

Hotel TALK

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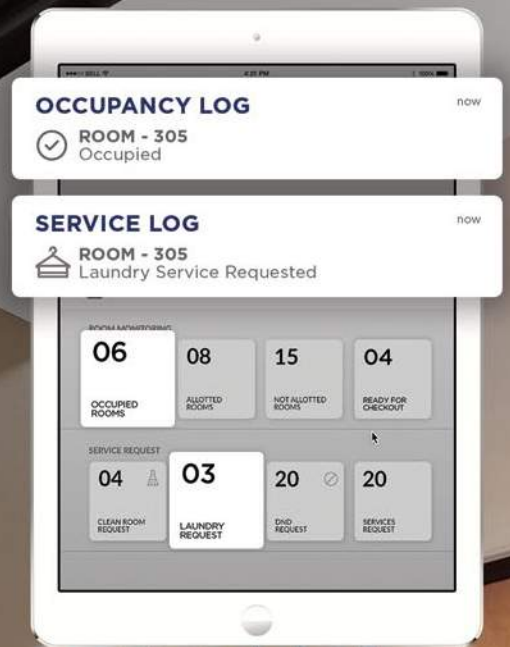
Pages 60 | ₹20

**SAURABH
RAI** sees
INDIA
spearhead
**BEYOND
GREEN'S**
growth

SUDEEP JAIN
outlines IHG's
expansion plans

Know Instantly: Room Occupancy & Guest Requests

LIVE CENTRALIZED MONITORING



Food wastage: A moral and economic issue



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Instituting researched methodology to measure food wastage and recording reduction would be a source of very useful management information & learning

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s the hospitality industry continues to drive unprecedented growth, organizations seem to be completely focused on inventory expansion to stay ahead. Such phenomenal growth does not come without concerns that impact society both socially and environmentally. It is imperative for hotels to recognize and address some critical issues on priority, and responsibilities regulated.

One big issue is that of food wastage, a tragedy of immense magnitude. Global numbers are most disturbing and we need to bridge the gap between the hunger index and wastage levels. Reports suggest that approximately one billion tonnes of food is squandered by households, retail sector and food service establishments — all this, while millions of people go hungry every day. Sadly, approximately 28 percent of the waste is generated by the food service enterprise including restaurants. Such wastage also impacts climate & nature, the economy and overall development.

The thought of waste reduction must become a philosophy that prevails over every process in our vast food service industry. It would be very encouraging to see hotel brands take the lead and institute best practices like efficiency in ordering of raw material; use of only seasonal produce; effective storage & distribution; menu planning; reduced buffet displays & portion control; and educating customers to eliminate plate wastage. Instituting researched methodology to measure wastage and recording reduction would be a source of very useful management information and learning. More than an economic loss, food wastage must be recognized as dereliction of conscience towards humanity and our planet.

Dear readers, I would like to thank you for your continued patronage and sincerely look forward to your comments and feedback.

Cheers,
Sunil Ghadiok

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Suryagarh Jaisalmer

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36 Banquets big for hotel revenue

There has been a significant shift in hotel design, with banquets evolving from ancillary spaces to central elements in hotel planning.



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Indian hotel industry is expected to witness healthy revenue growth in next fiscal, supported by steady domestic demand, reveals CRISIL Ratings analysis.

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



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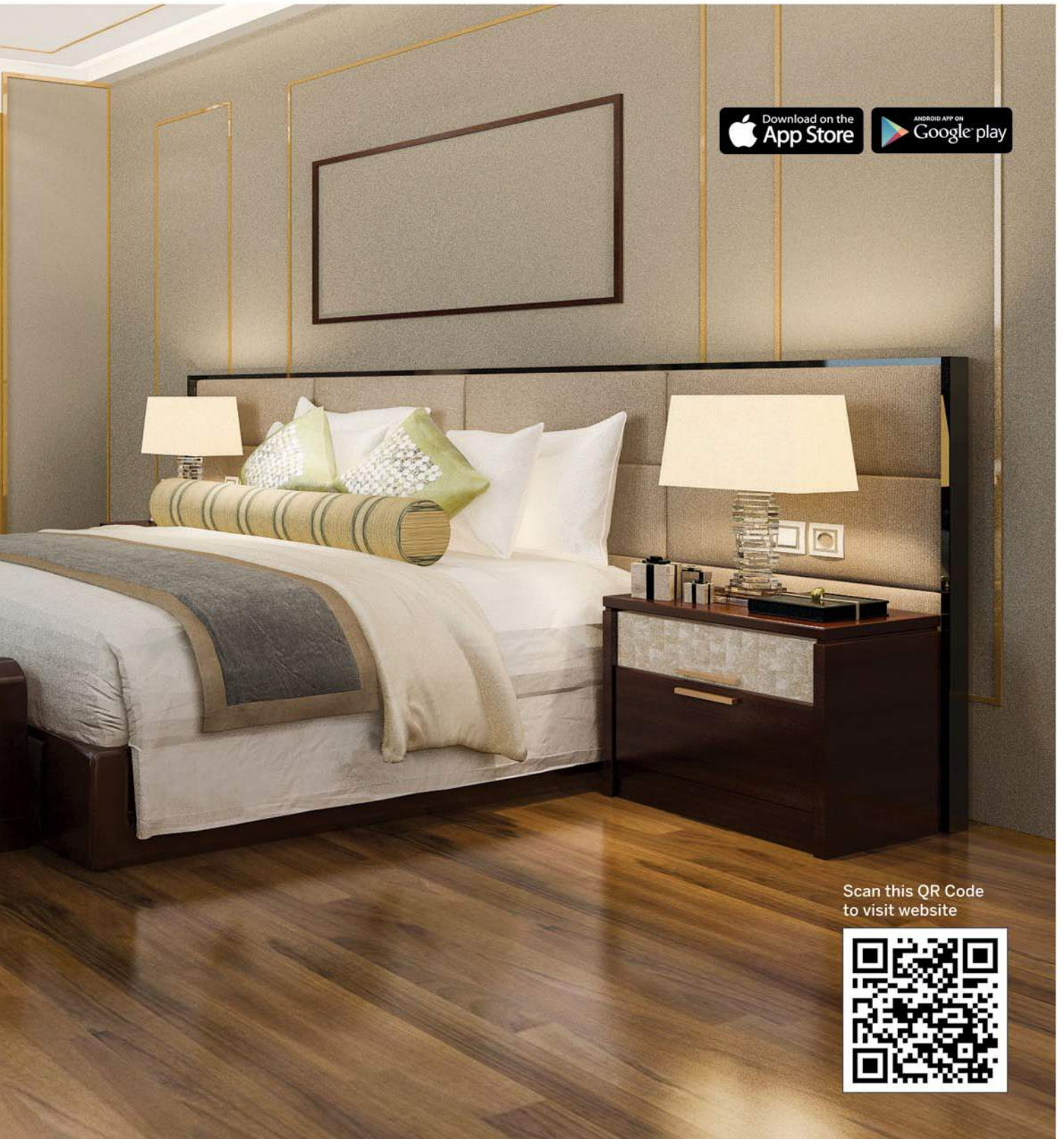
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Strategic moves and roadmaps

Outlining IHG's vision for South West Asia, **Sudeep Jain** avers the company is poised for robust growth in the region.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI





Q: What are short-term & long-term plans for IHG in South West Asia? Do you anticipate any key challenges?

A: India is a crucial market for IHG, and we have been experiencing growth in the country for several years. At present, we operate 46 hotels in India spanning five core brands. Looking ahead, our current pipeline indicates that we will double our portfolio in the next two to three years, adding 49 hotels with over 7,600 keys to our offerings in India. We are expanding our presence in tier I and secondary cities in the country to meet the increasing demand for quality, branded accommodation.

The company plans to expand its Holiday Inn brand family in India, focusing on domestic travel, alongside premium brands such as Crowne Plaza and voco, and luxury brands such as InterContinental, as well as its premium brands.



We are currently in discussions to add more hotels to gateway cities and resort locations in India.”

The InterContinental brand has potential for growth due to its familiarity with both domestic and international guests, and its legacy as the largest luxury hospitality brand globally, pioneering luxury travel for 75 years. We are currently in discussions to add more InterContinental hotels to gateway cities and resort locations in India, to expand the brand's presence in the country.

In 2023, five voco hotels were signed across key destinations, with the first in Jim Corbett set to open in H2 2024. The company is also introducing new global brands to India, including Regent Hotels and Resorts, Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants, and Vignette Collection and Garner, with the right partners and locations.

The hospitality industry faces significant challenges in attracting skilled talent, as many individuals do not view it as a viable



in tier II & III cities where there is an increasing demand for quality accommodations.

