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The government does acknowledge that the hospitality industry provides employment and contributes in other ways as well, but I don't think much gets done to facilitate that bit"

Rattan Keswani

quote of the month



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# Bloom Hotels' India Obsession

At the launch of Bloomrooms @ Janpath, we spoke to **Tom Welbury**, VP Strategy, Bloom Hotel Group, on his love for India.

 Anupriya Bishnoi



## Tell us something about Bloomrooms @ Janpath.

The reason we were able to launch the hotel in less than 100 days is because we have a world-class team across the board. We are quality-obsessed! We are constantly experimenting and innovating ways that matter not just to our overall guest experience but to our trusted travel partners as well. As a location, this is unbeatable; it's very special because there isn't a world-class mid-market hotel brand in Central Delhi. Finally, you can stay happy at Connaught Place without blowing your budget!

The product feels premium despite a highly affordable price point. For example, Bloom offers to all its guests Grohe rain showers, Egyptian cotton linen, and fresh air systems that only most leading hotels can boast of. Interestingly, Bloom is the first mid-market brand globally to trademark its sleep experience - the CloudBed. It's clear that this strategy has worked with Bloom boasting industry-leading guest satisfaction levels and an exceptional 30 per cent of all business coming from repeats.

Our travellers, who come from both the corporate and leisure segments, are not interested in lavish experiences; they want everything clean and crisp delivered with efficiency. The services we render are not complex or over-the-top; they are warm and friendly. We are reinventing the mid-market hotel space by offering world-class quality at highly affordable rates. We also believe in reducing the hassle for our guests, whether it be our express check-out system or the lighting switch logic in your room.

## How would the brand get greater visibility?

Every Bloom location is specifically selected to be the best in the relative micro market. Whether it's Calangute in Goa (where we have two properties), 100 Feet Road Indiranagar in Bengaluru, or New Delhi



As a location, this is unbeatable; it's very special because there isn't a world-class mid-market hotel brand in Central Delhi"





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railway station, Bloom is known for being closer to the action and it's one of the driving forces behind our success.

### What are the expansion plans?

Our goal is to open 100 hotels by 2020. We are open to all locations and not just Tier-I. Having set foot in competitive Tier-I markets such as Delhi, Bengaluru and Goa, the Bloom brand is now expanding rapidly across India to combine quality with scale.

Now, as part of our 100-hotel roll-out plan, the brand is considering Tier-II locations in markets such as Ahmedabad, Pune, Aurangabad and Kochi among others.

### The 'rooms' name may cause confusion in the customer's mind about the segment Bloomrooms operates in. Your take?

The Bloomrooms brand was launched in 2011 and was the first brand globally to associate the room as being a core part of the stay experience. Any follower brand confused our pure interpretation of 'rooms'. Aggregators and Bloomrooms are completely different. We are a hotel brand. We design, we build, we operate hotels and we have a highly loyal customer base.

### Are you looking at going international?

We are obsessed with India right now. We are not like a greedy kid with his hand in the cookie jar. Maybe, if my travellers ask me to open a property outside of India, I will think about it because that's a genuine reason. 🇮🇳



**Our goal is to open 100 hotels by 2020. We are open to all locations and not just Tier-I"**



SOUTH INDIA

### India gets its first handicrafts hotel in Vizag

The Palm Beach Hotel, a sister concern of LeSutra, has opened doors to its heritage wing, the Andhra Arts and Crafts Hotel. The wing boasts of around 70 sculptures and 50 art installations that weave in the narrative of Andhra's arts and crafts within the passages, corridors and residential areas of the hotel, making it the world's first handicrafts hotel. Le Sutra Hotel, the world's first Indian art hotel based in Mumbai, is designed on the three qualities – Tamas, Rajas and Satva.



WEST INDIA

### AccorHotels launches Mercure Goa Devaaya Retreat

AccorHotels has launched the Mercure Goa Devaaya Retreat situated on Divar Island on Goa's Mandovi River. The property will offer visitors authentic Ayurveda, naturopathy, and yoga treatments with international hospitality standards. The property has been launched in partnership with the Alcon Victor Group, an established hospitality brand in the Goan market. At Mercure Goa Devaaya Retreat, ayurvedic physicians prescribe personalised treatment programmes for each guest, after a detailed consultation.



NORTH INDIA

### Hospitality Purchasing Managers' Forum launches Rajasthan Chapter

Hospitality Purchasing Managers' Forum (HPMF) has launched its Rajasthan Chapter. HPMF has 12 chapters within India and two international chapters – Middle East and Sri Lanka. It's been over eight years since HPMF launched its first chapter in Mumbai on November 26, 2010. The membership base has also rapidly increased from the initial three to over 2600 members across India, Middle East, and Sri Lanka. The response from Rajasthan's hospitality trade has been overwhelming.

Domestic News





SOUTH INDIA

## Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE to begin operations from May 1, 2019

Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE is now confirming reservations beginning May 1, 2019, with introductory offers tailor-made for those who want to be among the first to experience the second Four Seasons hotel in India. The epitome of modern luxury in this dynamic city, Four Seasons is part of the prestigious new Embassy ONE development, encompassing the 230-room Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru, 105-room Four Seasons Private Residences, and commercial spaces. The estate is conveniently located at a 30-minute drive from the airport and well-connected to the central business district. Within the hotel, local guests and international travellers will find a warm and inviting all-day dining restaurant, CUR8, featuring a showpiece grill and a custom-built, supersize pizza oven with interactive live counters; The Lounge & Terrace, which could be the perfect place for a relaxed afternoon tea; and a curated selection of whiskies from around the world at The Collection.

## NORTH INDIA

## AAHAR to be held from March 12-16

AAHAR, the international food and hospitality fair, will be held from March 12-16, 2019, in New Delhi. Organised by India Trade Promotion Organisation, AAHAR is one of Asia's best known brands in food & hospitality shows. It has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years and is today a well-known destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals.

India's food and grocery market is the sixth largest in the world. The Indian food sector is a high-growth sector with immense potential for value addition and is expected to touch \$482 billion by 2020. The food processing industry in India accounts for 32 per cent of the country's total food market and 14 per cent of the manufacturing GDP. With the government keen on promoting value addition in the food sector, Indian companies, too, have taken the initiative in a big way, resulting in a growing domestic demand.

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Picture courtesy:  
The Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai

# Maximising on undersupply

JLL has appointed **Jaideep Dang** as Managing Director of its hotel and hospitality business. Based in Gurugram, this is Dang's second stint with the firm.



**JLL**



Anupriya Bishnoi

## Tell us about your new role at JLL.

I have worked with JLL previously between 2004 and 2011 in different functions. So in a way, I know the preamble of this business. In my earlier stint, we had built a robust consulting practice and provided best advice to the country's leading hotel owners and operators. Clients trusted JLL's value proposition and our offerings. Over the years, the industry size has grown significantly. There are many more hotels, segments and stakeholders in the business now as compared to the times when I used to work here before. I now have a wider audience to serve to. There is more business to do than ever before, even as hotels continue to remain a specialised asset class in real estate. So, you still need a specialised skill set. Having gained valuable experience by working with The Oberoi Group over eight years, I come back to JLL with technical on ground experience. I aim to apply all that I have learnt, and build our hotels practice further. I am committed to focus on hotel transactions, hotel operator searches, and other advisory services. I want to create quality and value both for the practice and the clients.



### Where is JLL looking to grow its business in the hotel space?

What used to happen during my previous stint with JLL is very different from what is happening now. Apart from top metropolitan cities, a lot of investment is now happening in Tier-II cities. The data also shows that most international brands like Marriott, Hyatt, Hilton, Radisson, etc., have penetrated in cities such as Lucknow, Kanpur, Ludhiana, Jamshedpur, Ranchi, Surat, and many others. Improved air-connectivity has fuelled growth in domestic travel and as a result, new resort destinations are opening up. We look forward to working in these new markets. Data suggests that Tier-II markets will witness more new hotel openings. However, from a number-of-rooms perspective, Tier-I markets will continue to rule. This means bigger hotels will be built in Tier-I markets but more hotels will be built in Tier II cities. So, we will focus equally in both these markets. We will also focus on new growth areas in the subcontinent, and are equally focused on enhancing our business in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan.

