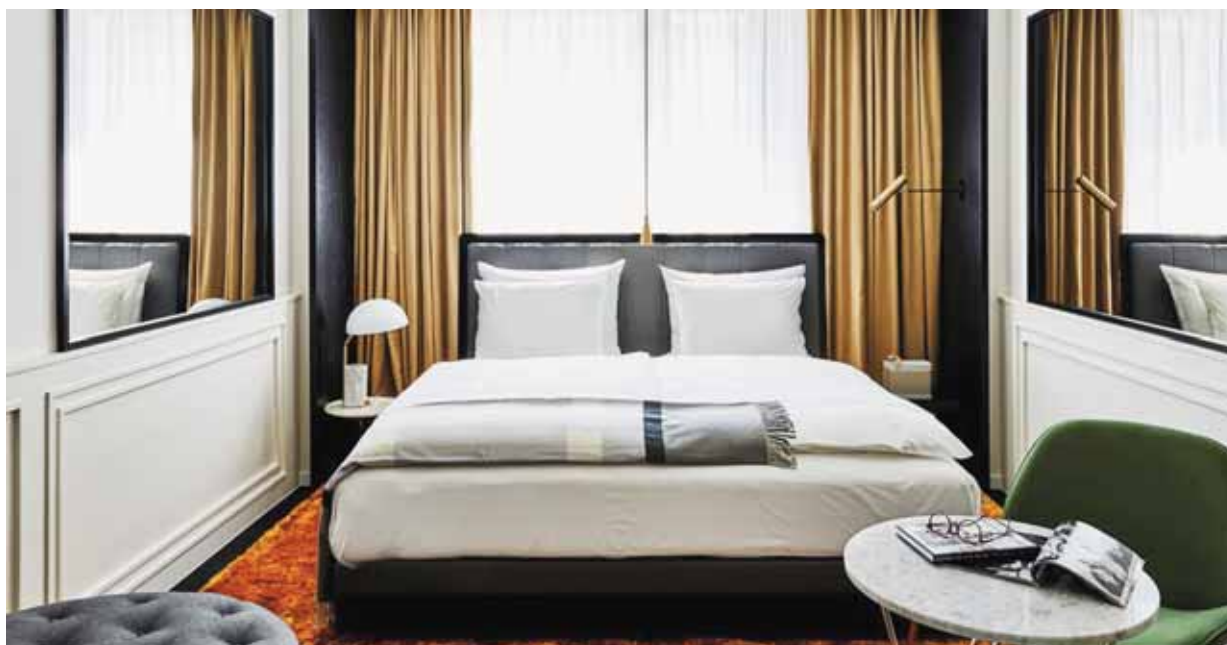


EUROPE

Roomers Munich opens with 281 rooms

Autograph Collection Hotels has announced its fourth hotel in Germany with the opening of Roomers Munich. "With its unparalleled location, immersive design, and bespoke dining experiences, Roomers Munich perfectly embodies the exactly-like-nothing-else ethos of the brand," says **Brian Povinelli**, Senior Vice President and Global

Brand Leader, Autograph Collection Hotels. "We are thrilled to welcome it to our growing global portfolio of 125 distinctive hotels around the world," he adds. Created by Gekko Group with an avant-garde approach to the hotel's interiors led by Amsterdam design company, Concrete, Roomers Munich opens with 281 thoughtfully-designed guest rooms and suites.



ASIA

Shangri-La Hotel, Xiamen, opens with 325 rooms

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts has announced the opening of the 325-room Shangri-La Hotel, Xiamen. With its enviable setting and offerings, the urban resort is a lifestyle destination catering to both leisure and business travellers. Overlooking a long stretch of beach on one side and urban views on the other, Shangri-La Hotel, Xiamen, is located within the city's newly developed financial and IT zone, Guanyin Shan Business Centre. Over 70 per cent of the hotel's guest rooms and suites have commanding views of the Taiwan Straits, ranging from the 42 sqm Deluxe Sea View Room to the elegantly styled Shangri-La Suite offering 168 square metres of luxurious living space.



Hospitality slated to grow: Lall

Rahul Lall, the recently-appointed Secretary General of Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), talks about his new role, the responsibilities it would entail, and his vision for the association.

KINDLY TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.

I completed my Post Graduate Diploma in Hotel Management from The Oberoi School of Hotel Management, New Delhi, and am from the Management Trainee batch of 1985-87. Prior to this, I did my Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) from Delhi University and am an alumnus of St. Xavier's Collegiate School, Kolkata and Don Bosco School, Chennai. As a professional hotelier, I have worked with The Oberoi Group of Hotels for 15 years and thereafter with Sarovar Hotels, in various capacities as General Manager and Area Director. Prior to joining FHRAI, I was the Vice President - Operations for Dangayach Group of Hotels.



RAHUL LALL

HOW WAS 2017 FOR HOSPITALITY AND WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN EXPECTATIONS FROM 2018?

With continuous positive support from the government, hospitality is slated to grow, and we see this sector providing those much-needed job opportunities for the youth of the nation. We also expect revenue growth for the Indian hotel industry to improve by around 7 per cent in FY 2018. The implementation of GST has brought in a positive change to the sector by reducing costs for customers, harmonising taxes, and reducing business transaction costs. We are expecting a healthier growth in the coming years and better movements in various market segments.

AS THE SECRETARY GENERAL, WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND VISION FOR FHRAI?

It is my privilege to be the Secretary General of FHRAI. Besides the day-to-day administration of the association, I am involved in liaising with the government and various government agencies for co-ordination on industry-related issues. To provide encompassing solutions to our members through representation, tourism growth initiatives, and awareness campaigns promoting and protecting the hotel industry ensuring that FHRAI is the leading voice of the industry will entail my duties as Secretary General.

A large number of factors have contributed towards the growth of the hospitality industry, with technology playing a significant role. It is time that this was deployed effectively to enhance awareness of our role and activities, which in turn will enhance our membership base and overall productivity. It is suggested that the various business verticals be fine-tuned and certain new ones added. Some of these verticals are revenue producing, non-revenue producing, accounts and administration, public relations and media management (including social media websites), and research and advisory services.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN HOSPITALITY THAT FHRAI WILL BE TAKING UP WITH THE GOVERNMENT?


We recently submitted our presentation to the Ministry of Finance regarding our suggestions for Budget 2018-19 for both direct and indirect taxes. We have raised the following issues in our presentation:

- All foreign exchange earnings should be treated as exports or deemed exports. If the same would qualify as export/deemed export of services, the credit balance would be available for adjusting GST liability on domestic taxable supplies
- Declared tariff should not be basis for rate categorisation. Rate categorisation should be on the basis of transaction value
- It is recommended that restaurants be given the credit for input services. Credit on inputs and capital items may be kept restricted
- It is recommended that 'Infrastructure' status to hospitality industry for projects of ₹ 25 crore and more be given



LOOKING TO FRIDAYS!

An entrepreneur for the last 10 years, **Rohan Jetley**, CEO, TGIF (India), describes his vision for the brand as one that is ambitious and not limited to the number of outlets alone. He has taken several bold initiatives that have made Fridays more responsive to the environment that it exists in.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE F&B INDUSTRY IN INDIA?

People these days are looking for high quality products. Millennials are conscious about what goes into their stomach. People are looking for bolder flavours, fresher ingredients. Also, the world is getting more globalised; there are more artisanal offerings rather than just mass chain restaurants. Players in the F&B industry now have to create an identity with the location they are in and I think people are gravitating towards that. With the economy booming and Indians taking to global cuisines with ease and speed, competitive offerings have helped expand the market offerings. Brand TGIF has enjoyed a loyal and aspirational following across India with the youth has embraced the iconic American brand as a global trend. TGIF was the first all-American fine-dining restaurant in India

and not a very easy concept to market in a closed economy. However, it soon became everyone's favourite destination for the all-American experience.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AMONGST THE MUSHROOMING IN THE SECTOR?

We are in the upper casual-dining segment and expect to remain there. This particular segment is growing very aggressively.

THE PREVIOUS YEAR WAS CHALLENGING FOR THE INDUSTRY. HOW DID YOU COPE?

Dealing with change, whether it's the beef ban, the highway liquor ban or even GST, is always a disruptor for restaurateurs. We strive hard to keep customers happy and on innovating what we serve to make their experience better, and then all our attention goes to dealing with challenges like these or rectifying ourselves around them. I think, the more stability the government can

offer in terms of economic policies, the better it will be. If they want to create a rule, they can do that, but let's not change the rule too often because everyone goes around that rule.

WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THE TALENT CRUNCH EXISTING IN THIS SECTOR?

It all comes down to constantly training and giving people opportunities. You have to identify the right talent and then promote it accordingly. When you give people a certain amount of responsibility, they rise to that occasion. The F&B industry is not going to pay as much as retail or any other industry, but it's definitely a great sector to be in. To mitigate the problem, you have to mitigate the talent within your own company and give it a chance to grow.

CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE TGIF IN TIER-II CITIES AS WELL?

Yes. Tier-II cities themselves are becoming extremely metropolitan.



With restaurants like ours going in smaller cities, people have to be more familiar with the American culture; this is already happening. Cities like Indore, Guwahati, and Jaipur are becoming more and more urbanised and cosmopolitan. In fact, we opened a new restaurant in Chandigarh and it's doing very well.

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT TGIF'S IMMEDIATE EXPANSION PLANS.

We are opening up in cities we already exist in, that is Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, etc. We are going to saturate these markets.



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50 years and counting: 'Park'ed at the top

Vijay Dewan, Managing Director, The Park Hotels, talks about the group's 50-year celebration and how the brand works tirelessly to stay on top of the game. He says the brand is constantly innovating and believes in the vision of 'Leadership through Differentiation'.



↓ Peden Doma Bhutia

50 YEARS OF THE PARK, THAT SURE IS A MILESTONE. YOUR THOUGHTS...

Having completed 50 years, it's a very exciting moment for us. There have been many such moments of learning and the next 50 years are going to be even more phenomenal than those that have gone by. We have been able to clearly differentiate our products on the basis of design, events, entertainment, and creating unique service experiences. Our core ideology is based on being 'Anything but Ordinary'; this has become our

brand and culture in a way, and it has become the spirit of The Park and the key to our success today. The success of The Park is also attributed to its values, which have been acquired over the years through various kinds of learning. Teamwork, commitment, trust, reliability, and integrity- these values are our guiding principles and our inspiration for the future.

HOW ARE YOU CELEBRATING THE 50 YEARS?

We hosted a very big celebration in Kolkata, where we hosted a 50-hour party; we are going to have a series of parties and events in

all our hotels from one city to the other over the year, and this will culminate at The Park Visakhapatnam, which also turns 50 in November, 2018. It's a curated experience, which will travel from one city to the other.

HOW HAS THE JOURNEY BEEN IN THE LAST 50 YEARS FOR THE PARK?

When The Park started, there probably weren't many hotel brands. The Park looked at doing business differently. In 1995, under the leadership of Priya Paul, a new vision of 'Leadership through Differentiation' was cre-

ated. Under that vision, you see that at The Park today, the focus is on differentiation and design, events and entertainment, and on curating food, so it's part of our culture. Today, of course, there are many more brands in India and many international brands are also here, but we have been able to create a niche for ourselves based on our strategy of innovation and differentiation.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO STAY ON TOP OF THE GAME?

The experiences at The Park are very different and that differentiation is helping us remain at the top. For instance, in Kolkata, where The Park started its operations, we are market leaders in terms of occupancies and revenue per available room. Even in terms of creating events and entertainment, we are the market leaders and this has been so for the past two decades. Location also plays a key role but the main thing is our innovative strategy. Our spas are also very popular among our guests. In all our hotels, in some way or the other, the atmosphere is very business-like during the

day, relaxed towards the evening, and very pulsating and full of energy towards the end. That brand spirit we have been able to bring about in all our hotels and that has created success for us as there are no comparable products of this kind in the market.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN IT COMES TO THE PARK BRAND?

We have launched our new brand-Zone by the Park, a social catalyst brand for design-conscious and price-conscious guests.

We have seven hotels operating under the brand in the cities of Chennai, Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Udaipur, Raipur, and Jaipur. It's also a very aspirational brand for young travellers and young businessmen in Tier-II and Tier-III cities. This brand is growing very well and has been successful in all the markets it has opened in.

We are expecting to launch seven more properties in about a year's time in places like Igatpuri, Puducherry, Surat, and Goa.

HOW WAS 2017 FOR THE PARK?

The overall occupancy in 2016-17 reached the levels of 2007-08, which was the peak performing year of the hospitality industry. The ARR and RevPARs are definitely seeing an increase. There is a change in demand and supply with demand rising at a much faster pace than supply, so the situation has completely reversed in 2016-17, and 2017-18 will be an even better year. There were some hiccups such as the liquor policy, which affected some of our hotels, particularly those in Chennai and Bengaluru, but the matter has now been resolved; the Supreme Court has given a clarification and things are now back to normal. Now, within municipal areas, one can serve liquor. Regarding GST, the government has been very responsive. We have had meetings with the tourism and finance departments and it looks like things will be positive. We are very hopeful that hospitality will be on an 18 per cent GST in times to come.



RENEWED LUXURY IN NOIDA

Radisson Blu MBD Noida recently unveiled its ultra-luxurious avatar, a re-designing exercise which is truly comprehensive with astounding detailing from the lobby to the restaurant, aimed at providing an unprecedented level of luxury and hospitality. **Sonica Malhotra**, Joint Managing Director, MBD Group, talks about the need for the renovation and the brand's future plans.



Anupriya Bishnoi

WHAT WAS THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THIS RENOVATION?