IHG's strategy in India focuses on meeting market needs and leveraging global brands. Over 80 per cent of its global portfolio is franchised, benefitting both IHG and owners. This model is best suited for mature markets with experienced owners or those favouring franchising. IHG maintains a strong managed estate in India but is open to partnering with owners on both franchise and managed models.

Q: Tell us about IHG's efforts in sustainability and the success rate of its implementation?

A: At the core of our culture and business is the commitment to operate responsibly and sustainably. Our 'Journey to Tomorrow' campaign, launched in 2021, is a 10-year action plan aligned with our purpose of 'True Hospitality for Good' and the UN SDGs. This roadmap challenges us to promote workplace well-being, diversity, and human rights, while taking care of our planet by reducing waste, CO2 emissions, and improving millions of lives



The IHG Skills Academy is an online learning platform that offers free education, courses, and opportunities for individuals to build confidence and become employment-ready."

career option. To maintain industry growth, the sector must position itself appropriately within the workforce, especially targeting millennial and Gen Z segments.

Q: What is IHG's strategy for expanding its portfolio in India, particularly in tier II cities? Would you consider franchising for hotel operations?

A: We are committed to long-term growth in India, strategically focusing on expanding our portfolio across key cities, including secondary markets. Currently, our India portfolio comprises 46 hotels across five core brands—InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Six Senses. We are expanding across key markets, from 10 to 15 new hotel signings across our brands in 2023 alone. Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, which constitute 75 per cent of our operating portfolio and majority of our pipeline, are pivotal to this strategy, especially



Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts



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in our communities. We have implemented IHG Green Engage, an online environmental management platform, which assists our hotels in measuring, reporting, and managing energy, water, and waste usage, thereby minimising environmental impact, while reducing utility costs. We are also undertaking initiatives to eliminate single-use plastic items, implementing AI-based technology to reduce food waste, and collaborating with local stakeholders to address water sustainability issues in high-risk areas.

Q: Are there plans for a hospitality institution under IHG?

A: Our growth has been supported by a robust talent agenda. We have implemented many initiatives to develop internal talent and provide training for external talent. IHG has launched the IHG Academy in partnership with local education and community providers, to improve the employability of India's hospitality workforce. The IHG Skills Academy is an online learning platform that offers free education, courses, and opportunities for individuals to build confidence and become employment-

ready. The initiative aims to address future skilling challenges in the hospitality industry.

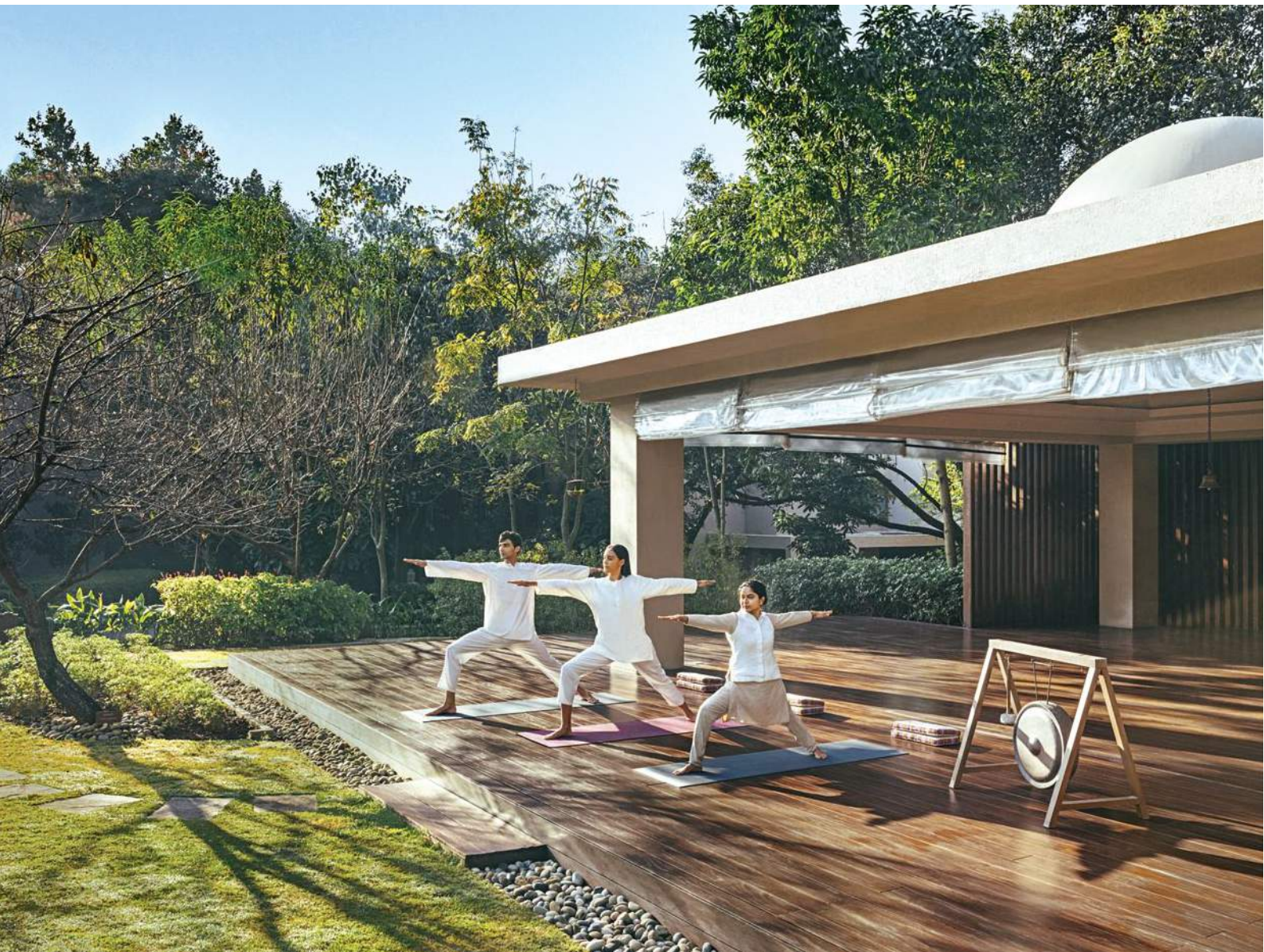
We also offer the 'RISE' programme, providing career development opportunities for women leaders aspiring to become general managers.

Q: Are you rethinking strategies in hotel design, related technology & operations to include Gen Z influences for the future?

A: IHG is investing in new technology to enhance the guest experience. Our cloud-based platform, IHG Concerto, integrates core hotel applications, allowing for seamless integration and enhancing the guest, owner, and colleague experience. Concerto allows for regular releases with new functionality at a pace and scale.

Guests can select add-ons and customise their stays, with prices adjusted based on chosen attributes. The ongoing investment in cloud-based technology accelerates the rollout of digital enhancements, improving the guest experience and ensuring safety and security of customers.

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Tech stirs hospitality education

Carlos Díez de la Lastra, CEO, Les Roches, underlines Artificial Intelligence, sustainability and entrepreneurship as top trends shaping hospitality education.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

Q: Post-COVID, hotel chains have adopted employee rationalisation strategy. Your thoughts on this?

A: With employers aiming to hire fewer staff, it does leave young hospitality students in a precarious position. The prospects for these aspiring professionals become competitive as they face the challenge of entering an industry that is undergoing significant transformation. The need for skilled workers remains crucial, but with fewer positions available, competition intensifies. It becomes imperative for these students to adapt and equip themselves with diverse skillsets to enhance their employability in this evolving landscape. They must seek out internships and practical experiences to gain an edge over their peers and demonstrate their value to potential employers.

“

Experiential learning is becoming increasingly important in hospitality education”

Q: Institutes are collaborating with hotel chains for mentorship programmes. Will it address the issue of industry talent crunch?

A: Through mentorship programmes, students can learn directly from seasoned professionals, acquiring insights into the intricacies of the hospitality industry that go beyond textbooks. This hands-on approach not only enhances their skills but also equips them with a deeper understanding of industry trends and challenges. Such partnerships often lead to internships and job placements, opening doors for students to kickstart their careers in reputable hotel chains.

Q: What are the global trends in hospitality education that you foresee shaping the industry?

A: Firstly, the integration of technology is revolutionising the way students learn and interact with the field. With virtual reality simulations and online platforms, learners can gain practical experience and access resources from anywhere in the world. Secondly, sustainability has become a paramount concern in hospitality education. Institutions are incorporating courses on eco-friendly practices, emphasising responsible tourism and encouraging students to develop innovative solutions for minimising environmental impact. Furthermore, experiential learning is becoming increasingly important in hospitality education. Students are encouraged to join internships and projects to gain hands-on experience and develop practical skills.