### Is consolidation the way forward for the hospitality industry?

Consolidation is the mantra, going forward. It is there in every industry. There comes a time when a lot of players mushroom and then there comes a cycle when they must find comfort in each other's company. We are currently in the cycle where consolidation is the key and it is going to increase further. There are still good business opportunities in the market. They may or may not be like the Marriott and Starwood merger, but these collaborations could be different in different business. Consolidation could also be in the form of marketing tie-ups, sharing technical platforms for a wider outreach, co-branding, etc. Collaborations could be of different levels and scales, but these will exist and increase.

### What's your take on the undersupply of hotels in the country?

Quite a few hotels across different categories got built over the last decade or so, particularly in the top seven business cities and a few prominent leisure markets. Most of these hotels are witnessing good demand and reasonable uptick in rates. Despite this growth in performance, we observe that real estate developers are cautious to invest in greenfield hotel developments. This is because developing a hotel is much more capital-intensive as compared to other real estate asset classes and if a hotel is not built, financed and operated well, the return on investment for an investor could be lower and longer.

However, a smart hotel investor/developer, who understands the hotel business, can take great advantage of this undersupply situation. That is the reason why traditional hoteliers of the country – Oberoi, Taj, ITC and other hotel companies such as Lemon Tree, SAMHI hotels and a few other real estate developers continue to add more hotels in their portfolio. Upward trend in office market absorption across business cities will further fuel occupancies and



Picture courtesy: Taj Falaknuma Palace, Hyderabad

will encourage investors to build hotels, especially as part of mixed-use developments. Hotel development around office campuses, metro rail corridors, airports, industrial corridors, and pilgrimage cities could offer lucrative returns to the investor as well as hotel operating companies.

### What's with the room rate discrepancy in different cities?

The room rate a hotel achieves is directly proportional to the market it is operating in. For example, a certain branded hotel with similar specifications and service offering in Delhi could fetch a higher room rate as opposed to a similar hotel in Chandigarh. This is simple demand–supply economics.

If the city has more visitors and hotels are well occupied, the rates will be higher. On the other hand, resorts operate differently. In resorts, product design, room sizes, personalised service also play a key role in rate positioning.



**Hotel development around office campuses, metro rail corridors, airports, industrial corridors, and pilgrimage cities could offer lucrative returns to the investor as well as hotel operating companies”**





Picture courtesy:  
Fairfield by Marriott Coimbatore

“

There has been a wide gap between real estate pricing and the yield a hotel generates on that real estate. Historically, this has been the issue that has impacted hotel valuations”

### What about the price discrepancy that exists within the city, like you just mentioned?

Again, it depends on the product and the offering. Two different five-star hotels in a city could differ in age, size, scale, and built form. They are bound to have different rates despite being in the same segment. It also depends on who the guest you are serving to is. Hotels should always be designed and developed keeping in mind the guest. If you are successful in your assessment, you will certainly command a premium rate despite being in the same location.

### Is standardisation of hotels and hotel brands important? Why should all hotels have a standard design across cities?

Standardisation is important as it brings efficiency in operating systems and parameters. That is why multinational hotel brands put immense thought and intellectual capital in positioning and development of hotels across segments. At the same time, each site and market is different from the other. Therefore, local aspects also play a role in design and development. There is no harm if a similar branded hotel looks and feels a bit different but serves the same purpose. On the other hand, in leisure markets, standardisation in design takes a back seat. For example, a particular brand's resort in Goa will look and feel different from its resort in Rajasthan. That's where local architecture, building materials and design take the lead, even as service, food quality and IT could be fully standardised.

### The industry remains challenging. How does JLL ease the burden?

These are exciting times for the industry. Fast paced innovations and market disruptions are keeping the

### CAPITALISE TODAY, BENEFIT TOMORROW

The hotel sector in India is experiencing healthy growth on the back of increased foreign tourist arrivals and growing domestic demand.


“A large part of the new hotel supply is part of mixed-use developments. With land prices rising, this trend of mixed-use hotel developments will be the future. The timing could not have been better for investors to explore opportunities to buy existing and under-construction hotel assets, both in business as well as leisure segments,” says Dang.

stakeholders on their toes. It is a continuous learning process. Owners, investors, brands – all require continuous advice.

At JLL, we have always believed in providing the right advice to a client, which empowers him to plan rightly, finance rightly, develop rightly, and operate rightly. We aim to be the most trusted consultant and transaction advisor to the real estate developers, funds, banks, and hoteliers. Challenges will help us all to excel.

### What kind of challenges do you face?

Typically, there has been a wide gap between real estate pricing and the yield a hotel generates on that real estate. Historically, this has been the issue that has impacted hotel valuations and transactions.

Excessive debt exposure on hotels built over the last 10 years has further compounded the problems of return on investment. 



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# All that govt does is make announcements

The Indian government has often voiced its concern for the industry, but other than that it hardly does much, **Rattan Keswani**, Deputy MD, Lemon Tree Hotels, elaborates, while speaking about the group.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

## How was 2018 for Lemon Tree Hotels?

We did well both in terms of occupancy, which was close to 80 per cent, and in terms of average rates. November was a bit iffy, but that was because of a lot of holidays. Lemon Tree Hotels will be operating 87 hotels with 8793 rooms across 58 cities by FY2021. We opened a few properties as well, including the ones in Dehradun (Uttarakhand), Pune (Maharashtra), Siliguri (West Bengal), and Morjim (Goa). We should soon be able to open an 'owned hotel' in Mumbai, followed by Kolkata. Then, we should be able to open a managed property in Kalina, Mumbai.

The market situation in Kolkata remained at the typical 60-65 per cent tipping point. We were also involved in the resort/leisure world with a smaller set of institutions like hotels in Goa, Katra, Jaipur, Sikkim, and Corbett. That's started to strengthen. Udaipur will be another upscale resort substantiating our direction towards attracting high-value leisure customers. Talking about international properties, we have signed management contracts in Dubai, Bhutan, and Kathmandu.

## What are your parameters when you think of opening a hotel internationally?

You have to visualise your strengths and where they can benefit both the owner and the geography. GCC, particularly Dubai and Abu Dhabi, have the largest tourist arrivals from India. They are dominated by upscale luxury. There is no true midscale player there.

Our strengths range from the distribution with Indian customers to our large loyalty programme, and our understanding of 20,000 Indians walking around the city of Dubai every day. Also, now that we have bolstered our leisure portfolio, travel agents are also our strength. In each country, the larger wholesalers and retailers are represented by a domestic set of agents, but since we are strong with the domestic as well as international agents in India, we should be able to translate that benefit to Dubai as well because it's the same cluster. The key agents remain the same even though DMCs may change. Close to 32 per cent of our customers are people who have visited us before. We are looking at other parts of

### LEMON TREE HOTELS & WARBURG PINCUS ENTER JV

Lemon Tree Hotels has formed a joint venture with an affiliate of Warburg Pincus, marking the former's entry into an adjacent but new business segment focusing on the development of institutional-grade rental housing accommodation serving both students and young working professionals across major educational clusters and key office markets in India. The partners will initially invest ₹1500 crore in equity, followed by an additional infusion of ₹1500 crore in equity at the option of the partners, to develop rental housing projects.



**The government did work on infrastructure (in some regions you can see the benefits) but that's not a wholesome initiative"**

GCC as well to grow. Once we are able to showcase the performance that we have exhibited in India, we will see some more international signings this year.

## Has the IPO turned out to be the way you expected it to?

So far, yes. In our business, you may have a forecast, but events around you are a risk you can't really fully plan for. The hospitality industry is such that it gets effected in several ways. There is no stability. The industry can be affected any day, based on local and global events. You can't forecast what's going to happen in the political world.

