

# HOSPITALITY Talk



Keeping the  
**wheels turning**



# HOSPITALITY Talk

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# Ploughing on

As the dark clouds of uncertainty begin to clear, the indigenous hospitality sector is gearing up to make up for missed opportunities and go higher through expansion and the launch of education programmes.

## HILTON GARDEN INN HOTEL, Embassy Manyata, Bengaluru, launches

Embassy Office Park REIT has announced the opening of the first Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Bengaluru, strategically located at the Embassy Manyata Business Park. This 353-key hotel is part of the upcoming Hilton Hotels Embassy Manyata complex, comprising 619 key dual-branded Hilton properties—Holiday Inn and Hilton—and a state-of-the-art 60,000 sq. ft. convention centre, making it one of the largest hotel complexes in South India. Combining upscale accommodation with ease of access and affordability, the hotel comes with the quality assurance of an award-winning brand.



## CHOICE HOTELS opens COMFORT INN KAIKALURU in Andhra Pradesh

The Comfort Inn Kaikaluru is the city's first internationally branded hotel. The hotel is conveniently positioned among major business, commercial, and shopping areas, making it perfect for both business and leisure travellers. The newly constructed hotel has tastefully spacious, furnished rooms with modern amenities. Saffron, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, is open. The hotel features a full-service fitness centre, among other services. Comfort Inn Kaikaluru also has modern banqueting facilities for extensive meetings and conferences, as well as intimate social gatherings.



## CLEARTRIP partners with YATRA.COM

Yatra Online, Inc. has joined forces with Cleartrip. The latter's customers will gain access to Yatra.com's inventory of 94,000 hotels and homestays, ranging from five-star luxury properties to alternative accommodations in over 1,400 cities and towns. The addition of Yatra's inventory with real-time pricing to Cleartrip will provide domestic and international travellers with a broader range of relevant and ideal hotels to satisfy their travel needs. It will also broaden and enhance options and business avenues for hotel partners.



## THE LEELA unveils LLDP

The Leela Palaces, Hotels, and Resorts has launched the Leela Leadership Development Programme (LLDP). This 15-month programme is designed to identify and groom the best talent, giving them a platform to carry forward The Leela's rich legacy. It is launched in partnership with the Indian School of Hospitality (ISH) and Les Roches.

## Signing of RAMADA BY WYNDHAM Sasan Gir

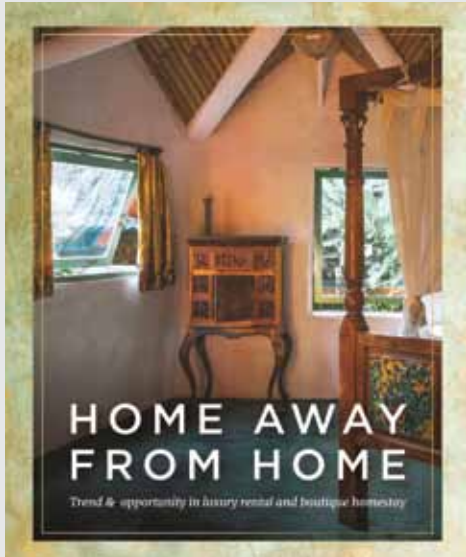
Sasan Gir Villa LLP has signed a franchise agreement with Wyndham Hotels & Resorts for a newly built 225-key hotel in Sasan Gir under Ramada by Wyndham brand. Ramada by Wyndham Sasan Gir will be spread over 12 acres of land and will have 225 keys, with 57 guest rooms and 168 villas. It will offer two specialty restaurants, banquet halls, and outdoor event space, among other amenities.





## Luxury rentals in India set to take off: NOESIS

The luxury rental and boutique homestay sectors in India are poised for exponential growth, as per NOESIS. India's travel market is projected to grow at 11 per cent, which reached around a whopping US\$ 48 billion in 2020. India still needs to add 2.5 million rooms in the homestay segment.



## 72-keys GINGER Greater Noida opens its doors

Ginger Hotels has opened a new location in Greater Noida. Offering 72 rooms, Ginger Greater Noida is strategically located near Pari Chowk, with convenient access to the India Expo Mart, commercial centres, the Greater Noida Sports Complex and the upcoming Noida airport. It also features two conference rooms with a capacity to accommodate over 100 guests. With the opening of this hotel, Ginger now operates more than 650 keys in the Delhi-NCR region.

## LEXICON IHM, MARRIOTT to shape next-gen hoteliers

Lexicon IHM signs an MOU with Marriott Hotels India to strengthen the development of its students. The Executive Leadership Programme of the Lexicon IHM will be supported by Marriott leadership. The Lexicon IHM students will get preference for internships and placements at Marriott Hotels. Within the agreement, Marriott India will own a class in the second and third years of the programme, whereby the students will receive career guidance.



## THE FERN RESIDENCY opens in Haridwar

The Fern Hotels & Resorts has launched The Fern Residency in Haridwar. This is Uttarakhand's third operational property. The Fern Residency in Haridwar is a 55-room full-service hotel with a multi-cuisine pure vegetarian restaurant, a swimming pool, a gym, a spa, and state of the art banquet facilities. The hotel is ideally set in the heart of the city, with easy access to the main tourist sites. The hotel has three types of rooms: Winter Green, Fern Club, and Hazel Suite.

**Suhail Kannampilly**, CEO, The Fern Hotels & Resorts, says, "We expect this hotel in Haridwar to do good business as it is situated in an extremely important city from the religious tourism point of view. Moreover, it is very well connected to other tourist destinations in the state such as Rishikesh, Dehradun, and Mussoorie."



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# Making a haul

The international hospitality industry is gaining momentum in terms of strategising revenue generation in line with the re-emergence of travel demand through new hotels and partnerships.

## RADISSON HOTEL GROUP debuts in Madagascar



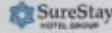
The Radisson Hotel Group has entered Madagascar with the launch of three hotels: the Radisson Blu Hotel Antananarivo Waterfront, the Radisson Hotel Antananarivo Waterfront, and the Radisson Serviced Apartments Antananarivo City Centre. The Radisson Blu Hotel, Antananarivo Waterfront, with 168 modern rooms and suites, is centrally located in a private area within the tree-lined waterfront and is close to the recently developed premier business district. The 30-room Radisson Hotel Antananarivo Waterfront, also in Antananarivo, welcomes tourists with true Madagascan hospitality. The 56 spacious and bright studios and apartments at Radisson Serviced Apartments Antananarivo City Center provide the ideal home-away-from-home for guests travelling for business, leisure, or extended stays.



## ANANTARA expands its luxury portfolio in China

The renowned luxury of Anantara is coming to China's Anji County in northwestern Zhejiang Province. Anantara Anji will have state of the art meeting facilities, an outdoor swimming pool with bar, four international restaurants serving Chinese and international cuisine, a full fitness centre, and a children's activity zone, in addition to 162 guest rooms. The resort's unique architecture is designed by internationally renowned architect Meng Fanhao of Line+ Studio. Construction will begin in March 2022 and is expected to be finished by the end of 2024. Anantara Anji will be the brand's third resort in China, following Anantara Guiyang Resort in Guizhou Province and Anantara Xishuangbanna Resort in Yunnan Province.

  
**BWH | Hotel Group**

## BWH HOTEL GROUP soft-brands build global momentum

BWH Hotel Group continues to broaden its appeal to travellers and developers with its expanding footprint of soft-brand hotels across its portfolio of offerings. BWH Hotel Group now offers seven soft brand options ranging from economy to luxury, providing unique experiences that suit the needs of every type of traveller and developer. It currently boasts approximately 500 active soft-brand hotels and resorts worldwide, with over 110 new properties in the global pipeline. In the last four months, BWH Hotel Group has activated over 30 soft-brand hotels around the world.

## EMBASSY SUITES by HILTON Philadelphia Valley Forge hires new hotel management company

Synergy Hospitality Management has been selected by Colmar Hotels LLC to manage the 229-room Embassy Suites by Hilton Philadelphia Valley Forge. Synergy Hospitality Management will improve the day-to-day operations of the hotel while working in partnership with the ownership group to realise the highest return potential for the asset.



 **global hotel alliance**

## GHA members predict top five travel trends for 2022

The CEOs of some of the world's leading hotel groups, all members of the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA), have made five travel predictions for 2022: Bucket-list travel and unique experiences, with a preference for sustainable travel, are top consumer travel trends; city travel will make a comeback, returning to around 75 per cent of 2019 levels; restriction-averse travellers will continue to explore hotels and destinations close to home; traveller desire for ease of payment will reach an all-time high; and tech-savvy and health-conscious travellers will value concordance.