When we entered the Noida market about 14 years ago, we were already ahead of the game in the city. We entered a virgin market where there wasn't a single five-star hotel. We are leaders in terms of operating performance, even in Delhi-NCR, and we are among the top three hotels in performance. Competition is something that is always changing and you always want to remain ahead of the curve given that Noida, too, is now

a mature market for a luxury product. We thought the time was right to come up with a luxury product in the city to help us continue to stay ahead of the game. That was the only need. It was a strategic decision of the management that for the next 14 years we had to be number one. Now we have changed the complete DNA of the hotel from the first 5-star hotel to a luxury one.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE AND HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THEM?

There was that initial bit of an unnerving situation when GST was rolled out because there was very little time

to actually prepare ourselves with clarifications coming in only towards the end. Considering we work with sophisticated operating systems and softwares, they took time to develop patches for us. So, there was an initial tension. Now the market is settled because everywhere there is GST application. If you have to trade, you have to pay. It has been all across the hospitality industry and we have come to terms with it. Certain lower categorised hotels got sops, which luxury and high-end hotels did not. That said, we as an industry managed it well and will manage it well in the future, too.

Certain amount of benefit has also accompanied the GST. We used to have multiple layers of taxation in hotels, food and beverage, and division of rooms. With GST, there is a certain uniformity that has come in. It takes time to adapt to any sort of change and if you look at it from a long-term perspective, it is actually for the better. Earlier, we would sometimes get Input Credit and sometimes not. With GST, we have gone into a clear-cut rendition of taxation.

Our ARR and occupancies didn't get hit at all; F&B, for a very small period got hit but everything soon came back to normal.

HOW ARE YOU DEALING WITH THE TALENT CRUNCH IN THE INDUSTRY?

There is a huge mismatch in the demand and supply of talent in the country. First, it's difficult to find talent and second, it is difficult retaining it. We are continuously striving to maintain a balance. In terms of corrective measures, there are international school chains that want to enter India and some of them have already spoken to us because we are also one of the largest education companies in India.

Internally as well, we do a lot of management development programmes and supervisory development programmes. We hire from campuses, groom students for two years, and prepare them for management positions. We started that about two and a half years ago. The first batch has only recently graduated. We have employed them in-house, across departments.

Now, depending on their key interests, they will spend a substantial amount of time to qualify to take managerial positions in that department. We also do supervisory development. A number of students, if given a little bit of training, can actually take up supervisory positions.

Also, it's very easy to look outside and say there is a big crunch of talent; we have now started looking inward, where we are trying to train our own people as it's something which is in our control and a great motivational factor for people who aspire to take higher positions. As a result, retention also becomes better. This step has had a positive impact on our MBD hospitality division.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM 2018?

2018 is going to be brilliant, at least for Radisson Blu Hotel Noida. With the luxury positioning of this hotel and



the Privé Collection rooms that are also extremely luxurious, we are already seeing a positive ARR shift of about 40 per cent on Privé Collection.

We also see 25 per cent growth in ARR and at least 35 per cent in RevPAR. We are actually seeing an uptrend from the time we've had Privé Collection in the market.

WHAT ARE YOUR IMMEDIATE EXPANSION PLANS?

Our Bengaluru property is under construction and it will take three years for it to get completed. We are also under an active lookout in the Goa and Mumbai markets. Besides that, we are in a joint venture with Germany's largest luxury hotel operator, Steigenberger Hotels, which is a big breakthrough for the group. We are the Indian counterpart for their group. We are looking after the management of MBD Steigenberger in India. We have already done four LOIs across MBD Steigenberger, including Intercity Hotel, a mid-market brand and MBD Express, which is going to be a breakfast category in our hotel division.

Inclusiveness, the way to wellness

Brendan Toomey, Vice President – Human Resources, Asia Pacific, Hilton, elucidates the role of inclusive programmes that Hilton adapts and ways to retain talent in the industry.



Jessy Iype



HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE TALENT IN INDIAN HOSPITALITY?

When I travel to different countries around Asia Pacific, I sense that the service in India is as good if not better than anywhere else in the region, which puts it ahead of the rest of the world. The talent here is highly engaged and we feel fortunate that the important culture that we have built in India is a new thrust. The vision of wanting to deliver the best in class is Hilton's mantra. Our mission is to be the most hospitable

company in the world. This covers four critical areas that include delivering memorable experiences, creating opportunities for team members, giving back to the communities that we operate in, and creating value for the owners of the hotels.

WHAT PROGRAMMES DOES HILTON OFFER THAT ENSURE IT IS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK?

We are one of the top 100 companies in India and number 25 on the 'Great Places to Work' list. The sort of programmes and initiatives that

reinforce our culture are things such as the most recent value proposition called 'Thrive at Hilton'. This programme is designed to help us support our team members in health and happiness. We have three key pillars within this, where we aim to improve the health and happiness of all team members in body, mind, and spirit.

Well-being

We strive to build a strong foundation of health and well-being. We provide team members with a great environment that inspires, instils



pride, and helps them achieve their goals. Through our 'Heart of House' programme, we create a space for team members that reflects our values. Hilton has also implemented a five-day work-week policy across seven hotels in India.

Mindful leadership

We seek lifelong learning and mindful leadership. We celebrate diversity in the workplace. Since 2012, we have tripled the woman leadership in our hotels across Asia Pacific and aim to have women leaders make up 30 per cent of our General Manager population by 2019. In 2016, we stepped up our commitment by signing up as a pioneering Singapore IMPACT Champion in support of HeForShe, the UN women-led solidarity movement for gender equality to foster a greater work environment for all our team members in Asia Pacific. We have held workshops and conferences that have empowered more than 420 female team members.

Making the world better

We connect with purpose and create a great culture so that our team

members feel cared for, valued, and respected, and are proud to be part of Hilton. We ensure that the team members feel recognised and rewarded for their contribution to our success. Recognition programmes such as Catch Me at My Best, the CEO Light & Warmth Awards, Thrive Sabbatical Team Member Appreciation Week – Recognising the Heart of Hilton, Go Hilton Team Member and Family & Friends Travel Programmes, Travel with Purpose-Hilton's corporate responsibility commitment enables team members to positively impact the local environment and community.

Currently, 82 per cent of our employees in India are millennials. By 2020, this would reach 70 per cent on a global scale for Hilton. Millennials have particular desires, wants and needs, and we provide all of it through our programmes. We have a management trainee programme for India for 18 months where team members go to different countries where they not only get to witness hotel operations but also get to see a different culture, a new foreign environment. This helps to broaden their thinking.

TELL US ABOUT THE YOUTH WELL-BEING INDEX.

There are 30 countries in the world that account for 1.8 billion youth. The International Youth Foundation surveyed a range of youth across three countries and came to different findings. We have partnered with the foundation as we pledged to touch the lives of a million youth by 2019, so globally we have connected with half a million. When we hire youth in our business, we offer meaningful careers, we need to understand the youth, and the index is an indicator that allows to understand what progress has been made by the governments of countries around the world and how we, as a business, can integrate the learnings from the well-being index. The latest index was released recently and overall it indicates that of those people surveyed in India, wellness is improving, which is huge. This is the age group between 15-29 years. In India, it went up four per cent. The youth surveyed in India said there is improvement in their well-being and lives. They also said that they were

quite optimistic about their future. However, there is still a view in the survey on gender inequality in India. It comes loud and clear as it is a big challenge.

What this tells a business is that when we think of shifts in hotels, we try not to roster them in unreasonable hours, working late at night. In our hotels in India, the female participation is 13 per cent, which is higher than the industry average of about 10-11 per cent. The participation of women in India is approximately 27 per cent.

WHAT TRENDS HAVE YOU SEEN IN THE INDUSTRY?

We should include differently abled team members and initiate suitable jobs for those from all walks of society. I feel every hotel should have 5-10 differently abled people working. Also, there is no reason why hotels should not include developmentally disabled persons, as there are sitting and standing up vocations for them in housekeeping, laundry, etc. Our aim is to work with NGOs and educate our leadership. The education process should be followed by the recruitment and training process. While hiring differently abled people, it should be noted that there is a suitable environment and infrastructure to add them to the workforce. Awareness to provide the right training is required. We need to sensitise team members of people of diverse backgrounds. We have an obligation to support as many members of our community as we can to provide them suitable jobs.

WHAT ROLE DOES SKILL DEVELOPMENT PLAY?

Skill is important. It is our expertise in training people to help them deliver great service to customers. We opened a vocational centre in Myanmar, where we took 22 youth from the countryside who never knew how to converse in English. We took them from their environment and we graduated them a month ago, and now every single one of them is fully trained and has a job for life.

The money they earn goes to their community. We are creating a meaningful workforce and their families are looked after well.



In our hotels in India, the female participation is 13 per cent, which is higher than the industry average of about 10-11 per cent



ENGAGING ALL SEGMENTS FOR GROWTH

Prashant Rai Sood, Director, EROS Group, talks about the company's plans for 2018, its performance in 2017, and the appeal of the hospitality sector of India.

TELL US ABOUT THE GROUP'S PLAN FOR 2018.

The EROS Group hopes to expand its footprint in India and internationally as well. We are currently focusing on exploring properties in Europe and London, as well as major cities in India, developing existing land banks and developing hotels and commercial properties. We are looking at doubling our inventory by 2020.

HOW DID 2017 FARE FOR EROS?

For us, 2017 was an extremely productive year with a lot of new developments and projects in the pipeline. EROS completed many residential complexes in Delhi-NCR, one of the recent ones being Wembley Estate located in Rosewood City on Gurugram-Sohna Road. It is a meticulously planned township spread across 115 acres. It is fully equipped with a school, shopping centre, tennis courts, club, and swimming pool. In Greater Noida, EROS Sampoonam is one of our ongoing projects and we aim to position it at an optimum value for investment. It is spread over an area of 25 acres and will have close to 3400 units. The complex



will have important amenities including large and lush green landscapes, swimming pools, a jogging track, a play area for children, in-house shopping centre, yoga and meditation centre, badminton courts, tennis courts, basketball court, skating area, putting green, club house with gym, billiards room, etc. We have also tied up with Bharti Realty to develop a housing project in Surajkund.

In the hospitality space, EROS has developed a deluxe 5-star property close to the Delhi-Faridabad border. It is managed by Radisson. We have also completely revamped Shangri-La's - Eros Hotel, New Delhi, and turned it into one of the most eminent properties in New Delhi. We also rebranded the existing spa into Shangri-La's global brand, CHI, which has already made its mark around the globe in more than 44 countries. The new accommodation facilities now offer state-of-the-art, well-furnished contemporary rooms and suites including a split-level Horizon Lounge for guests to enjoy the best in luxury in the heart of the city. We also



revamped our food and beverage offerings and brought Shangri-La's very own signature restaurant, Shang Palace, bringing the best of Yunnan, Cantonese, and Sichuan to the food connoisseurs of New Delhi.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE CHALLENGES THAT 2017 BROUGHT IN ITS WAKE?

The hospitality industry has seen major changes post GST. Earlier, the industry was liable to pay multiple taxes like VAT, Luxury Tax, and Service Tax. After GST, the consumer is paying a standard tax. Contrary to the industry's expectations, GST's impact on it has been comparatively neutral.

WHAT IS YOUR STRATEGY TO STAND OUT IN A MARKET RIDDLED WITH INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY BRANDS?

The hospitality sector is among the top 10 sectors in India to attract the highest Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The new players are mainly competing for trophy assets. However, the existing industry players with a track record of success are still driving most activity in the hotel space. International brands definitely have a strong hold in the industry. Having said that, we are constantly coming up with new and interesting concepts to maintain freshness and give our patrons something to look forward to. We also look at maintaining stellar service standards to ensure brand loyalty from guests; we don't intend to compete on prices but concentrate on offering a quality product with service to match.

HOW LUCRATIVE ARE TIER-II CITIES FOR THE INDUSTRY?

Tier-II cities are desirable destinations as they present an opportunity for growth and development, and allow business to expand and provide employment. The operational cost isn't much and it is a great opportunity for those investors who would like to earn rental returns from their investment. We are looking at opportunities for 3 to 4-star hotels in these cities.



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2017 in rearview Looking ahead to 2018

As the hospitality industry bids goodbye to 2017, the forecast for 2018 looks better. **Hospitality Talk** gets in conversation with industry experts to understand what 2018 is going to be like and how soon the industry will get accustomed to the changes it witnessed last year.



NORTON PEREIRA
General Manager
Le Méridien Goa, Calangute

STIMULATING EXPERIENCES

As a new hotel that has been operational for only five months so far, our focus will be on experienced hospitality. At Le Méridien Goa, Calangute, our effort is to expose curious and creative-minded travellers to engaging and stimulating experiences inside and outside the hotel. Our effort will be to help travellers explore the best-kept secrets of Goa, be it through art, culture, cuisine or music.

FOCUS ON RevPAR

2018 will be a year of ramping up for us. Hence, while we aim at a

gradual, yet steady increment in ADRs and occupancy growth, our focus will be on improving RevPAR index, which is a more wholesome indicator of progress and also helps evaluate market share.

AN OPTIMISTIC 2018

I am optimistic that 2018 will prove to be better than 2017. Goa has registered the highest year-on-year increase of 7.3 per cent in average rates in 2017 in the star hotel category. The resilience that Goa has exhibited with year-on-year performance improvements despite addition to supply is indicative of the buoyancy of this market and we are positive that this upward trend is going to continue. The state is still leading in RevPAR, beating Mumbai and shining as the

country's favourite leisure destination. Goa leads all the Indian states in terms of tourism spend in 2016-17 with 0.673 per cent of its expenditure allocated for travel and tourism, which shows in the infrastructure and planning of the state government and its ardent support to hospitality. This is a clear indication of the potential that 2018 holds.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Adaptability is the biggest learning from 2017. While as hoteliers we keep ourselves abreast with the dynamic nature of the industry and impending policy decisions that impact business, it is imperative to quickly adapt ourselves to change and take necessary measures that ensure first-mover advantage.