## What works better for you, Greenfield or brownfield projects?

Both work for us. The crucial part that remains is location. Greenfield projects take time but are easier to work around with architects and interior designers, and help reach the full potential of brand specifications. When you undertake a brownfield project, you become a little limited and may not be able to tweak it too much. Obviously, in the present business scenario, anyone would want to put up a hotel as quickly as he can, because the next three to five years are going to be very interesting in the sense that there is going to be a choke in supply while demand continues to increase. This is the best time for anyone to get the best result, before the supply cycle begins again.

## What about the crowding of hotels in Delhi's Aerocity? Do you think there is enough business for everyone?

I think there is and is in the high 80s for everyone. I can't say much about the high-cost hotel projects though; I cannot comment on whether or not they are getting an adequate return on their capital. In my opinion, everyone has a decent RevPAR.

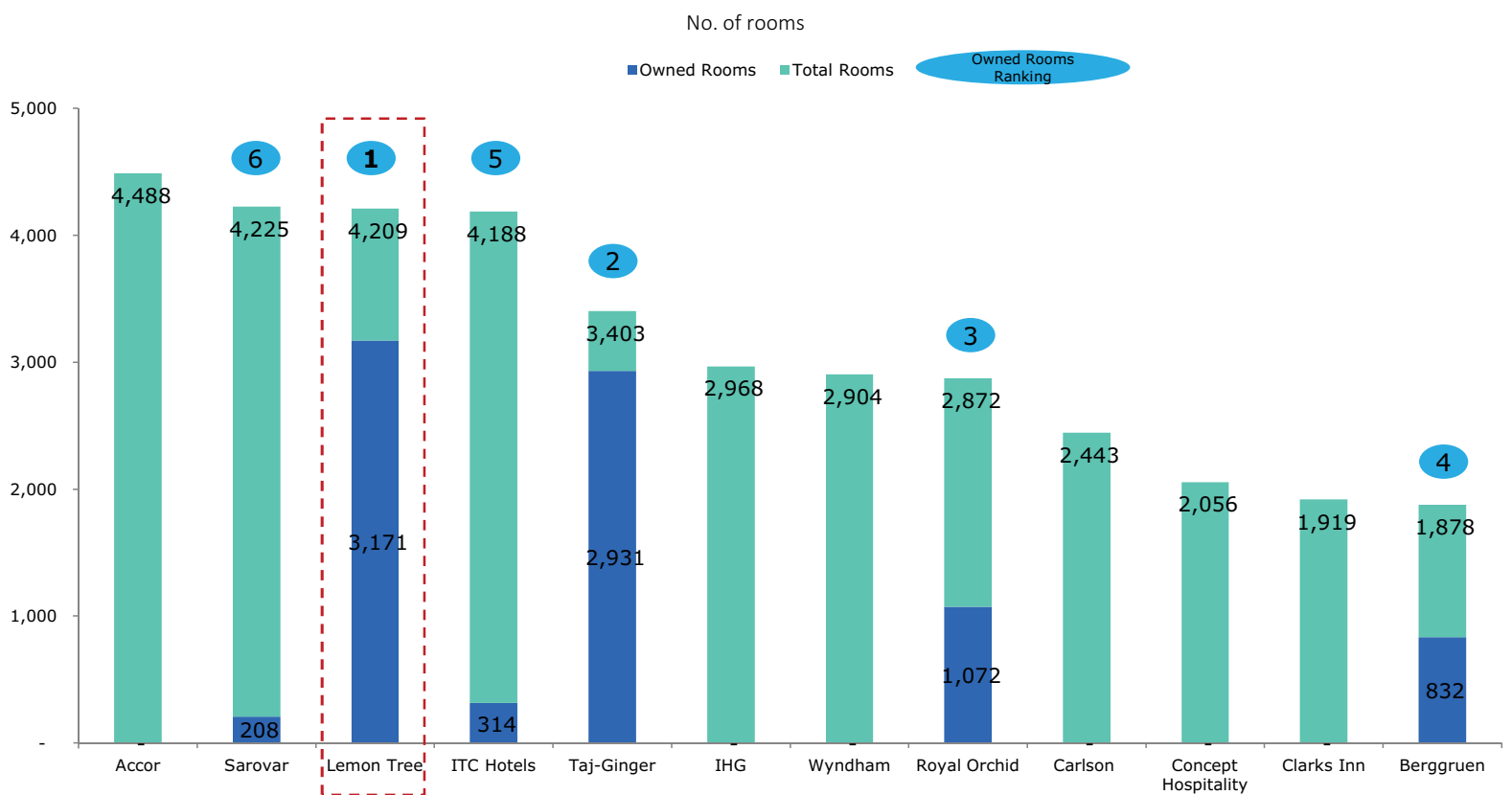
## Which city in India, in your opinion, is performing well?

We are not disappointed by any city. We are close to an 80 per cent occupancy across the brand and the country, in our owned and leased space. That said, it's not a matter of occupancy anymore. The question now is of the change



## India's largest hotel chain in Mid-priced Hotel Sector

Lemon Tree is the largest hotel chain in mid-priced hotel sector in India<sup>1</sup> and #3 in terms of total rooms<sup>1,2</sup>



1. On the basis of controlling interest in owned and leased rooms, as of June 30, 2017. Ranking is based on inventory, unless otherwise indicated; 2. Source: Horwath Report



in rate. Rates are getting hampered and we believe that others are not increasing the rates as they should.

### Do you think the market is mature enough to take that?

I think so, but that's because there's been an 11-year-long downturn, which has led to a lack of confidence. A number of players in the market have not made healthy cash flows and there is hesitation of losing whatever you have. This limits everyone. If you see our reports, though, we have shown a healthy price increase across India.

### Which are those government policies that keep bothering you?

I don't think the government really looks at this industry beyond some great announcements. The industry, by



**Security needs a dramatic change; the lack of it hasn't impacted the hotel industry much, but the notion that a few cities are unsafe, remains"**

and large, has been trying to do whatever it can by itself. There isn't much that one can say. Some changes are visible, such as the announcement of GST, but the rates are not helpful both for the industry and for the customer. Also, the government did work a bit on infrastructure, and in certain regions you can see the benefits, but that's not a wholesome initiative. The government does acknowledge that the hospitality industry provides employment and contributes in other ways as well, but I don't think much gets done to facilitate that bit.

Security, too, needs a dramatic change. Thankfully, the lack of it hasn't impacted the hotel industry much, but the notion that a few cities are unsafe, remains and creates scepticism among travellers.

### What makes Lemon Tree Hotels a success?

Lemon Tree Hotels has always remained true to its business model, which is optimum cost and keeping that in control. How do you keep your leverage under control and yet grow at the rate that the company has? Private equity, institution investors, and a pre-IPO is the answer. Institution investors move away in five to six years and so does private equity. Both have stayed with us and that shows our depth of understanding the business. Our customer rankings have also improved. We are now looking at people who are not so economically or socially well off and are below the poverty line. We also want more than 20 per cent of our payroll to be for the differently abled. 🇮🇳



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**East Region:** Kolkata: 033-22653383/9248, 22265647/7434; Bhubaneswar: 0674-2550147, 2552242; Patna: 0612-2344500. **West Region:** Mumbai: 022-28470617/19/21; Pune: 020-32943755; Nagpur: 0712-3222623; Ahmedabad: 079-26402024, 26401128; Surat: 0261-3110063; Indore: 0731-4050707. **South Region:** Chennai: 044-24935534/24953904; Coimbatore: 0422-3221343; Bangalore: 080-26851193; Hyderabad: 040-64549828, 27951027/28; Kochi: 0484-2779826/27/28.





# Sarovar and its East Africa game

Sarovar Hotels & Resorts has gradually expanded in East Africa and India. **Ajay K Bakaya**, Managing Director of the group, tells us why Africa was a chosen spot for international expansion.

 Anupriya Bishnoi

## What helps you single-out an international location for expansion?

Sarovar has been international for almost 20 years now. We started in a small way in Tanzania and then got rather serious about Africa, more precisely English-speaking East Africa, about 10 years ago. We have had our hits and misses; it's a more challenging environment than India, where people know who we are. We developed some hotels but lost them after two to three years for different reasons.