## £4 billion of UK hotel transactions in 2021: KNIGHT FRANK

Research by Knight Frank reveals an impressive £4 billion of UK hotel transactions in 2021. The underlying drivers of increased hotel demand, the continued improvement in profitability and visibility for future trading, have all contributed to the improved sentiment towards the sector. This past year has magnified the importance of investing in well-located assets, benefitting from multiple demand generators, combined with strong management and leadership.

**Henry Jackson**, Knight Frank, Head of Hotel Agency, said, "The desire to travel and staycation in the UK is expected to continue to boost regional performance, along with continued recovery in corporate and MICE demand. The return of international travellers will further boost trading performance in London and city centre hotels throughout the UK. Whilst the sector is facing a sustained period of economic pressure, current market dynamics are likely to ensure a positive year ahead for the UK hotel transactional market, with volumes anticipated to rise to £5 billion in 2022."

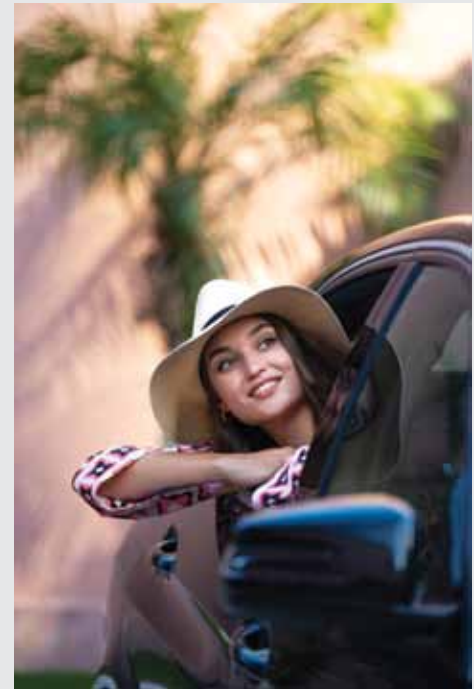


## MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL plans APAC expansion

Marriott International, Inc., has announced its plans to further expand its portfolio across APAC, targeting to open its 1000th property in the region by late 2022. The company expects to open nearly 100 properties in the region this year. **Craig S. Smith**, Group President-International, Marriott International, says, "I am very pleased with our 2021 development results in APAC. We have worked closely with our owners throughout the last two years to navigate the challenges brought on by the pandemic, adapt quickly, and grow. Last year in Asia Pacific, we signed two new development deals a week on average, with deals signed in 13 different markets across the region. This year, we expect to continue to drive demand and growth, which is a testament to our talented teams."

## SIXT and ACCOR announce multi-year strategic partnership

SIXT and Accor have forged a forward-oriented strategic partnership that will provide additional benefits to guests and employees of Accor—worldwide and free of charge. This will also increase the global brand visibility for SIXT among business and leisure customers. As part of Accor's 'Augmented Hospitality' strategy, the Accor with ALL – Accor Live Limitless programme offers members once-in-a-lifetime but also day-to-day experiences that go beyond the classic hotel blueprint.



## HYATT reports Q4 and full-year 2021 financial results

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has reported Q4 and full-year 2021 financial results. The net loss attributable to Hyatt was US\$ 29 million in Q4 2021, compared to a net loss attributable to Hyatt of US\$ 203 million in Q4 2020. In Q4 2021, the adjusted net loss attributable to Hyatt was US\$ 306 million, compared to a net loss attributable to Hyatt of US\$ 179 million in Q4 2020. The full-year financial results as compared to fiscal year 2020 reports a net loss of US\$ 222 million that was reduced from a loss of US\$ 703 million, and adjusted EBITDA increased to US\$ 257 million from a loss of US\$ 177 million. Comparable system-wide RevPAR increased to US\$ 77.80 in FY2021, a 42.9 percent decrease from FY2019 on a reported basis. System-wide Net Rooms Growth was 19.5 per cent in 2021. The pipeline of completed management or franchise contracts grew by 12 per cent to approximately 113,000 rooms.



## VINPEARL and MELIÁ Hotels International join forces

A strategic partnership plan has been unveiled by Vinpearl Joint Stock Company and Meliá Hotels International. The alliance of these two major resort hotel brands aims to contribute to the progress of Vietnam tourism in the global rankings. Vinpearl will transfer the management rights of its 12 hotels and resorts to Meliá Hotels International for a minimum of 10 years. The 12-hotel chain will operate under the new brand 'Meliá Vinpearl', similar to other major five-star chains such as Meliá Hotels & Resorts, Sol by Meliá, and INNSIDE by Meliá.

# Revival of domestic tourism in sight

JLL's HMI quarterly monitor report finds that RevPAR grew by 41.9 per cent in Q4 2021 as against Q3 2021. Domestic hotel operators dominated signings with the ratio of 52:48 in terms of inventory.

The Indian hospitality industry is currently on an upward trend, with improved vaccination rates and fewer travel restrictions driving traveller confidence. As a result, revenue per available room (RevPAR) increased by 100.3 per cent year on year in the fourth quarter of 2021. The quarterly RevPAR was 41.9 per cent, according to JLL's Hotel Momentum India (HMI) Q4-2021.

While the latter part of Q4 started to witness some impact from the Omicron wave, Q4 2021 was largely the best performing period of the last year, bolstered by long weekends, holidays during festivals, and social gatherings. Business travel also resumed, albeit in low numbers in some markets. The fourth quarter of 2021 also witnessed a significant increase in international

arrivals as compared to the same time period in the previous year. As the current wave subsides, the next two quarters are expected to witness growth in airline and rail travel and provide impetus for hotel performance.

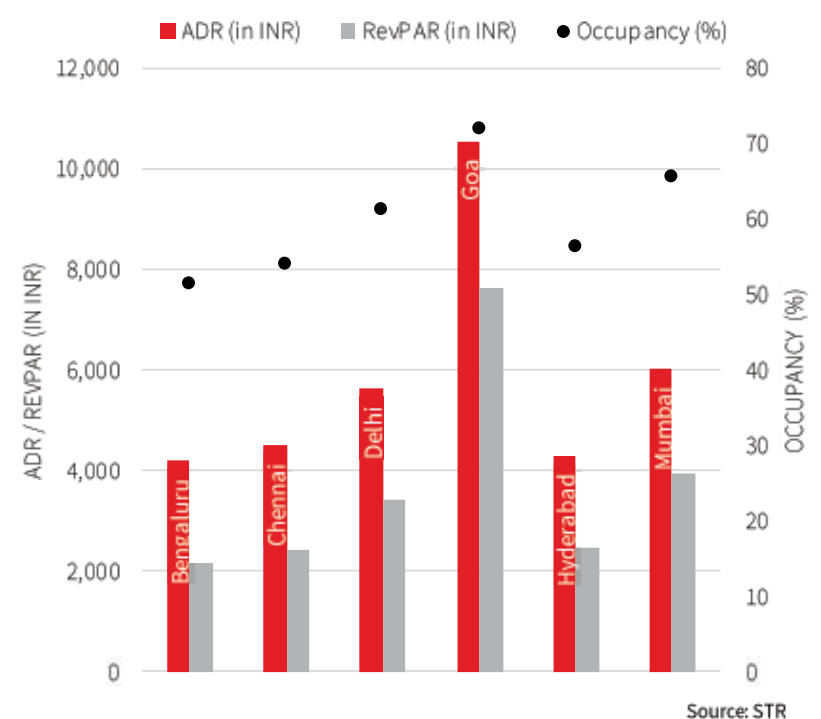
The domestic segment will continue to drive demand for both corporate and leisure travel. As restrictions against social gatherings ease, the social MICE segment will improve and provide much-needed business to the industry going forward. The total number of hotel signings in the fourth quarter of 2021 stood at 85 hotels with 7,347 keys. When compared to the fourth quarter of 2020, hotel signings increased by 81.9 per cent. Domestic operators dominated signings over international operators, with a ratio of 52:48 in terms of inventory volume.