A PROMISING YEAR

With the consistent surge in domestic tourism, 2017 started on a positive note for the aviation, travel, and hospitality industry. India became the third largest aviation market as domestic air traffic showed consistent growth. The hospitality industry, however, faced several roadblocks but has made an encouraging recovery in the last quarter. The industry's dependence upon technology is growing to improve efficiency, ac-

celerate profitability, and we expect Global Distribution Systems (GDS) to become more deeply embedded across these sectors. 2018 for aviation, travel, and hospitality will be a promising year as domestic travel and MICE will pick up resulting in business growth. With the upcoming Union Budget for 2018-19, we are looking forward to reforms supporting the industry. While the government is aggressively marketing Brand India globally, it is imperative to focus

ANKUR BHATIA

Executive Director
Bird Group & Member of CII's
Core Committee on Aviation

internally and address issues around taxation, infrastructure, and inconsistent regulations imposed by various states to achieve the potential of these industries. We also hope the Union Budget will empower each of the industries to take full advantage of varied opportunities ahead.



REVAMPING DINING

The entire team at The Westin Gurgaon and The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa is excited about the New Year. 2018 is looking to be really positive and everyone is working with great gusto to grow the brand and strengthen our presence in Delhi-NCR, taking it to the next level. The F&B offerings at the hotel will see a completely new avatar this year. The F&B teams at both properties are brainstorming to produce a delectable range of signature menus and innovative F&B concepts that truly make dining an interactive and international experience. With banqueting options galore, our guests' experiences at The Westin properties are designed to satiate any culinary curiosity. The Westin Gurgaon and The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa will curate a package that will foster experiential dining at EEST and Xiao

Chi, wherein our three expat chefs are serving up authentic pan Asian cuisine. Also, our guests can enjoy an endless array of delicious Indian cuisines at Bara Darhi; fresh and imaginative courses at the all-day diners, The Seasonal Tastes and The Living Room and delightful Italian cuisine at Prego. Giving equal prominence to the local regional food of our country is a concept that we want to encourage in the coming year. One of the key highlights at both our properties are the spa facilities at our signature Heavenly Spa by Westin, available to Westin guests across the globe.

ROBUST GROWTH

We are looking at a robust growth as business continues to rise. Our key source markets are looking positive and we are expecting a growth in the ARR in 2018.

ASHWANI NAYAR

Multi-Property General Manager
The Westin Gurgaon and The
Westin Sohna Resort & Spa

LUXURY AND GUEST SATISFACTION

With an extensive bandwidth and support system, we hope to establish ourselves as the first choice for the discerning traveller, offering the best luxury hospitality experience in Delhi-NCR, catering to the MICE and wedding segment of the client database, as well as to the leisure traveller. Guest satisfaction is of utmost significance at our properties and thus, we are focusing on creating stronger guest loyalty programmes in 2018. Club Marriott, our dining loyalty programme, gives access to a world of benefits across more than 250 Marriott International hotels and resorts in Asia Pacific.





AJAY K. BAKAYA
Managing Director
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

PLAN FOR 2018

The things that we are looking at for 2018 include a website upgrade, a two-way interactive CRS, more focus on online reputation management, and scaling up our guest loyalty programme.

A STEADY GROWTH

The revenue growth

for the Indian hotel industry is expected to increase by 6-7 per cent. The supply pipeline across several markets, coupled with steady demand uptick, will be the driver for the next upcycle in the industry over the next couple of years. The implementation of GST brought in a positive change to the sector by reducing costs for customers, harmonising taxes, and reducing business transaction costs. With steady occupancy across markets, we are expecting a healthier growth in the coming years and

higher movements of business as well as leisure travellers.

TECHNOLOGY, THE BEST WAY

The hospitality industry is in the midst of major changes due to disruptions by new-age technology-driven business such as Airbnb, Ola, and Uber. With the advent of smart technology and easy smartphone access, the business-to-consumer model has become the norm. Guests have become very tech savvy and there is no other way than changing the old economy business model if we want to continue to attract travellers.



NOSHIR A. MARFATIA
Senior Vice President - Sales & Marketing
The Fern Hotels & Resorts

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

For some time now, we have believed there is a need to create holidays for families where they can go with their pets. We are delighted to offer Pawsome Holidays at our resorts in Alibaug, Dapoli, and Mount Abu, where our guests can take their pets along for a true family holiday. Depending on the guest response to this initiative, we will extend Pawsome Holidays to more of our hotels and resorts in 2018.

STRONGER PERFORMANCE

On a group level, we are doing very well with an overall occupancy of 69 per cent across all our hotels. Most of our metro and Tier-I city hotels are averaging a YTD occupancy level of over

80-85 per cent. The Fern Hotels has an average ARR of ₹ 6,500-7,000, with our Mumbai properties reaching an average ARR of ₹ 7,500-10,000 and more. The Fern Residency properties have an average ARR of ₹ 3500-4500 and Beacon Hotels are at an average ARR of ₹ 2200-3000. We are confident of closing the current financial year at a stronger occupancy level with higher ARR's.

EXPANSION ON THE CARDS

We have experienced good occupancy and revenue growth in 2017 and are more bullish in 2018. The India growth story seems to be on the upswing again and this definitely affects the hospitality industry positively. At our level of hotels, the Indian domestic business and leisure traveller is our largest market and with both these segments travelling much more year-on-year, it only augers well for us. We are

confident of doing higher occupancy levels at higher ARR's at most of our hotels and locations in 2018, and will be opening hotels in new destinations like Belagavi, Aurangabad, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Kathmandu, and Bharatpur (Nepal).

TAILORED OFFERINGS

The Indian domestic business and leisure traveller is booking more and more last-minute trips and looking for value at full-service. Social media is playing a bigger role in the influencer and buying decisions. GEMs (Going that Extra Mile) can convert guests into loyalists and brand ambassadors for the hotel. At all our Fern, Fern Residency, and Beacon hotels, we are tailoring our operations and services to meet these new demands and learnings, and this is resulting in higher occupancies, higher repeat guests, more loyalty, and stronger bottom lines.

MORE PRESENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2018, our focus at Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach will be to strengthen our social media presence, as it acts as a key facet to drive and engage with our guests and audiences. Our dedicated team makes a conscious effort to keep itself updated with popular social media trends. Also, the hotel is soon going to see a refurbishment of the room inventory and other key areas of the property in 2018.

STAYING ABREAST WITH CITY TRENDS

Our chief emphasis for 2018 is the refurbishment of rooms, however, we will still be doing the same occupancy as per the trend in the city.

MORE EVENTS MEANS MORE BUSINESS

2018 looks very promising and filled with events and conferences. We're expecting a substantial number of business and leisure travellers to visit the city, as Mumbai is the epicentre of most business conferences and summits.

POLICIES APLENTY

2017 was an interesting year for the hospitality sector. The market saw new implementations such as demonetisation, GST, and the alcohol ban on highways.

Despite these being a blow to the luxury segment, they did not affect our hotel. Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach saw a remarkable growth in

SHITAL SETHI

Director of Sales and Marketing
Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach Hotel

F&B, social events, weddings, and MICE. The past year saw comparatively fewer compatible dates for weddings and social events. It is our aim to work more positively in 2018 as it is packed with events and weddings.



PLANNING THE FUTURE WELL

Our initiatives for 2018 would include planning to increase our GDS base via soliciting RFPs, increase our penetration in the corporate segment, increase our retail or online pricing and promote direct business via mobilising our brand website and nurturing local business relationships, and participate in various wedding marts.

SUSTAINING BUSINESS

For 2018, we are expecting a year-round occupancy of about 80 per

cent with mean average ARR of around ₹7,000.

AN INDUSTRIAL SPUR

Considering a revision of GST norms, we ourselves are very bullish on 2018. Projects like POD Taxi are underway in Gurugram and a spur in infrastructural development will see an overall increase in business. India being a key emerging market and enjoying a better ranking in ease of doing business will see an overall industrial growth.

ROHIT JHINGAN

Director - Sales & Marketing
The Pllazio Hotel, Gurugram

SOME GAINS, SOME LOSSES

Business volume in terms of occupancies grew but ADRs did not. The month of May was really good for Gurugram as the region saw good business. With an annual rise in hotel inventory in Delhi-NCR, one of the biggest challenges will now be to maintain service standards and exceed consumer expectations.



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

We started a revolution at The Lalit this year to make this hotel chain an inclusive place that welcomes everyone from people who are differently abled to people from marginalised communities. We want to change the perception of India as an unsafe, agnostic place.

REACHING FOR THE BEST

I am pleased at the direction the group has taken and want to promote Pink tourism in the country.

AIMING TO BE PREFERRED

2017 was a year of action and change for us. We are aiming at strengthening our efforts in the direction the group has taken in bringing the marginalised communities into mainstream, and we are sure to be the preferred choice for all our guests.

SETTING NEW TRENDS

2017 has been a year of achieving several milestones for us, from launching the group's first internation-

KESHAV SURI

Executive Director
The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group

al hotel to initiating campaigns like We Care (to give back to the society), hosting events for people with disabilities, acid attack survivors, pet-friendly brunches, LGBTQIA brunches, drag performances, and more. I learnt that it is not just the government or institutions, but the people who must act to make a difference.





SHATRUGHAN TOMAR

General Manager
The Fern Residency, Gurugram

GREEN ALL THE WAY

Since we are an eco-friendly hotel, we follow a number of Green practices. However, there is always a scope for improvement and we will try to better our standards in 2018. Some of our Green initiatives for the year will include our plan to open a gift shop where we will sell only environmentally friendly products; stock a central library with hiking and biking guides and information about the local environment and conservation efforts; buy organic, biodegradable, fair trade, locally-produced, cruelty-free products with minimal or recycled, plastic-free packaging whenever possible; donate leftover food to a local non-profit organisation; compost yard waste and biodegradable products; and provide glass cups and ceramic mugs (instead of plastic) for in-room beverages.

SUSTAINING ARRs

Foreign tourist arrivals are expected to reach 12-13 million by end of 2020, mainly due to increasing international trade, multinational companies setting up their opera-

tions in India, and more airports for better connectivity. As per a survey, the expected future inventory in 11 major markets across categories is low at around 57,000 rooms for the next five years. Therefore, with increasing demand due to improvement in economic activities and lower room additions, we expect the industry to sustain ARR going forward and grow at an average of 3.5 per cent per annum.

GUIDANCE BY TECHNOLOGY

Immersive experiences will reach the next level in 2018, with travellers turning to technology to better understand a destination or accommodation before they book. Artificial intelligence and digital technology are helping consumers turn the corner when it comes to smart destination intuition, reshaping the way we research, book, and experience travel. Almost a third (29%) of global travellers say they are comfortable letting a computer plan an upcoming trip based on data from their previous travel history and half don't mind if they deal with a real person or computer, so long as any questions are answered. Over six in 10 (64%) travellers say they would like to 'try before they buy' with a virtual reality preview, while 50 per

cent find that personalised suggestions for destinations and things to do encourage them to book a trip. Taking all the hard work and stress out of decision making, in 2018, technology will continue to guide us seamlessly to find the best stays and experiences.

DECODING SALES

Compared to last year, there is some movement. There is money out there and people are looking around for acquisitions. People have realised that hotel business is performing reasonably well but the hotel sector is not disjointed from the real estate business and there is no sign of improvement there. In 2018, hotels need to stop thinking of their website or mobile sales as a bonus. Instead, the attitude should be that anything not being sold on the website or mobile is a problem that needs to be solved. There must be strong and clear ownership of the online presence in every hotel and that strategy needs to take primacy. Accept that your website is no longer a hobby; it is a sales-generating machine, so allocate the financial and personnel resources it deserves or your business will be dictated by external parties if you do not.



RISHI PURI

Vice President
Lords Hotels & Resorts

MORE ONLINE MARKETING

For the past few years, expanding our footprint across the country was one of the bigger priorities. Today, we are operating 27 hotel properties under the Lords Hotels & Resorts banner and another 10 in the pipeline are due to become operational in the year 2018.

This makes us feel reasonably assured about achieving our target of 40 properties by the year 2020.

So, on the expansion front, we are expecting for the brand to go into autopilot and the development and franchise opportunities to organically grow from there. In 2018, we will look at consolidating and will focus more on marketing, especially on the online front.

OCCUPANCY OVER ARR

The ARR may not post strong numbers but occupancy should increase due to a strong domestic growth.

FORECASTING A RISE

2018 looks promising and the predicted trend forecast shows a positive growth for hospitality. The 2018 Global Travel Forecast has indicated airfares to increase by 3.5 per cent and hotel prices to increase by 3.7 per cent.



GAURAV KAPUR

Executive Assistant Manager
Hotel The Royal Plaza, New Delhi

PREDICTING GROWTH

We are projecting an increase of 10 per cent in our overall occupancy and ARR.

GROWTH TO CONTINUE

2017 has been an upbeat year for the hospitality industry with a lot

of movement happening from both corporate and leisure travellers to the city. Delhi-NCR has also strongly come up as a destination for trade fairs and expositions in 2017 and we expect the same momentum to continue in 2018.

UPGRADING FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Customers have become more demanding and are willing to explore

different concepts and designs. The same has helped us develop our F&B outlets like Royal Bistro Brewery that offers global cuisine with modern fusions. Rooms have also been upgraded with modern facilities and services. In 2018, the same tempo is going to be taken forward and new F&B concepts along with upgraded features for the guests staying with us shall be showcased.

INTERNATIONAL VIEW

GREEN INITIATIVES

In 2018, we aim to introduce sustainable and eco-resort initiatives that include the installation of solar panels to provide additional electricity for the resort. Our aim is to reduce energy consumption by over 20 per cent in 2018. Having recently recruited a Marine Biologist, in 2018 we will also start a coral reef regeneration project.

A HUMBLE GROWTH

In 2017, occupancy levels increased by 15 per cent with ARR up by 5 per cent. In 2018, our expectation is to maintain the current increase in RevPAR with a mix of 10 per cent increase in occupancy and 10 per cent increase in ARR.