Sarovar is now operating in Nairobi (Kenya), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Lusaka (Zambia), and has projects coming up in Axum (Ethiopia) and Somaliland. Now, how do we choose where to go? Honestly, we don't. Opportunities come to us, we deliberate, and wherever we feel we can add strong value, we go ahead.

## Why Africa for Sarovar?

I think it's because we understand the continent more than our competition does. The potential is colossal. We choose youngsters for design, development, and areas of operation, to go to Africa. We would love to go to the Middle East; we've had very little success there but now we are working harder than before.

## With an influx of hospitality brands in India in the recent past, do you think there is enough business for everyone?

India is still undersupplied and that has not changed. We have seen the number of hotel rooms go from 45,000 to 150,000, but for a country like India, this is extremely poor. That number is bound to grow! The economy is growing, the country is growing, the middle-class is growing, and tourists coming into the country have grown double-digit. It's fascinating seeing that guests finally have the choice of

**“**  
We have seen the number of hotel rooms go from 45,000 to 150,000, but for a country like India, this is extremely poor. That number is bound to grow”

good hotels and good rates. Everyone needs to operate smarter and provide better experiences. We, too, have grown between six and seven per cent in terms of total revenue.

## Where can we see new Sarovar properties?

We will be coming up with properties in Gorakhpur, Katra, Dehradun, Dohisar, Jammu, Goa, Dibrugarh, Morbi, Junagarh, Dalhousie, Bodhgaya, and Jalandhar. Also, the places we would really like to be in are Varanasi, Bhopal, and Patna.


## Which cities are performing the best for Sarovar Hotels & Resorts?

For us, Bengaluru is number one, Hyderabad is number two, and Mumbai is number three. In all these cities, we have the domination of business clients.

## What works better for you - Greenfield or brownfield projects?

We do Greenfield, we do brownfield, and we do conversion of existing hotels. In an ideal situation, however, we would prefer a Greenfield project because we can then build a more efficient hotel, one that benefits us, our owners, and the customer.

## Are you a believer in standardisation of hotel properties across cities?

Honestly, I don't think they are very different, barring public areas, of course, because they are going to be conceptualised by different designers. When it comes to hotel rooms, the larger the hotel chain, the larger the standardisation. It can't operate any other way. It's alright if you are a 20-hotel group, but anything above that needs a high level of standardisation. In my opinion, the design needs to bring in the local elements while being imaginative. 









**December 5, 2018**

### **FHRAI puts Go-MMT on notice**

In response to grievances expressed by its members, FHRAI put Go-MMT on notice. FHRAI wrote to the OTAs outlining the most critical concerns of the hotel industry, which included the issue of distortion of market price, the demand for exorbitant commissions, and the hosting of illegal and unlicensed bed-and-breakfast (B&B) accommodations.



**NOTICE**



**December 7, 2018**

### **Association meets MMT**

FHRAI, along with its regional associations, met representatives from MMT at the HRAWI office in Mumbai. A number of demands, such as reduction of the commission charged, no predatory pricing and no further discount without consent of hotels, etc., were laid. FHRAI also asked MMT to resolve all the concerns and revert soon.



**December 10, 2018**

### **FHRAI warns action against OYO for large-scale breach of contracts**

Post issuance of notice to Go-MMT, FHRAI also warned of action against room aggregator OYO for large-scale breach of contracts, jeopardising the safety of consumers and violation of laws. FHRAI pointed out that OYO was endorsing illegal B&B accommodations, flats in residential and commercial buildings, and other independent structures as hotels.



**December 21, 2018**

### **FHRAI members converge to determine course of action**

Individual hoteliers were approached by OTAs for renegotiating terms. The hotels, however, declined to accept the offer and demanded for the concerned entities to conduct business that's ethical and uniform across the country, without distorting the market and addressing all concerns raised.





# The OTA & hotel face-off

Taking a stand, FHRAI, the apex hospitality association in the country, is now at loggerheads with the OTAs and it seems the battlefield has been laid out. We bring to you the story so far...



**December 26, 2018**

## FHRAI reacts to Kalra's statement

After MMT's CEO Deep Kalra's comment that FHRAI had no locus standi in the commercial agreements, Kohli said, "I fail to see how our letter clearly worded as requesting to 'resolve' the situation would be misconstrued as trying to 'dictate' terms."

**T**he cost of a room is often the most crucial factor for customers when booking a hotel, and lately, with hefty discounts being offered to them by Online Travel Aggregators (OTAs), the latter have ensured they're a preferred choice for many. This preferential shift clubbed with high commission rates has made things difficult for hoteliers, especially the ones in the mid-market and budget segments.

A boycott initiated by hotels in Gujarat against the biased business practices of Goibibo and MakeMyTrip (Go-MMT) soon led to a nationwide protest against the latter. Around 270 hotels in Ahmedabad stopped entertaining bookings from the two OTAs, and other cities followed suit. The decision was taken at a meeting of the hotel and restaurant association in Gujarat, and was soon backed by FHRAI as well as Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI).



**December 29, 2018**

## FHRAI requests MoT's intervention

FHRAI reached out to the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) on the dispute with Go-MMT and OYO, requesting its urgent intervention for redressal of hoteliers' grievances. and wrote to **KJ Alphons**, Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism, Government of India, outlining the industry's concerns on account of the OTAs' unfair and arbitrary business practices.



**January 16, 2019**

## Sikkim hotels boycott Go-MMT

The Sikkim Hotels & Restaurants Association (SHRA) convened a hoteliers' meet in Gangtok, where it was agreed to not continue conducting business with Go-MMT until concerns were resolved. Hotels in the state indefinitely closed inventory to the OTAs and decided to not honour any new bookings. SHRA member hotels also decided to terminate their contracts with Go-MMT with immediate effect.



# Securing the future with collaborations?

Hotel companies are either acquiring brands or merging with existing ones, globally. In light of this trend, we ask experts if there is a flipside to a merger or acquisition, and where the loyalty programmes lie during the transaction.



**JEAN-MICHEL CASSÉ**  
Chief Operating Officer - India  
and South Asia  
AccorHotels

## The road ahead

In terms of mergers and acquisitions, if there were any opportunity that made sense, we would look at it, but is that what we are running after now, no, because what we really want is our development to clearly be asset-light. We are looking at mergers and acquisitions from a central or global point of view. This is why, thanks to the acquisition of Fairmont, Raffles and Swissotel, we've been getting additional hotels here. Thanks to the acquisition of Mövenpick, we've been getting additional inventory. So, globally, few other things like that may come and then they would be integrated and be



supported by our entire network, as is being done now.

I have to say that the acquisition of Fairmont, Raffles, and Swissotel gave us an amazing visibility in the luxury space because now, AccorHotels globally, is the second luxury player on earth after Marriott. When we look at the development pipeline, we have a slightly bigger

pipeline than they do. So, we are doing well in that space and these hotels enable us to look forward to new developments or luxury hotels in India as well.

## No flipside exists

I don't think there is a flipside because if there is such a merger or acquisition, it means there is an interest for both parties, and there would be interest for both parties in light of what the customer's choice would be. Either you keep whatever you merge or whatever you acquire.



**I don't think there is a flipside because if there is such a merger or acquisition, it means there is an interest for both parties"**



**VIVEK BHALLA**  
Regional Vice President, South West Asia  
InterContinental Hotels Group

## A world of opportunities

We have talked consistently about the opportunity to strengthen our brand portfolio in the highest-opportunity segments, and we've done this by launching new brands as well as adding them through mergers and acquisitions. In July 2018, we acquired 51 per cent stake of Regent Hotels & Resorts, which has been an excellent addition to our portfolio and has strengthened our



presence in the luxury segment. With this acquisition, we saw a real opportunity to round-out our global portfolio and add an upper luxury brand at a price point above InterContinental. This addition has helped us enhance our owner and guest proposition by giving us the ability to fill a 'portfolio gap'. It has also created a more robust loyalty offering and improved our ability to attract more B2B customers.