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Luxurious experiences drive growth

Saurabh Rai, EVP, South Asia, ME & Africa, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, envisions India leading the growth of Beyond Greens.

WORDS BY **SURBHI SHARMA**

Q: What are your short-term and long-term plans for South Asia region? Do you see a higher demand for luxury stays or experiences?

A: We have been in India for nearly 22 years now and India holds a dear spot within the Preferred Travel Group. Currently, we boast a portfolio of over 30 hotels across the South Asian region, including India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, among others. Our short-term goals are two-fold. Firstly, we have noticed an uptick

in luxury travel trends within the industry over the past couple of years. Our Legend Collection, representing our top-tier ultra-luxury properties within the world of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, has experienced a surge in growth over the past two to three years. From last year to this year, we have witnessed a 10 per cent rise in portfolio size—roughly 100 hotels worldwide. Therefore, we are excited about the opportunity to develop and expand the Legend Collection portfolio in the region.



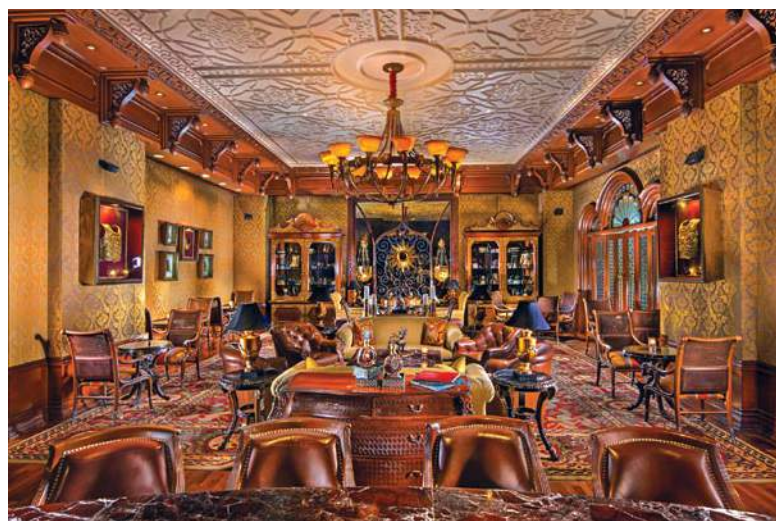
an exciting opportunity for us, and we are tracking developments in these destinations.

Q: Are you rethinking your marketing and operations to appeal to Gen Z?

A: Understanding and engaging with Gen Z can be challenging. It is evident this generation places little emphasis on ownership of material possessions. Instead, they prioritise investing in experiences. Gen Z has made it clear that they allocate a portion of their disposable income to social experiences and travel. This presents an opportunity for us to address. Our role, as a luxury brand, is to engage, collaborate, and discuss with them to understand how we can tailor the luxury hospitality experience to appeal to Gen Z.

Q: Future-aligned skilling is another area of concern. What is your brand doing to overcome this?

A: Future-aligned skilling is not merely



In the short-term, expansion remains of critical importance to us. One of our commitments is to increase the market share of our existing partner hotels. So, our focus is not solely on achieving a specific number of expansions, but rather expanding our reach, while maximising our contribution to our partner hotels' business shares.

Q: How do you want to enhance your portfolio in the South East region by tapping unexplored regions?

A: India, as a destination, offers numerous emerging circuits. We are monitoring and studying destinations such as Madhya Pradesh, and the strategies implemented by the central and state government tourism departments for their growth. This presents



Saurabh Rai, Executive VP, South Asia, Middle East & Africa, Preferred Hotels & Resorts

an option for luxury hotel brands; it is a necessity, given the disruptions post-COVID. Traditionally, the industry has been slow to adopt new technologies. However, it must now leapfrog and become early adopters.

We dedicated 2019 and 2020 to developing our thoughts, strategies, and launched mission-driven sustainability brand called Beyond Green in April 2021. Beyond Green is a sister brand of Preferred Hotels & Resorts and operates with a focus on sustainability. We started with 25 founding members and have since grown to close to 65 members worldwide.

Q: Beyond Green has carved a niche for itself. Talk about the response and feedback from your patrons?

A: The mission of Beyond Green is to unite a community of pioneering leaders and trailblazers in sustainability within the travel industry, including hoteliers and operators. We do not set hard targets in terms of numbers to attain, instead, our focus is on identifying deeply aligned individuals and organisations committed in sustainable luxury experiences.

Our evaluation process is structured around 50 objective criteria aligned with SDGs, which serve as the foundation for our standards. Every potential Beyond Green member must undergo a pre-joining sustainability audit inspection. This inspection covers three pillars: environment, culture, and community.

Q: India is a potential market for Beyond Green. Do we see an expansion in its India portfolio this year?

A: The growth of Beyond Green is



“

Our guiding principle is to seek out hotel brands that excel in experience curation, always staying at cutting edge of industry.”



spearheaded by India and we are anticipating expanding into other regional destinations that align well with our mission, such as Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives.

Q: From marketing to operations, there has been a shift towards ‘experience’ – how does your brand finalise potential associations or partners?

A: For us, experiences have become a prominent business driver. But in the world of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, Preferred Hotel Group, and now Beyond Green, experiences have been at the forefront. Our focus is on delivering a sense of local luxury and embracing the destination, including its cuisine, culture, and more. We achieve this by expressing these elements through the perspective of independent regional hotel brands and luxury brands.

Many global brands have had to pivot or acquire experiential brands to keep up. Our vision is to continue expanding and fostering new partnerships. One of the most unique aspects of Preferred Hotel Group and Preferred Hotels & Resorts as the largest independent brand in the world is our glocal approach. We are a global brand, headquartered in California.

Q: Do you engage with travel trade, per se, regarding the numbers from India?

A: We have expanded our capabilities to cater to various segments of outbound travel bookings from India. Recently, we bolstered our team on the ground by adding two more sales leaders exclusively focused on the Indian market. Their primary task is to cultivate strong relationships with Indian outbound travel agents and secure a larger share of business from these travellers for our luxury hotels worldwide.

HT

Smart solutions transforming hotel's milieu

BuildTrack offers solution that increase efficiency in hotels and enables sustainable living by optimising energy usage.

WORDS BY **AMITA PANDEY**

In today's fast-paced world, where the ubiquity of technology has hedged reality, the hospitality industry has also been transformed by the same. Hotels and their allied industries are eager to elevate the guest experiences by streamlining the management and miscellaneous operations using solution-based technology. BuildTrack's Smart Hotel Automation system is a tool designed to enhance the guest experience, while simultaneously improving the management of the hotel properties.

It is designed to streamline various aspects of hotel management & operations—from indoor and outdoor panels for guest rooms, keycard-based control, centralised monitoring

of rooms to energy efficiency. The system provides guests with the luxury to control via smart-touch switches, keypads, and smartphone-based control for their rooms.

Sustainable solutions

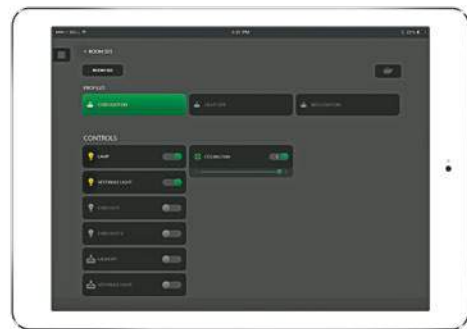
BuildTrack's energy efficiency solution targets the highest electricity—consuming assets for optimising energy usage, reducing costs and CO₂ footprint. The Smart App by BuildTrack provides centralised and scheduled-based control of AC units in office space or buildings. It is integrated with smart meters and offers current transformers that provide monitoring of energy consumption.

Innovative solutions

BuildTrack offers a centralised application for monitoring their chain of hotels across the globe, so they can be managed effectively. The platform links all the rooms together to track occupancy, room status, and service requests. This feature uses room numbers of the facility without occupant details.

Safety & security solutions

BuildTrack allows central monitoring of safety (smoke, gas leak) and security sensors (intrusion, glass break) across the property. These tools assure guests that their safety is prioritised, allowing them to relax and enjoy their time sans worries. **HT**



“

BuildTrack allows monitoring of safety and security sensors thereby, ensuring a swift and coordinated response

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Design Thinking Bridging the industry education gap

Smeetha Guha, Dean, Hospitality and Management Studies, Indian School of Hospitality, emphasises for design thinking solutions that integrate education with evolving industry demands.