MORE EFFORT, HIGHER GAIN

As India has become the world's fast-

est growing outbound travel market, Ayada has increased its sales and marketing efforts here, which has resulted in an increase of 182 per cent in guest arrivals from India during 2017.

MORE DIGITAL INITIATIVES

Indian guests are increasingly booking online and directly with the

SIMON QUARRELL

General Manager
Ayada Maldives

resort. During 2017, India took over USA for the highest number of visitors to our website. Internet users in India are expected to rise to 580 million in 2018, so Ayada will be focusing more on digital marketing.



DIVERSIFICATION, THE KEY

In 2018, we will focus on diversification. This essentially means that we are going to spread our guest mix by country of residence. Phuket as a destination has good airlift from Europe, Russia, and China.

However, being so close to Singapore, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, and other gateway cities, coupled with increased direct access, we feel it is important to redouble our efforts and improve our numbers from regions such as India, the Middle East, and further West to Africa.

A GRADUAL RISE

We see a steady growth in demand and occupancy as a result of improved airlift and better infrastructure with a renovated airport. ARR has been steady in the low season with good growth in high demand periods.

A FRUITFUL 2018

Banyan Tree Phuket, Banyan Tree Spa Sanctuary, and DoublePool Villas by Banyan Tree Phuket are well recognised for the diverse experiences they consistently deliver. A prime reason that we

SRIRAM KAILASAM

Area General Manager, Senior AVP
Banyan Tree and Angsana Laguna
Phuket

enjoy a steady growth is effective marketing of the destination by Tourism Authority of Thailand and a strong demand from key feeder markets.

TAKEAWAY 2017

The key takeaway for us as a luxury hotel operator is that innovation in service delivery and services is a key differentiating factor between hotels.



ART SMART FOR A PERFECT START

The restaurant business has become massive in India. In the last few years, stand-alone restaurants have jeopardised the business of restaurants inside star hotels. We talk to spokespersons of some artistically designed stand-alone restaurants to understand better the evolution of the restaurant culture in India.



Anupriya Bishnoi

PLAYING WITH DESIGN

Dining out is the primary form of entertainment. Being Indian, we love eating out and we love our food. Our restaurants are the result of a variety of ideas intersecting interestingly at a stunning site. The soul of our company is creativity and innovation, so creating an arty environment through food, design, and a distinct dining ambience is in the culture of the company. You have to innovate and have a value-centric proposition for it. Setting up a restaurant requires both science and art. By science I mean numbers and by art I mean the aura of a restaurant keeping in mind the mood you are trying to set up. The hues of colour and light must also be considered.

SMALL DÉCOR ELEMENTS

Soft furnishing and the right cutlery impact the overall interior and décor of the restaurant as it adds to its charm and the sophistication of the cuisine. Once the décor of the restaurant is in place, the soft furnishing is added to give a finishing touch to the theme. This includes the smallest elements of décor such as cushions, curtains, tablecloth, napkins, etc.

MAKE OR BREAK WITH LIGHTING

Lighting plays an important role in the overall aesthetic of a restaurant.

Too much of it can make the place look too loud and over-the-top, while too little can hamper the dining experience. Within any restaurant or dining setup, patrons must be able to experience the excitement of having food and be able to receive the gratitude of the food with positive vibes. Proper lighting defines the space and sets the overall mood of the restaurant.

AMBIENCE AND CLIENTELE

It is very important to understand the market because geography plays an important role. Sometimes, if you end up making a very premium product for a market that is not open to it, you can intimidate your potential guests and they will not come to the restaurant.

Similarly, in a very high-end environment or a luxury mall, if you end up making a very simplistic ambience, people might not find the entire value proposition premium enough to spend money on.



ZORAWAR KALRA
Founder & Managing Director
Massive Restaurants



AN ESCAPE FROM ROUTINE

People eat out for various reasons. One of them is to break the monotony of daily dinners at home. An arty ambience allows customers' minds to be refreshed. It lifts their spirit to be in a colourful place. They also see things that they would not usually see. This generates points for conversation and also inspires them to be creative in their homes and work life. It distracts them from whatever stress or problems they may be facing personally. Most importantly, it definitely complements the food experience. You might serve the best food, but a white-walled, plain-tabled, blank ambience is not going to be appreciated as much as a well-designed, well-maintained restaurant.

KEEPING IT SHARP

Much like ambience, good cutlery and comfortable soft furnishings are important to have a well-rounded dining experience. It's really disappointing when a customer can't eat his salad because of a not-so-pointy fork or can't cut his chicken easily because the knife is not sharp enough. Other subtle factors of cutlery such as the weight and polish really matter. If it's too heavy, customers can't eat for long; if it's unpolished, scratched or damaged, it gives a bad impression and the restaurant probably comes across as careless. If they think that about your cutlery, they're definitely thinking that about your food. My biggest pet peeve with soft furnishings in restaurants is dirty chairs. This applies to curtains as well. It's very common to see black stains, food stains, wear and tear on tapestry, and depressed

cushions in restaurants. Come what may, these should and need to be regularly uplifted. At AKA Bistro, we choose PU that is easy to clean, is always snug on the chairs, and feels like leather. We choose dark and matte colours to complement the light walls and cosy lighting. Also, every table has a fresh flower to add a touch of freshness.

AMBIENCE BY AGE

Ambience can be a reason of apprehension for diners of other age groups. Fine-dine restaurants will usually have older, well-travelled customers while cafés will have teenagers. It's not only due to the preference of food but also due to the preference of space.

Younger people like a fun, colourful, noisy, and quirky setting. They are fine with uncomfortable chairs and high stools. Older people prefer white tables, larger sinking chairs, and dim lighting for a quiet, relaxing atmosphere. It's a reflection of how different age groups like to live at home as well.



ADITYA AGRAWAL

Owner & Director
AKA Bistro





WHEN AMBIENCE REFLECTS TRANSITION

The ambience of a restaurant is as important as the food and service it provides. When a patron passes by a restaurant, the interior is what catches the eye. Once a customer decides to dine at a particular place, even before they sample the food, they have subconsciously made up their mind on whether or not they would like to come back to that restaurant. For Cafe Delhi Heights, we have an arty and quirky ambience that reflects the transition that Delhi has gone through over the past 25 years.

STAYING TRUE TO THE DÉCOR

Cutlery and furnishing of a restaurant depend on the theme. At Cafe Delhi Heights, we use cutlery that is casual as our restaurant has a laid-back appeal. Soft furnishing is also very important to ensure that a customer is seated comfortably. If a patron is uncomfortable, he will neither enjoy the food nor the service.

JUST THE RIGHT LIGHT

Lighting is also another important aspect, which is most often ignored. For

Cafe Delhi Heights, we use yellow lights as they make the ambience look warm and cosy. That said, one has to be careful and balance the number of lights used as it may also make the place look dull and gloomy. There should be ample light that will help the patron see and understand the food that they have ordered; it is all part of the experience.

COMFORT BUILDS CLIENTELE

While Cafe Delhi Heights has quirky interiors that appeal to a younger generation, Nueva is a fine-dining, South American and Peruvian restaurant that has more of a classy and premium look that appeals to a more niche audience. Even so, there are many patrons that are regular at both the restaurants and not just one. The key to this is comfort. Irrespective of what your target audience is, if you are able to make your patron feel comfortable and their experience memorable, they would like to come to the restaurant again and again.



VIKRANT BATRA

Owner
Cafe Delhi Heights and Nueva





ART FIRST

Introducing art as a feature inside a restaurant makes people break into conversation and keeps them engaged. Completing any look is not limited to furnishings, colour themes, etc. Utilising art to create the mood of the place is essential; often left as a finishing touch, it can also be used first to create an entire look around your work, which is what has been done here at Cafe Tesu.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Every detailing you put in your restaurant should speak volumes of

the thought process behind framing the holistic look of the space. The overall look and feel should even be carried to selection of the fabric and cutlery in order to complete the character of the space and bring about charm.

BUILD A MOOD

Lighting is easily the utmost feature that can create or destroy the guest's mood in seconds. Lighting in a restaurant always serves a functional purpose. It not only sets the mood but it can even differentiate spaces and create the right vibe.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT ZONES

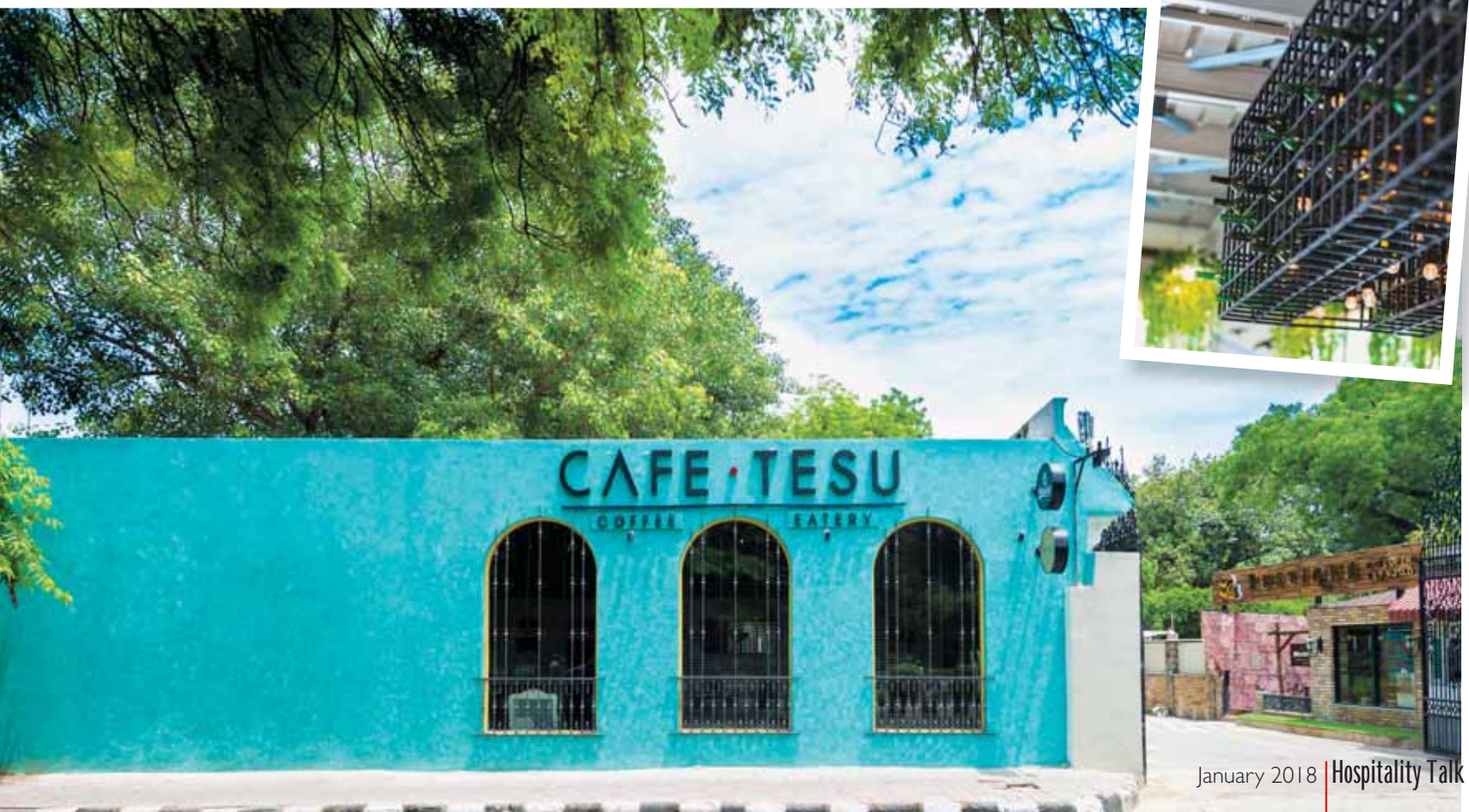
When deciding the ambience of a restaurant, a certain target audience is kept in mind. This could definitely become a reason of apprehension for diners of other age groups to visit the restaurant. That said, this is exactly what we have tried to defy while conceptualising the café.

Creating different zones and different kinds of seating options make the ambience welcoming for people from different walks of life.



DHRUV GOYLE

Owner
Cafe Tesu





REGIONAL INFLUENCE

Ambience plays a significant role as it not only attracts customers but also enhances the depth of the place. Interiors, lighting, music, and staff—these factors help make an ambience subtle. However, these days, owners and restaurateurs are more inclined towards making restaurants beautiful, depicting the same through art and design. Sanadige, a fine-dine, coastal cuisine, multi-storied outlet in Chanakyapuri, Delhi, has an impeccable wooden interior across the wall, sculptures of fishermen, women selling fish, art made out of fibre that portrays fishermen on their boats and other such artefacts that add life to the restaurant.

CUTLERY AND AMBIENCE

Cutlery signifies the style of a restaurant, be it casual dining or fine dining. Our cutlery is an amalgamation of brass and steel fused together to match the ambience of the restaurant. The upholstery has been perfectly matched to the interiors.

THE PERFECT MOOD

Everyone loves a candlelight dinner or dinner served in dim light, but the level of dimness needs to be such that it creates a pleasant



GAURAV SAHAI

**Regional General Manager
Sanadige, Delhi**

environment while not deterring the ability of the customer to see his/her food. On the other hand, extra bright lights are also going to ruin the experience. A good ambience is made up of perfectly adjusted lights that serve the purpose of both utility and creating a certain mood. Sanadige is amongst one of them. Sanadige is adequately balanced with warm yellow lights inside and outside the premises. At the end of the day, the entire business of any restaurant is directly dependent on the level of comfort the customer enjoys. If you are not appealing enough to your guests in terms of food, service, and ambience, you will not make it to their favourite dining list.





SALONI RUPANI

Co-owner
Dishkiyaoon

A PHOTO-OP FOR MILLENNIALS

The aim is to be different without being outlandish. Customers appreciate artistic interiors as long as they are tasteful. Most people visit a particular restaurant mainly due to the ambience and the vibe they get. Also, in this era of selfies, it has become essential to have an arty ambience.