With the right partners and right locations, we expect to have representation for the brand across regions.



**We acquired 51% stake of Regent Hotels & Resorts; this helped us enhance our owner and guest proposition, and fill a portfolio gap"**





**AJAY BAKAYA**  
**Managing Director**  
**Sarovar Hotels & Resorts**

#### **The near future**

The last two to three years have witnessed the trend of brand acquisitions and mergers in the hotel industry, globally. This translates to availability of more funds for a stronger distribution system and improved, catchy loyalty programmes. We see the trend continuing for the next few years as well.

In our case, the merger with Louvre Hotels Group (LHG) opened new doors in terms of global presence, distribution channels, loyalty programmes, and worldwide synergies with a large hotel group.

#### **Seamless transitions**

There is absolutely no confusion in the market or in the mind of the customer about brands. So far, the transition has been seamless and we have retained our home-grown brands, which have now been added to the overall product portfolio of Louvre Hotels Group.



#### **More benefits, happier customers**

Sarovar's loyalty programme will merge into LHG's and eventually, into Jin Jiang group's loyalty programme with over 120 million members. These developments will offer Sarovar rewards members a whole new world of benefits.

#### **Global visibility**

Mergers and acquisitions have provided our brands a global presence, in addition to providing access to various distribution channels and central reservation systems that have opened up the technology gates for us.



**This translates to availability of more funds for a stronger distribution system and improved, catchy loyalty programmes. We see the trend continuing"**



# Thriving in Aerocity

Being in the vicinity of one of the busiest airports in the world calls for extra security measures and world-class services. **Suman Gahlot**, General Manager, Aloft New Delhi Aerocity, gives an insight into the market here.



The year 2019 looks very promising for business, and we should achieve a fair market share by the end of the first quarter”

## How is the overall business of Aerocity doing? How has it evolved in the last year?

Aerocity, as a location, has picked up very well. With so many corporates moving in, the food courts, up-to-date security, and the corporate hub of Gurugram give us a strategic advantage over hotels in North and South Delhi. A number of MiCE events have now begun to take place in Aerocity, allowing attendees to dodge the Delhi/Gurugram traffic. Transient leisure guests prefer a location closer to the airport, and Aerocity becomes an obvious choice. Airline crew also prefers staying at Aerocity because of its proximity to the airport.

## What about the performance of your property, given that it is relatively new here?

We are getting good response from guests and they seem to be liking the natural lighting and open-space concept of the hotel. The year 2019 looks very promising for business, and we should achieve a fair market share by the end of the first quarter.



## What kind of security protocols do you need to follow, being so close to Delhi airport?

Aloft New Delhi Aerocity firmly believes in 'safety first for first-class service'. Aerocity has been declared as a hypersensitive zone by the government and security agencies, so we have to strictly equip this property with all approved safety and security features, including bollards, boom barriers, ETD, VMS, XBIS machine, DFMD, detectors, CCTV, face recognition system, smoke detectors, fire sprinklers, emergency alarms, AED, and other gadgets as per our global and local brand guidelines.

## What advantages does Aerocity enjoy over other prime hotel locales of Delhi-NCR?

Located in the convenient area of Aerocity, the property illustrates the ideal culmination of contemporary and futuristic infrastructure, making it accessible to all the most popular areas of the city. The hotel attracts many clients from across the country and globe through its renowned culinary expertise. What plays to our advantage is our promise to guests and patrons to provide the comfort of this property within a short drive from the airport. 🍷



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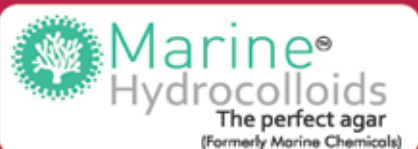
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Wonder Gel 50	++++	++++	50-80	
Wonder Gel 100	+++	+++	100-200	Jams and Marmalades, Sugar-only jam, Ketchup, Sherbet and Sorbet, Rolled Fondant, etc.
Wonder Gel 200	++	++	200-250	



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# adds more 'joy to the city'

AccorHotels recently launched its 50<sup>th</sup> property in India, the 189-room ibis Kolkata Rajarhat. At the occasion, we got in touch with **Mizan Uddin**, the hotel manager, who spoke of its uniqueness and plan for the year.

 Tripti Mehta

## What makes ibis Kolkata Rajarhat unique?

ibis, in India and across the globe, is renowned as a young, trendy, and cool brand. It promises modernity, comfort, and service at the best price, to the people of Kolkata and those travelling to the City of Joy. Featuring 189 well-designed rooms, ibis Kolkata Rajarhat is strategically located near the new IT sector and residential hub – Rajarhat Smart City – and it is just about 20 minutes away from the airport. The hotel features have also been revamped. The all-day dining restaurant 'Spice It' offers the unique opportunity to explore Indian regional and international cuisines inspired by home-style meals and street food.

Kolkata now also has a MiCE space close to about 2500 sqft, divided into three well-equipped and state-of-the-art meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 250 people, along with a lawn that can host various activities, events, and social gatherings. ibis Kolkata Rajarhat will act as an archetype for all the future ibis in India. It provides a young look while also reflecting the local flavour and provides an ethnic feel to the hotel's exterior design. The façade, too, breaks away from the usual, giving it a very peppy and attractive look. ibis Kolkata Rajarhat is green and eco-friendly, and has been built using sustainable materials.

## What are the sustainable practices that the hotel will follow?

If you're talking about the entire construction space, we've used the best of sustainable materials and



**“**  
I am sure  
there would  
be challenges  
in the future,  
but right now,  
they get  
camouflaged  
in the business  
opportunities we  
see here”

practices to ensure that we remain committed to the environment. If you talk about the rooms, we've used aerators to ensure that the usage of water is controlled. In terms of F&B, we've done away with coal and now use gas-based tandoors. These are some of the ways in which we are trying to reduce fossil consumption.

If you talk about boilers that we use extensively in hotels, we've come up with heat pumps. We are soon going to remove the plastic bottles being placed in the rooms as well, as part of AccorHotels' Planet21 initiative for sustainability. We are trying to do that in the first go because we also need to look at the hygiene aspect of it. People usually prefer a plastic bottle as it's locked and sealed and so, perceive it to be clean and hygienic. At the restaurant and bar, we are not using plastic straws. So, slowly and gradually we're trying to do away with everything plastic. Even the packaging being delivered to rooms will be done away with and we'll be using sustainable products such as bamboo or anything that is biodegradable and safe.

## What is the segment and market share of guests/travellers you're targeting?

It is mostly millennials that we are catering to, of course, the middle management. That said, we will get a lot of senior management as well because companies these days are really focused on cost and work towards avoiding an unnecessary wastage of money. ibis, in that sense, is a brand that really offers value for money in terms of efficient stay, which means we are clutter-





free and whatever is needed in the room by business travellers has already been provided.

In terms of the economy segment, we really don't have too many structured hotels here. We are the most premium economy hotel; we are a lot better in terms of offerings and we look forward to a better and a fair market share.

### What are your targets in terms of ARR and occupancy?

We will try to price ourselves in the ₹4000-4500 bracket, as that is where we will be able to offer value for money to our guests. Generally, November to February are good months, so we are looking forward to them. We are looking at about a 35-40 per cent occupancy in the first year; slowly and gradually we would work towards ramping up the entire process; the occupancy rate in the city is about 70 per cent.

### What are the pros and cons of being in this market?

I don't really think there is a disadvantage to being in Kolkata. The best thing about the city is that it is really closely knit. People in Kolkata get to know each other very well. It's more like a family. In terms of business, we're collaborating with the Novotel, which is a big support to us. In terms of the city, it has a lot to offer. It's culturally a very rich city and has a heritage value to it. So, I think we can really collaborate well with the locals and see how we can work together.

We don't see a challenge yet, because there is a lot of positivity. That said, I am sure there would be some challenges in the future, but right now, I think they get camouflaged in the business opportunities we see here.

