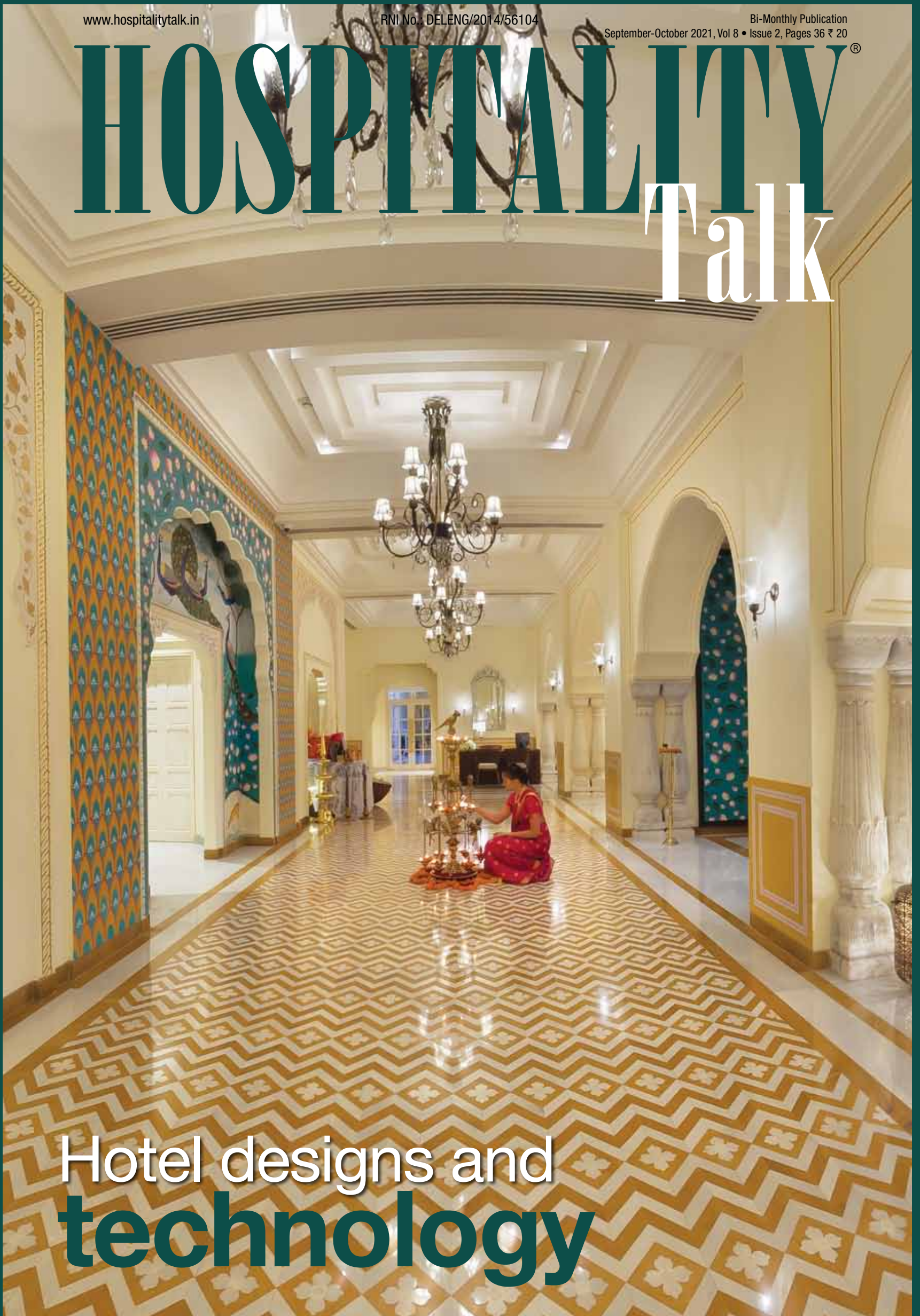


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**HANDICRAFTS
INDIA
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New Delhi: 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001
Phone No: +91 11 233 44179,
Fax: +91-22-22070131
E-mail: hospitalitytalk@ddppl.com

Mumbai: 504 Marine Chambers,
43 New Marine Lines
Mumbai 400 020, India
Tel: +91-22-22070129, 22070130
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

Desk Editor
seth.d@ddppl.com

Editorial Team
lipla.negi@ddppl.com
nisha.verma@ddppl.com
hazel.jain@ddppl.com

Advertising : Delhi
ankit.endlaw@ddppl.com
+91-9650399928

gaganpreet@ddppl.com
+91-9650399934

Advertising : Mumbai
harshal@ddppl.com

Design
Raashi Ajmani Girdhar

Advertisement Designer
Nitin Kumar

eCommerce
Ashish Chakraborty

Production Manager
Anil Kharbanda

Circulation Manager
Vivekanand Maurya

Business Manager
Ashok Rana

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Editorial enquiries: (concerning reproduction of articles):

talk@ddppl.com
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Enticing options

A lot is happening globally with hotels rolling out value-driven offers, preparing to receive visitors...



JUMEIRAH MALDIVES all set to welcome its first guests from October 1, 2021

Jumeirah Group announces a new international resort, Jumeirah Maldives, which is poised to welcome its first guests from October 1, 2021. The guests can now discover Jumeirah Maldives, an all-villa luxury resort tucked away in the crystalline turquoise waters of the North Malé Atoll, easily reachable by speedboat or seaplane from Malé Airport. Its idyllic location offers privacy for romantic getaways, a blissful island retreat for friends & family & experiences to suit the more active traveller. It offers 67 beach and over-water villas in one-, two- and three-bedroom configurations, all with stunning panoramic views of the Indian Ocean.

RAFFLES rolls out a 'hybrid' hotel model in Cambodia

Raffles Hotel Le Royal has reopened its northern wing as an ASQ (alternative state quarantine), offering an elegant option to inbound travellers. "Guests will be accommodated in a stand-alone wing of the hotel, with stringent health and safety protocols," said Hotel Manager Dennis de Groot. "We are dedicated to offering a sanctuary of unparalleled comfort for those undertaking the mandated 14-day quarantine." The move comes at a time when Cambodia has been widely praised for its handling of the pandemic and its efficient vaccine programme. Celebrated for more than 90 years as one of the "Grandes Dames" of Southeast Asia, it also exemplifies Le Royal's place in the country's history, not only as an oasis of serenity, but as a safe haven.



UFC STAYCATION At Yas Island Abu Dhabi

UFC fans can enjoy an incredible evening with a stay at one of Yas Island's leading hotels, starting from AED 1,380. It has unveiled staycation deals for visitors coming to see the latest and much-anticipated bout, due to take place on October 30, 2021 at Etihad Arena. With only limited number of packages available to purchase on Yasisland.ae, fans of UFC from across the UAE are encouraged to get into the fighting spirit and book quickly for an action-packed experience.



HYATT REGENCY PHNOM PENH to welcome vaccinated visitors in Q4 2021

Hyatt Regency Phnom Penh is set to welcome international travellers in Q4 2021, as Cambodia prepares to reopen its borders to fully vaccinated tourists in November. "We've been very fortunate in Cambodia and I'm pleased to report that 99 per cent of our hotel staff are already double vaccinated," said Herman Kemp, General Manager of Hyatt Regency Phnom Penh.

BANYAN TREE marks anniversary with resort credit offers

Celebrating its 27th anniversary, Banyan Tree announces a range of value-driven offers across more than 40 properties worldwide. In Thailand, the group's luxury resorts in Koh Samui & Krabi will provide daily credit vouchers to guests, which can be used at all on-site restaurants & spas to the tune of 2,000 baht & 3,000 baht respectively. The "Rediscover the World" promotion applies to bookings at all Banyan Tree hotels.



A bright scenario

It has been a promising scenario for hospitality with ITC launching Welcomhotel Katra, Sarovar signing Golden Tulip in Goa, Grand Victoria The Fern Resort & Spa opening in Panchgani and much more.



ITC HOTELS launches Welcomhotel Katra

Welcomhotel has launched its latest outpost in Katra, just 45 km away from the Jammu airport. It offers 83 well-appointed guest rooms, a swimming pool, and an array of sublime activities on-site. The hotel also offers an ideal space, both outdoor and indoor, for events, weddings and celebrations with a seamless banquet space of 2,750 sqft. Katra has been the preferred destination for devotees for its proximity to the divine shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi temple. The hotel aims to serve as the base camp for those wanting to partake in the region's picturesque attractions, including Patnitop. For the thrill seekers and nature lovers, Patnitop is just 85 km drive away from the hotel.

RADISSON announces the opening of RADISSON BHOPAL

The Radisson Bhopal hotel has opened in Madhya Pradesh's capital city. It offers a 4,500 sq. ft., space that is excellent for both leisure and business guests visiting the city. "We are delighted to strengthen our footprint in Madhya Pradesh with the opening of Radisson Bhopal. It is a welcome addition to our existing portfolio in the state where we also have hotels located in Indore, Gwalior and Khajuraho," said **Zubin Saxena**, MD and VP-Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group. The hotel features 104 uniquely designed and spacious rooms and suites equipped with facilities like work desks and free Wi-Fi.



RAMADA BY WYNDHAM to launch hotel in Sonipat

Monika Associates has signed a franchise agreement with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts for a new hotel development in Sonipat, Haryana, under the Ramada by Wyndham brand. The hotel will be located on NH44, connecting Delhi to the North India states of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and J&K. The location will offer guests great accessibility and connectivity.

FORTUNE HOTELS checks into Hoshiarpur

Fortune Hotels has signed an operating agreement for a hotel in Hoshiarpur, Punjab. Set to be a 'Fortune Park', the new hotel strengthens the brand's presence in the state. Located on NH3, 6 km from Hoshiarpur town, it is set to open later this year. Announcing the signing, **Samir MC**, Managing Director, Fortune Park Hotels Limited, said, "Our quality offerings along with the ITC's Hotel Group

legacy behind us, will give the city dwellers a premium address to host their celebrations and memorable events."



SAROVAR signs Golden Tulip in Goa

Sarovar Hotels has announced the signing of Golden Tulip, Arpora in Goa. The hotel is expected to welcome guests in 2023. Commenting on the development, **Anil Madhok**, Executive Chairman of Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, said, "We are delighted to expand and strengthen our Golden Tulip's leisure portfolio in this market which is a very popular destination among Indian as well as international tourists."