AN INTELLIGENT SELECTION

Cutlery, crockery, and soft furnishings should be such that make guests comfortable while they enjoy their meal. It is therefore important to be practical and intelligent when choosing these. After ambience, the first thing that your guests notice is the cutlery. It plays an important role in the overall presentation of the food. Special care must be taken to ensure that the soft furnishing matches the ambience.

DAY AND LIGHT

Lighting should go with the ambience. Correct lighting plays an important part in highlighting the USP of the restaurant and the food. It should be adjustable to suit the time of day and ambience. Lighting can make or break a restaurant's feel.

AMBIENCE BY FOOD

You cannot please or satisfy all your customers. Generally, ambience should match the kind of food being served and reach the maximum target audience that the restaurant is aiming for. Also, it's up to the restaurant to cater to masses or a certain class.



Mark your Calendar

for

Travel Shows 2018

Travel

LUXURY SHOW

April 7-8, 2018 (Sat - Sun)
Delhi NCR

Travel

WEDDING SHOW

July 7-8, 2018 (Sat - Sun)
Delhi NCR

Travel

BUSINESS SHOW

December 1-2, 2018 (Sat - Sun)
Delhi NCR

To Exhibit, please contact:

Punam Singh: punam@travelshow.world, +91 98111 58785
Sarika Bhambhani Rawal: sarika@ddppl.com, +91 98101 91852
Sonia Guru: sonia.guru@ddppl.com, +91 8800396009



A CEASELESS IMPACT

Dhananjay Kumar, General Manager, The Surya New Delhi, talks about the tough times that 2017 brought with it and the long-term impact that the year's policies have had on the hotel.



TELL US ABOUT THE USP OF THE PROPERTY.

The property is located close to hospitals, business hubs, and tourist places, and houses contemporary banqueting and conferencing facilities as well as products such as Sampan, a rooftop pan Asian restaurant. That said, our biggest USP is our team that lives our value of 'Service so Memorable' at all times. What also makes us strong is that more than 50 per cent of our team members have had a very long association with us, depicting brand loyalty and commitment. They know

most of our guests and their preferences, which also makes it easier for our guests to interact with them. Our guest relation officers are assigned to look after their needs and requirements right from check-in to check-out, and give them personalised service and co-ordinate with all supporting departments.

HOW HAS THE HOSPITALITY MARKET IN DELHI-NCR EVOLVED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS?

The hospitality market of Delhi-NCR has evolved substantially over the past few years. The industry has performed well compared to last year in terms of room and F&B business.

WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE IN 2017?

Our F&B and room business faced a number of challenges due to the liquor ban, demonetisation, and implementation of the GST. However, I am sure that this is just a teething issue and eventually it will settle down. We also faced issues with rates as most of the competing hotels dropped their rates due to lack of guidelines being followed by players in the market. As a hotel, one must consider one's classification before taking a decision and keep rates at the bare minimum. However, a number of hotels dropped their rates in trying times to get any amount of business. I sincerely hope there is rate

parity, at least among hotels that belong to the same segment.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU'VE MENTIONED ABOVE?

The year was extremely challenging for hotels that came under the ambit of the liquor ban. We lost more than 50 per cent of our business due to the ban and it is impossible to recover all deficits in the com-

ing months as it didn't just leave us completely dry for five months, it also affected our future business prospects, especially the banqueting business. It became extremely challenging this year to sustain business due to this ban as well as the implementation of the GST. We also had to bear losses on account of liquor that expired during the ban, in turn impacting our bottom line. Our stores and operating inventories were blocked for five months.

WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THE EXISTING COMPETITION?

Competition is both direct as well as indirect. As far as hotel rooms are concerned, we have direct as well as indirect competition in terms of product location and also face huge competition in terms of food, beverage, and banqueting facilities. Quite a

few restaurants have opened in the approximate radius of 5-8 kms and it is tough to fight them as they offer a similar experience at a similar price. A certain section of guests is also apprehensive of dining at a 5-star hotel and prefers to go to a stand-alone restaurant instead. The perception among them is that a 5-star hotel is expensive for dining, however, in some cases the stand-alone restaurant is more expensive, yet receives higher footfalls. Earlier, competition only existed between hotels, but now hotels are facing competition from stand-alone restaurants as well. A number of stand-alone banquet facilities also offer an experience similar to that provided by hotels, even though they may not be following FSSAI guidelines. They do eat into our penetration of business and market share.

WHAT KIND OF ARR'S AND OCCUPANCY ARE YOU EXPECTING IN 2018?

We have seen growth in terms of occupancy and also ADR, in spite of so many rooms being added at Aerocity. The year looks positive and we are expecting a growth of at least 10-15 per cent over last year.

HOW WAS 2017 FOR YOU?

The hotel industry was faced with a number of challenges in 2017 and we were no exception. Guests reduced the number of functions they wished to hold from three to just two or one; the liquor ban still continues to impact us since there is no function without liquor, leading us to lose out on a number of residential, social, and corporate functions as well; we also completely lost out on our corporate long-stays due to the ban.



NEW COLOURS FOR A FRESH LOOK

Sterling Holidays has launched its new branding to address the needs of the modern customer. **Ramesh Ramanathan**, Managing Director, Sterling Holidays, reveals what's on the cards and how the company is planning to achieve growth in the coming years.



Nisha Verma

HOW HAS THE HOLIDAY INDUSTRY TRANSFORMED THROUGH THE YEARS AND HOW ARE YOU A PART OF THIS CHANGE?

I think the holiday landscape has changed tremendously, especially with low-cost airlines and new routes on offer. A change in lifestyle has also brought about digitisation and software companies. People are travelling internationally and many young people are getting employed.

From one holiday to several holidays a year, including weekend getaways and drive-to holidays, things have changed dramatically and we have also changed along with them. Earlier, we used to look for popular holiday destinations such as Ooty, Shimla, and Darjeeling. Then we realised that people were driving down to other destinations and thus we moved there as well. Hence, everything from location, the nature of hotels, type of holidays, and duration of holidays has changed.

FROM A MEMBERSHIP MODEL YOU HAVE NOW BECOME AN OPEN-TO-ALL CHAIN. WHAT BROUGHT THIS ABOUT?

We have always been giving our members holiday experiences, but we only had members and were selling memberships. It was a vacation ownership model.

Now we are selling to everybody and have people coming for two-three nights because we have built an inventory like that.

WHAT DOES THE NEW BRANDING ENTAIL?

Whatever we wanted to say and do, we have embodied it in the new brand. The brand has evolved based on what we want to do. It is very contemporary; it is for those who are young and those who are young at heart. Hence, the colours are different and have a certain element of intrigue. The idea is to deliver discoveries that always intrigue travellers.

HOW WAS 2017 FOR YOU?

It was good as it was the first full year when we finished all our refurbishments and therefore, in the period April-June, we achieved almost 82 per cent occupancy with almost 35 per cent increase in ARR's across our 2200 rooms. We continued to do well and also did our rebranding. With this we believe that we will continue to do well.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FROM 2018 AND WHAT WOULD BE YOUR GROWTH STRATEGY?

From 2018, we are going to grow. We will also be looking at the management contract route because with that option we can grow faster. We already own a lot of land, which we will develop, but the idea is to do it with a management contract.

In 2018 we will add around 400 rooms, and the overall idea is to add around 20-25 destinations over the next four-five years, which should double the number of rooms from the current 2200.

In terms of destinations, we would have covered all of India, so that

when one thinks of a holiday they will have to think of us.

HOW HAS THE ADVENT OF ALTERNATIVE STAY OPTIONS LIKE AIRBNB, OYO AND OTHER HOMESTAYS CHANGED THE MARKET FOR YOU?

The more the merrier. It gives more opportunities for everybody to holiday. The entry of these players has served to expand the market. I think it's a good thing as this way people can explore new destinations at their own budget.

COULD YOU SHARE THE DETAILS OF THE PARTNERSHIP YOU HAVE WITH MAKEMYTRIP?

I must say that it's very good. We are very happy that we have partners like MakeMyTrip. We went to them three and a half years back when this industry was still evolving. They supported us and we continued to grow with them.

Today, we are offering one of the largest leisure room nights to them. We have 20-25 per cent of our overall business across OTAs.

ARE YOU COMING UP WITH ANY NEW PROPERTIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

We have a few new properties and we are constantly looking for more. While many properties are scheduled to open, work is still in progress on others. We have properties coming up in Mount Abu, Panchgani, and Coorg.

There will be some expansion in our existing properties as well over the next 18 months.



Catching on to a trend

Setting new trends in the Quick Service Restaurant and café industry, Fast Food & Café Convention 2017 provided a common platform for industry stakeholders to meet, greet, and witness discussions on the future of this fast-paced sector.

A FEW WORDS...

Fast Food & Café Convention, an event that brings together the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR), fast casual, and café community, took place on November 29, 2017 at The Lalit New Delhi. The event was conceptualised in a bid to identify the changing dynamics of the fast food industry in India, as it responds to the discerning consumers and their ever-evolving tastes. In the last two decades, since the first QSR entered India, the industry has seen a constant growth and a momentum that has given operators the leverage and confidence of a promising future.

The event provided an exciting opportunity for entrepreneurs and people who are zealous about the fast food and café industry. It saw 120 brands, over 200 delegates, and 30 speakers discussing the future of the QSR industry and its promising growth.

The convention brought together leaders of the food industry, successful restaurateurs, and renowned chefs who shared ideas, thoughts, and inspirations. "Fast

Food & Café Convention 2017 is India's first conference catering to the needs of a rapidly growing Indian QSR market.

This is a brilliant chance for QSR players to understand and map the changing dynamic landscape of consumer trends from what's new and hot to what's on the way out. We also hope the event will help boost innovation within the industry," shared **Mini Jacob**, Co-founder, Oddbox, the organiser of the event.

Differentiating itself from standard conferences, Fast Food and Café Convention aims to be the defining platform for the QSR & café sector in India. The organisers announced that plans are already underway for the launch of Fast Food & Café Convention – Bengaluru scheduled for May 3, 2018 and Fast Food & Café Convention – New Delhi in November of 2018. Participants of the show found the event to be extremely relevant and a show that is a must-attend for key players, upcoming brands, and entrepreneurs.

"Congratulations to the team for a successful event. It was a great platform to connect with leaders in the industry. Thank you for making me a part of it," said **Tarun Bhasin**, President and CBO, Dunkin' Donuts.

"It was a pleasure being there. The convention had interesting discussions and potential of some good partnerships," said **Himanshu Mehta**, CFO, KFC India.



1800 MEETINGS AT TRAVEL BUSINESS SHOW

The second edition of Travel Business Show witnessed productive meetings take place across two days from December 2-3, 2017, at Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR.



Kanchan Nath

Travel Business Show, the only forum of its kind in India that connects the world's most exclusive business providers dealing in high-end business segments with elite travel planners from various MICE sectors, was held from December 2-3, 2017, at Le Méridien Gurgaon, Delhi NCR. The show was inaugurated by Her Excellency **Teresita C. Daza**, Ambassador of the Philippines to India, who was also the Chief Guest for the evening. The inauguration was followed by an engrossing panel discussion on MICE, moderated by **Priti Khanna**, Director, DDP Publications. The discussion had stakeholders of the MICE industry provide their inputs on experiential MICE. The eminent panelists included **Tekla Maira**, Director Luxury Sales – India, AccorHotels; **Homa Mistry**, CEO, Trail Blazer Tours; **Kiran Thomas**, AVP, Administration and Global Travel, Sutherland Global Services and **Ismail A. Hamid Amer**, Regional Director, Egyptian Tourism Counsellor. The afternoon session of the first day witnessed serious B2B meetings between 30 exhibitors and 30 corporate buyers. Addressing the audience on how

tourism and MICE continue to be a great contributor to the economy of nations, Daza said, "In 2016, the Philippines economy grew by 6.8 per cent, faster than the 5.9 per cent expansion in 2015. In the third quarter of 2017, it grew by 6.9 per cent. The sector also contributed about 8.6 per cent to the country's GDP in 2016. The top source markets for the Philippines from Asia include China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Currently, India is the 12th largest source market for the Philippines, with many Indians visiting Manila, Cebu, Palawan, Angeles, and Boracay."

Giving an insight into the popularity of the Philippines as a destination for Indians, she added, "In 2016, Indian arrivals to the Philippines was 90,000, which is an average of about 246 Indian passengers per day. This number is very encouraging, despite visa requirements for Indians travelling to the Philippines."

Giving a synopsis of mega MICE events in the Philippines, she said, "Aside from leisure travel, the Philippines has also been witnessing an immense contribution of the MICE segment to the growth of Philippines'





tourism industry. In November, the Philippines hosted the 31st ASEAN Summit and related conferences where 21 leaders including Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, came to Manila. During the whole swing of these events, delegates from ASEAN and its partners were shuffled to various destinations of world-class infrastructure while being pampered with Filipino hospitality.”

Speaking about how visa services and policies have contributed to these substantial numbers, Daza said, “To provide better visa services to Indian travellers, the Philippines has already instituted a 14-day free visa for Indian nationals who are holders of visas for USA, Japan, Australia, Canada, Schengen, Singapore and

the UK, from all international airports and seaports of the country.” With Philippine Airlines also assessing the possibility of establishing direct flights to India, she hopes that the plan will soon push through so that it can provide huge tourism and economic benefits to both India and the Philippines.

Post the conclusion of the first day of the event, the second also saw pertinent one-on-one B2B meetings take place between 30 exhibitors and 30 MICE agents. This specialised event is aimed to identify and drive trends in the business travel sector, and in turn attract highly sought-after, difficult-to-reach clients.



HUMAN TOUCH VS TECHNOLOGY

Technology has superseded the human touch in the hospitality sector. While many agree with that, for some, human touch remains at the top. **Hospitality Talk** tries to decode the trend.