## HOTEL MARKET PERFORMANCE

Cities	Q4 2021		
	Change over same period last year		
	RevPAR Change (%)	AOR change (pp)	ADR change (%)
Bengaluru	↑143.0	↑24.8	↑25.4
Chennai	↑91.8	↑18.3	↑27.7
Delhi	↑130.6	↑20.2	↑54.8
Goa	↑106.7	↑18.4	↑57.4
Hyderabad	↑100.9	↑22.6	↑22.7
Mumbai	↑106.4	↑22.9	↑34.4

Source: STR RevPAR: ↑ Increase ⇄ Stable ↓ Decrease

## Q4 2021 PERFORMANCE TREND



## TIER-WISE BREAK-UP

Tier	Branded - Hotel Openings		Branded - Hotel Signings	
	Hotels	Keys	Hotels	Keys
I	4	697	14	1,661
II	16	1,397	31	2,822
III	26	1,576	40	2,864

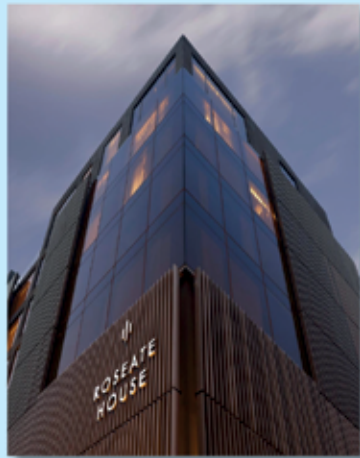
## CLASSIFICATION-WISE BREAK-UP

Category	Branded - Hotel Openings		Branded - Hotel Signings	
	Hotels	Keys	Hotels	Keys
Luxury	9	728	8	1,729
Upper Upscale	3	428	4	383
Upscale	14	1,265	18	1,742
Midscale	18	1,135	50	3,079
Budget	2	114	5	414



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# Room rates catch up to speed

Indian hotel sector saw its highest monthly room rates since March 2020, with Goa leading with average rates 20 per cent higher than pre-pandemic levels in December 2021, according to HVS Anarock.

## HOTEL SECTOR

Key Stats (India Average)



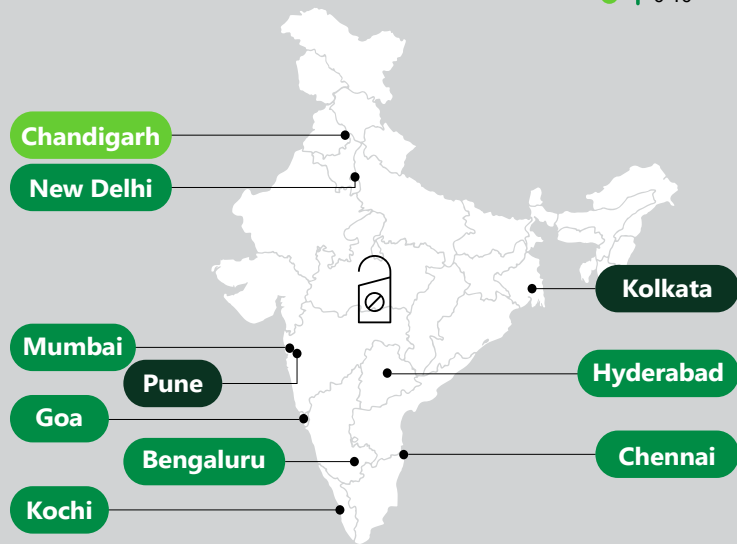
	DEC 2021	M-o-M (%)	Y-o-Y (%)	DEC 2021	NOV 2021	OCT 2021	SEP 2021
ADR	₹5,750 - ₹5,950	↑ 7-9%	ADR	↑ 33-35%	↑ 42-44%	↑ 25-27%	↑ 19-21%
Occupancy	58% - 60%	↑ 3-5pp <sup>1</sup>	Occupancy	↑ 15-17pp	↑ 24-26pp	↑ 25-27pp	↑ 29-31pp
RevPAR	₹3,335 - ₹3,570	↑ 15-17%	RevPAR	↑ 82-84%	↑ 156-158%	↑ 133-135%	↑ 163-165%

Source: HVS Research

## OCCUPANCY CHANGE<sup>1</sup>

Key Indian Markets Y-o-Y (Dec 2021)

- ↑ 20-30
- ↑ 10-20
- ↑ 0-10

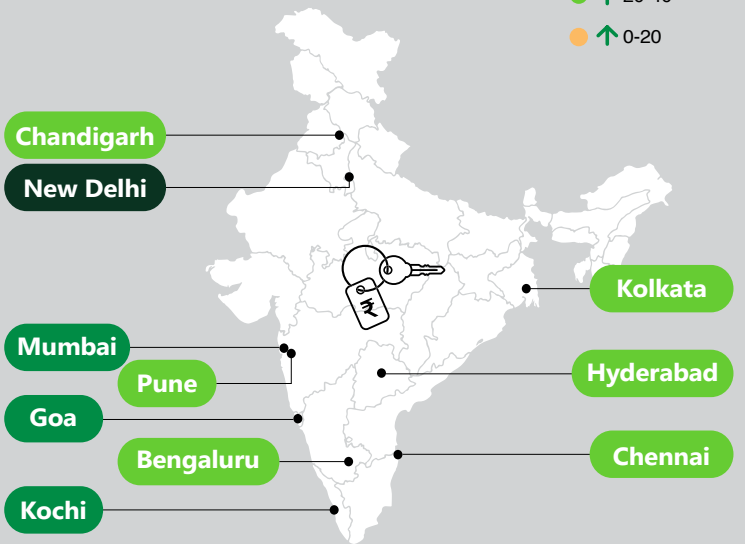


<sup>1</sup>Occupancy change in percentage points (pp)

## ADR CHANGE<sup>2</sup>

Key Indian Markets Y-o-Y (Dec 2021)

- ↑ 60-80
- ↑ 40-60
- ↑ 20-40
- ↑ 0-20

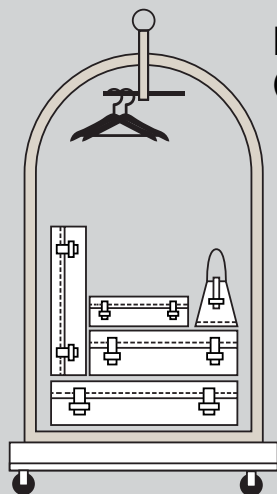


<sup>2</sup>ADR change in percentage

Source: HVS Research

## BRANDED HOTELS<sup>3</sup>

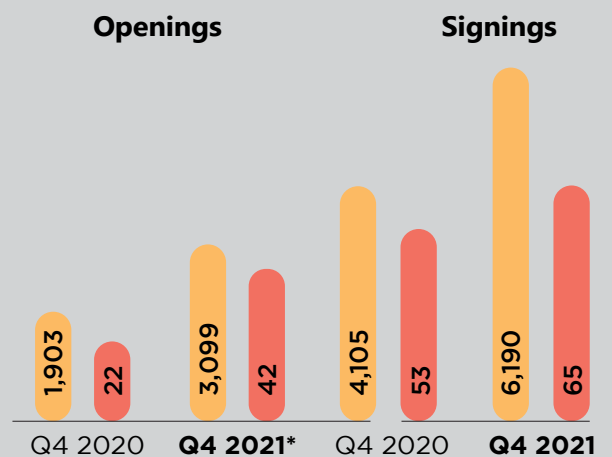
(Q4 2021 vs. Q4 2020)



By Keys



By Properties



<sup>3</sup>Data collated by HVS from 16 hotel operators and media reports as of January 22, 2022

Source: HVS Research



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# Keeping the wheels turning

Even though Union Budget 2022-23 was dismaying, **K.B. Kachru**, Chairman Emeritus and Principal Advisor, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, and Vice President, Hotel Association of India, says they will keep pushing for infrastructure and industry status for hospitality sector.



Nisha Verma





**What are your thoughts on the budget announcements? Do you believe the industry's expectations have been met?**

The budget, although being a letdown for most of the industry, nonetheless mentioned and emphasised the hospitality industry's plight. At least something positive has happened, and we need to acknowledge that. It is a breather in terms of the extended emergency credit line that has been accorded to the industry. We did, however, have expectations from the government. We believed it was a reason to hope that everything would go as planned. Unfortunately, we did not get what we had requested. We, as an industry, are not looking for loans, but we are looking for support in terms of survival.