INDIJO CONSULTING to represent hotel employeerate.com

hotelemployeerate.com has appointed IndiJo Consulting as its representative in India. **Lara Sidhu**, Director Business Development-APAC, Hotel Employee Rate, says, "While India is a new market for us, we see immense potential and are eager to showcase India's beautiful hotels and locations on our global platform."



GRAND VICTORIA THE FERN RESORT & SPA opens in Panchgani

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has opened Grand Victoria The Fern Resort & Spa in Panchgani, Maharashtra. The 81-room upscale resort is situated in the heart of Panchgani, with easy access to the major sightseeing attractions. The hotel also offers a finely designed restaurant and banqueting facilities. Elaborating on the opening, **Suhail Kannampilly**, CEO, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, said, "It is a moment of great pride for the entire Fern family. After our huge presence in Gujarat, we have become one of the largest hospitality players in Maharashtra as well."

HOTEL TRANSIT re-launched as T24 RETRO

The iconic Hotel Transit, located near the Mumbai airport, has been re-launched as T24 Retro, after undergoing a complete overhaul. Talking about the retro makeover, **Bharat Malkani**, Chairman, T24 Retro, says, "We have created a modern boutique hotel that wraps in the enduring charm of Mumbai. Extensive use of technology to enhance the check-in and check-out experience, besides reducing the time spent at the reception are some of the highlights of T24 branded hotels."



Noida
International Airport

RFQ(Request for Qualification) for "Selection of Licensee to Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer the City Side Hotel" at NIA

Yamuna International Airport Private Limited ("YIAPL") has been granted the right to develop, operate and maintain the Noida International Airport ("NIA") on DBFOT basis.

YIAPL intends to select a Licensee to award the right to "Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer the City Side Hotel" at NIA (the "Project") pursuant to and in accordance with open bidding process.

YIAPL wishes to receive Applications in response to this RFQ to short-list experienced and capable Bidders for the RFP Stage. In line with the same, YIAPL has Published RFQ(Request for Qualification)for above captioned project on NIA e-tendering Platform.

Interested parties can download the RFQ upon successfully registering at YIAPL's e-portal, accessible at:
<https://niairport.abcprocure.com>

For further clarification, interested parties can communicate at tenders@niairport.in.



Cautiously optimistic

Pinning Raffles Udaipur on Accor's global map, **Kerrie Hannaford**, VP – Commercial, Accor India & South Asia talks about raising the bar with immersive hospitality and emotional luxury.

 Lipla Negi



Kerrie Hannaford

What have been your considerations behind coming to India?

We are confident that India's luxury hotel industry has a bright future. Raffles is the 10th brand that Accor is introducing in India. There is a promising future for such brands in the region as there are discerning customers that are looking for memorable, inimitable luxurious experiences which a brand like Raffles delivers.

Were MICE, big fat Indian weddings, a consideration for entering India?

MICE and weddings are segments that remain a focus area for most hotels. In a country like India, weddings will always see traction, as they are firmly entrenched in the culture. The ongoing global pandemic has brought in a wide range of new trendsetting patterns in the big fat Indian weddings industry.

There has been a complete shift towards contactless food services, micro wedding ceremonies, in addition to the present norms of socially distanced gatherings, with a focus on highly sanitised venues. As modern-

day business travellers look for an accommodation or event venue where they can experience exclusivity, peace and tranquillity, Raffles Udaipur aims to be a workcation destination that keeps them inspired.

All of our brands have a strong focus on the meetings and conventions market as well as an extremely high brand recall in the weddings and socials market. Raffles Udaipur will extend the largest ballroom in the city facilitating big meetings, weddings, conferences and product launches while the smaller meetings rooms can be used by corporate groups staying with us, for their board meetings, giving us an opportunity to engage with the business segment.

Raffles Udaipur is presently conducting virtual tours and will soon organise familiarisation tours in partnership with airlines to help build a stronger brand image and consumer base by tapping into various segments like leisure, MICE, corporates, wedding planners, etc.

Do you think Raffles Udaipur will give you an edge over others?

Our aim is to deliver the Raffles legendary brand experience in India and to match with the other Raffles Hotels & Resorts worldwide. We are confident



We have curated a blend of offerings with local Indian traditions to create memorable experiences”

that our immersive hospitality and unparalleled experiences is what will charm our guests. We want our guests to see what we have created, amalgamating Raffles' global ethos with local Indian sensitivities.

How does Raffles Udaipur plan to carve a niche for itself?

Every Raffles hotel promises bespoke experiences, which are designed to deliver 'emotional luxury' to the well-travelled guest. Raffles Udaipur is built like a grand country estate on a private island. With breathtaking views of the Uda Sagar lake from every room, unparalleled culinary experiences, largest ballroom in the city, brand's signature offerings, such as the Raffles Spa, Writers Bar and Long Bar, as well as the legendary Raffles service, our guests will have a reason to discover the city anew. At Raffles, the distinction is the brand essence. We have curated a perfect blend of the brand's signature offerings with local Indian traditions to create a memorable experience for our guests. The Raffles brand carries forward a persona that is regarded prestigiously all over the world. It promises extraordinary experiences, curated itineraries and luxurious stays, complemented by the signature Raffles butler service. What sets us apart are the breathtaking moments and unique experiences – from a celestial cruise under the moon to imaginative destination dining framed in the picturesque hills that surround the lake.

Why did you choose a season specific market like Rajasthan?

Rajasthan is a place with a vibrant culture and a rich history. It is the perfect destination to explore for leisure travellers, who are on a constant quest for peace, calm and discovery. One of the most preferred domestic as well as international tourist destination, Rajasthan is brimming with cities, such as Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Mount Abu and Bikaner, which boast of beautiful and inviting landscapes, delectable cuisines, and warm people. It was all these elements that helped us choose Rajasthan for India's first Raffles.

What made you go ahead with the decision to launch the hotel this year?

It has been our long-term vision to operate in the ultra-luxury and premium segments, and we have always had a forward-looking attitude towards new signings and openings. Yes, the recovery is going to be slow, but we are already seeing a return of luxury travel across the globe, in countries that are opening up.

Things are looking up for the luxury market, especially now that people are looking for ways to indulge in expensive yet thoughtful experiences following all of the uncertainty and confusion caused by the pandemic.

How do you plan to sustain for next two years when the property would majorly be relying on domestic business?

We will certainly see more caution, and guests will be more prudent while making travel plans. The hospitality



Brand promises curated itineraries and luxurious stays, complemented by Raffles butler services”

industry will remain dynamic, but will now be extra cautious, agile and innovative. The future is still unknown, but we are cautiously optimistic. Under the current circumstances, with travel restrictions, more and more Indians are exploring domestic destinations.

We strongly believe that this will help us sustain bookings and attract more traffic to the hotel. In an environment where you only have the opportunity to travel domestically, people will choose luxury as travellers are looking for meaningful experiences that allow them to develop deeper connections with their loved ones.

For those planning their first stay at Raffles Udaipur, we have introduced an exclusive experience – A Royal Escape – priced at ₹45,000 (plus taxes) per night and is valid only for stays between August 2 and September 30, 2021.”

The news of Raffles Udaipur has given the industry reason to cheer. What keeps you motivated?

There is the belief that people love to travel and celebrate together and ultimately, they will return to places that offer holistic experiences that have a strong focus on safety, security and well-being. The discerning traveller continues to look for bespoke, meaningful experiences, and that is what keeps us motivated.

Technology vital post COVID

The recent DDP Digital Conclave titled ‘The Post Pandemic Reset’ focused on hospitality and how technology would play a major role in a reset for the post-COVID world.



Nisha Verma

While COVID brought sustaining businesses to the fore, hospitality companies had to rejig their strategies to sail through the pandemic. For **Abinash Manghani**, CEO, WelcomHeritage, the central focus is to stay afloat. “You must survive this entire episode and as business owners or CEO, the most important metric is the cash flow of the organisation, even though generating profits is not possible. The most important question that customers ask us since phase-I of the pandemic is regarding safety. Travel is now flexible, and we enable that to happen,” he said. Speaking about the scenario with restaurants, **Vineet Wadhwa**, Chairman and Managing Director, Fio Restaurants, said, “All this time the industry was glued

on the top line or the bottom line as the main game. The pandemic has taught us to look at the stuff in between in detail. After the first lockdown, in October we saw a very slow rise and hit about 80 per cent of our revenues by March, until COVID hit us again. Surprisingly, in July we are seeing figures that resemble that of March. We downsized, came out with limited venues and staffing, and the revenues were depleted. The revival happened with ingenuity, ideas and concepts of luring the diner and the experience of the outlet. Now, looking at July figures, I can say that we should be stepping into the thriving phase since competition has gone a little controlled and the survivors are seeing the chapter of March returning.” Saying that the pandemic and viral attacks are going to



be a way of life forward, **Alok Sharma**, CEO & Founder, Shycocan Corporation, shared, “The last 15 years saw the emergence of SARS, swine flu, Ebola and now COVID-19 that brought down the whole world. With the number of variants coming out, people are saying that the next pandemic could be 10 times worse. This means that we need to be prepared. Several measures are being taken up in terms of hygiene and vaccination. However, at this time, technology must play a central role. For this, a viral defence device is the technology that allows spaces to be safe.

Ever since we opened office post first lockdown, we have worked like pre-pandemic days with only basic protocols. Every space is safe from the transmission of coronavirus. We believe that having a viral safety device will have to be a standard fitting in every area of all restaurants, just like air-conditioning and lighting.”

CHANGES POST THE SECOND WAVE

Manghani shared that the second wave has made all players, who were not earlier taking adequate steps, to come into the mainstream. “Today a major concern is if the destination or hotel follows the safety norms or not. Today, customers know that travel plans can change owing to changing protocols at different places or some family member can fall ill. Hotels must recognise that and ensure that payments are returned to respective customers,” he advised.

Wadhwa added, “The visible changes in dining include early eating habits and the move to environment-friendly packaging. Thirdly, everyone has learnt to work with a limited team and seeing towards hygienic practices, which is a big change for India as they have learnt to queue up and not crowd up. The preference for outdoor dining and local fresh produce is great.”