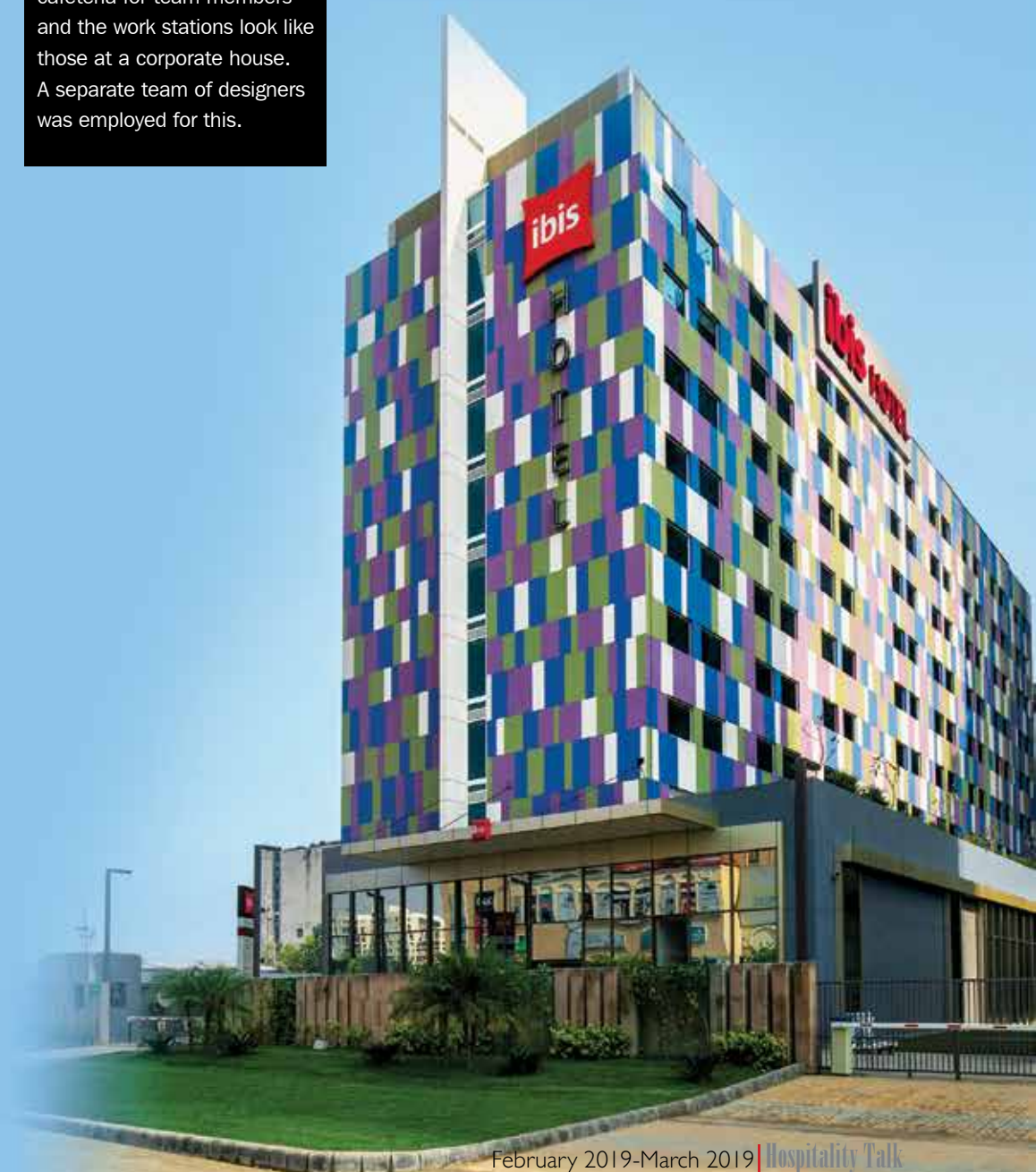
### Local food joints are favoured by food enthusiasts in the city. In such a scenario, how do you aim to attract walk-in guests to Spice It?

We have a very peppy setup; right from the very entrance you see the use of colours. Not just inside, but even in the façade we've done away with the monochrome theme that we have in the other 18 ibis properties in India. So, the whole idea is to make it more fun. A lot of times people go to restaurants because they feel that a hotel would be more expensive, but we are trying to

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

AccorHotels has upped the ante for economy hotels in the country with the upgraded ibis Kolkata Rajarhat. What's more? Staying true to its message of being vibrant and young, the Group has ensured that the same be reflected in the hotel's work areas as well. The property has a vibrant cafeteria for team members and the work stations look like those at a corporate house. A separate team of designers was employed for this.

price it in such a way and possibly our marketing will be in such a way that we'll try and get youngsters to come and just hang out. ibis, as a brand, is perceived as fun and relaxed; there are no boundaries! You can see that in the team as well. That is the value we want to give; we don't want guests to come and feel locked in a five-star theme. We just want them to be comfortable and help them feel like they're home. Ambience, team, food - everything combined is to give the guest an experience that is easy and fun. 🚀







# Return on sustainability

Sustainability doesn't come easy! **Sunita Reddy**, Proprietor and Chief Architect, Acme Designers, talks at length about its importance and hurdles that stand in its way.



HT Bureau

## Tell us something about the hospitality projects you've worked on.

Lately, Acme has done a lot of hospitality projects and every time we take up a new hospitality project, it is always different from the previous one in many aspects. One of the biggest and most challenging hospitality projects for us was Ibiza Resort in Kolkata. The project is spread over 20 acres and creates a Mediterranean holiday experience. Some of my other favourites include Tippy Bull and Brooks & Bonds, both theme-based and interestingly conceptualised.

## How has the design of hotels evolved?

Earlier, hotel designs were elaborate and intricate, with delicate and unique interior selections that required high maintenance and more manpower. For instance, instead of a veneer wood finish that is widely used today, pure teak wood was earlier used for making beds, chairs, and other furniture. This wood was very heavy, expensive, and would require high maintenance. Today's market demands light-weight, modular, easy-to-assemble-and-maintain furniture. Also, the hospitality business used to primarily focus on aesthetics and ambience, but in today's time, two key elements that drive designs are clean and hygienic restrooms as well as good quality mattresses and pillows.

## India is far behind when it comes to being sustainable. Why are we taking time catching up?

In my opinion, the main setback is lack of research and innovation in our country. We mostly adopt technological advances and techniques that have already been researched and developed by other countries. In a way, we are copying those innovations irrespective of our

requirements. Instead, we should research and develop materials and methods in accordance with our country's requirements and in line with our weather, geography, climate, topography, etc. We should look for innovative solutions that are specific to our country, taking into account the resources that we have in abundance and utilising them optimally.

## What are some of the obsolete practices hotels still follow?

High-end amenities such as humongous pool sizes using gallons of water, five to six restaurants (with approximately 30 seats each that are not full even once a year), as well as more-than-required glazing in the façade solely for aesthetic purposes are some of the examples that come to my mind.

## How expensive is it being sustainable?

Expenditure-wise, the initial capital investment required is more, but in the years to follow, there is good return on investment. It proves to be more economical with reduced operational costs and that's exactly what makes it a smart choice, though not an easy one. It is challenging to adopt the sustainable approach of designing, as various norms (especially by LEAD and GRIHA) come into play, along with innumerable calculations that the execution requires, including type and size of bricks being used, the carbon footprint of the building, etc. That said, it's not always about certification and everyone can contribute in their own small way. Architects should promote the green design concept by way of general practices such as providing ample amount of ventilation and daylight, constructing rainwater harvesting pits, and other measures that can be implemented easily. 



“

The main setback is lack of research and innovation in our country. We mostly adopt techniques that have been researched by other countries, and copy them irrespective of our requirements”





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# A toast to the Big Achievers

India Travel Awards & India MiCE Awards, in their latest edition, felicitated the best of the best from every segment of the fraternity.

 Nisha Verma







**A** name to be reckoned with, India Travel Awards & India MiCE Awards concluded their latest edition at Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra. In attendance were stalwarts of the MiCE, hospitality, and travel industry from across the country. The chief guest for the evening, **Satyajeet Rajan**, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, felicitated and congratulated the winners for their contribution.