AMIT KUMAR SINGH

General Manager
The Muse Sarovar Portico, Kapashera

TECHNOLOGY ON THE FOREFRONT

The hospitality industry continues to grow with the use of advanced technology to enhance guest experience, thereby helping increase revenue. While most hotel chains now have dedicated mobile applications for reservations in terms of rooms and restaurants, OTAs have come up with various ways to reserve rooms, banquets and restaurants, resulting in reduction in manpower due to lesser human interaction. Upgraded PMS and advanced options for hotels create profiles that store details as specific as previous-stay linen preferences, choice of newspaper, eating preferences, etc. All prior special requests are stored and preferred leisure activities kept in memory in order to gain a deeper knowledge of guests, so staff would know



Courtesy: Pepper, the humanoid robot at Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas

particularly well what to offer to the guests on their next stay. New advancement in technology such as robot-butlers and robots for cleaning of swimming pools have really replaced humans and manpower. Some hotels also have applications that enable guests to entirely bypass the check-in desk using a digital room key sent to the guest's smartphone on the check-in time of day of arrival.



SRINIVAS SRIRANGAM

General Manager
Novotel Imagica Khopoli

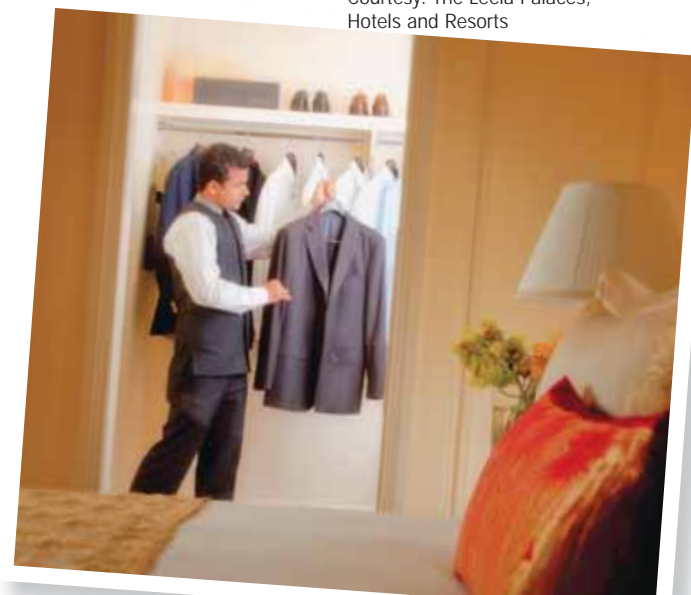
HUMAN TOUCH RIGHT AT THE TOP

Technology is here to stay but it cannot replace humans. It does not matter how much technology advances, we will always require the human touch for an overall experience. Yes, technology is an added advantage for it is vastly used in every step of a guest's journey. From the booking process of getting automated best deals to direct mobile check-ins, each prove that technology is a bonus support to create a 'wow' factor for guests. Technology indeed compliments the human touch, but can never replace it. Guests are habituated to tech-based solutions for their travel and stay purposes. Moreover, they are accustomed to human presence during their stay. Futuristically speaking, no one would enjoy a hotel full of technology, be it artificially enhanced bots or fully automated tabs briefing you about all facilities; we are always going to need human interactions.

Today, the hospitality industry functions on a harmonious interface where humans meet technology. Even

with internet in the picture where physical devices are embedded with electronics and software to enable every object to connect and exchange data, our guests will always need humans to explain the functioning of these hi-tech innovations. In the face of a technical glitch, we will always find ourselves approaching humans for a solution. A machine lacks artistry, that unique human ability to cater to the needs of an individual. Technology is developing rapidly and it would be foolish to argue otherwise, but some things remain fundamental and human presence will continue to be one of them.

Courtesy: The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts





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SERVING SMARTLY

Established in 2010, Smartsolve Houseware is a prominent name in the industry for importing and supplying bohemian crystal glassware in the Indian market.



Jaya Sethi

The competitive advantage that Smartsolve Houseware enjoys is its own crystal glass material of the category. The company uses quality quartz sand to prepare the glass batch and does not use lead compounds. This type of glass is not counted among the group of common soda-potassium glasses, it belongs to special crystal glasses.

It is necessary to keep in mind specified physical and chemical characteristics for the glass to be classed in this prestigious group. Meeting all these requirements is proven by a 'Certificate of Conformance'. Safety of health is guaranteed by products made of this glass material.

"Currently, we are selling our products through major modern retail formats of India. Our exclusive range of glasses fit well with the classy interiors of a modern household. We are also present on almost all online busi-

ness formats. Our website also caters to customers directly," says **Jaya Sethi**, Director, Smartsolve Houseware.

"We entered the Indian hospitality sector with our 'For your Table' series. These are precisely-formed, thin-walled crystal glasses with smooth rims. The stemware series in the range is suitable for the finest of wines and the elegant tumblers enhance the taste of other, equally popular drinks. Together, they serve as decorations for a festive table and suitably complement informal meetings," adds Sethi. The company also has a wide range of decorating techniques. Pantograph, engraving, sand blasting, painting, high enamel, printing, decals, etc., can be combined for beautiful results.

'Unity, Integrity, Innovation' is Smartsolve's business philosophy. The company has also joined hands with a number of clients based on high-quality products and sincere service.

Slurrp, slurrp away!

Based on family recipes and combined with the traditional goodness of millets that offer a multitude of benefits, the Slurrp Farm Millet Pancake mixes are both nutritious and delicious. These mixes are made with super-grains such as finger millet and foxtail millet, oats, chocolate, and real banana. They contain no preservatives, artificial colours or additives. They are a great main meal and snacking option for both children and adults.



Drink to health

Faber has recently launched an RO water purifier that uses Filmtec membranes. These membranes are made in USA and are untouched by human hands during the manufacturing process. This helps the water purifier to perform in the TDS limit of 3000 ppm. Faber's range of RO water purifiers offers assurance of 100 per cent RO water and 100 per cent UV water. The purifiers do not use TDS controller. All purifiers by Faber offer Germblock technology that protects the purified stored water from microbial contamination.



Sleep like a cat

SleepyCat is all set to introduce its range of box mattresses that use advanced technology to easily roll-pack the mattress into a box that is one-third of its normal size and shipped straight to your door in a neat, easy-to-handle box. This is a convenient solution to the over-complicated mattress shopping experience. The box mattress concept is new in India and has been perfectly crafted for the Indian consumer after carefully observing the traditional mattress industry in India with a focus on four key factors that affect a person's sleep. These would include comfort, support, temperature, and durability.



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MOVEMENTS

SUNJAE SHARMA

Vice President, Operations – India
Hyatt Hotels

Hyatt Hotels has appointed **Sunjae Sharma** as Vice President of Operations for India. A seasoned hospitality professional, Sharma will lead Hyatt's India operations and will be responsible for executing the company's operational and growth strategy in his new role. He will assume his new position at Hyatt's Gurugram headquarters. Prior to this appointment, Sharma was the Area Vice President for South & West India and General Manager of Grand Hyatt Mumbai, where he oversaw the strategic and financial performance of 16 hotels.



SUROJIT GHOSE

VP Sales & Marketing
Treehouse Hotels

Surojit Ghose has recently joined Treehouse Hotels as VP Sales & Marketing. He brings in a vast and varied experience with a front office and sales background, and had started his carrier with ITC Maurya. He has been associated with brands like IHG in various capacities including at the regional sales office for The Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu, cluster sales at Holiday Inn & Crowne Plaza Mayur Vihar, and at InterContinental Eros. His last assignment was Director of Sales at The Suryaa.



PUNEET SINGH

General Manager
Grand Hyatt Mumbai

Grand Hyatt Mumbai has appointed **Puneet Singh** as General Manager for the multidimensional lifestyle complex in the heart of Mumbai. With over 25 years of experience across international luxury hotels spanning four continents and 10 countries including China, Germany, Turkey, Russia, Tanzania, UAE and Egypt, Singh is a veteran hotelier known to be the game changer in each of his distinct assignments. In his new role at Grand Hyatt Mumbai, Singh will be leading a team of more than 1000 associates.



MANSI MEHTA ARORA

Director of Sales, India
Hilton

Hilton has announced the appointment of **Mansi Mehta Arora** as Director of Sales, India, to be based in Delhi. She will be responsible for managing the hotel sales teams and reporting to Pariva Rustagi, Regional Director of Sales – India. Arora is also expected to build and maintain relationships with key business partners. She will be involved in promoting the hotels and resorts that are managed by Hilton in India.





SHARAD DATTA

General Manager

The Westin Mumbai Garden City

Sharad Datta has been appointed as the General Manager of The Westin Mumbai Garden City. He brings over two decades of experience in hotel management with brands like Marriott International, Hyatt, and Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. Datta commenced his career with F&B operations before his first assignment as General Manager with Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. Prior to this, he was the General Manager at Hyderabad Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre and Courtyard by Marriott Hyderabad.



ASHWANI NAYAR

General Manager

The Westin Gurgaon and The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa

With an experience of around 25 years, **Ashwani Nayar** is the General Manager at The Westin Gurgaon and The Westin Sohna Resort & Spa. In his new designation, he will be focusing on the overall operations of the hotels, driving profitability, increasing revenue and guest satisfaction, and enhancing the strong brand positioning of the two hotels while creating a positive workforce environment. Nayar's vision lies in creating equal and relevant opportunities for all.



DEEPAK SAMPATH

Rooms Division Manager

Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport

Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport has appointed **Deepak Sampath** as the Rooms Division Manager. Sampath brings with him over 16 years of experience in his field. In his new role, he will be responsible for securing a consistent high guest feedback rating by putting in measures that include training the team, guest relations management, and repeat guest business through loyalty programme enrolments. His responsibilities will also include administering internal expense control measures for higher profitability.



ROHIT JHINGAN

Director - Sales & Marketing

The Pillazio Hotel

The Pillazio Hotel, Gurugram, has appointed **Rohit Jhingan** as Director of Sales & Marketing. In this role, he will be responsible for managing the hotel's sales and marketing teams. Jhingan comes with an experience spanning over 13 years, where he has worked with global brands like Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts and Lebua Hotels & Resorts. He has also been involved in managing pre-opening of hotels, unit properties, and domestic and outbound sales.



MOVEMENTS

VINEET VERMA

Executive Director & CEO

Brigade Hospitality Services

“

I de-stress by spending about an hour and a half at the gym, six days a week”

I de-stress by spending about an hour and a half at the gym, six days a week, except when I am travelling. I am extremely passionate about my family and I do not share my Sundays with anyone without including them. My most memorable holiday moment was during my visit to the US in July when I got to hold my grandson for the very first time. I also enjoy travelling. I have a number of favourite destinations in India where I prefer hills over beaches. My favourite international destination continues to be Singapore.

**SUJEET KUMAR**

General Manager

Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway

“

My favourite holiday destinations are Goa and Boracay”

Music and movies are my biggest stress busters along with relaxing with friends over food and drinks. Travelling is also one of my favourite ways to de-stress after long stints of work. I am extremely passionate about F1 racing. I take time out to travel to various places just to enjoy the thrill of viewing a good race. My most memorable holiday moment was in Bali where on the last night of my stay, my friends and I danced all night, had breakfast in the morning, and caught the flight back home. My favourite holiday destinations are Goa and Boracay.

**NARENDRA PRABHU**

General Manager

Signature Club Resort

“

I spend my leisure time with my family and that time includes movie nights”

To de-stress, I play sports. Badminton is one sport that I play after a day's hard work. I spend my leisure time with my family and that time includes movie nights at home or family outings. My work is one thing that I am extremely passionate about and care for deeply. One of my most memorable holidays is the one at Mudumalai, with my entire team at Signature Club Resort. We went bird-watching and trekking through the thick forest at night. Ooty is one destination that is in the top five vacation spots for me.

**SHARAD DUTTA**

General Manager

The Westin Mumbai Garden City

“

I used to be a part-time solo musician in a bar in the initial stages of my career”

Going for a swim, watching movies, and playing the guitar are also ways I like to unwind. One mental technique to de-stress that I use is visualising a calm scenario. I am also passionate about golf. One thing not many people know about me is that I used to be a part-time solo musician in a bar in the initial stages of my career. My most memorable vacation was the first vacation with my daughter at a beach destination. My favourite destinations are Srinagar and Barcelona.





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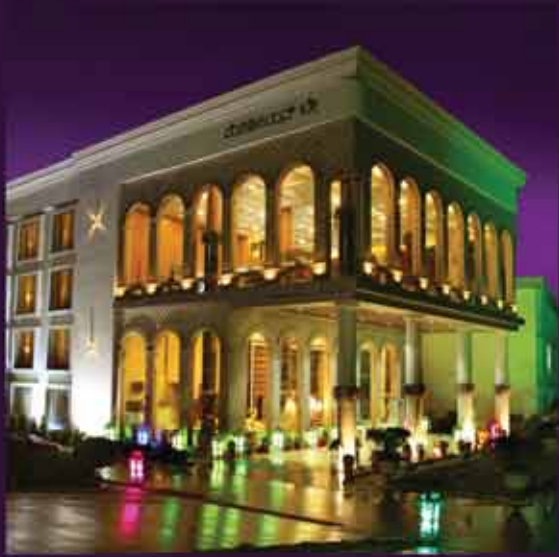
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The hospitality industry in India has started gaining momentum. Many new international as well as domestic hotel chains are making inroads into the country. At such an important juncture where every hotel is trying to do its best, hosting India Hospitality Awards in The Lalit New Delhi becomes all the more relevant. The hospitality industry has gone through a major makeover. A few years ago, only selective hotel chains were present, but today all regions are witnessing a surge in trends in this ever-growing sector across all hospitality brands. The Indian capital remains home to some of the best luxurious hotels and will see an influx of both corporate as well as leisure travellers.

The movement of tourists to the country is increasing, the hotel business is also progressively expanding. This has motivated hoteliers to set up their properties, resulting in numerous hotels across star categories being established here.