BUILDING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Claiming that they have seen a clear discernible difference between branded and non-branded hotels, Manghani revealed, “There is a clear shift towards branded hotels, whether it is within cities or outskirts. Reports show that innovative marketing practices and people being cooped up at home for long periods of time, has resulted in hotels in the cities also beginning to do better. However, the flavour of the season is the boutique, small, 3-4 hours away, nature-driven or wildlife-driven destinations, which will stay. As soon as the market opens, consumer confidence will increase. Travel is not going to go down as hotels after the second phase of COVID are a lot more adjusted to the new customer and will do far better.”

TRENDS IN RESTAURANTS

Sharing the post lockdown trends in restaurants, Wadhwa said, “I think healthy and fresh eating is on the rise. Highlighting the food sources on the menu has come as a suggestion. Also, we are seeing several people moving away from imported produce. Every restaurant will work on a new menu with limited choices. Then there is better understanding on digitalisation in the restaurants. People are comfortable with QR menu. They are also glued on with social media propensity. In terms of technology, there are newer ideas like Shycocan, which I think is

brilliant. I think we would like to experiment and new technology ideas are the way forward.”

HOSPITALITY READY FOR TECHNOLOGY

Sharma claimed that there is technology adoption in most restaurants with increasing digitalisation in processes. “However, the question is how to create a safe space. People understand UV devices. However, when we meet them and talk about a new category, which was designed over 10 years of research and was launched in 2018 after which the pandemic hit the world, it is unheard of by many. Our product is too good to be true. There is a need to look at things in terms of both bio safety and bio efficacy. If the industry could really put their might together behind it, then we can win consumer confidence and could be back to pre-COVID days in that closed environment. Many restaurants have adopted technology, and they can tell the customers that they are in a safe environment as they were before in that area,” he explained.

PENT-UP DEMAND

Manghani believes that hospitality is a derive demand business. “Paradoxically, the whole business has become regulated because the government must clear travel and if travel happens the derive demand comes to us and subsequently goes to restaurants or F&B facilities in those areas. In the meantime, hotels, destinations and tourism bodies will have to convert this whole game into a destination marketing game. If these destinations are considered safe and following stringent norms, as per the customers, I do not see any major problem in demand. I only see that the rationale of travel is restricted in terms of RTPCR test and protocols being different everywhere.”

He believes that singular hotels can try and develop destinations. “If you are the only major player there, you should develop the destination before business comes to you. However, when there are multiple hotels and you think local state tourism bodies are not spending money in destination marketing, then it becomes your prerogative to come together with like-minded players and do something,” he added.

GOVT NORMS AND TECHNOLOGY

Sharma stressed that they cannot go against the government directives. “Our technology is an extra layer of protection and the chances of somebody transmitting COVID to another person is virtually negligible. However, in hotel industry one cannot go and control every guest. While nobody should go against the government norms, an extra layer of protection will help you even if somebody broke that norm, especially in restaurants where people do put down the mask to eat,” he pointed out.

MOVE TOWARDS HOMESTAYS

Calling it a societal response to COVID, Manghani revealed that in tourist destinations, hoteliers are earning half of what homestays are earning because they are predominantly discreet and independent. “The entire homestay belongs to the guest usually and one can manage safety far better in smaller numbers. Hence, within hotels too, wherever villas are developed, they are doing far better than match-box structures and people are willing to pay the difference,” he stressed.



ABINASH MANGHANI



The most vital metric is the cash flow, even if profits are not made



VINEET WADHWA



Revival happened with luring the diner for the outlet experience



ALOK SHARMA



A viral safety device will have to be a standard fitting



On the road to recovery

The food delivery market is dominated by Swiggy and Zomato, sharing 85 per cent of the total market between them, says the India Food Service Delivery Report 2021.



Lipla Negi

India's food delivery market is growing at a rate of 33 per cent per annum and is expected to touch ₹93,600 crores (13 billion dollars) by 2023, despite an initial drop in sales over health and safety concerns in the wake of COVID-19. The findings are from 'India Food Service Delivery Report 2021,' a first-of-its-kind study that maps current and future food service delivery markets in the country.

While the pandemic initially led to a drastic 70 per cent drop in online food delivery, especially from March 2020 to the end of 2020, many 'better brands' managed to recover 50 to 60 per cent of their pre-COVID sales, eventually, according to the report. "There was also a trend for DIY food and cocktail kits from various restaurant chains. Many new cloud kitchens have come up during the pandemic increasing the choice for customers," adds Samir Kuckreja, Founder & CEO, Tasanaya Hospitality, who has also worked on this report along with Jasper Reid, founder, IMM; and Peter Backman, a globally renowned food service professional.

On the road to recovery, both the aggregators and restaurants have worked together to deliver a safe dining experience. "Some of the measures implemented include temperature checks for kitchen and delivery staff, live streaming from restaurant kitchens, and strict COVID protocols being followed in the kitchens and by aggregator teams," says Kuckreja.

The food delivery market at present is dominated by two major players — Swiggy and Zomato — sharing 85 per cent of the total market between them. The report also gives some rare insights into how restaurants and fast food chains in the country are battling aggregator platforms, which retain control over valuable customer



SAMIR KUCKREJA
Founder & CEO
Tasanaya Hospitality



There was a trend for DIY food and cocktail kits from various restaurant chains. Many new cloud kitchens have come up during the pandemic"

information, even as they depend on them to reach out to customers.

"The aggregators are able to mask customer data, which means the operators (restaurants) cede the knowledge of and their relationship with their customers. In the absence of data sharing, it is not possible for the operator to understand its delivery customers, market to them, measure loyalty etc. On the other hand, it means that the aggregator deliverer owns valuable information about customer habits and references, which can be used to improve customer experience," the report notes.

The monopoly over data has forced some restaurant chains to invest in self-managed delivery programmes for direct connection with customers and to provide greater control over quality, branding and other marketing initiatives. The battle for customer loyalty has also led to deep discounts and high commissions, resulting in conflicts between aggregators, deliverers and restaurant operators.

Some of the brands that have taken steps to minimise risk of losing customer control to aggregators are Impresario Hospitality, Fat Lulu Pizza and Cold Love Ice Cream. Fast food outlets like Domino's, McDonalds and Pizza Hut are also developing algorithms on their apps to increase visibility to customers and also reduce customer acquisition costs to create sustainable business models. The initiatives, however, do not mean the brands are going to forsake aggregator platforms any time soon. Instead, it will lead to more of a co-existence between the two different systems, the report notes. According to the India Food Service Delivery Report 2021, India's food delivery market has witnessed

unprecedented change in the last five years with new entrants, powered by sophisticated technology radically altering market dynamics with innovative models, such as cloud kitchens (restaurants which accept delivery only orders without a traditional restaurant or dining-in facility), hyper local services (food service delivery and more) and restaurant partners.

India's restaurant industry is one of the largest service sector industries, contributing to nearly 3 per cent of the GDP and the single largest employer in the service sector with more than 7.3 million people on its payroll, the report states. The report, which focusses on three key elements of food delivery like aggregators, cloud kitchen operators and restaurants, predicts considerable potential for future growth in the country "as restaurant delivery starts to eat into the retail market's share of wallet."

The predictions are based on increase in disposable incomes; increase in internet and smartphone penetration; consumer behavioural changes, such as reduced time available for preparing meals at home and disposable income groups replacing home cooked food to (home-style) subscription meals; regulatory policy changes; and emergence of new aggregators and reduced levels of investments in existing aggregators.



Some measures implemented include temperature checks for staff and live streaming from restaurant kitchens"

The total volume of India's food services market size as of 2019 is pegged at ₹4,62,000 crore. Out of this, the organised food services market size is around ₹1,68,000 crore and that of food service delivery market is around ₹25,200 crore. The food service delivery market share of 15 per cent is similar to the share in the UK and somewhat higher than that in the US.

The Indian food service delivery market, not including takeaways, meal kit delivery services and ingredient delivery, was worth ₹37,440 crore (5.2 billion dollars) in 2020. The report is based on the dual, top-down and bottom-up approach pioneered by Buckman. All figures provided in the report have been cross-referenced with other sources, including the National Restaurant Association of India Report 2019 and checked for accuracy with leading industry players, both operators as well as aggregators.





‘We must be in the concurrent list’

KB. Kachru, VP, Hotel Association of India & Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

 Nisha Verma

Members of the Hotel Association of India (HAI) recently met with G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and DoNER to discuss issues pertaining to the hospitality and tourism industry at large.

KB. Kachru, VP, Hotel Association of India & Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, mentioned that the Indian tourism and hospitality industry has suffered a lot. He said, “For this industry to survive, at least help us in making some policy changes, which will directly and indirectly help the citizens and the industry at large. We made some suggestions to the new minister. We reiterated what we need to do to help our industry.”

He shared that currently 40 per cent of the inventory/hotels will close because they do not have enough revenue to survive and pay for their

loans and interest on principal. “Apart from this, we have requested the government to help us in operating them in a manner that such hotels can meet their justified expenses. The hotel industry has not been given infrastructure status, despite the same being given to automobile, manufacturing and other industries. Not many people know that 9 per cent of the GDP and 9 per cent of employment is generated by the tourism industry,” he added.

“If the government recognises the industry as infrastructure, we will be eligible for advantages such as electricity and power at industry prices, which are significantly lower than the commercial rates we currently pay. We will be given locations, which will help us in the creation of new destinations. Today, to be part of infrastructure, we must be in the concurrent list of the government,” he pointed out. Another request he added was to give moratorium for a longer period. “Giving 2-3 months moratoriums is not going to help anybody.

The government wants us to take out loans, but why would anyone take out more loans when they cannot even pay the interest on the ones they already have? The government has also initiated ECLGS, but it needs to be more practical. Hotels are unable to avail this. Hence, we are requesting them to have a policy on moratoriums for 2-3 years and a long-term policy on principal and interest," he said.

They also discussed the service export issue with the minister. "The SEIS is due to hotels for FY 2019-20 and 2020-21. The government is just sitting with it and the minister promised to consider it immediately," revealed Kachru.

Kachru believes that all these issues, if resolved, will support tourism businesses to adapt and survive. "It will promote domestic tourism and ultimately support the return of international tourism. We also need a standardised RTPCR policy and vaccination policies in place. Hence, we should look at constructive steps like vaccine passport or recognising RTPCR test for a certain period," he suggested.