In a time when the hospitality industry is one of the key drivers of worldwide economic progress, it confronts a significant challenge: a widening talent gap, magnified by changing consumer behaviors and rapid technological advancements. This critical disconnect between the industry's demands and the output of educational institutions threatens to stifle innovation and erode competitiveness. With the World Travel & Tourism Council forecasting the creation of 100 million new jobs worldwide in the next decade, it is crucial to address this talent



shortage with strategies that focus on human needs and aspirations.

Despite the fact that the hospitality industry is dynamic and stands out for its energy and constant evolution, it is still seeing a significant decline in interest among the youth. Recent trends indicate a worrying 10–12 per cent annual decrease in student enrollments in hospitality-related studies. This alarming trend points to a deep rift between the industry's vibrancy and its perception among the younger generation.

Interactions with high school students across India reveal that 95 per cent overlook hospitality as a top career choice. This gap in perception leads to a challenge in attracting the talent necessary to lead in today's experience-driven economy. Hospitality education often finds itself perceived more



“

To attract new talent to the hospitality sector, it is essential to elevate its perception beyond traditional views.”

as niche vocational training than the foundational pillar it truly is.

It is clear that addressing the hospitality industry's talent gap demands innovative strategies. This situation calls for a solution rooted in design thinking, a methodology that emphasises empathy, innovation, and a deep understanding of human needs to align educational outputs with the industry's evolving demands.

Acknowledging these challenges, it becomes essential to implement strategic interventions that realign hospitality education with the industry's evolving needs.

Enhancing industry-academia collaboration

Initiating strong ties between academia and the hospitality industry, coupled with a focus

on technological empowerment, stands at the forefront of evolving hospitality education. Jointly developing curricula that mirror the sector's real-world demands enables students to gain advanced, applicable skills, preparing them for leadership and innovation. Crucially, mirroring the IT industry's successful model from the 1990s, there is a significant opportunity for hospitality businesses to sponsor and invest in educational tech labs and simulation environments.

For the hospitality sector to flourish, it is crucial to view investments in education as pivotal for the industry's progression. Such strategic educational investments promise to enhance collaboration between the hospitality industry and academic circles, ensuring



By promoting educational model that values empathy, collaboration & innovation, we lay groundwork for more dynamic hospitality sector.”



the development of a talent pool equipped to navigate and excel in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Embrace an interdisciplinary approach

Merging liberal education principles with hospitality studies introduces an interdisciplinary approach that dismantles traditional academic boundaries. This strategy enriches the hospitality curriculum with insights from business, technology, psychology, and sustainability, preparing students for the increasingly interconnected nature of today's global economy. Such a comprehensive educational model cultivates a workforce adept in critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability—

skills that are indispensable in navigating the complexities of the hospitality industry and beyond.

Furthermore, the hospitality industry, with its global reach and economic significance, serves as an ideal backdrop for a foundational business course. Students not only learn about the intricacies of service and experience design but also gain insights into managing operations, financial planning, and strategic marketing in a real-world context. This holistic view, underscored by practical experience and theoretical knowledge, prepares graduates not just for careers within hospitality but for leadership roles in any sector, emphasizing the versatility and depth of their education.

Elevate the perception of hospitality careers

To attract new talent to the hospitality sector, it is essential to elevate its perception beyond traditional views. The hospitality industry should be showcased as dynamic, innovative, and rewarding, reflecting its true nature and the breadth of opportunities it offers. A field ripe with opportunities for career growth in areas like digital marketing, sustainable management, event planning and global tourism to name a few. By showcasing the industry's embrace of cutting-edge technology and its dedication to sustainability and creating memorable experiences, we can highlight the diverse career paths available.



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INSP20D	230VAC 50HZ	500	296x370x75mm	Inbuilt	275x350mm	Inbuilt	4.5Kg
INS2BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1000	800X400X100mm	Inbuilt	787X387mm	Inbuilt	9.700Kg
INS3BRA	230VAC 50HZ	1500	1200X500X82mm	Inbuilt	1205X505mm	Inbuilt	25.338Kg

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Recent trends indicate a promising outlook for those in hospitality, with managerial positions seeing salary increases of up to 20 per cent in some regions over the past five years. The industry needs to focus on work-life balance, including flexible working hours and comprehensive wellness programmes, which would add to its allure. Moreover, showcasing the sector's forefront position in adopting new technologies and sustainable practices we could shift the narrative which in turn would attract the right talent who are not just looking for a job but also aspire for meaningful career where they can make a real impact.

The way forward: A unified vision for hospitality excellence

As we envision a future where the hospitality industry thrives, integrating design thinking into our strategies becomes crucial. This means not just addressing the talent gap but doing so in a way that deeply considers the desires, expectations, and aspirations of potential employees and is viable for the employers. Through empathy, collaboration, and innovation, we can build educational models and career paths that truly resonate with the next generation, ensuring the sector's long-term vitality and growth.

This framework emphasizes understanding and addressing the real needs and aspirations of both the industry and its future professionals. By promoting an

educational model that values empathy, collaboration, and innovation, we lay the groundwork for a more dynamic and resilient hospitality sector. HT

About the author

Smeetha Guha has been instrumental in devising and implementing numerous training initiatives, with emphasis on leadership training and organisational development. She has over 28 years of professional expertise and currently serves as Dean, Hospitality and Management Studies, Indian School of Hospitality.

(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)

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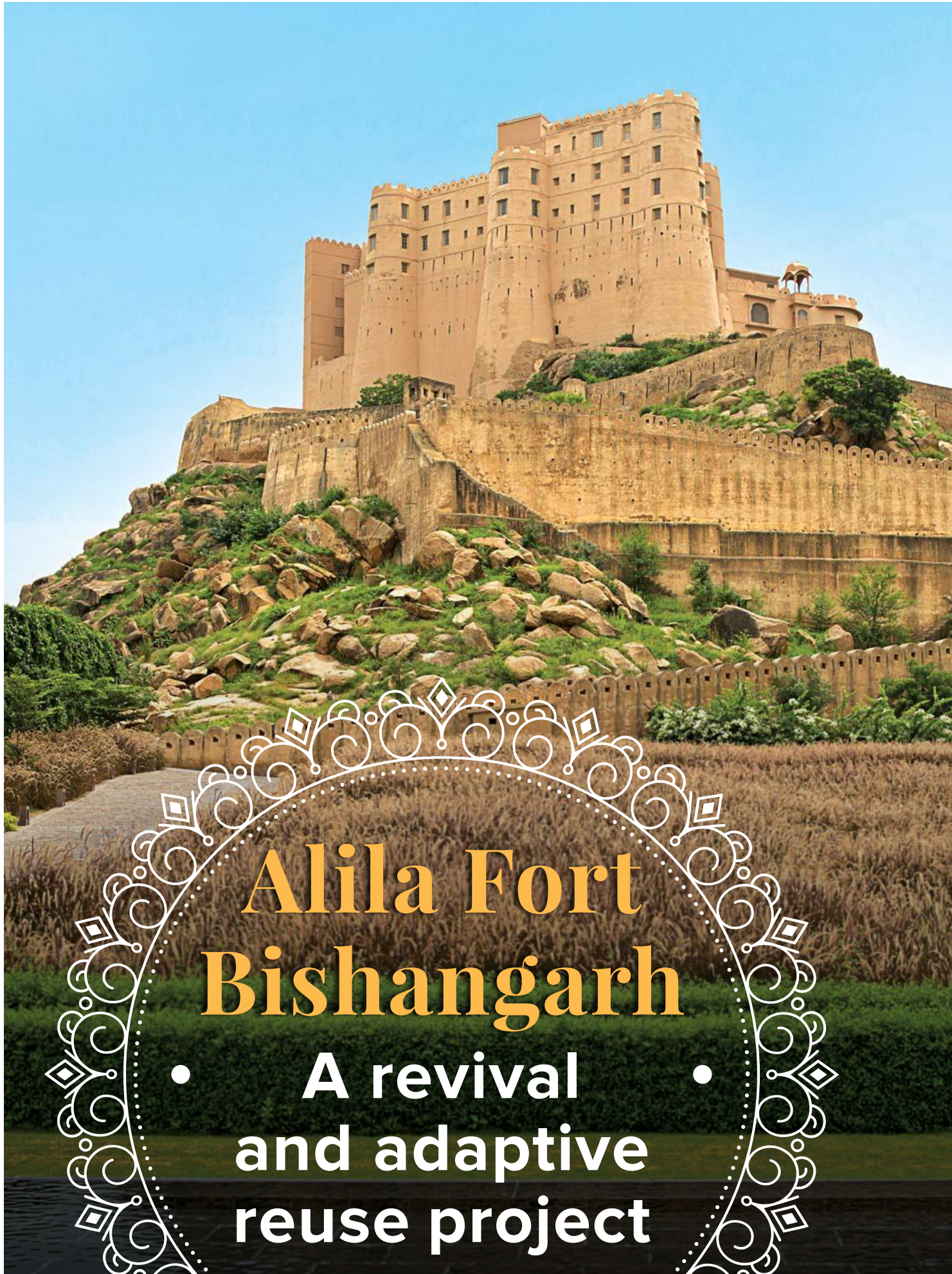
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Alila Fort Bishangarh

• **A revival
and adaptive
reuse project** •



Taking cues from what was found in the ruins, the interior is an enthralling dialogue between the age-old design methods and newer ideas of architecture & technology.