Indian hoteliers remain positive about the future of the country's hospitality industry as a whole. Demand and supply will be balanced with new upcoming hotels and with people travelling more often than before.

SanJeet

India Hospitality Awards

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MARKETING
Gunjan Sabikhi
Amit Bhasin
Seema Datt
Sonia Butalia
Jaspreet Kaur

DESIGN
Yogendra Baghel
Vikas Mandotia
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PRODUCTION
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CIRCULATION
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Z1-02, PO Box: 9348, Saif Zone, Sharjah, UAE
Ph.: +971-6-5528954, Fax: +971-6-5528956

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Brilliance receives

India Hospitality Awards recently concluded its third edition at The Lalit New Delhi on November 27, 2017. With a packed audience, the award ceremony left no stone unturned in keeping guests engaged as hospitality players were rewarded for their dedication to the industry.

Anupriya Bishnoi

The third edition of India Hospitality Awards was held on November 27, 2017, at The Lalit New Delhi, to honour the achievers of the hospitality industry at a national level. A first of its kind, the awards are based on internet voting and are therefore, fair and unbiased.

Gracing the evening as Chief Guest was **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India. In his address to the audience he said, "Initiatives like India Hospitality Awards are great because this is one sector which has great potential and is a big money spinner.

The hospitality sector creates a lot of employment and at the end of the day as Tourism Minister, I am concerned about employment generation and the kind of money it can bring; this particular sector does both. Since hospitality plays such an important role, we have to go out of our way to promote such functions. Also, hospitality and MICE attract people who are interested in doing serious business. This sector brings in people and creates jobs- a mandate for the development of the tourism industry." The Ministry of Tourism is focused in its approach to the hospitality sector and is willing to undertake initiatives that will help further its spectrum.

Elaborating on this, Kannanthanam said, "We will be coming out with a tourism policy in 2018; we are in the process of drafting and finalising that. The whole idea is to create the right infrastructure for people to come and visit our country and for





suitable honour



Indians to travel around." He also added, "I am trying to project my ministry as a tourism-friendly ministry and in a way, we have succeeded in doing that. Projecting our ministry as very helpful and happy is going to bring people back to our country."

We are also coming up with a new website that would be useful to travellers. It will be in user-friendly languages, fonts, etc., making the entire experience seamless for those who want to know more about the country."

At the event, **SanJeet**, Mentor, India Hospitality Awards, said, "India Hospitality Awards is

developed to identify, highlight, and reward excellence on a national level throughout the hospitality sector. We are proud to have been instrumental in recognising excellence and will continue in this endeavour. These awards are not a reward but a responsibility to help the industry grow. Today, hospitality is synonymous with progress and development.

Every small hotel, restaurant, resort is contributing to the growth of this industry. But are we doing enough to recognise these players? We have instituted these awards for this precise reason. This recognition that we bestow on our dynamic players has helped further motivate them."





Chief Guest | **ALPHONS KANNANTHANAM**

The delightful evening of India Hospitality Awards highlighted the growing importance of the hospitality sector. Gracing the evening as Chief Guest, **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, said, "Initiatives like India Hospitality Awards are great because this is one sector that showcases tremendous potential. It results in long-stay guests and occupied hotel rooms. Since hospitality plays such an important role, we have to go out of our way to promote such functions. The MICE sector, an important aspect of hospitality, creates a lot of employment."

► **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, received the award for **Chief Guest**. He is felicitated by **Sanjeet**, Director, DDP Group; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson and Managing Director, Bharat Hotels





Guest of Honour | SUMAN BILLA

India Hospitality Awards was instituted with an aim to honour the achievers that brought about change in this sector in the field of hospitality, MICE, procurement, etc. Reiterating its importance, the Guest of Honour for the evening, **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, said, "If tourism has to move forward, MICE, one of the biggest components of the hospitality industry, has to move ahead as well. It is great that we are recognising excellence in the field and this will go a long way. If we talk about increasing numbers, then we have to see which products can bring maximum growth; MICE can do that for India. I am happy that we are honouring all those stalwarts who have made MICE tourism happen in this country, taking hospitality to a new level. They have relentlessly pushed the envelope to make this sector what it is."

► **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, received the award for **Guest of Honour**. He is felicitated by **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group and the India Hospitality Awards team





Gallery of Legends | AMAN NATH

“The awards are a milestone to know that you are moving in the right direction. It’s good to know that the trade is appreciative and once you are noticed, other people are also inspired. At Neemrana, we are passionate about what we do. I receive this award in humility. We want to be in every state, we want to touch every ruin; we want to bring employment, we want to empower people, and we want to do it with great humility. That’s our aim,” says **Aman Nath**, Founder and Chairman, Neemrana Hotels.

► **Aman Nath**, Founder and Chairman, Neemrana Hotels, was awarded the **Gallery of Legends**. He is felicitated by **Sanjeet**, Director, DDP Group; **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson and Managing Director, Bharat Hotels





DDP Game Changer | **SUNIL GHADIOK**

“It’s a triple whammy for me- one, being recognised; two, getting an award in a hotel I have most fond memories of through my work life and three, receiving the award from Jyotsna Suri, the Tourism Minister, and Suman Billa. It has been a fantastic journey for 39 years now and with this award I hope I can go on for a few more. I dedicate this award to every person that has worked with me in the last 39 years. I think it’s a huge process in selecting the right and the most deserving people. To reward them is great encouragement not only for all the players in the industry, but also the people who have put their effort into making what hospitality is all about in India,” says **Sunil Ghadiok**, Chief Executive Officer, Nidra Hospitality.

► **Sunil Ghadiok**, Chief Executive Officer, Nidra Hospitality, was awarded **DDP Game Changer**. He is felicitated by **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group; **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson and Managing Director, Bharat Hotels





DDP Trailblazer | HIMMAT ANAND

“I think the India Hospitality Awards team always does a great job. These awards were started a few years ago and I think they’ve been an amazing success story. India Hospitality Awards really recognises the best of the best. I hope to meet up with old friends that I have not met for a long time and just be a part of the fraternity to find out what’s going on,” says **Himmat Anand**, Founder, The Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels.

► **Himmat Anand**, Founder, The Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels, was awarded the **DDP Trailblazer**. He is felicitated by **SanJeet**, Director, DDP Group; **Alphons Kannanthanam**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India; **Suman Billa**, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and **Dr. Jyotsna Suri**, Chairperson and Managing Director, Bharat Hotels





Excellence in Professional Leadership

SANJAY RAI

Sanjay Rai, Executive Vice President - Sales, The Oberoi Group, says, "Recognition of any kind, especially one of such eminence, is an achievement. India Hospitality Awards as an institution and the work that the team has done over the years is special." He further adds, "The hospitality industry works tirelessly and accolades like these are proof that our hard work has borne fruit."

► The award was given to **Sanjay Rai**, Executive Vice President - Sales, The Oberoi Group



Excellence in Hospitality | SM AZMAT

SM Azmat, President, Sales & Marketing, Jaypee Hotels, says, "India Hospitality Awards is a unique initiative which makes professionals like us perform better all the time. It also encourages the younger lot in the hospitality industry to excel in the fields they are performing in. The hospitality industry as a whole gains from a motivated and charged workforce to deliver excellence."

► The award was given to **SM Azmat**, President, Sales & Marketing, Jaypee Hotels



Best Procurement Manager

NITIN SHANKAR NAGRALE

Nitin Shankar Nagrale, Vice President – Materials, Foodlink Restaurants India, says, "I am really glad that our procurement industry has been recognised and I am happy to hold the flag for our fraternity." Speaking about the award ceremony, he says, "This was a very well organised event. All of us who have received awards are really happy and I want to thank the team for their initiative where they are recognising the efforts put in by the people of the industry."

► The award was given to **Nitin Shankar Nagrale**, Vice President – Materials, Foodlink Restaurants India

Best Sales & Marketing Professional

ANSHUL GOSWAMI

Anshul Goswami, Director of Sales & Marketing, Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal, says, "Any organisation that wins such an honour has to be special in its stead. Why HOJO won was because of standing out as a trendsetter in the market." She adds, "We are one of the youngest brands to enter India while the trend of Indian hospitality has been settled for over a century. As a new entry, we managed to make a dent in the old ways and make it permanent. In the coming years, we have plans to expand our wings in the country and make our presence felt in new locations."

► The award was given to **Anshul Goswami**, Director of Sales & Marketing, Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal



Most Promising Hospitality Sales Professional

RANDHIR GUPTA

Randhir Gupta, Director of Sales - Leisure, India, AccorHotels, says, "India Hospitality Awards has emerged to be prestigious in the industry. It's the best way to recognise talent and motivate them to set new standards in work and hospitality, be it any department- operation, purchase or sales and marketing. The presence of industry stalwarts shows recognition, respect, and admiration." "I won the award due to my consistency and service to the industry over a long period of time. I always remain available and stand with them during critical times. Rightly said, these awards are not just a reward but a responsibility to help the industry grow," says Gupta.

► The award was given to **Randhir Gupta**, Director of Sales - Leisure, India, AccorHotels





Best Hotel Manager | ANISH RANA

Anish Rana, General Manager, FORMULE1 Bengaluru Whitefield, says, "I feel that the reason we have received the award is team dedication. India Hospitality Awards is a great platform for networking and these awards recognise the hard work put in by the industry people." He adds, "According to an STR report, there is going to be an upscale movement in the industry; we are going to see a positive shift."

► The award was given to **Anish Rana**, General Manager, FORMULE1 Bengaluru Whitefield

Best Debut Hotel Chain | BEST WESTERN HOTELS & RESORTS

Atul Jain, Chief Operating Officer – India, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh, Best Western Hotels & Resorts, says, "India Hospitality Awards, the most respected award in the travel industry, has always identified and recognised the achievements and accomplishments of progressive companies and leaders from the industry. Every year, India Hospitality Awards recognises the success stories that have redefined the rules of the game." He also says, "It is an incredible honour to be recognised with this award, as it is a true testament of the hard work and dedication of the entire team."

► The award was given to **Best Western Hotels & Resorts** and received by **Atul Jain**, Chief Operating Officer – India, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh



Best Wedding and MICE Resort | HOTEL CLARKS SHIRAZ, AGRA

Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra, is a multifunctional property that caters to varied markets and themes. It is the most sought-after, themed MICE facility in Agra. The hotel receives both leisure as well as corporate clients, though weekends are full with leisure travellers and families. The hotel facilities are well-segregated to accommodate both.

► The award was given to **Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra** and received by **Geeta Subramanian**, General Manager, Marketing and Sales; **Rupak Gupta**, Joint Managing Director and **Debasish Bhowmik**, Senior Vice President



Best Contemporary Hotel | LE MÉRIDIEEN NEW DELHI

Meena Bhatia, Vice President - Marketing & Operations, Le Méridien New Delhi, says, "It is indeed a great initiative. 'Maya' came to us in the form of honour and recognition for the work we have done." She also says, "When we renovated our hotel almost seven years ago, we chose materials, designs, and styles that belonged to the future. It was indeed a bold step then, moving away from the traditional hotel rooms and public area settings. Thank you for recognising all of this and much more that we innovated."

► The award was given to **Le Méridien New Delhi** and received by **Meena Bhatia**, Vice President - Marketing & Operations



Best Heritage Hotel Chain | WELCOMHERITAGE HOTELS

Sunil Gupta, CEO, WelcomHeritage Hotels, says, "India Hospitality Awards is an encouraging platform; it is good to get a pat on the back once in a while. People in the industry are always working hard and always have a smile on their face."

► The award was given to **WelcomHeritage Hotels** and received by **Sunil Gupta**, CEO and **Sanjeev K. Nayar**, General Manager, WelcomHeritage Hotel, Delhi





Best MICE and Wedding Hotel

THE LALIT NEW DELHI

Keshav Suri, Chairperson and Managing Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality Group, says, "India Hospitality Awards is one of the biggest and most respected hospitality awards in the country. For any hotelier, it is a matter of pride and honour to be nominated and to win. I would like to congratulate the team for carving this niche and also thank them for recognising the initiatives we have taken at The Lalit and awarding them."

► The award was given to **The Lalit New Delhi** and received by **Nitin Chandra**, Head of Sales – MICE; **Vishal Sharma**, Head of Sales – Banquets; **Vijay Bhalla**, National Head – Corporate Sales and **Vivek Shukla**, General Manager – Corporate Affairs & The Lalit New Delhi

Best Digital Marketing Service Provider

INTERNET MOGULS

Avijit Arya, Chief Mogul, Internet Moguls, says, "I wanted to be a car racer but somehow got into hospitality and from hospitality, I got into digital marketing. Also, we have been working hard in this industry and word-of-mouth must have made us win today." Sharing his opinion on the event, he says, "It was an extremely well organised event and now that I have attended it, I know why people talk about 'Maya' so much. The event is at par with international standards."

► The award was given to **Internet Moguls** and received by **Ram Arya**, Director and **Avijit Arya**, Chief Mogul



Best Luxury Corporate Hotel

PARK HYATT CHENNAI

Park Hyatt Chennai is one of the most luxurious hotels in Chennai, located just 15 minutes from Chennai's international airport and overlooking the Guindy forest reserve. With thoughtful luxurious amenities and features, exquisite décor, and unparalleled elegance, the hotel is an unforgettable destination for luxury travellers around the world.

► The award was given to **Park Hyatt Chennai**

Best Luxury Wedding and MICE Hotel

RADISSON BLU KAUSHAMBI DELHI NCR

Radisson Blu Kaushambi Delhi NCR's location places guests outside the congestion of the city but still close to must-visit places like Akshardham Temple and Connaught Place. Each room and suite at the hotel combines style with practicality. The events space at the hotel offers flexible banquet rooms that include Amber and Lavanya, each available to be set up according to a client's preference.