Stressing that they want to work with the government, he said, "There is need for a national tourism board, which should govern, and help development and marketing for India. Our suggestions have been accepted well and the government has promised to do it. We have also pushed for PPP model, which they are keen on adopting."

On the tourism minister announcing to talk about the inclusion of tourism in the concurrent list, Kachru said, "The intent is very good, and they have promised to process it as well. However, it will depend on a lot of specifics, and we are quite optimistic since it is the first time this has been taken seriously."

Recently the Ministry of Tourism has said in a reply to a parliamentary standing committee that the ministry has taken up the issue of inclusion of tourism in the concurrent list with the ministry concerned, so that tourism can be placed on the national agenda.

According to the Hotel Association of India (HAI) the proposal, if implemented, will help in post-pandemic recovery of the sector. The Association has welcomed initiation of the proposal by the Ministry of Tourism for including tourism in the concurrent list of constitution.

Once implemented, this will also play a key role in post-COVID recovery of the hospitality sector, which has been one of the worst-hit segments amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism activities and products differ from state to state. According to HAI, placing tourism on the concurrent list will allow for more seamless cooperation, which could lead to faster plan implementation and a pan-India face for Indian tourism..

INDUSTRY STATUS

Kachru shared that infrastructure status is country-wide, and you cannot have things going state wise. If you are in the concurrent list, you cannot have industry status, which is a state subject. Some states like Maharashtra and Karnataka have recognised tourism as an industry. However, there are other states which have declared tourism as an industry, but the benefits have not come.

“**A national tourism board should govern and help India’s growth and marketing efforts”**

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Ensuring job revival

G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, the newly appointed Director General, Tourism, observes that the fundamental concern is to ensure all tourism stakeholders are employed.



Nisha Verma

Claiming that after the pandemic the tourism sector has suffered a lot across the world, **G. Kamala Vardhan Rao**, Director General, Tourism, said that they are looking signs of revival wherever they can. “When compared to other countries, India is performing quite well. Because of this, we are seeing a revival of domestic tourism in the last 3-4 months. Hence, we are concentrating on promoting and incentivising travel. It is needed to boost the hotel sector, tour operators, guides, taxi drivers, and all the stakeholders, who have lost jobs,” he says. The fundamental concern, according to Rao, is to ensure that all tourism stakeholders are employed.

INITIATIVES

Apart from outreach programmes, another focus of MOT is to implement their major flagship programmes of PRASAD and Swadesh Darshan. “The idea is to oversee these projects and go for domestic publicities and develop infrastructure, wherever it is required in tourism and conduct more research,” Rao asserts.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Stressing that capacity building is essential, Rao shares that right from northeastern areas to Ladakh, the homestays industry is witnessing growth. “MOT would like to focus more on capacity and skill development, starting with languages to hospitality – F&B and guides. We want to maintain their international reputation. We will review these initiatives every month with the stakeholders. Under Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, celebrating 75 years of Independence, we are taking up major activities.”



G. KAMALA VARDHAN RAO
Director General
(Tourism)
Ministry of Tourism
Govt of India



The intention is to increase number of homestays & build capacity for locals”

LADAKH TAKEAWAYS

MOT organised an event in Ladakh, which according to Rao, was a good experience. He says, “We interacted with the local stakeholders in the presence of the secretary and LG of Ladakh. With 17 flights every day, it is seeing a significant increase in tourists. One cannot expect 5-star hotels everywhere in such environment, as it is an extremely delicate ecosystem. One of the key takeaways is capacity building in the form of homestays, in order to avoid disturbing the environment.”

He further adds that since the development is already taking place in the area, local residents will have to be employed for receiving the benefits. All projects and programmes are aimed at employment generation for the locals. They have discovered around 30-35 helipads and would expand this number, as well as the essential infrastructure for adventure tourism and medical aids.

ON BORDERS OPENING

Rao is hopeful that both outward and inbound tourism will occur once the borders open, in line with the current revenge tourism.

“However, it also depends on how the pandemic has affected other countries, and if movement between India and any of those countries is possible. We expect increased inbound travel in the near future,” he asserted.

Keeping the spirit of tourism alive is the motto of the Ministry of Tourism and the tourism sector’s survival and revival are important.



QualSTAR certifies Roseate



Roseate Hotels & Resorts has become the first hotel group in India to receive QualSTAR certification, for achieving the highest level of food safety and hygiene standards.



HT Bureau

QualSTAR is India's first and only hospitality rating agency accredited by the Quality Council of India to provide COVID compliance certification to hotels. After the extensive online and on-site audits, Roseate was independently assessed by QualSTAR to meet more than 470 safety and hygiene standards. "We are truly honoured to be recognised by this leading certification body for our safety precautions and hygiene practices which is the most important factor, especially during these COVID times," says **Kush Kapoor**, CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts. "We would like to thank QualSTAR for recognising us and certifying our practices," he adds.



KUSH KAPOOR
CEO, Roseate Hotels & Resorts

out, the same room would be allocated only 24 hours post being thoroughly disinfected. Roseate Hotels & Resorts would also follow an alternate room occupancy policy to maintain social distancing. Housekeeping staff would wear personal protection equipment (PPE). Delivery and clearance of room service orders would be just outside the hotel room entrance. To ensure touchless usage of elevators, a staff member in PPE would be present to operate with not more than three members at a time. Touchless dining is also going to be paramount at Roseate. For dining, the guest, while booking a table, can see the menu and order from it. The guest shares their location with the hotel so that

Roseate Hotels & Resorts provide an unparalleled experience and satisfaction to its guests keeping all hygiene and safety standards in place. 'Touchless Hospitality' is the new future, and Roseate Hotels & Resorts have completely remodelled their standard operating procedures towards providing greater care and ensuring a safer environment for guests.

In a bid to minimise physical contact with guests, they have launched 'Care by Roseate', a novel approach towards instilling confidence among customers about their safety. Care by Roseate involves stringent procedures in place to ensure no contamination enters via any route. The measures involve thermal screening at entry gates of all passenger vehicles, display of 'Safe' status in Aarogya Setu App for staff and guests, and mandatory wearing of masks to enter the hotel premises. All hotel vehicles are disinfected at entry points and after every use. Sanitisers are kept in all prominent locations within the hotel. Guest luggage would also be disinfected from outside on arrival.

To enable seamless, remote check-ins, touchless check-ins would be facilitated via an app, in which all information would already be pre-registered. After check-

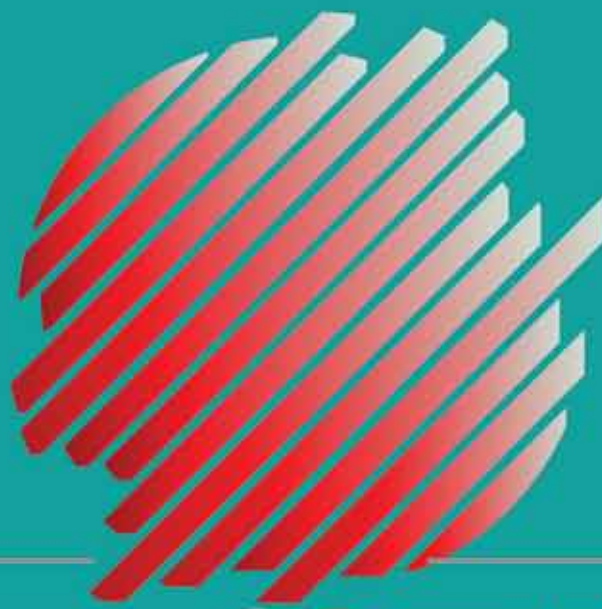


We are honoured to be recognised for our safety precautions"

the kitchen staff starts preparing the meal when the guest is en route to the hotel's restaurant.

In addition, the app would allow guests to see food being prepared live in the kitchen. In the end, the bill comes on the app on which it can be paid via credit card. There would be no buffet services for the time being. 'Care by Roseate' would ensure that while utmost care is taken, guests will not be deprived of availing luxe fine dining and stay services.

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Hotel designs & technology

We need to eradicate ad hoc practices and come up with a more sustained approach in hotel designs and a standardised implementation of the same across the industry.

 Ananya Kukreja



The advent of the current and ongoing widely known prognosis has led to profuse and diverse ad hoc practices implemented across hospitality industries. Whilst disasters over the years have incited consequent disruptive contrivance, Sars-CoV-2 with its mutations has yet again begot an opportunity for hotels and parallel establishments to redesign and improve their services in order to better suit and provide for guest expectations, convenience and satisfaction. Hygiene and sanitation must prevail without intruding or making the traveller experience inconvenient; recognising that said precautions will be followed for a long term and a foreseeable future, hoteliers ought to better plan the same durably.

CONVERSION IN CRISES

Diseases or rather disasters have had a habit of impacting design and architecture throughout ages. Pertaining to emergency propelled transformation of this industry, COVID-19 is perceived to have similar impacts on the design of hotels in the 21st century. Despite having a considerable amount of experience in tackling crises over centuries, the recent pandemic betided as a surprise. Crises generally have the nature of affecting a particular region; in that case, territories around the globe can pool in resources and choose to extend help to the distressed. COVID-19, however, emerged as a disaster that struck all mankind and crippled strongest of economies.

With no prior knowledge and the entire planet struggling, no standard procedures could be executed and the industry, through trial and error, learnt and adapted to the evolving needs. Unlike any other viral diseases which were spread by a vast majority of birds or mammals, this was communicable by humans, which made it ever so difficult to contain.

Geeta Ahuja, Interior Designer and Architect, Caryatid Design Studio sums up this pandemic by stating, “One careful human can save another human being, but one careless human can spread and kill 70”.

Hospitality, and all its various segments, as widely acknowledged, survive and thrive on human interaction. After the initial disruption of travel and accommodation sectors, business gradually improved; greater information on the virus was circulated and guidelines were issued by authorities. Hotels in the Indian demographic adhered to the same whilst also complimenting the procedures with higher safety protocols, so as to compete with international standards. All the while, one thing remained constant, and that was the provision of ad hoc practices; even through practiced safety, sanitation and hygiene, guest experience was yet to be thoroughly fulfilled. This has led to an outlook of improving services beyond guest expectations and incorporating new ideas throughout hotel operations in terms of design.