Our industry is still treated as elite, but they do not realise that we need handholding. We are one of the largest employment generators in any industry. We make a significant contribution to the national GDP. Given these factors, I believe we require stronger handholding. We still believe that it is never too late. There are some policy decisions that can be taken outside the budget where no direct cash is involved. It is important that decisions such as the granting of infrastructure status or industry status-related benefits to the hospitality industry will help it survive.



I believe that before we even consider reviving, we must first thrive. We need to work harder to improve. We do require some serious considerations at this stage of survival. As a result, the disappointment stems from the fact that we were not mentioned anywhere else in the budget announcements by the Finance Minister. Our travel partners and people overall in the tourism trade were anticipating that some important aspects would be covered in the Union Budget 2022–23, which unfortunately has not happened.

**What is the next step for HAI now? Will you go back to the government to clarify your point and urge them to consider making a few tweaks when the budget ultimately comes into force?**

We are still going to push to get infrastructure status and industry-related benefits. I see no reason why a particular vertical is given industry status and we are not, especially when we are generating substantial



**We expected that the Union Budget would address some crucial issues, but this has not happened”**

## THE LATEST ADDITION

Radisson Hotel Group has announced the opening of Radisson Resort Pondicherry Bay in the coastal fishing village of Arikamedu in Pondicherry. Situated between a lagoon and the Bay of Bengal, the hotel looks to welcome business, leisure, and MICE travellers to enjoy safe and memorable stays. This opening makes Radisson the first international hotel brand to operate in the union territory of Pondicherry. Spread over 20,000 square metre, the resort amalgamates modern design and comfort with rustic surroundings to deliver an immersive experience to its guests. It also houses a 260 sq. m., hydro-therapy saltwater Moroccan pool with a jacuzzi, called Salt Splash.

employment. Our entire industry is working together on this one.

**What initiatives does HAI have for its members?**

We have had a difficult two years, except for a couple of months last year. This challenging time caused by the pandemic has trickled down to all levels, from stakeholders to employees and third-party partners. It has happened to everyone, which has made survival the most pressing issue. Firstly, the entire hospitality industry has to come together and see what it is essential to survive in the industry.

Then we also have some obligations towards our communities, partners, and sustainability. The Hotel Association of India (HAI) is collaborating with the Centre and state governments to examine these goals, assist them in achieving them, assess them, and then work with them on the shop floor.





### **How do you see the future of the hospitality sector as a whole?**

There are certain situations over which we have no control. We have witnessed the first, second, and third COVID-19 waves. The likelihood that we may be hit by more waves is making the rounds in the industry. As a result, it is all the more imperative to exercise caution. We need to be responsible to ensure that we will do our best to stay safe and keep our guests safe. That confidence level has to be created both at the shop floor level, at the government level and at every single touch point. Secondly, if we want more investment to come into our industry, we need long-term policies, not short-term ones.

Hence, we are asking the government to consider us as a viable industry, give us industry status in states, and make us part of the infrastructure status so that we get benefits and the people who are investing here have some kind of certainty to get a proper return on investment (ROI). Then there are issues directly linked to the pandemic, such as the opening of international flights, which can provide confidence to tourists.



**We are growing at the rate of almost one hotel a month, both in terms of opening and signing new deals”**

Air connectivity is of utmost importance. How can we expect international tourists to come here if international flights are not completely reopened? We can only inspire confidence once people have the ability to travel and we witness an influx of tourists.

Then technology is the right way to move forward, and we must adapt or we will fall behind others. As a result, it is a culmination of several factors. Nevertheless, we welcome the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister about e-passports, which will help people travel outside India and send the right message.

### **What type of expansion ambitions do you have for the brand?**

Radisson Hotel Group has been fortunate enough to have 104 hotels operating currently in India, and we have another 60 under active development that are in the phase of construction. These are all the Radisson Hotel Group's deals that are set to open doors. We are opening around 10 to 12 hotels every year. Our resort and overall getaway locations are doing well because of domestic tourists.





**Travel agents specialising in MICE have been impacted”**

In the last two years, domestic tourism has been a huge opportunity. Had we not focussed initially on it, we probably would not have had so many hotels and any other means to survive. We are growing at the rate of almost one hotel a month, both in terms of opening and signing new deals.

Even during a difficult phase, we are planning to introduce some other verticals that will help us position ourselves better in the marketplace. This is what our primary growth plan is.

**What are the other verticals that you are considering foraying into?**

We are introducing our luxury brand ‘Collection’ to the market and even talking about our other brands for the mid and upper-mid market. In addition, we are seriously looking at taking small luxury locations under our umbrella, even if the size is not big.

**Mid-size and luxury hotels have been performing well on account of the surge in domestic tourism. However, homestays is a market that many**

**companies are interested in. What plans do you have for this segment?**

We are considering the homestay market. We intend to remain proactive in this market and provide what it requires, but not at the cost of our brand specifications. We want to just stay where our brand specifications allow us to be.

**How has it been collaborating with the travel trade during these trying times? How helpful have they been to the brand?**

Fortunately, the combined strength of the travel trade and hospitality partners has helped each other survive this period. We get business from OTAs and other travel partners as well. The only missing piece is that there is no international business. Hence, travel agents who were specialising in the incentive business and in MICE have been impacted.

**When is the next property coming up? What is the immediate next big thing for Radisson?**

Our hotels in hill stations are a priority currently. We are getting good rates and occupancies, and the flow is good. In Himachal Pradesh, we have recently opened a property in Dharamsala and will be opening one in Kufri. We are the only international brand with seven hotels in Jammu and Kashmir, and we opened two hotels there last month—a golf resort in Pahalgam and one in Sonamarg. We are active. We opened an extremely upscale hotel in Nashik.

I feel things are moving quickly and we want to maintain that pace. We have to work together to make things happen. We are going through a difficult period. We have not given up hope for a better future for the industry. Omicron, I believe, is nearing its end.

That is what I would like to think in the hope that the global pandemic situation would improve and we would eventually see development in the tourism and hospitality industry. We want to remain positive about the future.

# Left in lurch

While hotliers appreciated few encouraging announcements, industry is dissatisfied for Finance Minister has failed to implement many of its relief measures.



**Arun Kumar**  
Director, FHRAI-Institute of Hospitality Management

“ COVID-19 has had a negative impact on education, and most schools and colleges were not prepared for online education. It is disappointing to note that budget allocation to the PN-vidya Scheme was reduced. The education budget allotment has been increased to ₹1.04 lakh. Aid for higher education, research, and innovation has grown over the previous year's allocation, but additional funding is required to meet the demand.

**Kush Kapoor**  
CEO, Roseate Hotels and Resorts

“ The one-year extension of the ECLGS moratorium for the hospitality sector would provide relief to hotel players who are battling with the weight of loan repayment and uncertainty in revenue generation. It will provide much-needed liquidity to the sector. It is appreciated that, despite the government's income limits and the impact of the growing budget deficit, the government has recognised the burden on the industry.



**Zubin Saxena**  
MD & VP-Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group

“ We welcome the Union Budget and the allocation of strategic aid that will allow the hospitality sector to bounce back. The expansion of ECLGS for the hotel sector with an expanded insurance cover of ₹5 lakh crore is a welcome step. With domestic travel on the rise, we believe the government's highway expansion plans will improve accessibility and strengthen demand even further.

**Himmat Anand**  
Founder, Tree of Life

“ I am disappointed with the government. Are the previous two decades not enough to realise that the government does not and will not consider us a priority, despite our massive GDP contribution and provision of millions of jobs? And these two examples of our contribution are starting to sound as jaded as Incredible India! Each of us must do our best for our industry to shine together.



**Pankaj Gupta**  
General Manager, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar Noida

“ While the industry welcomed ECLGS extension, there were hopes for far more specific measures. The specifics must be researched to better comprehend the impact on certain enterprises and organisations. This will help small and mid-sized hotels in overcoming liquidity challenges and resuming expansion. Overall, the budget prioritises long-term, sustainable benefits over short-term.





### Sarbendra Sarkar Founder, Cygnett Hotels and Resorts

“ ECLGS expansion to include additional funding for the hospitality sector is a positive step. This will help small and medium-sized hotels in overcoming liquidity challenges and returning to growth. The increased emphasis on infrastructure development will benefit the tourism and hospitality sectors as well. We also welcome the unveiling of the National Ropeways Development Programme.

### S.P. Jain Managing Director, Pride Hotels Ltd.

“ The FM considered extending ECLGS, and its guarantee cover has been increased by ₹50,000 crore, bringing the total insurance to ₹5 lakh crore. This would be a massive boost for the hotel and tourism sectors. This will offer the industry a much-needed lift by providing more liquidity and helping it regain its position. Millions of people who have lost their jobs can now find work in the sector.