Addressing the audience, he said, "Being an entrepreneur in India is difficult, and I must congratulate everyone for being a part of the MiCE and travel business and achieving so much. We, at Ministry of Tourism, have always tried to help entrepreneurs with finding solutions to problems. The tourism sector has contributed greatly to generating employment." Claiming that those who focus on experiential tourism will be the game changers in the travel industry, Rajan added, "Those who create trends or bring in innovation are going to succeed. I wish India Travel Awards & India MiCE Awards success. The way awardees have been chosen is very participative, and the selection process is very good and involves the industry at large." The award ceremony was also graced by **Manvinder Sandhu**, first runner-up at Gladrags Mrs India.

Attended by 150 guests from the MiCE, tourism and hospitality industries, the award ceremony acknowledged achievers in various fields. **SanJeet**, Mentor, India Travel Awards & India MiCE Awards, said, "It is our aim to recognise, felicitate, and reward outstanding contribution in the MiCE industry. These awards are powered by TravTalk and MiCETalk, India's leading travel and MiCE publications, respectively."

Talking about the industry, he said, "The Indian MiCE industry is currently pegged at ₹25,000 crore and is expected to double in the next two years. The potential is huge! These awards have been convened to recognise excellence, hard work, and success. Today, the industry is synonymous with progress and opportunity." He also said that these awards aimed to celebrate global players, both big and small.

The awards are divided into four categories: personal awards are for the legends of today and tomorrow, business awards are for organisations that have set benchmarks in their respective field and consistently exceeded expectations, trending awards are decided by critics and finally, partner awards for those who have contributed to making the event a grand success. Winners are selected through an online nomination process, followed by online voting, and finalised after a jury verdict.

Thanking the team and members of the jury for bestowing this honour upon him, **PS Duggal**, Director, Minar Group, who entered the Gallery of Legends, said, "I am happy to receive this award and hope to continue working for the industry with the same vigour." Demonstrating his enthusiasm, **Himanshu Patil**, Director, Kesari Tours, who was chosen as DDP Trailblazer for his contribution in the growth of the company and the industry at large, said, "The team behind the awards has set very high standards, right from selection to execution. It was a great show."

The Face of the Future award went to **SMA Sheeraz**, Managing Director, Sheeraz Tours, who thanked the team and said, "We started our business in 2007, and now it's the main market because every tourism board and airline is focusing on Tier-II cities. This award would certainly encourage us to do more." 



# A celebration of excellence

India Travel Awards & India MiCE Awards were a celebration of achievers and their resolve, and brought to the fore the contributions made by them in taking the hospitality and tourism industries in India to greater heights.



**GALLERY OF LEGENDS**  
PS Duggal



**DDP TRAILBLAZER**  
Himanshu Patil



**FACE OF THE FUTURE**  
SMA Sheeraz



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Debasish Bhowmik



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**BEST VENUE FOR LAUNCHES (TIER-II)**  
Paradise Village Beach Resort, Goa





**BEST LUXURY RESORT**  
The Fern Samali Resort



**BEST BOUTIQUE HOTEL**  
Goldfinch Hotel Mumbai



**BEST CASINO HOTEL**  
Deltin Suites



**BEST LEISURE & MICE RESORT**  
Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra



**BEST BUSINESS HOTEL**  
The Suryaa New Delhi



**BEST DEBUT HOTEL**  
Aloft New Delhi Aerocity



**BEST WEDDING & MICE RESORT**  
Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra



**HOSPITALITY PARTNER**  
Hotel Clarks Shiraz, Agra



# Is eating out, in?

Eating-out frequently has led to the boom of the restaurant industry in recent years. But, when you stop to think, how willing are we to give up the home-cooked food we so love? We bring to you some points of view...

## ZHANG HONG SHENG

Head Chef

TCK by The China Kitchen

With the wide variety of cuisines available in Tier-I cities, diners have started experimenting a lot more. They no longer need a reason or a special occasion to eat out because a restaurant is more than just a place to eat - it is also a place to socialise and unwind. However, at the same time, millennials are mindful of what they eat and select their places after thorough

consideration. Also, due to ultra-urbanisation and the introduction of western food chains in India, we now have countless options for food. There is also a growing niche of restaurants that are slowly coming around to using niche, regional ingredients such as the black rice of Manipur which is being incorporated into restaurants and hotel menus.

Indians have been taught that fresh food made at home is better and healthier, since time immemorial. They tend to go out mostly on special occasions with their friends or family members. According to a report, dining out with the family accounts for 25 per cent of all meals outside home, wherein families spend anywhere between ₹5,000 and ₹6,000 a month on eating out. Among cities, Delhi and Mumbai spend the most on eating out, a reflection of their large population and high per capita income. However, while denizens of Delhi-NCR love eating out more elaborately in stand-alone restaurants, their counterparts in Bengaluru and Mumbai prefer on-the-go meals due to the longer commutes. Yet, urban Indians do not eat out as much as their peers in other countries. Nonetheless, the market is expected to grow, and it is estimated that restaurants will benefit over the next decade as millennials spend more.



According to a report, dining out with the family accounts for 25 per cent of all meals outside home”

## AKSHAY NAYYAR

Culinary Consultant

Novele

People in India have graduated from the habit of eating just Indian food wherever they go. Today, people want to experience world cuisines and modern Indian cuisine, which is more of an experience for them.

Earlier, people in India enjoyed eating home food at least five to six days a week, but now they eat out at least twice or thrice a week and every time they dine out, they want a change.

The only barrier here, in my opinion, is that this phenomenon is restricted to metro cities of India



and to people who are in the mid to high-income groups.

As a country with a population of over 1.3 billion, the number of people who dine out is still very small. This, however, is said to change in the coming years because now, family size is nuclear and all members are working, so cooking at home is an added task vis-à-vis dining out.

Hence, it can be said that notions are changing and more people are dining out for the experience of it, not just to enjoy a good meal.





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**SHIREESH SINGH**

**Corporate Chef**  
**UNO Chicago Bar & Grill**

Authentic Indian food is healthy. It is full of superfoods, something that has gained popularity in Western countries in recent times. Over the past 50 years, an average Indian has become well-travelled and is therefore more informed about global food choices. The eating habits of the average Indian have undergone changes owing to factors

such as more disposable income, easy access to global cuisine, long working hours, and nuclear families. This has led to a new evolved market where people are ready to explore and experiment with available options.

The Indian culture has always been more bent towards a sit-down meal

with family or friends at home, unlike the West where people are more likely to grab a meal on the go or eat out. Traditionally, Indian diet uses fewer processed ingredients and more natural ingredients than that used by Western countries. These factors affect the eating out habit of Indian consumers, especially in the Tier-II and III markets. That said, this perception is gradually changing, as a number of multinational food brands are customising their offerings and providing healthy choices to suit the traditional values and food habits of Indians. As more and more global brands move to smaller towns, it is only a matter of time before this population catches up.



**The perception is changing as a number of brands are customising their offerings”**



**SABYASACHI GORAI**

**Celebrity Chef**

Consumers want to experiment with their own country’s cuisine, they want to explore local and regional produce and flavours, and I really believe this is going to be one of the biggest trends in 2019. Resultantly, there will be an upward shift in the number of people dining out. Also, a lot of focus is on vegan and healthy diets. Every restaurant will have to have a vegan menu and a health-conscious menu that states the calorie count, as the consumer today is becoming extremely health conscious.