PROGRESSIVE DESIGNS

The notion of luxury has in the recent past shifted from power and opulence to more inclusive experiences with a focus on generosity, flexibility and support. In a conversation with **Gautam Sen**, Associate

Professor-Operations Management, Institute of Hotel Management, Aurangabad (IHCL), it was derived that, significant changes in design and space allocation is the way forward where major markets across the world are utilising ergonomic designs to enhance staff productivity and guest convenience.

The significant rise in awareness about benefits of exercise, health and wellness has now steered the way for biophilic designs, which will prove intrinsic in redesigning public spaces. Allocation for natural light penetration and air circulation will not only provide for an acoustic sensory experience, but will also assist in reassuring the guests with flexible facilities whilst working wonders against the incubation virus. This includes inclusion of outdoor spaces like open terraces on lower floors and rooftop lounge bars, or at minimum, provision of windows in all closed spaces like guest rooms and staff quarters for air circulation and sunlight imbued decontamination.

Ahuja, in continuation states that hotels over the last year, started a revolution of outdoor catering and services and realised the importance of open spaces due to aerosol contamination. To add to her assimilation, research suggests that there is an increasing consideration and ensuing implementation of open kitchens, non-invasive decorative screening and private booths in dining areas, lounges, and lobbies, especially in upcoming properties.

Guestrooms, at least a select designated, are claimed to change in design and become larger in order to accommodate sleep, work, dining, work out and any other guest requirements, all in-room and in a confined space, till their confidence restores. This may include lock secured cutout in walls to deliver any room services. Corridors are also likely to become wider to facilitate the ease of movement following distancing.

Rishi Puri, Senior Vice President-Operations and Development, Lords Hotels & Resorts mentions that while existing hotels may not be able to fully benefit from these unviable structural changes, emerging hotels can very well inbuilt such ideas into design planning.

He further mentions assembling of cabins for temperature checks along with sanitation stations located conveniently around the property, which does not require exceptional redesigning. Lobbies and guest areas should be designed to generate more revenue now and allow guests to meet one another in isolation; cluster seating here will be eradicated with compact seating spaces becoming widely acceptable. Additionally, with business travel reduced, hoteliers can create revenue by converting certain public areas, and even guest rooms into spaces for prevailing virtual meetings.

One of the greatest changes the hotel industry continues to witness is furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) specifications. Interior designers, here, will have the most influence in terms of sensitive selections of materials and finishes that respond to the threat of contamination without losing the intrinsic human desire for warm, welcoming and tactile surroundings.



GEETA AHUJA



Hotels have realised the importance of open spaces



GAUTAM SEN



Changes in design & space allocation is the way forward



RISHI PURI



Public areas and guest rooms can be used for meetings





DHEERAJ KUKREJA



We have revamped safe procedures for buffet service



FF&E specification is always in the front line, and this is especially true now. What the guest sees, touches and feels can make or break a stay and confidence about a brand, and to administer so with variable and moveable instalments will prove lucrative.

Dheeraj Kukreja, Chief Operating Officer, Piccadily Holiday Resorts has made considerable changes to their properties in terms of entry/exit points of employees and guests and reorganised the FF&E configuration in high footfall and frequent touch point areas like cafeteria, restaurant and lobby. In their Piccadily Assured Safety & Security (PASS) programme initiated last year, they have established easily accessible sanitation stations, standardised masks, PPE kits, sanitisers and disposable gloves as amenities, revamped safe procedures for buffet service otherwise discouraged, optimally spaced public area seating, and advisedly allowed sunlight in circulation. Kukreja believes that such provisions and more should

identification of carriers and sustainable disinfection of the rooms and public areas by exploring new methods replacing/minimising the chemicals usage.

Room collateral is predicted to disappear in favour of digital apps. High touch areas, such as door handles, elevator buttons, toilet flushes, knobs and light switches, will and should be replaced by sensor or gesture operated technology. Facial recognition, automatic doors and elevators, voice-activated TV and room controls, amongst others are some technologies which have already gained momentum of implementation across the industry.

One of the most striking updates here will be the introduction of electrostatic sprayers; the same machines used for fogging airplanes, and sanitising surfaces both inside hotel rooms and in public areas like the lobby and gym. Many hoteliers encourage the use of UV lights as a means of sanitation, while others deliberate the idea. An alternative to treat air is by



SANJAY SINGH



Hotels need technological designs for efficiency



be incorporated as a part of hotel design instead of seemingly ad hoc practices and be standardised throughout the industry.

According to **Sanjay Singh**, Chief of Projects, Sterling Holiday Resorts, existing hotels till such definitive time will have to augment their systems. SOPs which entail capital expenditures (CapEx) infusion and recurring operating expenses (OpEx) will not be sufficient to mitigate all potential risks; new hotels should as requirements capture infrastructural as well as technological designs for seamless efficiency.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

In a continuing conversation with Singh, it was understood that with the repeated waves of the virus, the major focus now is on improving the indoor air quality through augmentation in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, improvisation in waste water systems, thermal scanning, instant

using ultraviolet-C (UVC) light; this can be consciously placed above or below the ceiling tiles to avoid direct contact with human epidermis. These lights can provide continuous sterilisation across the hotel and particularly in buffet service restaurant, and banquets/conferences.

Marriott International is the first hotel company in this regard to include UV light cleaning and sanitising sprays. While there is a huge focus on reducing manual intervention, robots are actively being used for sanitising incoming vehicles, baggage, supplies, amongst others in front and back of the house areas. According to practicing hoteliers, luggage scanners should be upgraded and doubled as baggage sanitisers. This may be implemented in back house resource scanning devices and storing areas as well.

Investment in right technology for video conferencing in hotels, like lights, space, camera, acoustics, amongst other things can reap unimaginable benefits for a

long time, for the simple reason that conference and banquet halls that can physically accommodate say 1,000 people, will now have the privilege of having more than 10,000 attendees at once. Organisers will have a chance to sell tickets for virtual events and not only utilise their space more effectively, rather also increase their revenue opportunity through technology and brand building.

Additional disruptive technologies that can be implemented in the industry are virtual views or footfall insights of public areas, especially lobbies, restaurants and bars to see the atmosphere and avoid crowds. Robust data gathering through large cloud-based technology is already being done in global brands because online bookings do not communicate required data collection feasibly; two factor authentication (TFA) can be used here for increased security. Puri suggests inclusion of do-it-yourself (DIY) stations where guests can input their information in standalone counters with the help

which provide customisable images/photographs to display may be integrated which would make stay of the guest more 'homely' with them customising technology driven frames to photographs of their close ones.

WAY FORWARD

"While its impact has subconsciously reduced, COVID-19 is not gone," states Puri, and to palliate the same, "greater use of mentioned practices will drive bulk manufacturing, increase competition and subsequently reduce prices of the same," recommends Kukreja, who further adds that governments must devise guidelines and encourage hotels towards said practices with slight rebate on taxes and subsidy provisions, which would elevate the execution.

Moving forward, hoteliers must consciously design for intentional flexibility that will offer the least amount of disruption to the guest experience and operations in a time of need and make processes seamless. One must



of PMS infused tablets. This will not only make sure that technology is used at its optimum best, but also ensure complete transparency, guest privacy, protection of staff and guests and boost employees' multi-tasking skills.

While travel is being authentically facilitated through health/vaccine passports and similar, Kukreja regards software upgradation as a high priority where hotels can retrieve COVID-19-related information through government portals, reducing fudged reports and increasing ease of information delivery for informed decisions. Likewise radio frequency identification (RFID) technology may be used by hotels to track guest movement while in transit and around the property for more quick and personalised experience. This could potentially be used to lock doors, control amenity access, make payments, prevent theft, manage inventory, optimise maintenance and replacement, and assure sustainable practices. To further personalise guest experience, an inclusion of smart digital frames

be cautious of unsustainable over-correcting practices and allow progressive ideas due gestation time for research before heavily investing in expensive designs and technologies; in the meantime, training and staff skill development is the way to go.

There has evidently been a shift in business travel from pre to post COVID-19 with orientation heavily shifting to leisure; city hotels are providing leisure provisions and amenities to guests to sustain business and adhere to guest comfort. Guests and staff here must have a two-way commitment towards each other in terms of safety, with both parties actively taking necessary precautions for the well-being of the other. At the end of the day, one must think if such provisions are worth the expense, a rumination, especially for small-scale properties. Hoteliers must ensure that such inclusions lead to their progression, not regression, and technologies as well as designs implemented are disruptive in its intended meaning.

A complete solution

Built on the airspace of a conventional railway station, The Leela Gandhinagar reflects the vision of modern India, says **Jaideep Anand**, Vice President and General Manager, The Leela Gandhinagar.



Lipla Negi

Built on the airspace of a conventional railway station, 22 meters above ground, The Leela Gandhinagar is touted as an engineering marvel. And why not! Offering a blend of architectural antiquity and famed opulence of Indian hospitality, it is India's first-of-its-kind 5-star hotel with 318 rooms built atop railway tracks.

"The architecture combines modernity with tradition. The lavish interiors are inspired by Gujarat's rich archaeological and architectural antiquity, and the art decor by the state's rich flora and fauna. Each of the 318 rooms offer unrivalled opulence, state-of-the-art facilities and luxurious amenities to guests," says **Jaideep Anand**, Vice President and General Manager, The Leela Gandhinagar.