WORDS BY RITU & SANDEEP KHANDELWAL

As a team of ‘vernacular’ homegrown Architects and Interior designers from Jaipur, in practice for 30 years now, we have also been deeply involved in art and culture, poetry, Indian classical music, wildlife, and nature. We share a passion for preserving Indian aesthetics and heritage and remain sensitive to the humane aspect of design including an affinity towards local artisans and craftsmen. All this embedded in our love for India, its ancient wisdom, diversity and everything that it stands for. This truly drives our design approach which includes deep research and minute detailing.

Getting involved in the fort revival and design project

Clearly a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us, getting involved in the revival of an abandoned fort in the village of Bishangarh near Jaipur. It began a decade ago when my husband Sandeep and I had to compete with an accomplished French architect to prepare a proposal for the conversion of a warrior fort into a well-equipped luxury heritage hotel. With limited experience in handling a great heritage structure, it was all about sheer enthusiasm and getting immersed into deep rooted research of Indian culture and communities including local crafts and building techniques, and modern aspirations of society. It was also about intruding into the kingdom of thousands of bats and monkeys that ruled the property. It took us over a week to figure out the position of rooms, public areas, intermediate horizontal and vertical circulation, and service areas to be able to make it into a usable space. We seem to have got it right, to be awarded the project. From there on it became a tireless journey of research, documentation, measurements, and design development.

Design ethos – architectural

Design vocabulary here, fully belongs to the original structure. Ideas of the past remain encapsulated in a way that serves modern needs best. Taking cues from what was found in the ruins; finishes were derived, mostly from in and around the area. Local marble, granite, carpets, fabrics, artefacts, lighting and furniture make this fort an authentic and sustainable reincarnation of the past. All window and entrance portals, arches and columns, railings and latticed (Jaali) screens, turrets, and walls, are fully in sync with the original structure. Broken elements were recreated, finishes were emulated, and ruined pieces were reused. The architecture resonates with the Jaipur Gharana style where the influence of the Rajput, Mughal and British elements is seen together. A perfect example of this is seen in the property, where a Tudor and a cusped arch happen together.

The design is sparse and simple with judiciously weaved-in features of the Rajput elements. One could say it is an enthralling dialogue between the age-old design methods and newer ideas of architecture and technology.

Design ethos – interiors

Interiors respond to the fort’s inherent character, offering luxury through space, uncluttered and Spartan effect, yet judiciously weaving in attractive Rajasthani



With neutral walls, not-so-ornate furniture; the hand-crafted accents bring luxury and refined subtlety to the spaces



elements such as Jaali screen work, hand-painted frescoes, traditional thikri on walls, Tarkashi decorative objects, metal Chhitai on furniture and block printed pure cotton fabrics with rounded-off edges in the entire wall surfaces to smoothen the harshness of the structure.

Niches mirror the style of the arches present in the property. Doors replicate traditional designs found in Rajasthan, but all are customized here with iron nails and lion-faced knockers. Corridor wall scones feature metallic jaali work resulting in an articulated dispersal of light while an embroidered metal cladding (metal Chhitai) is used on select

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Ritu & Sandeep Khandelwal
Co-founders & Principal Architects
Sthapaty Architects



Simple things like furniture layouts, floor laying, marking of shafts, handicapped friendly access to main dining and some rooms were tedious on-site processes



furniture pieces and decorative walls. With neutral walls, not-so-ornate furniture, and muted interiors; these hand-crafted accents bring luxury and refined subtlety to the spaces. Natural Teak furniture is customized as a reflection of native vernacular style with touches of both British colonial and modern. Cotton and linen in nuanced colors and traditional patterns have been used.

With 59 rooms having 22 different types of layouts, a very big challenge was to incorporate central air conditioning and still retain the old charm of the fort. Having found old sleeper wood in some turrets of the fort, timber from Jodhpur was incorporated in the ceilings of all areas cleverly concealing services. Interiors differentiated from the

prototype Heritage language made it “Surprisingly different”.

Challenges and ground realities: plugging in services

Immense challenges were overcome, from constructing a road to reach the fort, discovering and solving the mysterious puzzle that existed within the structure, finding circulation through 3m thick walls, deciphering the ruins that existed to finally making this organic structure into a fully equipped boutique hotel! Simple things like furniture layouts, floor laying (its start points and direction of stone), marking of shafts (which never fell in place), HVAC, Locating and making a working vertical circulation scheme, handicapped friendly access to main dining and some rooms

were tedious on-site processes.

What makes it different is its immaculately detailed servicing for the hospitality business. With 600 sq ft rooms and 5 fixture bathrooms, 4 elevators, 3 staircases, 5 Food & Beverage outlets, a 3-level fully equipped kitchen and central air-conditioning the property maintains breezy corridors, an open to sky central courtyard and a panoramic 360 degree view.

It has been a work of passion and endurance; a baby born a decade back, and matured into a stunning and beautiful address for the Alila Group in 2018.



(The views expressed are solely of the authors. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)



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Creativity, innovation ride high AT AISSMS CHMCT

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

Atithya 2024, a culinary contest, hosted by AISSMS College of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, attracted 35 colleges from Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru. The event featured diverse competitions, such as the Budding Chef challenge, Cocktail Adventure, and Vines & Vases competition. It nurtured the entrepreneurial spirit through Seed Story, where participants presented start-up ideas in the hospitality sector. Intellectual prowess was tested in Turn the Tables, a debate on socio-political topics, and Match Thy Wits, a quiz programme.



The gala dinner and awards night, themed 'Champs Élysées-the Allure of the French Boulevard', was the highlight, with guests, including **Malojiraje Chhatrapati**, Secretary, AISSM Society, along with **Smt. Madhurimaraje Chhatrapati, Ashwin Kotnis**, IPS, IGP, Tamil Nadu, Chief Guest and Chef **Ajay Chopra**, Guest of Honour. **Anand Chordia**, Director, Suhana Spices also graced the occasion. The event featured the release of a commemorative Coffee Table book *The Spice Route*, encapsulating recipes based on the World Record of 100 curries awarded by the World Book of Records, London. This immortalized the memories and achievements of Principal **Dr Sonali Jadhav**, faculty members, and students.

The Institute, during this event, also announced a new BBA - Culinary Management programme starting from this academic year. It would be the right choice for all those who aspire to make their careers as chefs on a global platform.

Under the Parisian-themed ambience, participants forged bonds of camaraderie. IHM Kolkata lifted the Champions' Trophy for the third consecutive time. Atithya 2024 left an indelible mark, fostering friendship and igniting a new wave of creativity and innovation in the hospitality industry. **HT**

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Banquets in spotlight

There has been significant shift in hotel design, with banquets evolving from ancillary spaces to central elements in hotel planning.

WORDS BY **SAKSHI SINGH**

Hotel design has witnessed a drastic change in the past decade. Banquets were an afterthought for most of the hotels built at the turn of the millennium, but things have changed radically with banquets taking centre stage during the conceptualisation of a hotel. The common practice in hospitality circles was that if you have surplus space in the property, add a banquet, which would lead to an additional source of revenue and help in better utilisation of the land. Hoteliers soon realised that a banquet or an event space does not necessarily have to be an attachment, it can be a differentiator, if planned properly, and can help in diversifying sales. “Banqueting revenue can help stabilise a hotel’s income, particularly during periods of seasonal fluctuations in room occupancy. While room bookings may vary throughout the year, events such as weddings, conferences, and corporate functions provide a more consistent source of income,” **Ashish Jatia**, Executive Director, Rhythm Hospitality, said. The wedding market in India is estimated



Ashish Jatia

Executive Director, Rhythm Hospitality

“*Banqueting revenue can help stabilise a hotel’s income, particularly during periods of seasonal fluctuations in room occupancy*”



Sarbendra Sarkar

Founder & MD, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

“*Banqueting business is very important, especially in key destination wedding markets such as Jaipur*”

to have touched US\$75 billion in 2023, with the cost of the event space along with allied services such as catering and decoration accounting for the bulk of the expenses. On the other hand, the MICE market has been clocking double-digit growth for the past couple of years. A combined multi-billion market of wedding space and MICE forced hotels to focus on designing flexible and functional banquets. “The banqueting business is important, especially in key destination wedding markets such as Jaipur. Depending on the location, the segment contributes 15 to 30 per cent to the overall revenue of a hotel. Additionally, having banquets located on the ground floor with access to garden spaces or lawn areas is immensely advantageous, especially for weddings and social functions,” **Sarbendra Sarkar**, Founder and Managing Director, Cygnett Hotels & Resorts, said..