### Manoj Agarwal Head-Asset Management, InterGlobe Hotels

“ One of the industries that has yet to recover from the pandemic is hospitality. The third wave of viruses prevented people from travelling and slowed the industry's recovery in Q4 of the previous year. We applaud the FM's announcement to prolong the ECLGS by ₹50,000 crore until March 2023. Hopefully, this will bring some relief by increasing liquidity and help in the sector's speedier recovery.



### Sanjay Sethi CEO & MD, Chalet Hotels Limited

“ We welcome the FM's emphasis on hospitality in ECLGS, but we are waiting for the fine print on any relaxations in meeting debt ratio covenants from past ECLGS, as well as on whether the ₹200 crore cap under the scheme has been increased. The current budget's focus on clean mobility and green energy is consistent with Chalet Hotels Limited's initiatives and actions.



### JK Mohanty CMD, Swosti Group

“ The move to grant an extra ₹50,000 crore as an ECLGS loan is another debt that is not relief. The one-year moratorium term is insufficient and should be prolonged until March 2025. Although the tourism ministry's budget allocation has been raised from ₹2,026 crore to ₹2,400 crore, this is insufficient to promote India.





# Set to breach 100-MARK

Ajay Bakaya, MD, Sarovar Hotels, discusses tough lessons of 2021 and how they are making an effort through training as he shares firm's plans to reach the 100-mark in number of hotels by 2022.



Nisha Verma

**W**hile the pandemic struck every hospitality chain hard initially, and many of them had to make difficult decisions to navigate the unexpected scenario, few have come forward to state that there were decisions that resulted in learning.

Ajay Bakaya claimed that while they did not make any blunders at first, they never waited to make decisions about how to handle the situation. "We were the first to adopt staff reductions, rotation, and cost-cutting measures. We began vaccinations from the beginning. As difficult as it is to admit, perhaps we should have foreseen it more. Still, I would do the same thing I did in those 12 to 18 months," he said.



**We are committed to opening eight hotels in 2022, surpassing the 100-hotel threshold"**

He insisted that lessons were learnt and said, "We were looking at drastically cutting costs. We compromised on plant and machinery (P&M) maintenance at many of our hotels, which hurt us. The demand poured in, and we had no idea what hit us since some of the P&M was down. Some were not ready, and it was clear that upkeep had been ignored. So the lesson was learnt, and it has already been executed. Despite a downturn, areas such as gardens, horticulture, swimming pool areas, and every piece of front-end machinery must be kept in proper working order at all times," he reflected. Another lesson, he said, is not letting down one's guard. "Because the second or third wave was milder, one tends to take things for granted. That is where we will be extra cautious," he added.





Insisting that they take all necessary actions, he said, “One issue that many hotels are dealing with is that we have had to let many of our employees go. We had to lay off about half of our workforce. Half the population is out of work. I have reclaimed my business and am contacting these people. They are either unavailable or unwilling to return to the hotel sector. Going ahead, we will ensure the GM meets with every single person on the team who we see quitting, whether on their own or not, and has a chat to figure out why they are going and leave a window open till things get better.”

### STANDING UP TO THE PANDEMIC

When the second COVID-19 wave left the capital city in need of beds, one of the Sarovar properties in Gurugram was turned into a pandemic hospital. The model, however, was not mirrored in any of the other properties. Bakaya explained, “We did not do it in more properties. Firstly, it was a costly exercise that needed corporate sponsorship since we had to pay top doctors, nurses, and ward staff three to five times their salary. Our funding for one hotel came in quite handsomely. We explored our possibilities, but by the time we considered reserving a second hotel, the time had passed. It went well for 45 to 60 days, after which hospitals had beds available again and patients could use their own oxygen concentrators. The demand has greatly dwindled.”

### REVIVAL VIA TRAINING

When it comes to revival, Bakaya felt that training the staff is critical. “Our emphasis is on training and getting back all frontline staff. Hence, our focus is to re-employ or recruit new employees. Hotels cannot



**AJAY  
BAKAYA**



**Hotels cannot engineer revivals or thrivals, but they are controlled by the market engine”**

engineer revivals or thrivals, but they are controlled by the market engine. From July to December, as well as October to December, we had a good run. However, we took a significant hit in January, when we lost half of our December sales. February would be better, but it would still be behind our expectations. We could get back on track with our budgeted figures in March,” he claimed.

### NEED FOR ONLINE TRAINING

While there are online training sessions for hotels, including one by Sarovar Hotels, Bakaya believes in traditional training methods. “I have gone through a number of online training sessions. However, in our industry, if there is a youth at a hotel, someone needs to advise him on what to do. Doing it on camera is not always the best option. While we have been doing a lot of online training sessions, we will place a strong emphasis on conventional structure. Sarovar has maintained an e-learning programme for the past 10 years. There must be a blend,” he said.

### LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

Revealing their plans, he said, “Currently, we have 45 hotel projects underway. We have committed to opening eight hotels in CY2022, allowing us to comfortably surpass the 100-hotel threshold. We are currently at 96. We have lost a couple of hotels in Africa because of the pandemic. However, we have a great property already operating in Lusaka and another opening soon in Tanzania’s Dar es Salaam. We are also exploring another hotel project in Uganda.”

He feels that the hospitality sector follows the Indian economy. “I think the economy will have a rebound similar to what we saw from 2003 to 2007. We will see an upswing in hotel business and hotel rates over the next three to five years,” he shared.

### GOVERNMENT’S ROLE

In terms of the hotel industry, Bakaya felt that the government has been patient and empathetic. “We are pitching to have the sector benefit from the infrastructure status, and we have reached out to several quarters. This would make it easier to raise funds for future hotel projects. The entire country, including tier 2 and 3 cities as well as smaller towns, has a huge demand for lodging such as hotels, resorts, and glamping. We will profit as an industry in the long run if capital becomes more widely available and payable for a longer repayment period.”

### TECHNOLOGY AND JOBS

Sarovar Hotels have adopted technology, but Bakaya does not believe it would risk jobs. “The number of physical meetings will decline, and many people will handle things online. We have also gone paperless. We have systems in place to reduce the amount of human interaction for people checking in who are concerned about physical contact. We are adopting technology based on consumer demands. Technology is not meant to replace jobs. Technology usually entails a large number of individuals working on it. The key for hotels is to ensure that there is a balance for customers between what happens on screen and physical interaction, which will remain integral to hospitality.”



# Creating benchmark standards

As an increasing number of travellers are looking for accreditation of a hotel before making bookings, especially foreign tourists, QualSTAR offers certification that helps hotels ensure guest satisfaction that translates into growth and revenue generation.



Lipla Negi



Showing promising growth, Indian travel market is expected to cross US\$ 125 billion by 2026-27. This clearly re-emphasises 'need for standardisation' for existing as well as new hotels aiming to tap into this growth. Preparation is vital for business growth.

Recognised globally in over 100 countries, QualSTAR certification supports hotels to take a lead and amp up their chances of being viewed (online) and preferred in this ever-expanding business of hospitality. In

## DID YOU KNOW?

**It is the only government-approved COVID-19 safety audit to minimise reputational risk and liability"**

fact, it is the only alternative to getting certified by a government-approved agency. Its many benefits also include helping hotels realise the total fair market value of their hotel assets for loan and sale purposes.

## GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Putting the pandemic behind them, an increasing number of Indian travellers are pinning their travels on domestic tourist destinations. Driven by a deep desire to explore and be outdoors after consecutive lockdowns, their passion for travel is also being fanned by emerging travel trends such as revenge travel, staycations, and digital detox, among others. This presents hotels and resorts in the country with an unprecedented opportunity to capitalise on the growing craze for domestic destinations.

However, it is not the same traveller anymore. Domestic travellers' expectations of hotel stays and services have changed, especially when it comes to cleanliness and hygiene. They are increasingly opting for hotels that offer the assurance of quality in every sense. Nowadays, safety and hygiene have 'unsurprisingly' pipped pricing to become the top concerns of domestic travellers. And this puts into focus the significance and value of standardisation and quality certification for a hotel.

Armed with a deep understanding of guest experience in the hospitality industry, gathered after extensive research conducted with the help of the most renowned and celebrated organisations in the world, QualSTAR helps existing as well as new hotels ensure the highest safety and service standards for an unmistakable guest experience.