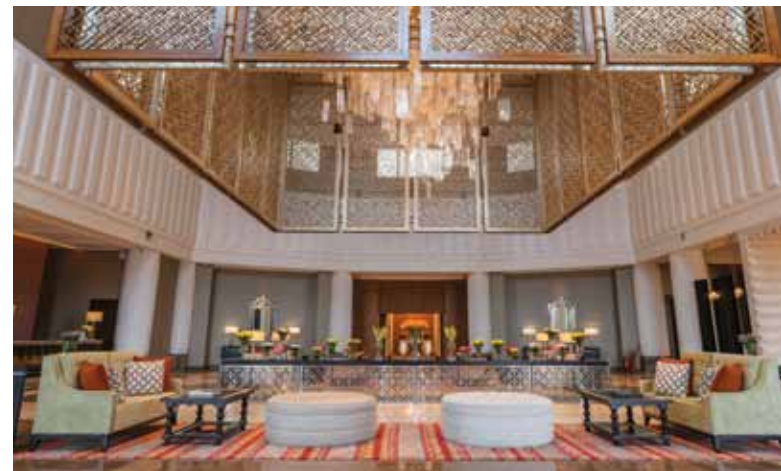
The hotel complements the country's largest convention centre, Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre (MMCEC) Managed by The Leela, seamlessly blending state-of-the-art facilities with Indian hospitality to offer a complete convention solution. The Leela Palaces Hotels Resorts partnered with the Government of Gujarat, Ministry of Railways and IRSDC to redevelop Gandhinagar capital railway station along with the luxury hotel. "The inspiration behind The Leela Gandhinagar is the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of transforming the urban landscape with state-of-the-art infrastructure. Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts is honoured to play its role in realising this vision," adds Anand.

Located near the Dandi Kutir museum, the hotel provides spectacular views of the Central Vista. From elegant ballrooms to stately meeting rooms, guests can choose from the hotel's indoor and outdoor event spaces spanning across 30,000 sq. ft. The world-class facilities at the hotel are perceived and conceptualised keeping the sophisticated global traveler in mind. "It seamlessly blends cutting-edge facilities with the graciousness of



JAIDEEP ANAND
Vice President and
General Manager
The Leela Gandhinagar

“The lavish interiors are inspired by Gujarat's rich archaeological and architectural antiquity”



Indian hospitality and is ideal for all categories of guests," explains Anand.

He credits the rich and vibrant culture of Gujarat curating the mood board for the hotel's design and interior. The flooring is inspired by the Adalaj Stepwell and features elements like the famous Tree of Life at Sidi Saiyyed Mosque, traditional glass beadwork, textile craftsmanship of Bandhej, Ajrakh and Batik, among others. In addition to bevy of suites consisting of Royal and four Presidential Suites, the hotel also features a holistic world-class spa, a state-of-the-art gymnasium, and an outdoor pool. Together with MMEC, it is expected to boost economic activity in the region. MMEC is built over an area of 34 acre, and offers both choice and flexibility with leading-edge facilities to host conventions for up to 15,000 delegates. Four seminar rooms, three exhibition centres, seven conference halls and a meeting room, are all equipped with every modern amenity imaginable. "The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre Managed by The Leela, will generate demand for the destination and position it as one of the most sought-after convention destinations in the world," says Anand. He also feels that the hotel will add to the global allure of Gandhinagar as "it attracts thousands of business travellers every year. A luxury hotel like The Leela Gandhinagar that can cater to their needs was very much needed."

Focus on feedback

Domestic tourism has emerged as a sustainable segment to watch out for especially in post-pandemic business recovery scenarios, says **Pankaj Gupta**, General Manager, Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre.



Hazel Jain

How are you ensuring the safety of your guests?

IHG Hotels & Resorts has been at the forefront of creating a safe and secure environment for all our travellers. With IHG Way of Clean been implemented across all brands of IHG hotels globally, our travellers experience a standardised and robust hygienic environment for their hotel stays or dine-in experience. Some standardised protocols at Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre include mandatory wearing of mask and temperature checks, disinfected luggage and maintaining physical distancing at all times, reduced contact at check-in, touchless transactions, front-desk screens, touchless sanitiser stations, sanitised key cards, paperless checkout, contactless payments, etc.

What are you doing to lure domestic tourists?

Domestic tourism during pre-pandemic scenarios would contribute about 70% of the overall transient traffic at the hotel, however in today's scenario domestic tourism contributes to almost 90% of the traffic. We at Holiday Inn Jaipur City Centre focus on feedback and reviews from our esteemed guests since they provide valuable insights on services, offerings, and changing travel patterns. This helps us evolve in our services and improvise on our opportunity areas. Our consistent service experience has helped us to ensure that we maintain high-ranking positioning on key travel portals and digital platforms.

We offer a full-service upscale Holiday Inn experience with 172 keys including six suites, four F&B dining options and recreational facilities like gymnasium, outdoor rooftop pool, spa and salon that helps our guest to relax and enjoy all facilities under one roof in a city centre hotel conveniently located close to major sight-seeing locations and the prominent 'bazaars' of Jaipur. Our brand hallmark 'Kids Stay and Eat Free' offers a special customised menu for our young



PANKAJ GUPTA
General Manager
Holiday Inn Jaipur
City Resorts



We offer a full-service experience with 172 keys including six suites and four F&B dining options"



travellers. We are also very excited about the revival of domestic tourism in the state since it gives us the opportunity to showcase the hotel and our services. We ensure that the hotel offers all safety protocols defined by the government of Rajasthan and IHG Way of Clean. With exciting staycation packages, we offer a safe environment to our travellers along with an array of services to help them unwind and spend quality time with their families and de-stress.

Have you adopted any new concepts?

Door-to-door home delivery was conceptualised last year during the lockdown to cater to our guests since they were unable to visit the hotel and enjoy their favourite cuisines. The menus were designed keeping in mind the best-sellers and the availability of the raw material during the lockdown. After a resounding response to last year's services, during this year's



lockdown we reintroduced this service for our guests with enhanced safety measures and improved eco-friendly packaging. The key factor to our success was the fact that we ensured that the hotel handled food end-to-end eliminating the need to incorporate a third-party delivery partner and ensure food safety and hygiene.

This year, in addition to our extensive à la carte menu offerings, we also offered Buffet @ Home and specialised themed meals for our guests to savour the buffet experience in the comfort of their homes. Moreover, the IHG curated Assisted Buffet concept has been well accepted by our guests since it assures them of a no-touch dining experience during the busiest dining period of the day.



Local experiences

There will be more challenges along the way. However, COVID-19 has shaped the industry for a better, sustainable and enriching future, says **Patrick Taffin**, Assistant Dean, SHMS Leysin.

There is no doubt that the past year has challenged the industry to find innovative solutions to adapt and survive, not only by our own experience but also through shared experiences with different hospitality professionals worldwide. Let's take a look at some trends with the most favourable outcomes.

REMOTE LOCATIONS & FEWER INTERACTIONS

Across the hotel industry, the common trend that clients searched for was minimising contact with other guests. From Swiss ski resorts to luxury villas in the Maldives, guests have flocked towards these locations to limit their contact with others. It is not hard to see the logic here: the less human interaction, the lower the risk of getting the virus.

Another common preference is hotels that offer open-air spaces, expanding their gardens, limiting the chances of contamination. Hotels that cannot provide this have kept the promise of social distancing by providing additional room service options.

TAKEAWAY VERSUS SUSTAINABILITY

The industry needs to innovate its engagement with customers. Seizing this opportunity, hotels and restaurants have expanded takeaway offerings to external guests. However, one element that needs to be considered is removing single-use plastic from takeaway services and sourcing ingredients from local farms.

As travellers look for remote and open spaces, they tend to migrate to locations surrounded by nature. Sustainability has always been an important topic, and with the impact of the pandemic,



**PATRICK
TAFFIN**
Assistant Dean
SHMS Leysin



**As of now,
the focus on
local 'pearls'
is a critical
success
strategy"**

consumers have opted for secluded destinations while remaining conscious of reducing the impact of human activities.

LOCAL NOW MORE THAN EVER

Aside from locally sourcing, local inbound travel is booming. Boutique hotels have reached peak levels of occupancy. The good news is that people will always want to travel. Still, with mandatory quarantines, constant changing of red-listed countries, fear of contamination, many have decided to enjoy and explore their own countries.

This translates to the success of local and independent hotels. Outbound tourism is not gone, and with the vaccination campaign in full swing, there will surely be a comeback, but the focus on local 'pearls' is a critical success strategy.

DIGITAL MEDIA

The importance of investing in digital media presence has never been so evident. Hospitality businesses can assert themselves into the virtual environment to promote their mastery of guest service experience to the online world.

There will be more challenges along the way. However, COVID-19 has shaped the hospitality industry for a better, sustainable and enriching future. As the industry returns to its sources, traditional experiences are on-trend, and the local community will source new experiences.

(The article has been written by Patrick Taffin, Assistant Dean at SHMS Leysin. The views expressed are the author's personal views.)

IHE goes physical

India's one of the largest B2B hospitality expos, the four-day IHE 2021, opens on September 24 at IEML, Greater Noida and will be a 100 per cent 'physical show'.

The India Expo Mart & Centre (IEML) in Greater Noida is all geared up for the 2021 edition of the India International Hospitality Expo (IHE 2021), which has emerged as the country's biggest B2B show designed exclusively for the hospitality and food sectors. The Expo, to be held on September 24-27, 2021, will be a 100 per cent 'physical show', and is filling up with exhibitors representing verticals that are relevant to the hospitality sector.

It is their goodwill that gives Rakesh Kumar, Chairman, IEML, and Director General, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), the confidence not to move away from organising a 100 per cent 'physical show' and its full complement of the concurrent events: a four-day conference, masterclasses, a mixology workshop, young chefs' culinary competition conducted by Indian Culinary Forum (ICF), and IHE 2021 Excellence Awards.

Hari Dadoo, IHE Fair President is confident that the industry has recovered, and is waiting for a hospitality event. Nirmal Khandelwal, Managing Director, FCML is of the opinion that IHE is a niche exhibition, and the hospitality market today has evolved for the better. It is important that stalwarts of the industry come together and brainstorm for any further action that can be taken in favour of the industry.

Kumar said that the rapid progress of COVID-19 vaccinations across the country has given us the booster shot we needed to plan a 'physical' show with all health and safety protocols in place. The success of the vaccination drive, the heightened state of preparedness of our health sector, the steady progress



RAKESH KUMAR
Chairman, IEML & DG, EPCH



COVID-19 vaccinations across the country has given us the booster shot we needed"

of the un-lockdown process, and the return of hotels and restaurants to business as usual, collectively gives us the strength to plan ahead, and plan bigger and better.

The IEML is now fully operational and thoroughly sanitised. Spread across 58 acres (2,35,000 sqm), it is truly a 'bio-bubble'. The management has institutionalised practices, such as fumigation of public spaces and toilets at regular intervals, easy access to no-touch hand sanitisers, CCTV-controlled monitoring of the body temperatures of people entering the show venue, and mandatory use of the Arogya Setu app. The flow of visitors will be managed in a way that there is no crowding at any time.