When a banquet space is not designed along with the hotel, several niggling issues become apparent when the banquet is made functional at a later stage. For instance, not taking into

consideration the utility area required to host a large gathering often impacts the functionality of the banquet space. Similarly, the distance and capacity of the parking space can affect the demand for a banquet, especially in the case of high-end properties. “The banqueting design should consider aspects such as closeness to kitchens for glitch-free F&B service and adequate space for guests to move around so that an event or a wedding can be conducted smoothly,” Sarkar explained.

An important distinction to be made, while conceptualising a hotel is the kind of events the property would be primarily targeting. If a hotel is situated in a business district, the flagship event space should be targeted at M!CE events and the aesthetics and design should reflect that. “Hotels across locations should include banqueting spaces in their initial design plans to maximise revenue from weddings and social events. However, the extent of inclusion should align with market demand, location-specific



Amit Raman

General Manager, Radisson Blu Pune Hinjawadi



With innovative tech integration, our banquet spaces can effortlessly handle different event requirements”

factors, and the hotel’s overall business strategy to ensure optimal utilisation and profitability,” **Jitendra Kumar**, Director, F&B, Courtyard by Marriott Pune Chakan, pointed out. .

The social media-led transformation of culture has led to a rise in the number and variety of events, making flexibility the core of all banquet designs. An event space should be flexible enough to be modified to host different kinds of events. Hotels can use outdoor areas, terraces, and rooftop areas to offer clients additional options for hosting events. “By utilising modular setups, innovative technology integration, and multifunctional design, we ensure that our banquet spaces can effortlessly handle different event requirements, maximising income prospects,” **Amit Raman**, General Manager, Radisson Blu Pune Hinjawadi, said. Banquets on the ground floor in proximity to



Dmitri Cooray
MD, Jetwing Hotels



When designing banquet hall, it is crucial to integrate it with other hotel facilities & ensure its coexistence with other areas”

the lawn or spaces that combine an indoor and outdoor setup get top billing amongst clients.

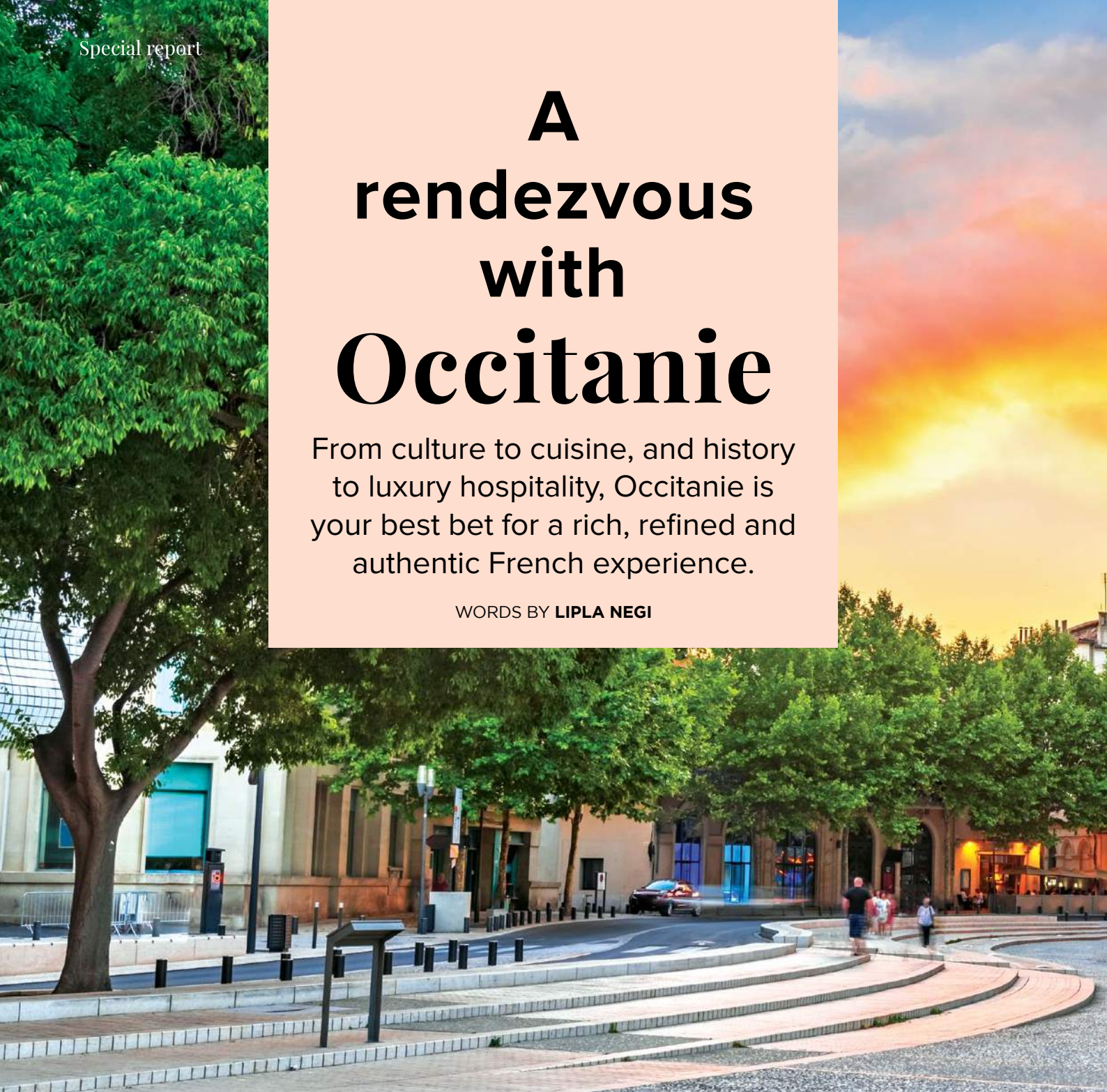
The aesthetics, space utilisation, entrance area, colour combination, and availability of compatible technology play an important role. The emergence of smart lighting and decorative solutions has opened a Pandora’s box of demands by the clients, which has made technology integration a non-negotiable element of the design. State-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, lighting controls, and other technology features have become vital elements of banquet design. “When designing a banquet hall, it is crucial to integrate it with the other hotel facilities and ensure its coexistence with other areas,” elaborated **Dmitri Cooray**, Managing Director, Jetwing Hotels. Highlighting technology integration at Jetwing’s event spaces, Cooray said, “With soundproof walls and modern technology, these spaces ensure absolute seclusion and comfort.”

A well-designed banqueting area improves operational efficiency by streamlining processes such as event setup, food service, and clean-up. It leads to smoother event execution and better utilisation of staff resources. An efficiently-run banqueting space can help a hotel differentiate itself in the fiercely competitive hospitality market. HT

A rendezvous with Occitanie

From culture to cuisine, and history to luxury hospitality, Occitanie is your best bet for a rich, refined and authentic French experience.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI



While Paris is getting all the limelight as the host city for Olympics 2024, there is a lot to explore for travellers beyond the capital city or French Riviera. With its diverse offerings, pristine natural beauty and resplendent chateaus and castles straight out of fairytales, Occitanie ticks all boxes for an immersive travel experience. It is France's second-biggest region with 220 kilometres of Mediterranean coastline, that appeals to all kinds of travellers —

history buff, nature lovers, adventure seekers, luxury connoisseurs or digital nomads. The region offers the best of hospitality with hotels offering premium luxury experience.

India is one of the key source markets for the region, and it is leaving no stone unturned to offer the best in hospitality to Indian tourists. "France is expecting a substantial growth in all Asian markets in 2024. In 2023, we saw substantial rise in all Asian markets, although the growth is yet to meet pre-COVID level. In India, we have seen a

strong demand from wedding and luxury segments. Indian travellers are showing keen interest in luxury experiences in Paris, experiential tours in South of France and Ski resorts in the Alps region," **Sophie Mandrillon**, Marketing Director, Atout France. With an array of winter sports resorts and wellness resorts, Occitanie ticks all boxes for a rejuvenating rendezvous.