**DID YOU KNOW?**

**QualSTAR is approved by the Ministry of Commerce, QCI, and NABCB.**

**WHY QUALSTAR?**



The accreditation by QualSTAR helps you rise above the average hotel category and truly stand out as the most preferred hotel by travellers. It also helps explore the vital relationships between brand promise, guest experiences, and employee behaviour.

**CUT THE QUEUE**

QualSTAR is the only standardisation of hotels in India that has been approved by the Ministry of Tourism through the process of classification, where hotels are categorised according to their star category. It is the only alternative to getting certification by a government-approved body.

Currently, there are 45,928 registered units, of which only 3,450 are classified and 42,445 are unclassified. About 3,400 units have registered requests for classification and verification with the State Nodal



**GREESH BINDRA**  
Vice President-Operations  
The Suryaa, New Delhi



**QualSTAR gives you an accreditation that is internationally recognised and helps your hotel ensure an exceptional guest experience”**

**QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT**



authority and are awaiting classification. In just one metro city, classification applications are pending for nearly 180 units which means these units are yet to be inspected and certified with pendency days exceeding an average of 200 days. In this scenario, QualSTAR is the only alternative to getting classified in real time.

To ensure safety and hygiene in the hospitality industry, the government launched a COVID-19 compliance scheme called SAATHI, where a hotel can do self-assessment and take a print out of the certificate. Although this self-assessment scheme is available free of cost, the absence of a third-party audit and assurance often fails to win the confidence and trust of frequent travellers.

Unwilling to compromise on safety and hygiene standards, travellers today do not mind going an extra



mile to hunt down hotels that have gone through the grilling process of standardisation and exhibit their 'stars' proudly and stamped by a trusted authority.

### PAR EXCELLENCE

QualSTAR is India's only hotel classification and COVID-19 compliance certification body which is approved by the Ministry of Commerce through the Quality Council of India (QCI), and the National Accredited Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB). This certification has come after almost five years of research on Indian and international standards, developing a scheme that was approved by NABCB.

The hotel classification is highly trusted and widely recognised in the hospitality industry, which directly translates into meeting guest service standards, amplifying the visibility of your property and expanding your reach to a wider range of discerning domestic as well as global tourists.

Unlike traditional classification inspections, QualSTAR undertakes an in-depth audit covering 360 degrees of hotel products, services, compliance, business practices, and business continuity. The certification begins with the application and review of statutory compliance. Before the audit, a deep dive into the hotel, the facilities it offers are reviewed on the website and physically verified during mystery audits.

The mystery audit of hotel products and services is followed by an announced audit of the heart of the house areas that support the guest services. This is followed by the verification of statutory compliance, the business processes, and guest complaints and their resolution process.

The entire audit takes almost two days and two nights and could also be extended by a day, depending on the size of the hotel and the facilities it offers. The auditing mechanism is only to improve the hotel and its performance when it comes to guest services as well as products.

### WORLD-CLASS AUDITORS

It typically takes two days and two nights for two auditors to physically audit a five-star hotel. The QualSTAR auditors are appointed after going through a rigorous assessment process. The audit team is experienced and well versed in the international standards and protocols to be followed while auditing a facility.

All the auditors come with over 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry. They have been trained on ISO 17065 requirements, auditing techniques as per ISO 19011, and as per WHO (World Health Organisation) standards. The audit team goes the extra mile to conduct objective and customised analysis of the results. This enables your standards to be on par with internationally relevant guest expectations. And more importantly, the standards become enablers

**QualSTAR, the  
govt-approved  
classification  
company, whose  
certificates  
are globally  
recognised**

### DID YOU KNOW?

**QualSTAR audit process takes at least two days and two nights for two auditors to audit a five-star hotel.**







**KUSH KAPOOR**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Roseate Hotels & Resorts**



**Keeping in mind both COVID-19 and the hygiene standards, hotels must go for this QualSTAR certification”**



**MEENA BHATIA**  
**VP & GM**  
**Le Meriden New Delhi**



**Today, it is all about the right content, social media channels, and advanced technology”**

of ultimate guest satisfaction. Taking along the in-house team, the auditors dive deep into the analysis of scores across QualSTAR parameters to get an extensive understanding of your hotel’s performance and market standing.

**AUDIT ADVANTAGE**

QualSTAR, through its international accreditation standards, offers a system that is unbiased and wholly based on technology, devoid of human intervention. It rates your property against industry standards to provide genuine ratings. At the same time, the detailed audit process helps your team identify areas of improvement and highlight the strengths.

Unlike the classification, which is valid for five years, the QualSTAR Certification is valid for two years and covers four unannounced surveillances. This is to ensure that the standards are maintained and the commitment to quality is maintained.

The criteria are followed strictly, and if any discrepancy is found, immediate action is taken by the team. From food to building, every aspect of the hotel is carefully audited. For example, the QualSTAR team even checks the mixture of the hand sanitizer used to ensure that only the WHO prescribed chemicals are used.

**COVERING ALL DIMENSIONS**

Like any other industry, third-party inspections are unarguably important for hotels to be on a path of continual improvement. At the same time, for guests, it is important to have quality assurance from a third-party certification. The QualSTAR audit covers Dimension 0 to Dimension 8 – from statutory compliance to business risks, energy reduction goals to sustainability with all stakeholders.

Moreover, there is also an emphasis on new technological advancements and making the industry’s services efficient and reliable at all times. There is no other certification available in the industry that has 360-degree coverage of all aspects and is a one-stop solution to achieving quality and proclaiming to the guests the quality assurance that the hotel has achieved. With this certification, you clearly gain a competitive advantage for your hotel and gain an unprecedented advantage in terms of brand visibility and loyalty.

Getting classified by QualSTAR brings many tangible advances, most notable being direct control over the quality and service standards, which periodic inspections as well as audits could ensure. From the promoters’ angle, the brand stands to benefit from the assured bench-marked standards, and by virtue of this, the quality of the experience of the hotel guests and their satisfaction is high.

In an industry where standards are non-negotiable criteria and form the soul and spirit of the brand, QualSTAR helps hotels maintain a brand image and values that are deeply rooted in truth and honesty, which ultimately translates into exceptional guest service and upward growth for the brand.







# Raising sight for BUSINESS RECOVERY

COVID-19 has had a significant impact, especially on hospitality industry. In such situation, industry has no alternative, but to generate creative ideas and reinvent itself.



Charmaine Fernz

In a competitive world, we have always heard of the adage, 'survival of the fittest', but this is even truer in a post-pandemic world. The hospitality industry, not just in India but globally, was majorly affected by the pandemic, which resulted in hampering the livelihoods of millions of people. A similar sentiment is expressed by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, wherein a release stated that the pace of recovery remains slow and uneven across the world regions due to varying degrees of mobility restrictions, vaccination rates, and traveller confidence.

Tourism suffered the greatest crisis on record in 2020 when international arrivals plunged by a whopping 73 per cent. This is likely to be followed by a 70 per cent and 75 per cent fall from 2019 levels in 2021. The impact was severely felt by the Indian hospitality industry, as the HVS Anarock research stated that the markets were set on a path to recover the ground lost due to the past disruptive events and supply overhang as the year 2020 started on a positive note with strong performances in the initial two months. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent travel curbs and nationwide lockdown, however, has had an unprecedented impact on the sector.

However, moving on optimistically, **Kush Kapoor**, Chief Executive Officer, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, explained, "With the impact of the pandemic lessening, we have discovered new nuances in hospitality to give our guests a satisfying experience, while keeping all hygiene and safety standards in place."

Elaborating further, **Nikhil Sharma**, Regional Director-Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, said, "A new industrial revolution is on the way. It is anticipated to have a huge impact on the hospitality industry. As a result, technological advancements continue to influence the industry and improve the customer experience. The hospitality industry has embraced technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and,



**With the impact of the pandemic lessening, we have discovered new nuances in hospitality"**

over the last few years, virtual reality (VR) applications have also become increasingly popular in the business."

## THE TECH FOCUS

With technology leading the way in the New Normal, hotels are fast adopting strategies to welcome guests and build numbers. As **Arif Patel**, Regional Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Hyatt India asserted, "In the current times, it is all about the right content, social media channels, dedicated websites, advanced technology, and online sourcing and planning tools. All of these features, together with the right channel mix and decision-making supported by data and analytics are expected to help us appeal to guests."