Amarjit Ahuja, Director (Procurement), Le Meridien, New Delhi, and Founder, Purchasing Professionals Forum-India (PPFI), said that the buyers are waiting for a hospitality show after almost two years and are ready to do the buying. A lot of under construction hotels are looking forward to visit and benefit from the Expo, according to Rajesh Chowdhury, Head of Business Development – India and Subcontinent, T&S Brass and Bronze Works, Inc.

Dr. Nitin Shankar Nagrale, Founder & General Secretary – HPMF, CEO India and Emerging Markets – QualityNZ, said that this is the right time to look at vendor base and involve suppliers in the procurement process for a mutual benefit.

IHE 2021 will be not just an exhibition but also a knowledge fest for professionals engaged in the food and hospitality sectors. It is a show that cannot be missed.



HOMESTAY in the Himalayas

Invoking the grandeur and nobility of the Raj era, Jungle House – a boutique homestay in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh – opens its doors for guests.



Lipla Negi

Rising above the middle Himalayas, The Jungle House Shimla offers a splendid blend of nature, history, and modern comfort. The Shimla home of HH Princess Kusum of Bharatpur comes with an illustrious history that dates back to the late 19th century. A witness to the heydays of the Raj, Independence and the birth of Himachal Pradesh, the home has welcomed nobility.



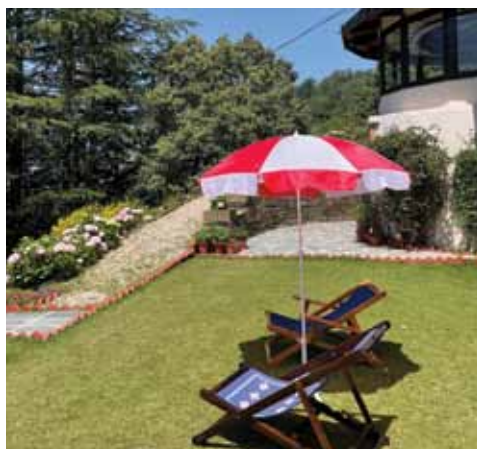
KARAN SINGH
CHM & Co-Founder
1524 Delhi

Perched on a sunlit spur at over 7,700 ft on Jakhu Hill, Jungle House commands sweeping views of the middle Himalayas. With social distancing, work-from-home and staycations becoming the new normal, this immensely private estate addresses the heightened need for solace, peace and privacy. “People are increasingly looking for private villas, homestays and boutique hotels that do not require them to share facilities with people outside their family bubble, and assure a higher degree of privacy, intimacy, personalisation and security,” believes **Karan Singh**, Chairman and Co-Founder, 1524 Delhi.

The estate offers two exquisite suites in a stone cottage that effortlessly combines contemporary style with colonial hill architectural design. The cottage has been meticulously renovated to preserve its original features. In response to the pandemic, the boutique homestay has initiated additional stringent protocols to further safeguard the health & safety of the guests and employees. Jungle House is confident of attracting tourists with its pristine Himalayan beauty, authentic ‘Raj Era’ experience and a promise of absolute safety and hygiene. “After extended periods of isolation, people are keen to stretch their legs and travel, for a much-needed change, to reconnect with the world and for a sense of space and mental peace. People prefer travelling in family groups and driving holidays are preferred as they provide the opportunity for minimal contact with the external environment,” says Singh.



People are looking for private villas & boutique hotels, offering a higher degree of personalisation”



FHRAI-IHM gets NCHMCT affiliation

FHRAI-IHM has become the first private institute managed by FHRAI to be affiliated with the National Council of Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT), Noida.



The FHRAI-Institute of Hospitality Management (FHRAI-IHM) is now affiliated with the National Council of Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT), Noida an organisation of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. NCHMCT, Noida presently has over 75 affiliated Central, State and private hotel management institutes in the country.

FHRAI-IHM becomes the first private institution that is run by India's apex hospitality association – Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) to be affiliated with the NCHMCT. FHRAI-IHM will offer a three-year B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration, 18-month Diploma in Food Production, 18-month Diploma in Bakery and Confectionary and 18-month Diploma in Food & Beverages Service.

"India's only private hospitality institute that's run by the country's apex hospitality association is now also affiliated with NCHMCT, Noida an organisation

ABOUT FHRAI-IHM

FHRAI-IHM was established in 2005 with the aim of improving the standards and skills of the human resource in the hospitality industry in India along with increasing availability of quality manpower for the industry in the country. The institute is founded by FHRAI, the world's third largest hospitality association.



ARUN KUMAR SINGH
Director
FHRAI-IHM

of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. This development reinforces our commitment to offer students the best in hospitality management education," says **Arun Kumar Singh**, Director, FHRAI-IHM.

FHRAI-IHM is founded by FHRAI comprising of its four regional hotel and restaurant associations in the North, East, West and South. FHRAI is the world's third largest hospitality association. FHRAI-IHM offers the best-in-class training infrastructure backed by experienced and learned faculty for carving out a great future for students in hospitality.

"FHRAI-IHM is fully equipped to provide students with all necessary inputs in the area of aptitude formation, personality development and brings the right value-add for building careers in the hospitality domain. Moreover, research & development and inclusion of case studies to sharpen the intellectual mind of students will help in building their self-confidence and will enable to move ahead in their career. We are also updating as well as incorporating the technologically advanced practices prevalent in the hospitality industry.

Hopefully, we will soon have put this phase of lockdowns and restrictions behind us and pray that tourism bounces back to health. Hospitality has and will continue to play a major role in the progress of education and continue to be a great avenue for students aspiring to make a career in the field," concludes Singh.



FHRAI-IHM brings the right value-add for building careers in the hospitality domain"



Acquisition mode

Click Hotels by Suba has acquired 35 hotels across 22 new destinations in India. By 2023, the hospitality conglomerate targets to cross 3,000+ rooms.



MANSUR MEHTA



Our focus is on ultramodern hospitality services



NANDIVARDHAN JAIN



The acquisition enables Click Hotels to fast track growth



In a major breakthrough for the hospitality segment following the COVID-19 outbreak, Click Hotels by Suba has successfully added 35 new properties to its portfolio across 22 prime destinations in India which marks the milestone of total 2,000 rooms.

Some of the destinations include Ranthambore National Park, Dalhousie, and Jim Corbett National Park alongside others.

Marking one of the biggest acquisitions in the budget hotel segment, the latest expansion drive is a part of Click Hotels' acquisition of 1589 Hotels, GenX, RNB, and RNB Select.

Following its acquisition, Click Hotels by Suba has marked its transition to an asset-light business model. The hospitality conglomerate has further forayed into the leisure segment building on its 'Bed, Breakfast, and Broadband' and affordable luxury model. The new-age midsegment hotel chain will now directly manage 50 prime hotel properties across India, UAE, and Nepal.

The brand believes in going the extra mile for each of its guests. Hence, in addition to iPads and BYOD (bring your own device) technologies to name a few for easy check-ins, the brand's online booking system comes equipped with artificial intelligence and other avant-garde technological enhancements.

The brand also harnesses the power of data and analytics, which forms the base of its key decision-

making. Speaking on the development, **Mansur Mehta**, Managing Director of Suba Group of Hotels, said, "At Suba, we are on a mission to acquaint hotels across the country with ultramodern hospitality services. Our latest acquisition drive is in line with this vision."

"The majority of our acquired properties cater to the leisure segment and perfectly complement our existing portfolio of business hotels. We have also worked towards the diversity of destinations and included prime holidaymaking spots to delight Indian vacationers. A new loyalty programme for our brand patrons, called 'Click Smiles', is now live as well and will further add to our core value proposition," concluded Mehta.

Nandivardhan Jain, CEO of NOESIS Capital Advisors who acted as an exclusive transaction advisor said, "The opportunity to acquire 1589 Hotels attracted the Suba Group of hotels due to their presence in the leisure destinations."

"This transaction is a reflection of a great Indian entrepreneurialism creating a sustainable & conversion friendly hotel management platform which aims at suiting to independent hotel owners and domestic travellers requirements," added Jain.

The acquisition of this portfolio enables Click Hotels by Suba to fast track its growth across South Asia. By 2023, Click Hotels by Suba envisions crossing 3,000 rooms and strengthening its presence on the national level."

'People will travel en masse'

John Spence, Founder and Owner, Karma Group of Hotels; and Visiting Professor, Yale University, shares his views on how the hospitality industry should cope in the present and restart in the future.



Hazel Jain

How do you think the hospitality industry will pan out going forward in India and Asia?

The hospitality industry will, I believe, quickly recover. The pandemic has affected all of us in the industry. No more so in India, where we had to shut all of our resorts because of the situation. However, once tourists are able to travel, resorts will be packed, and we will conduct brisk business.

Lockdowns and closures will become increasingly restricted as herd immunity develops. As a result, the hotel business will be able to provide more consistency in service. COVID is likely to continue a long time, but if we figure out how to cope with it, people will want to travel in droves. They want to spend right now, reward themselves for being quarantined. They might also be worried that they will be locked up again in the future.

As a result, people will travel en masse. However, business travel may remain affected as people have adapted to working remotely. Companies will tighten their budgets, because of the losses they are bearing. Thus, they will discourage all but essential business travel. As a result, they will discourage anything except essential business travel.

Do you think there will be more consolidations, in terms of brands or hotel companies?

I think so! The major hotel companies, like the Marriotts, the Starwoods or Wyndhams, are consolidating for economy of scale and critical mass. There is still enormous scope of growth for boutique hotels, in which Karma operates. Consumers desire something distinct as the major brands become increasingly homogeneous. They want something that is architecturally appealing, and responsive and friendlier to location, rather than constantly going for huge consolidations.



JOHN SPENCE
Founder & Owner
Karma Group
of Hotels



I think the general trend will go two ways – one, consolidation to the top end, two, more boutique hotels”

What are some of the new trends and strategies you see hoteliers adopting in the next 1-2 years?

I think, the general trend will go two ways: one, consolidation at the top end, and two, more boutique hotels like Karma which are low density, have a small number of rooms, and are more distinctive, coupled with self-catering.