**AKSHAY BHARDWAJ**

**Corporate Chef**  
**Eastman Colour Restaurants**

India is a young nation, a land full of citizens travelling the length and breadth of the globe and being exposed to the rich heritage, culture and trends everywhere. Indians have an acquired taste for adapting to different trends. The rapidly growing

F&B industry is no different from this evolution. With each day we see a rise in demand for new food trends, dining concepts, and new flavours in the market, however, despite being one of the most populated countries in the world, we are not among the top 10 where people eat out. Being a chef and someone who has been a part of the evolution, I strongly believe that eating out for us is not a basic need, but an indulgence. The prevalent ‘home kitchen’ culture in our country is part of our lives. In a country as

blessed as ours with ingredients and a culture where families eat together, the concept of eating out every day cannot be popular. In our culture, eating out is still considered an unhealthy practice and home-cooked food is often preferred. What is also amazing to see is how Indians establish a balance between both eating at home and eating out. Our quest to eat healthy and good food has led to the emergence of some great eateries and even if we are not in the top 10, the food industry in India is still booming.





# Proximity plays to The Oterra's tune

The unsparing competition in the city of Bengaluru is not a matter of concern for The Oterra. **Raghu Nair**, the General Manager of the property, explains why the hotel's USP will allow business to thrive.



HT Bureau



## What makes the hotel unique?

The Oterra is situated in the heart of Electronics City, one of the biggest IT hubs in Bengaluru. The proximity we provide to the various companies around us is of utmost importance to our clients and guests.

We are also the only five-star deluxe hotel in the vicinity and hence provide our guests with the service that meets the required standards. In addition to this, we also have one of the biggest banqueting services in Bengaluru, with 10 meeting venues including the grand ballroom, lawns, and poolside.

Spread over 2.5 acres of landscaped greens, with 264 rooms and four flavorful restaurants, everything about The Oterra, Bengaluru, is expressly conceived to deliver every imaginable amenity and comfort needed for people travelling for success. The guest rooms have been thoughtfully designed to exceed expectations. Standing as an epitome of elegance and charm, the hotel unifies class and comfort.

## How has the hospitality market evolved in the city and how have you managed to survive among competition?


In the past few years, the city has seen a great influx of

travellers and that indeed does increase the competition within the industry. However, the market has changed tremendously. Guests are now well-travelled, have been to different places, and have had different experiences. They know what to expect! Hence, the industry has turned guest-centric and that's exactly how we like to function, too. We endeavour to provide our guests with a holistic experience and give them a personalised service, and I think that sets us apart from competition.

## What kind of challenges do you face?

When it comes to challenges, I would say that it is the competition our restaurants face from the various stand-alone restaurants in the city, with regard to the prices offered.

## Does the city have enough number of rooms to meet demand?

The city does have several hotels and indeed does meet the demand for rooms. However, during special occasions and events such as the aerospace show or other conventions, there is a huge influx of travellers to the city. Due to this sudden increase in demand, there is a possibility of crunch in the availability of the rooms. 

“  
The industry has turned guest-centric and that's exactly how we like to function, too”



# Appointments

## PARVEZ NISAR >>

Hotel Manager

**Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi**  
Fairfield by Marriott Pune Kharadi has appointed **Parvez Nisar** as the Hotel Manager. A well-recognised industry veteran with almost 18 years of experience in the luxury and upscale hotel segment, Nisar is adept and well-acquainted in the industrial know-how. He has successfully driven the conversion and re-launch of Premier Inn Pune to Fairfield by Marriott Pune.



## ASHISH SHOME ^

General Manager

**Hyatt Place Gurgaon**

Hyatt Place Gurgaon has appointed **Ashish Shome** as the brand's new General Manager. With more than 28 years of experience in the industry, he will be spearheading the hotel's operations, overall performance, and strategy execution. His last assignment was at Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa as the Director of Operations.



## SUBHASISH DUTTA >>

Director of Finance

**Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa**

**Subhasish Dutta** has been appointed as the Director of Finance at Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa. With over eight years of experience in the industry, he will be leading the finance division at the property. Here, his task entails ensuring smooth functioning of the finance department.



## SHOBHIT SAWHNEY ^

General Manager

**Hyatt Regency Pune**

Hyatt Regency Pune has appointed **Shobhit Sawhney** as the new General Manager. He brings with him a deep understanding of the hospitality industry after having worked at different hotels across India and overseas. During his tenure he has worked with brands like The Oberoi Hotels, Hilton, and InterContinental Hotels. His stint with the Hyatt brand began with Grand Hyatt Mumbai.



## << ARZOOMAN IRANI

Executive Chef

**Vividus Hotel, Bengaluru**

Vividus Hotel, Bengaluru, has appointed **Arzooman Irani** as the Executive Chef. Equipped with a diploma in hospitality from Australia, a degree in professional cooking from the Baltimore International Culinary College, USA, and a diploma in management studies from the Swiss Hotel Association - Les Roches, Switzerland, he has worked with hotels and restaurants across the globe.





### RANJAN BANERJEE

General Manager  
Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla

#### Q. An experience you will never forget?

I have visited dozens of unique places across the world but my trip to New Zealand was an experience of a lifetime. I still can't get over its snow-capped peaks, sparkling coves, coastal glaciers, rainforests, and fish-filled rivers. It is truly a traveller's paradise. As far as India is concerned, two places close to my heart are Orchha in Madhya Pradesh and Chettinad in Tamil Nadu due to my love for history, in particular palaces, temples, and culinary delicacies.

#### Q. Something about you not many know?

Not many people know that I love playing badminton with my daughter and that is definitely the best part of my week. I am also very fond of reading fiction, Ayn Rand being my go-to writer and philosopher.



I am fond of reading; Ayn Rand is my go-to writer and philosopher”



### RAJEEV KUMAR

General Manager  
The Fern Kadamba Hotel & Spa

#### Q. How do you spend time off work?

During my free time, I prefer to go through the news, read about trends of the hospitality industry, and always want to spend quality time with family and friends. A morning work-out is also a must for me to begin the day. Listening to Bollywood music, watching movies, and following cricket are my favourite hobbies.

#### Q. Places you love to travel to?

Being in Goa, there is so much to explore within the state. I prefer to travel to Thekkady and Munnar in Kerala, and enjoy the Dubai Safari quite a bit. Visiting Bali is also on my list.



I prefer to travel to Thekkady and Munnar in Kerala”



### MIZAN UDDIN

Hotel Manager  
ibis Kolkata Rajarhat

#### Q. What do you do in your free time?

My leisure time is mostly a creative time for me, be it weekends or after office hours. Apart from spending time with family and catching up with old friends, I indulge in sheer innovative work. I add on to the interiors of my house by creating something new out of waste. On some occasions, I visit institutes to share my take on the hospitality industry.

#### Q. Places you love to visit?

Being fond of travelling has helped me to explore new destinations. I strongly feel that the joy of exploring the less-travelled roads is unparalleled and totally worth it. I once happened to ditch the Mall Road of Shimla for the majestically serene Mashobra, a place not many people travel to.



I feel that the joy of exploring the less-travelled roads is unparalleled”



### RAJAN MALHOTRA

Director of Sales & Marketing  
Shangri-La's Eros Hotel,  
New Delhi

#### Q. What helps you de-stress?

Spending quality time with my family de-stresses me after a hectic day at work. Movies and cricket are both very close to my heart and I consider them my best friends. Music is another interest of mine and I love listening to old classical music after work hours.

#### Q. Do you love to travel?

I am an avid traveller and whenever I get a short break from work, I pack my bag and travel to Goa or Kerala's backwaters. London and Singapore top my list for international travel destinations, for their unique landscapes.



Whenever I get a break from work, I pack my bag and travel to Goa”

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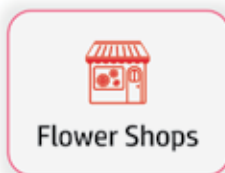
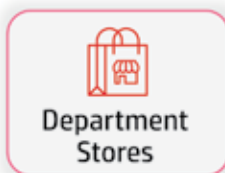
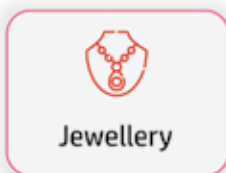
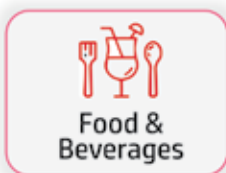
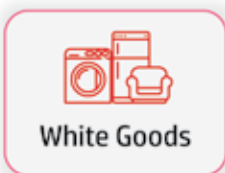
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