Savouring La Ville Rose

Recently, Toulouse, the capital of France's southern Occitanie region



played host to the 17th Rendez-vous en France held on 25-26 March. Popularly known as La Ville Rose—The Pink City—a name given to the city for its eye pleasing terracotta architecture, it is also the centre of European aerospace industry. France's fourth largest city is home to many historic sites such as Capitole that houses the city hall and a theatre, the Jacobins convent, which is the birthplace of the Dominican order and the Basilica of Saint-Sernin, a UNESCO site listed as part of the Way of St. James pilgrimage route.



Luxe stays in Occitanie

Reviving the spirit of roaring twenties, the **Maison Albar Hotel - L'imperator** is an art deco jewel in Nimes.

A member of Relais & Chateaux, **Domaine de Verchant** in Montpellier sits in the middle of vineyards and offers luxurious stay.

Overlooking a vineyard, **Domaine de Privadiere**, Uzes serves a rejuvenating countryside experience with a spa & gourmet restaurant.

A former 17th-century mansion, **Hôtel Richer de Belleval** exhibits the spirit of heritage and artistic harmony.





With its diverse offerings, pristine natural beauty & resplendent chateaus & castles, Occitanie ticks all boxes for immersive travel experience

A prelude to the main trade event, the pre-show FAM trips were carefully curated by Atout France in collaboration with host region to spotlight its history, culture, and culinary traditions. From vineyards to medieval era chateaus and churches, one such FAM trips took us on an invigorating exploration of some of the most popular and culturally rich cities of the region – Nimes, Uzès, Montpellier, Carcassonne and of course, Toulouse.

Sparkling cities, enriched experiences

A common thread running across all these terrific cities is the architecture that stands symbolic of France’s rich past transcending decades. From luxury hotels right next to a medieval castle to chateaus and vineyards complementing as the backyard view for some of the world’s best resorts and spas, the hospitality firmly backed by magnificent architecture and spirit-renewing nature, Occitanie are incredibly indulgent. Whether it is luxury travellers or business groups, these hotels and resorts are equipped to cater to all kinds and sizes of travellers. In addition, the picturesque resorts serve as perfect setting for a dreamy intimate Indian wedding, delighting guests with gastronomy, wellness, and relaxation.

A place that looks as much in the past as it looks ahead, Occitanie region with all its culturally-enriched cities and towns is worth exploring for all types of travellers. From Pont du Gard in Nimes to La Cite, the best-preserved Medieval fortress of Carcassonne and the

Tourism in figures

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beds



16.3 mn

hotel nights
(4th highest in France)



3rd region for overseas tourists



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visitors every year

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around

1/3

of the national spa market





Basilica of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse (a masterpiece of Roman art), every turn on the streets of these invigorating cities is earmarked by historic sites. Also, quintessential to these city streets are coffee shops and Patisseries that serve the French magic in a cuppa.

Exclusive tours could also be curated for student groups, especially in Toulouse, which has

a significant student population. The tour operators dealing in study tours will find many state-of-the-art industry and other professional spaces led by budding entrepreneurs as well as multi-generational family businesses. La Maison de la Violette is a family business founded by H el ene Vi e offers products based on the famous Toulouse Violet—the city’s emblematic flower. Today, she

runs this business with her daughter Melanie. Similarly, AHPY Creations’ Bleu de Pastel, conserving the history of blue gold (Indigo), is run by the gifted Annette Hardouin and her husband is a lesson in art and craftsmanship. The region is strewn with a variety of local gems, offering unique, authentic and stimulating experiences that make Occitanie a must visit for every traveller. HT



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Maximising spa profitability

The hotel industry is embracing wellness-centric experiences amidst rising demand from business travellers as well as zen seekers.

WORDS BY ANANYA KUKREJA

Hotels and resort spas contribute US\$82 billion to the global wellness economy, according to the Global Wellness Institute. The Indian travel market is experiencing a surge in wellness resorts, showcasing the country's diverse culture, heritage, landscapes, and ancient wellness traditions.

“With an increasing focus on holistic well-being and lifestyle choices, there is a growing demand for wellness-centric experiences among domestic and international travellers,” **Rubin Cherian**, General Manager, Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre & HICC, said.



carve out a few hours to unwind at spas, rejuvenating their minds and bodies before their next meeting.

“Awareness about wellness has increased drastically post-pandemic, even more so than pre-COVID,” **Vinaya Jadhav**, Director, Spa, JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar, said. While global treatments are popular, Ayurveda holds its own unique charm.



Rubin Cherian
GM, Novotel Hyderabad,
Convention Centre & HICC

longer viewed as a ‘nice to have’ supplementary facility, but rather as a core element of the guest experience. They not only drive demand but also serve as an untapped source of profits.

“The number of business leisure travellers is steadily increasing within the spa segment. It is incumbent upon us to capitalise on this demand to generate revenue and enhance guest attraction and retention,” **Surbhi Gaur**, Spa Manager, Grand Hyatt Mumbai, shared. A holistic spa offering can increase a hotel or brand’s average spending per guest. On an average, the spa department of a hotel contributes about 7.4 per cent to the hotel’s total revenue. An efficient hotel recognises the potential of this integral department and leverages it for growth and market penetration.

“There is a rising interest in tailored programmes toward relaxation and rejuvenation,” **Vinayak Rao Karri**, Spa &

“

With an increasing focus on holistic well-being, there is a growing demand for wellness-centric experiences.”

The trend has expanded to multiple states and cities, with Rishikesh emerging as top destination for travellers seeking wellness. Post-COVID introspection has led to increased demand for spa and wellness experiences, with domestic demand increasing and business travellers keen to indulge in spa and wellness experiences curated by hotels.

Guest choices are diverse; a recent observation has shown that late night and evening slots have become popular in the spas and salons. As a result, frequent business travellers exhausted from a long day’s work frequently

Of late, it has been witnessed men prefer spa services and women contribute equally to skincare treatments. Spa vouchers are becoming popular gift items and party favours, enhancing a hotel’s reputation through positive word of mouth. Spas are also gaining popularity as venues for intimate get togethers such as bachelorette parties and baby showers.

With the global rise of wellness travel, spas are poised for continuous future growth and increased marketability. In today’s hospitality market, spas are no

Wellness Manager, Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida, said. “The hotel industry should prioritise promoting self-care within its spa department by directing marketing efforts toward its concept and purpose. The Average Treatment Rate (ATR) can serve as an alternative to the





Vinaya Jadhav
Director, Spa
JW Marriott Mumbai Sahar



Awareness about wellness has increased post-COVID, more so than pre-COVID.”



Surbhi Gaur
Spa Manager
Grand Hyatt Mumbai



The number of leisure travellers is steadily increasing within the spa segment.”

Average Daily Rate (ADR) in the spa industry, allowing for dynamic pricing. This entails offering value-added deals during low-demand periods and charging higher rates during peak periods. Spa services are perishable, with limited inventory, and any missed revenue potential after a treatment hour has passed is irrecoverable. By analysing ATR and treatment room utilisation, the spa industry can support dynamic pricing and capitalise on the spa department’s potential,” Karri added.

Spas are increasingly adopting yield management strategies, implementing variable price points on weekdays and weekends, during high and low occupancy periods, and based on whether a treatment was booked in advance or by a

walk-in customer. Treatment Room Utilisation (TRU) is another metric used to assess spa profitability, with most spas operating at 40–60 per cent TRU. However, mornings typically experience low demand, with most treatments sold from late afternoon until closing. Many hotels are adjusting their spa timings to maximise guests’ preferences.

Therapist utilisation is another metric used to measure demand in a spa. High therapist utilisation may indicate insufficient staffing levels, while low utilisation may suggest overstaffing, impacting spa labour costs and profitability. Optimal therapist utilisation





consultations and personalised home care recommendations can encourage consistent use of spa-exclusive products. Incentivising staff and therapists can improve overall engagement, increase product rotation, and boost retail sales growth.

Marketing efforts can be event-related or calendar-related, incorporating themes and customisation for seasons and celebrations. Nearly 20 per cent of the existing customer base can generate up to 80 per cent of future spa profits. To enhance repeat

guest ratios, consider launching a loyalty programme, encouraging re-booking, personalising the guest experience, providing value-added offers, and rewarding staff. This strategy can help attract and retain customers, ultimately leading to increased profits.