Of course, I believe our 'club' concept will blossom as well. We are closer to a member's club than we are to a vanilla hotel. Forty-five thousand members are part of the Karma club, which is constantly growing tremendously.

Consumers like to be a part of something they recognise and can rely on for quality. And we think of it as a way of life. As a result, we do not consider ourselves to be a hotel. With our customers and their families, we regard ourselves as having a long-term, lifelong connection. That is a tendency, I expect, to continue in the coming years.

Does Karma have expansion plans for India?

During COVID, we were keen to acquire more resorts. It is clear that trading has been difficult. We did, however, become debt-free at the same time. We do not have any partners telling us what we can and cannot do, because I control 100 per cent of the company.

We saw it as a fantastic chance to get additional inventory for our current members and to expand our membership base in the future. We expect to have added 10 additional properties to our portfolio this year. And we will probably grow at a slower rate in the future, with five new resorts every year, most of which will be in India.

Festive table settings by L'Objet

Founded in 2004, L'Objet is the life work of Founder and Creative Director Elad Yifrach. Emery Studio brings festive tableware setting by L'Objet to India. All L'Objet collections are made with exceptional materials, and with proper use and care, which will last for generations. L'Objet shares that a striking table setup using their tableware will create a lasting impression at your festive dinners with your loved ones. This festive tableware setting showcase pieces from the L'Objet collections – Fortuny, Alchemie, Tabriz and Oro. Emery Studio specialises in bespoke decorative lighting, tableware and home decoration solutions for interior designers and architects.



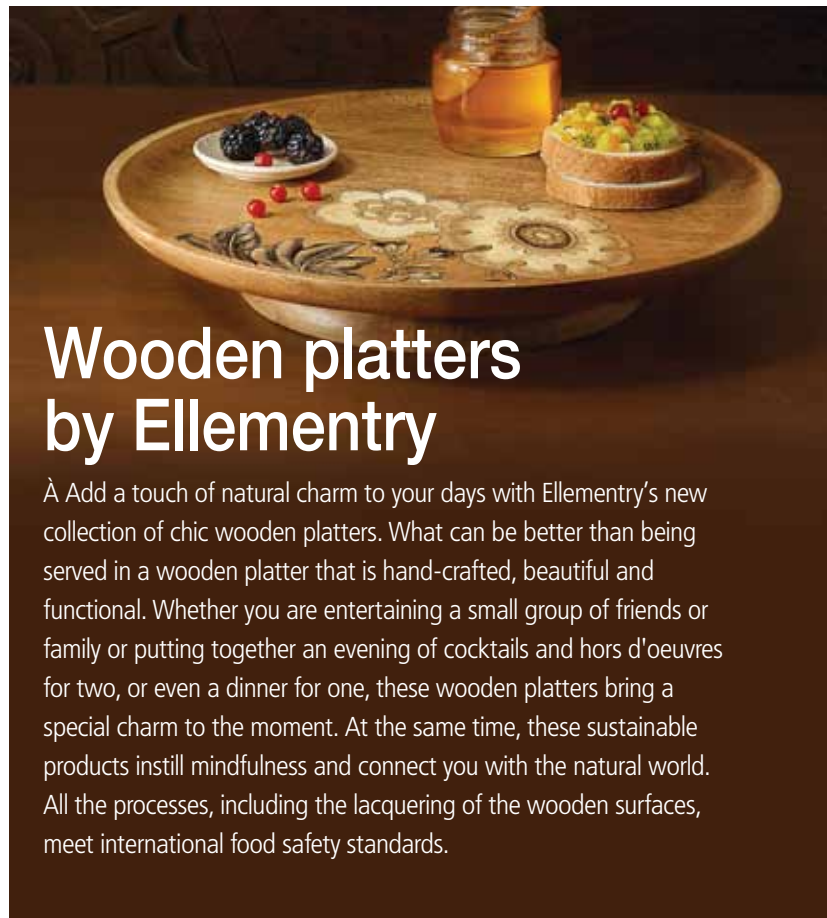
Emery unveils tableware

Emery Studio brings to India, an exquisite collection of porcelain tableware – Aegean – by L'Objet, inspired by the Greco-Roman treasures of the ancient world and named for the sea stretching between Greece and Turkey, Aegean. The exquisite collection comprises a charger plate, a dinner plate, a dessert plate, a soup bowl, a sauce boat, a coffee pot, a mug, a tea cup, a saucer, a rectangular platter, an oval platter, a serving bowl and more.



Wooden platters by Ellementry

Add a touch of natural charm to your days with Ellementry's new collection of chic wooden platters. What can be better than being served in a wooden platter that is hand-crafted, beautiful and functional. Whether you are entertaining a small group of friends or family or putting together an evening of cocktails and hors d'oeuvres for two, or even a dinner for one, these wooden platters bring a special charm to the moment. At the same time, these sustainable products instill mindfulness and connect you with the natural world. All the processes, including the lacquering of the wooden surfaces, meet international food safety standards.



Alankaram launches sofa designs

High-end furniture designer and manufacturer, Alankaram has added new designs to its sofa collection. With frames made from enduring teakwood and solid wood, the designs are available in an array of upholstery materials and colours. These new pieces are ideal for living rooms, lounges, and offices. Alankaram sought to create new designs that emphasised a timeless and contemporary aesthetic. To do so, the creative team at Alankaram focused on simple silhouettes and top-quality woods to keep the look minimal whilst ensuring modern-day comfort. The new assortment features two-seaters, three-seaters, and L-shaped sofas, which can be customised for fabrics and wood finishes.





4607 Chandelier by Barovier & Toso



À 4607 Chandelier by Barovier & Toso, a classic Venetian chandelier, has been brought to India by Emery Studio. Flowers in multi-colored glass paste, a multitude of decorations and the transparent purity of the crystal make 4607 Chandelier suitable for the most important palaces on the Grand Canal. The 4607 Chandelier is available in various sizes and a number of hues and finishing.



Swarovski unveils a statement light

Sacmeh International has unveiled in India, Bagatelle, a statement-making light from Swarovski Lighting. Bagatelle is a delicate light that combines the formal aesthetics of traditional style with contemporary flair. It offers a new interpretation of a classic lantern full of dreamy ornamentation and fanciful dance of crystal rosettes and drops around a sculptural crystal basket.

Mi Casa Collective

Mi Casa Collective is back with its annual physical exhibition. Featuring 30 labels, it will be held at Bikaner House, India Gate on October 15 and 16, 2021. It will exhibit a mélange of traditional and modern Indian homeware brands. From furniture, décor, outdoor living to bath and bedding linen – the two-day exhibit will capture the gamut of products in the interior space.



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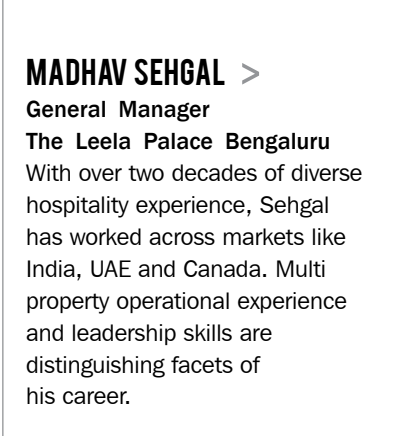
< ALLEN MACHADO

**Chief Executive Officer
Niraamaya Wellness Retreat**
Machado specialises in developing profitable business models, luxury hotel operations, revenue management and fund raising. Heading trendsetting luxury hotels in India and the Middle East and delivering top-quality service has been his forte.



< DIETMAR KIELNHOFER

**Area VP and General Manager
Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel
and Residences**
Hyatt India and Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel and Residences appoints Dietmar Kielnhofner as Area Vice President of Hyatt India and General Manager of Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel and Residences.



MADHAV SEHGAL >

**General Manager
The Leela Palace Bengaluru**
With over two decades of diverse hospitality experience, Sehgal has worked across markets like India, UAE and Canada. Multi property operational experience and leadership skills are distinguishing facets of his career.



BALAGI SINGH >

**General Manager
ibis Jaipur Civil Lines**
With over 18 years of experience in the hospitality sector, Singh has been a part of the Accor family for 13+ years, performing varied roles across several hotels and geographies. In the new role, he will be looking over day-to-day operations and management.



< ANAND NAIR

**General Manager
Crowne Plaza Chennai
Adyar Park**
Nair brings with him 24 years of industry experience, with a first-hand expertise in managing Business & Leisure hotel portfolios. He will oversee the complete operations and management of the hotels.



< GOPINATH GOPALAN

**General Manager
Radisson Blu Hotel
& Spa, Nashik**
Gopalan's proficiency and meticulous operational techniques will play a significant role in establishing Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Nashik as one of the most sought-after lifestyle-led leisure destinations in Western India.



VIKAS KUMAR >

**General Manager
Four Points by Sheraton
Kochi Infopark**
Kumar shall lead the executive team of Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark. In his new role, he brings his progressive experience of hospitality & dynamic knowledge base to make this hotel a brand icon in Kochi.



PARINITA SAMANTA >

**Director of Marketing and
Communications
Pullman & Novotel
New Delhi Aerocity**
Samanta will be the custodian of the hotel's brand standards and marketing and will be responsible to create a long-term strategic communications plan in alignment with organisational goals.



< RAJAN KALRA

**Director of Sales
The Click Hotels by Suba**
Kalra brings with him an experience of over 15 years in the industry. He will be responsible for the development and implementation of sales strategies to drive revenue, increase visibility and enhance the perception of Click & 1589 hotel brands.



< ABHISHEK PRABHAKAR

**AD of Sales-Leisure
Eros Hotel New Delhi
Nehru Place**
He will play a pivotal role in aligning and leading business development goals in Travel Trade. He will be responsible for uplifting the segment and generating new business avenues in Tier-II and III cities.

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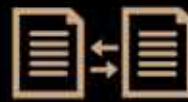
A Physical Event

The entire hospitality
and F&B industry is
coming together for
India International
Hospitality Expo

WILL YOU BE THERE?



PRODUCT
SHOWCASE



INFO
EXCHANGE



LIMITED
COMPETITION



PERSONALISED
AGENDA



COMPREHENSIVE
ASSISTANCE



TARGETED
BRANDING



SPEAKING
OPPORTUNITIES



PRE-SCHEDULED
MEETINGS