For the hospitality industry, it is all about three key factors which will help build guest numbers: Accelerating innovation, increasing resiliency, and witnessing growth. A recent Oracle report puts the spotlight on how hotels could more efficiently monetise and merchandise different aspects of the hotel experience by: Competing with short-term rental properties, as traveller demand for short-term rental properties increased significantly in 2020, and rethinking operations as COVID-19 forced many hotels to make tough decisions about their staffing, operations strategy, remote work plans, and changes to the guest experience.

Investments in technology were also focussed upon as 2020 accelerated a variety of changes implemented by the IT departments of hospitality businesses. As Kapoor explained, “Touchless hospitality is the new future, which is here to stay. Focusing on health and hygiene, hospitality players are opting for a contactless approach. Kapoor said, “For dining, guests book a table through an app while also surfing through the menu to order. Guests can also share their location with the hotel so that the kitchen staff can start preparing their meal order when they are en route to the hotel/restaurant.

Another option is to add items while having a meal. Finally, settling the bill through the app can be paid via several payment gateways. Kapoor added, “We have also associated with Bird Apps for delivery of laundry to the doorsteps of guests with the utmost safety, hygiene, and wellbeing through the Launderette app.”

#### A DIFFERENT APPROACH

The business environment of 2020 has created new momentum among hotel executives to rethink their notions of profitability and revenue diversification. This was thinking beyond the ordinary. Hotel rooms had to be filled with uniqueness. This is where pricing comes into the picture. Hotels’ approaches to meeting short-term guests have changed. There was a lot of focus on staycations. 2020 changed the world, but 2021 was all about adapting and making up for lost vacations while working remotely.

According to OYO Travelopedia 2021, nearly 48 per cent of Indians worked from home during the year, of which a whopping 85 per cent preferred workcations, or working away from home in a scenic location. And of these, 61 per cent took a workcation. What is more interesting? Nearly 27 per cent took a month-long workcation. Hill stations ranked top on the list of spots for these Work x Travel trips, which was followed by numerous people who visited their hometowns as well as beach destinations. Hotels are now catering to a different and evolved traveller.

Patel explained that COVID-19 has fundamentally shifted the importance of wellbeing, making it top of mind for many. At Hyatt, we are addressing this shift in new ways. For our MICE sector, adapting to hybrid events is an important way to make participation more inclusive and allow people who are not travelling to join the conversation.” There are also hybrid packages



**ARIF PATEL**  
Regional Vice  
President, Sales &  
Marketing  
Hyatt India



**Today, it is all about the right content, social media channels, and advanced technology”**



available that take the uncertainty out of organising as well as budgeting hybrid events. “We have a team to help guests navigate the technology to create a fully integrated and shared experience that makes attendees feel like they are in the same room,” Patel added.

#### THE HUMANE TOUCH

The hospitality industry, no matter what, is all about customer service. Despite the influence of technology, which has penetrated far and deep, the human touch will still exist. Sharma said, “While technology continues to transform the hospitality industry and improve the customer experience, we at Wyndham believe that the personalised touch that our team members provide cannot be replaced or replicated. By using technology to complete mundane tasks, team members have more time to spend on interaction with guests and ultimately providing unparalleled customer service. In the future, technology will increasingly interlace with traditional hotel operations in order to simplify and enhance the customer journey, but it will not replace the human touch that hospitality offers.”

Going forward, travellers will be more cautious and aware about health, safety and sanitisation, but life goes on. As they say, the travel and hospitality industries are resilient. Undoubtedly, there is no looking back for technology proliferation, but the time is now for a more strategic line of thought and a back-up plan.

As we conclude, if there is one significant lesson the pandemic has taught each one of us which is to plan and prepare for the unforeseeable future.



**NIKHIL SHARMA**  
RD-Eurasia  
Wyndham Hotels &  
Resorts



**A new industrial revolution is underway, having a huge impact on the industry”**



# Building resilience

Hotelivate will host 17th Edition of its Hotel Investment Conference-South Asia (HICSA) at Grand Hyatt, Mumbai on April 6 and 7, 2022. This edition of HICSA will be centred on resilience.

Hotelivate's annual event, Hotel Investment Conference-South Asia (HICSA), is back in Mumbai and will be held on April 6 and 7, 2022. With two of the most challenging years in recent times behind us, HICSA aims at igniting sparks of hope for the hospitality industry. It will be conducted as an exclusively in-person conference, with the aim of instilling a sense of confidence in the fraternity. The theme this year is about that journey where the collective focus is on working at it harder, trying to make it better, doing it faster, and making us all stronger. Commenting on the 17th anniversary of HICSA, **Manav Thadani**, Founder & Chairman, Hotelivate, said, "This year's edition will be unique and special in many ways, with almost 45 per cent



**MANAV THADANI**  
Founder & Chairman  
Hotelivate

of first-time speakers, another 10–15 per cent of speakers who have spoken just once before, and almost 20 per cent of speakers being inspiring women. While last year we did a hybrid version, this year, as per tradition, we are back with an in-person conference."

On the first day, the conference will feature exclusive interviews and keynote addresses from notable speakers such as Jesper Palmqvist, Area Director, APAC STR; Ritesh Agarwal, Founder and Group CEO, OYO; Aaditya Thackeray, Cabinet Minister of Tourism and Environment, Government of Maharashtra; Katerina Giannouka, President-APAC, Radisson Hotel Group; Peter Fulton, Group President-Europe, Africa, Middle East, and South-West Asia, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, and Resorts; and Haitham Mattar, MD-India, Middle East and Africa, IHG. The day will close with the 'HICSA Hotels of the Year Awards' presented by MakeMyTrip. The second day will feature many relevant panel and group discussions, as well as a few keynote sessions with industry leaders.

**“This year, as per tradition, we are back with an exclusively in-person conference”**

# Nesting with nature!

How, through our wise, holistic, and conscientious lifestyle choices such as compostable hand gloves, one can nest with nature even in the midst of urban bustle, says **Aditya Daga**, Founder, Greenware.

Why choose a holistic and conscious lifestyle? You must begin somewhere. It is better to deliver the right kickstart to your quest for a better ecosystem!

## WHERE TO START FROM?

**Know that you can make a difference:** Doing the bare minimum, such as turning off lights before leaving a room, taking shorter showers, avoiding plastic-packaged items, and reusing and recycling materials, can all contribute to a safer environment. Begin with small steps and watch how they grow into massive ones!

**Rethink your choices:** When making purchases, you must exercise caution. Before making a decision, you must think and rethink. Wouldn't a bamboo toothbrush serve the same purpose as an electric or plastic brush, with the added benefit of a safer environment?



**ADITYA DAGA**

**Say "NO" to plastics:** How hard is it to say "NO" to something that consumes our lives? It is not that difficult if you put in the proper effort. According to a study, 320,000 plastic bags choke our planet every second. You may help save Mother Earth by being a part of the solution, not the pollution. Begin by saying "NO" to single-use plastics and switching to more eco-friendly alternatives such as Greenware's compostable hand gloves. After all, we need to protect the planet for future generations.

**Learn from the facts:** Awareness is the key. The more you know about what is happening around you, the more you will learn, improve, and act! Life would have been so much better if you knew that plastics and aluminium tin cans were not the only things that could be recycled. To begin with, you can recycle food, computers, mobile phones, magazines, paint, books, batteries, paper, televisions, and a lot more.

**Learn, adapt, and educate:** Follow these easy steps to help yourself and others while also improving the ecosystem. Nothing can stop us from believing that you are and will change the world! To take a step towards going green, visit [www.getgreenware.in](http://www.getgreenware.in).



India's Most ECO-Friendly Gloves





# LEANING into Sustainability

In his new role at Accor, **Philip Mahoney** seeks to revolutionise food and beverage by bringing hyperlocal culinary menus into fold of immersive dining experience and build sustainable practices from outset.

 Lipla Negi



Accor has appointed Philip Mahoney as Vice President of F&B for India, the Middle East, Africa, and Turkey. In his 30-year career, for him, this position is particularly unique as it gives him key responsibility to drive the group's strategy in the region: making food and drink the heart and soul of each of its hotels.

Speaking about his new role and challenges, he said, "The size of the country and geographical nuances are challenging, obviously. It would be easy to just refer to India, but we know there are many variations in terms of style and diet."