► The award was given to **Radisson Blu Kaushambi Delhi NCR** and received by **Hemant Mehta**, General Manager



Best Convention Hotel

UVA MERIDIAN CONVENTION CENTRE

It is a pleasure that the Best Convention Hotel award has been given to **UVA Meridian Bay Resort & Spa**. At our resort we make our guests feel like they are at an ideal home away from home that delivers an exclusive and personalised experience. **UVA Meridian** is the best place to take time out from the grind of a hectic schedule and just unwind.

► The award was given to **UVA Meridian Convention Centre** and received by **B. Udayakumar Shetty**, Chairman & Managing Director and **Vinay Kumar Shetty**, Managing Director





Best Debut Luxury Hotel | RADISSON BLU FARIDABAD

Harpreet Vohra, General Manager, Radisson Blu Faridabad, says, "India Hospitality Awards is a fantastic initiative. It helps building a relationship and rapport within the fraternity. Also, we are there to give the best to the industry. It's a very good platform for all hoteliers to promote themselves."

► The award was given to **Radisson Blu Faridabad** and received by **Shitiz Chawla**, Director Sales & Marketing; **Harpreet Vohra**, General Manager and **Mahek Sachdeva**, Manager Marketing & Communications

Best Business Hotel - Regional | FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON DEHRADUN

Four Points by Sheraton Dehradun is located on Rajpur Road in the heart of the business district that offers a full range of business and leisure amenities. The hotel has 65 rooms with two meeting spaces. Be it an intimate gathering or a conference, this hotel is equipped for varied needs of its clients.

► The award was given to **Four Points by Sheraton Dehradun** and received by **Sanjeev Bhambri**, Managing Director



Best Leisure and Wedding Resort | THE WESTIN PUSHKAR RESORT & SPA

Amit Rana, General Manager, The Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa, says, "I want to thank India Hospitality Awards for recognising The Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa. This is a great initiative. This is a great opportunity for us."

► The award was given to **The Westin Pushkar Resort & Spa** and received by **Amit Rana**, General Manager and **Ashutosh Ojha**, Associate Director of Sales



Best Mid-Market Business Hotel | FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON NAVI MUMBAI, VASHI

Subhabrata Roy, General Manager, Four Points By Sheraton Navi Mumbai, Vashi, says, "India Hospitality Awards has established itself as one of the pioneers in recognising the efforts put together by the hospitality world. The prestigious award comes as an appreciation to all hoteliers for their year-long effort to bring out the best in their respective fields." He adds, "Each year, it's becoming more coveted. It truly inspires the industry to work hard and get appreciated on such a great platform."

► The award was given to **Four Points By Sheraton Navi Mumbai, Vashi** and received by **Subhabrata Roy**, General Manager



Best Luxury Convention Hotel | THE LEELA AMBIENCE CONVENTION HOTEL, DELHI

Rakesh Pasbola, Associate Director of Sales, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi, says, "It's a prestigious award for our hotel. Due to our team's hard work, we have won this award and now people recognise us as the first choice for any big convention in Delhi-NCR."

► The award was given to **The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi** and received by **Leslie Morrison**, Director Sales and Marketing; **Rakesh Pasbola**, Associate Director of Sales and **Abde-ali Zoomkawala**, Head - Catering Sales





Best Luxury Hotel | **HYATT REGENCY CHANDIGARH**

Niraj Chotai, Assistant Director of Sales, Hyatt Regency Chandigarh, says, "India Hospitality Awards recognises new talent within the industry and gives a lot of motivation to keep up the good work." He also says, "Hyatt Regency Chandigarh is the newest 5-star hotel in the city with all the correct elements for a great corporate hotel. Larger room size, largest room inventory for a big corporate MICE block, and a collection of speciality restaurants enable us to offer the perfect solution for all your corporate requirements."

► The award was given to **Hyatt Regency Chandigarh** and received by **Pawan Thakur**, Sales Manager and **Niraj Chotai**, Assistant Director of Sales

Best Luxury Resort | **MADHUBHAN RESORT & SPA**

A magnificent luxury resort and spa covering 25 acres has been created amidst the verdant greenery of Charotar near Anand, Gujarat. The property is equipped with modern amenities and luxurious accommodation, and promises its guests relaxation, family bonding, and rejuvenation. Madhubhan Resort is a short drive from Vadodara and Ahmedabad, which are connected by short flights from Mumbai and New Delhi. The resort is also perfect for theme destination weddings.

► The award was given to **Madhubhan Resort & Spa** and received by **Manohar S. Gurung**, Vice President



Best City Hotel | **CROWNE PLAZA TODAY GURGAON**

Nalin Mandiratta, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Today Gurgaon, says, "I am honoured to receive this award on behalf of the Crowne Plaza Today family. It has been a nice journey; every day we have grown to achieve the benchmark in the hospitality industry with our avant-garde service standards. I am highly appreciative of the drive that has been shown by our team to receive such recognition. I would even like to thank our patrons for their valued support and loyalty towards us." He also says, "India Hospitality Awards is a great gesture to felicitate the pioneers behind the success of the hospitality industry in the country. It is whelming to have such a platform available where the people from the industry are honoured for their efforts."

► The award was given to **Crowne Plaza Today Gurgaon** and received by **Nalin Mandiratta**, General Manager

Best Executive Hotel | **HOWARD JOHNSON BENGALURU HEBBAL**

Rishi Neoge, General Manager, Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal, says, "It is a platform for achievers in the hospitality sector who have done exemplary work in the industry, including its various departments. Also, owing to its association with Ministry of Tourism, it carries a lot of weight."

► The award was given to **Howard Johnson Bengaluru Hebbal** and received by **Anshul Goswami**, Director of Sales & Marketing and **Ankit Pratap Singh**, Sales Manager



Best Mid-Market Hotel | **GOLDEN TULIP GOA**

Pankaj Dubey, General Manager, Golden Tulip Goa, says, "It's a great experience taking the award back to the hotel. I want to thank everyone who voted for us. Without their support, I don't think it would have been possible. This is just an indication of where we stand. The goal is to better ourselves next year." He also says, "India Hospitality Awards is a great platform for us to be recognised. One, it is great to be recognised by your guests and second, it is great to be recognised by your own fraternity. I want to thank the team from the bottom of my heart. I feel great about receiving this award."

► The award was given to **Golden Tulip Goa** and received by **Pankaj Dubey**, General Manager

Conversations and Celebrations aplenty





Best 5-Star Heritage Resort

HOTEL NOORMAHAL

Kr. Roop Partap Singh Choudhary, Director, Jewel Group of Hotels, says, "I am glad to be here among all fine hoteliers. We have been part of this industry and the fraternity for a long time. Noormahal is a recently-opened property and for it to be nominated is a matter of pride. It is such an esteemed award and I am really happy to be here."

► The award was given to **Hotel Noormahal** and received by **Kr. Roop Partap Singh Choudhary**, Director, Jewel Group of Hotels

Fastest Growing Hotel Brand

SUMMIT HOTELS & RESORTS

Summit Hotels & Resorts is a chain of hotels and resorts in North and North East India. With presence in all popular tourist destinations in the region, the properties are defined by a subtle elegance. Summit Hotels & Resorts has properties in Bhutan, Gangtok, Darjeeling, Pelling, Kalimpong, Namchi, Srinagar, Manali, and Shimla.

► The award was given to **Summit Hotels & Resorts** and received by **Sumit Mitruka**, Chief Executive Officer and **Niharika Mitruka**, Director



Best Wedding Hotel

RADISSON BLU UDAIPUR PALACE RESORT & SPA

Poonam Agarwal Nair, Regional Director of Sales, Radisson Blu Udaipur Palace Resort & Spa, says, "India Hospitality Awards is a great initiative that offers a platform to recognise professionals, start-ups, hotels, and hoteliers that have done some remarkable work and deserve recognition. Rewarding hotels and professionals under various categories and grouping them as per region or zone is perhaps the most fair and idealistic way." She adds, "The ceremony offered a great platform for networking and meeting industry experts and other inspiring professionals, and keeping abreast with changing trends in the industry."

► The award was given to **Radisson Blu Udaipur Palace Resort & Spa** and received by **Piyush Kapoor**, General Manager; **Poonam Agarwal Nair**, Regional Director of Sales and **Siddhant Chhabra**, Sales Manager - Delhi

Best Emerging Hotel Chain

VINCA HOTELS & RESORTS

Snehal Kulshreshtha, Director, Vinca Hotels & Resorts, says, "We are a two and a half year old company and we have seen growth in the last one and a half years in terms of properties that we have accumulated. We are focused on Tier-II, III, and IV markets." He also says, "Having been in this industry for three decades, acknowledgment of any sort is great and encouraging. All kudos to the organisers for doing this."

► The award was given to **Vinca Hotels & Resorts** and received by Directors **Snehal Kulshreshtha** and **Chandar Sarvagam**



Best Debut Serviced Apartments

CITADINES OMR CHENNAI

Citadines OMR Chennai is strategically located along Rajiv Gandhi Salai, more popularly known as OMR. The aparthotel offers guests the space and comfort of a home along with the services and conveniences of a hotel. Guests can choose from studios, one and two-bedroom apartments, which are equipped with a kitchen and modern amenities. The beautifully landscaped aparthotel provides guests a green respite amidst an urban jungle.

► The award was given to **Citadines OMR Chennai** and received by **Ashwin Vijayasekar**, General Manager





Best Destination Wedding Planner

BLUE MOON TRAVELS

Vijay Dadhich, Managing Director, Blue Moon Travels, says, "India Hospitality Awards has materialised well and always looks to felicitate those people who do good work in the industry. I want to thank the team for the wonderful event they have put together."

► The award was given to **Blue Moon Travels** and received by **Vijay Dadhich**, Managing Director and **Sachin Varma**, Manager - Business Development

Best Corporate Hotel | THE SURYAA NEW DELHI

Dhananjay Kumar, General Manager, The Surya New Delhi, says, "I feel very happy and the credit goes to the team for doing a brilliant job in looking after the guests. We have been doing pretty well because of our team. This is one of the most genuine awards conducted through a proper voting system and where you can get proper feedback." He adds, "I am really proud to be associated with such awards. Also, I believe getting an award is brilliant but being able to maintain that kind of good work is really important. We would like to maintain it. Let's see if we are able to get more awards next year."

► The award was given to **The Surya New Delhi** and received by **Dhananjay Kumar**, General Manager



Best Designed Hotel | THE PARK NEW DELHI

Rohit Arora, Area General Manager, The Park Hotels, says, "It was indeed a great moment for us. The tremendous feeling of encouragement you receive when you win is impossible to explain. Our cutting-edge, contemporary design by Conran and Partners, award-winning restaurants and entertainment spaces, and luxurious rooms make The Park New Delhi the capital's popular hotel. Thank you for recognising the collective effort of my team."

► The award was given to **The Park New Delhi** and received by **Sarah Stephanos**, Director, PR and **Rohit Arora**, Area General Manager



Best Debut Airport Hotel | HOLIDAY INN

EXPRESS NEW DELHI INT'L AIRPORT T3

Holiday Inn Express New Delhi Int'l Airport T3 is located in the heart of India's busiest aviation hub, offering transit guests exactly what they need- a hassle-free, convenient stay and a great night's sleep. The hotel features the brand's signature Great Room where guests can dine and interact with each other during their stay.

► The award was given to **Holiday Inn Express New Delhi Int'l Airport T3** and received by **Arya SJB Rana**, General Manager



Best International Hotel Brand

INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) currently has 30 hotels in 14 cities, collectively having over 5,717 rooms in India across brands, including InterContinental Hotels and Resorts, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, and Holiday Inn Express, with another 33 in the development pipeline.

► The award was given to **IHG** and received by **Gresh Bindra**, Regional General Manager, North & West India





Gold Partner | ASPRI SPIRITS

Aspri Spirits today represents some of the finest brands in the world of wines, beer, cider and spirits, and has emerged as the top player in the alcoholic beverage segment. The company with its commitment to ensure highest quality standards focuses on sales, marketing, and distribution. It is dedicated to building premium international brands in travel retail and domestic markets across the Indian subcontinent.

► The award was given to Aspri Spirits and received by Sachin Abrol, Controller Sales - North and East



Hospitality Partner | THE LALIT NEW DELHI

Located in central Delhi, The Lalit New Delhi is in close proximity to key commercial and business locations. The hotel operates 461 rooms and suites and offers over 39,000 square feet of conference and banqueting space. It also includes an art gallery and a variety of shops. The Lalit New Delhi operates restaurants offering various cuisines and a number of other dining options.

► The award was given to The Lalit New Delhi and received by Vishal Sharma, Head of Sales Banquet and Vijay Bhalla, National Head - Corporate Sales



Beverage Partner | PE AUR BEVERAGES

Piyush Mathur, Founder & CEO, PE Aur by Hielo Beverages, says, "India Hospitality Awards is a great platform to interact with industry people. We believe in contributing something more than just an appealing brand." He adds, "With a team of passionate youngsters, we are continuously involved in research and development. The packaging of PE Aur has been done while keeping the natural essence of the beverage intact and convenient for the consumers to enjoy the drink wherever they are. People have accepted our product not just in India but overseas as well."

► The award was given to PE Aur Beverages and received by Piyush Mathur, Founder & CEO



Associate Partner | TOPS

Tops has various products under its umbrella. Right from pickles to jams and cornflakes, Tops is one of the country's famous brands. From locating the perfect fields to developing state-of-the-art processing methods that ensure superior quality and consistent flavour, the company is committed to providing products that enrich meals.

► The award was given to Tops and received by Surinder Sharma, Senior Manager - HORECA and Girish Nagpal, Chief Executive Officer

Thank You
for the overwhelming response in 2017

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For further details, please contact:

Gunjan: +91 96503 99905, gunjan@ddppl.com,
Amit: +91 96509 13334, amit.bhasin@ddppl.com,
Seema: +91 96501 96531, seema.datt@ddppl.com,
Sonia: +91 96503 11774, sonia.butalia@indiahospitalityawards.in

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