So we have to get into the details of this amazing country. "Fortunately, we have identified regional specialists in each of the countries we operate in to make sure our strategic approach is applied sensibly according to regional nuances."

### AGAINST 'THROWAYISM'

Authenticity and the locale are always most important to us, and that will always remain the focus. For travellers visiting hotels, that immersion into the destination, that sense of place, is very often part of the experience people value the most, and it does not matter if you are a domestic or international visitor. Similarly, for local guests using our restaurants and bars, I think it is important that they see that international operators embrace the traditions of their environment and, more so, respect them.

We will reinforce this by really pushing hyperlocality: It is one of our key messages and we are seeing some real progress with hotels setting up partnerships with local farmers for specialised and organic produce, but also establishing micro farms either through traditional methods where they have availability of land or through vertical hydroponic farming where they do not.

We want to be 'against throwayism' and this ties in nicely with our push towards more plant-based menus and, in this, of course, we can learn a great deal from the Indian culinary scene.

The beauty of having hotels with multiple outlets, though, is that we can do both. This means that we can implement global concepts, such as KooX Asian Grill in Chennai, using local produce to present it in a more international fashion.

What we want to avoid, though, are the bland international offerings you see in so many hotel restaurants, where they do not really know what they are and have no identity at all.

### CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION

We can push 'local' and still gently suggest people in different directions to encourage them to think a little differently. Take weddings, for example: The abundance of a massive buffet is wonderful for a celebration, but how good for the planet is all the associated food waste? I think we will start to see a shift in people's attitudes in that respect, and we would like to play a



**PHILIP MAHONEY**  
VP-F&B for India, the Middle East, Africa, and Turkey, Accor



**Sustainability should be the 'chinois' through which we pass all our activity**

small part in that trend of 'conscious consumption'.

### ORDERING IN IS THE NORM

I think we have to celebrate 'ordering in'. Obviously, it has been dramatically increased by the pandemic, but it was becoming so much the norm that it had brought untraditional players such as upscale restaurants and hotels into the scene.

We have already invested in a new start-up delivery service operating in GCC countries (Kitch In), partnering with our hotels, and we see no reason why that cannot expand further afield. In the meantime, we will continue to foster the partnerships that have been built up by hotels before and during the pandemic.

### EXPERIENCE IS THE KEYWORD

It is a key part of the dining out journey as it is not just about getting some food and drink. It is the theatre involved, the sociability, the 'us-time'; whatever is driving you, it is rarely just getting some food. This we have to reimagine constantly.

How can we make it better without invading a party's privacy? How can we tell you stories without becoming a bore?

And we can bring the experience home: Meal kits do just that, transforming communal cooking into a wonderful bonding experience for people at home, transforming the joy, successes, and failures of communal cooking into an almost primal thing as we chew bones around the fire.

### EMBRACING DIGITAL PLATFORMS

We need to tell people about the experience they are missing in restaurants. We have seen a significant release of pent-up demand in several of the countries where we have a presence, but we can give that a nudge by embracing digital—our teams are getting very story-savvy and the need to tell these stories goes beyond restaurant walls onto digital platforms.

### FLAVOUR VARIATION IN DRINKS IS FUN

We have been doing some work with tea-based cocktails and mixes and pairing them with food. The sourness and bitterness you can achieve with those and with fermented drinks will undoubtedly appeal to people who like to experience more complex flavours.

So, that is a route we can explore to expose people to flavour variations. But, should we really try to do it that way? We can, of course, explore food pairing with traditional vertical drinks, and there are so many flavour combinations to discover that I think it could be fun!

### SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE

It should be the 'chinois' through which we pass all our activities. To our hyperlocal activity, we can add a range of food waste reductions. And definitely no plastic. The challenge for us comes in construction, as we do not build or own our hotels. So, we need to work with our partners and present the case for building sustainable practices from the get-go.





### < SARVAR HANS

**Vice President-Commercials  
Amritara Hotels & Resorts**  
Hans has been elevated to the position of Vice President-Commercials from National Director of S&M. Apart from sales, marketing, and revenue, Hans will now be responsible for prospective acquisitions and brand expansion.



### < RONAN FEARON

**General Manager,  
JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige  
Golfshire Resort and Spa**  
His appointment as the General Manager of the new resort will witness Ronan in an all-encompassing role responsible for positioning the hotel as a defining benchmark in luxury hospitality in the region.

### SHARAD K UPADHYAY >

**General Manager  
Crowne Plaza Greater Noida**  
He will spearhead business operations, overall execution, and business development, ensuring its growth and expansion through innovative strategies. In his last stint, Sharad was the GM of Holiday Inn Mumbai International Airport.



### FARSHID BILLIMORIA >

**Director of Revenue  
Sofitel Mumbai BKC**  
Farshid will be responsible for driving topline revenue and market share through the implementation of strategic pricing and inventory controls for the hotel, which includes the food and beverage and banqueting areas.



### < RAMNIK CHOUDHARY

**Director of Sales & Marketing  
Raffles Udaipur**  
Choudhary brings over 20 years of expertise in sales, hotel pre-openings, marketing, loyalty, revenue, and distribution to Raffles Udaipur. Previously, he served as Senior Director of Airline Sales and Business Support at Accor Hotels.



### < NITIN VARSHNEY

**Dir. of Engineering, Sheraton  
Grand Bengaluru Whitefield  
Hotel & Convention Centre**  
He will be responsible for the efficient operations of Engineering, as well as achieving the highest levels of guest satisfaction, sustainability, and safety standards. He will also plan the next 10 years' investment.

### ADITI DAS >

**Assistant Director Human  
Resources,  
JW Marriott Kolkata**  
Aditi has been the driving force behind flawless HR systems that have been adopted and lauded for their efficacy. With a varied work list, she will be in charge of overseeing the daily operations of the HR office.



### AMAAN KIDWAI >

**Area Manager, Welcomhotels-  
Northern Region & GM,  
Welcomhotel Sheraton**  
He will oversee the brand in the northern region with nine operating properties, including Welcomhotel Katra, Chail, Shimla, Amritsar, Pahalgam, Mussoorie, Chandigarh, as well as Welcomhotel Dwarka and Welcomhotel Sheraton, Delhi.



### < RAVINDER SINGH PANWAR

**Executive Chef  
The Westin Hyderabad  
MindSpace**  
He will overlook the entire food concept that runs throughout the property. A seasoned chef with over 15 years of experience in the hospitality sector, he has previously worked globally and across India.



### < JOYDEEP ACHARYA

**Executive Housekeeper  
JW Marriott Kolkata**  
Aacharya will be key in improving guest experience, understanding how departmental activities affect the hotel's financial goals, and contributing his expertise in financial administration, operating statements, as well as payroll progress reports.





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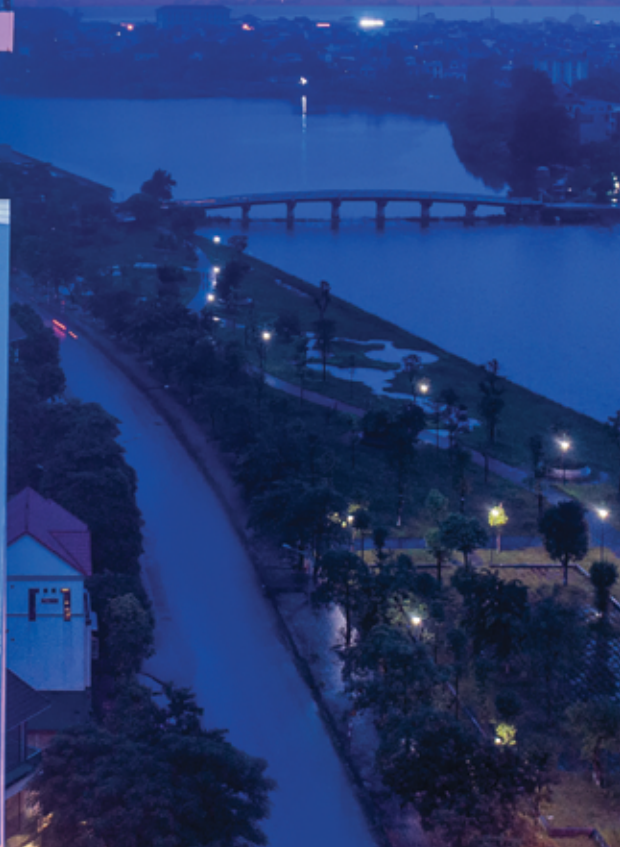


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