There are endless possibilities for how one may improve their wellness sales; ultimately, hotels feel a sense of pride in contributing to an individual's wellness journey and providing guests with an opportunity to 'take a break' amidst the hustle and bustle of city life. HT



Vinayak Rao Karri
Spa & Wellness Manager,
Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida



There is a rising interest in tailored programmes toward relaxation and rejuvenation.”

requires effective scheduling and sales efforts. This metric may vary depending on the spa's positioning and type. For instance, in a luxury hotel spa, additional time may be allocated for complimentary pre and post-treatment consultations, which may reduce therapist utilisation but ensure high guest satisfaction and add incremental value to the spa facility.

Other metrics used to determine a spa's performance include revenue per available treatment room, spa revenue per guest, spa revenue per occupied room, and guest capture rates.

Offering value-added treatments with pre and post-consultations can enhance a spa's premium position and improve the hotel's understanding of guests. Spas should allocate sufficient time between treatments to spend with guests and recommend the best-suited products and services. Programmes such as therapist





AAHAR 2024 featured an impressive display of innovative products from top players in hospitality industry. Let us explore what they presented.

WORDS BY SURBHI SHARMA

Sustainable solutions take centre stage



Sunil Dutta
Country Head,
Sales, Hotels &
Institutions-India &
SAARC Nation
King Koil

At AAHAR this year, King Koil unveiled an exciting array of new products designed to elevate the sleep experience for hospitality businesses. Our Luxe Collection features premium materials and unparalleled comfort for a luxurious sleep experience. We have also introduced the eco-friendly line, crafted with sustainable materials without compromising on comfort or quality.





PA Prabhu
Co-founder &
Director
Chef Mate
(Revac Systems)

CHEFMATE by Revac Systems has been dedicated to providing turnkey solutions in the segment of commercial kitchen ventilation. In the past two decades, we executed more than 1,000 projects pan India. At AAHAR 2024, we launched a front cooking station designed to serve mobile cooking service for banquets, and breakfast counters of 5-star hotels and airports. The units have a self-filtration system to remove all the fumes and smell which is ideal for light cooking in airconditioned areas. Besides this, we also launched UV hoods that have IP 65-rated light fittings covered with smoke-proof toughened glass covering. Our products not only provide safety but they also provide efficiency and reduce cost.



Rajendra Mittal
Founder & Director
Mittal International

Mittal International is one of the leading importers of kitchen equipments for hotels and other institutions catering to the needs of the food and beverage industries of India. Renowned for its customized service, we cater to our customers with reliable products characterized by quality, efficiency, technical progress, ease of use and optimal performance. From large catering facilities, exclusive clubs, hotels, and international food chains to small food retailers, we are the one single source of supply. With the start of 2024, we have seen an increase in demand from our clients and have come up with a wide range of imported products, including coffee machines and economical ovens.



Ajay Khanna
Partner & CEO
Eagle Forgings

Eagle Forgings is a 30-year-old company, serving the hospitality industry with long-lasting certified equipment, backed up with quality service and spares. We supply bedroom and bathroom equipment and other accessories to most of the premium hotels across India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Aahar is a great venue for brands like us to showcase our products to customers. For the last two years, we have been concentrating on going green. Taking a cue from PM Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' policy, a lot of our products are now either assembled, made, or backwards integrated in India and we are slowly going to start having more and more products which will be made in India, made for India.



Manisha Chatterjee
Managing Director
Winterhalter

Winterhalter develops solutions for commercial warewashing for our customers all over the world. Stands for quality of the highest level, our products provide first-class cleanliness, hygiene and maximum reliability throughout the washing process. This is the standard that we set for our products and the promise that we give to our customers. As a specialist in Warewashing, we understand requirements and preferences of our customers. We develop resource-saving and sustainable washing solutions. With innovative technology, we reduce water, electricity and chemical consumption. We attach great importance to material compliance and conformity underpinned by endorsements and certification.



Razi Haider
Country Manager,
India, Sri Lanka &
Nepal, Hobart

Hobart is a leading manufacturer of commercial food equipment for cooking, food preparation, dishwashing, waste reduction, weighing and packaging. We have dedicated for more than a century to supporting commercial and institutional food service and food retail professionals by providing premium equipment. This year at AAHAR, we launched a pressurised pan, a combi oven, and a large hood-type machine. We are also providing advanced machines to our customers, which can reduce the operating cost, are easy to operate and reduce manpower. Our vision is to lead through technology innovation, operational excellence, superior customer service and unsurpassed value.



Puneet Kumar
Founder & CEO,
Sterling Solutions

Sterling Solutions is a young dynamic company. We are an importer of commercial kitchen equipment and provide spare parts and servicing to the customers. Having several years of experience in commercial kitchen equipment industry, this year we came up with inductions, juice dispensers, etc at AAHAR. We are experts in the installation of commercial kitchen systems along with practical management experiences. We have seen good demand from the industry in recent months whereas at the same time, we have seen hotels have also started increasing their budgets and started investing in us. We believe in keeping our customers happy and providing them with products at a very competent price.



Leena Mittal
Director
So Sweet
(Herboveda)

Since 2003, So Sweet products have been the one-stop source for 100 per cent natural sugar alternatives for almost two decades. Unlike artificial sweeteners, fructose, and cane sugar which cause harm to people's well-being, So Sweet provides 100 per cent natural, pure and healthy sugar alternatives. Besides tabletop sweeteners, this year at AAHAR, we have introduced ready-to-serve Lemon & Orange drinks made with stevia and fortified with Vitamin C. We also launched Monk Fruit Sweetener, which is 100 per cent natural and zero-calorie sweetener. In recent years, we have not only witnessed an increase in demand from our clients but also seen awareness among the hospitality clients about our products.



Vasant Rajasingh
CEO
The Bell Match
Company

We are a match production company, and this was our second time in AAHAR, hence we showcased more packaging this year. What makes us different is our ability to understand the complete needs of customers and deliver creative solutions. With well-differentiated product offerings and a sustainable manufacturing approach, we offer customers flexibility, stability and absolute peace of mind. We are renowned for exceptional customer service and an impeccable safety and compliance record. This year, we expanded our production facility and added more printing lines, and equipment to our kitty. We are also going to launch our new offerings in the next three months.



Gaurav Kumar
Director
Aerocide

Aerocide is one of the most creative & leading scent marketing agencies in India. We design and deliver scenting solutions to all kinds of industries thus helping brands create memorable unique experiences for their customers by infusing the perfect blend of fragrances in the air. Our scent diffusion equipment is made in-house and uses cold diffusion technology to create an unforgettable unique ambience. For a decade, we have been participating in Aahar and this was our 9th edition. We launched some new towers and some new scent systems for the hospitality industry that are economical and robust in terms of efficiency. We also introduced new inspirational fragrances and body fragrances.



Oommen Matthew
Founder
Cornell India

Emerged by the 'why not India' attitude, CORNELL is raising the standard of Indian hospitality equipment and creating the benchmark for others. The company is dedicated to quality engineered equipment and exceptional customer service offering maximum performance. At AAHAR 2024, we came up with a front-of-house equipment serving facility, hot & cold cabinets to maintain the temperature of the food, salad bars, ceramic tops, plate dispensers, tray sliders, etc. People appreciated our concept of not importing products from outside and starting manufacturing them in India. We experienced high demand from the market as last year, we sold around 130 units and is expected to cross 700 units this year.



Kuljeet Singh
Director
CleanCare India

AAHAR has been a good platform to showcase our products. In the future, we aim to compete with global brands and maximise our reach globally through better-quality products. CleanCare India has been reckoned as the manufacturer, trader, and wholesaler of best-quality products. We procure the best-suited inventory of raw materials and utilise cutting-edge manufacturing technology to develop quality products that are globally demanded for its practicable costs, durable performance, elegant design, appealing looks, and industry-proven fabrication. Our line of products is carefully developed and rigorously inspected by using the latest techniques.



Mohit Sharma
CEO
Romio Technologies

Self-ordering and digital kiosks, inbuilt thermal printers in different screen sizes, wall hang displays that can be used on the walls of hotels, restaurants and banquet halls are our new offerings at AAHAR this year. We provide fully customized POS Billing software for restaurants, hospitality, F&B industry, QSR, nightclubs, food courts and caterers. Our products are operational in 1000 plus outlets contributing to their smooth operations. The models that we have designed are based on the feedback that we received from our customers. There is a 20–25 per cent year-on-year growth in demand. We are overwhelmed by the market response and look forward to working with new brands.

HT

Eyeing robust revenue growth

Indian hotel industry is expected to witness healthy revenue growth in next fiscal, supported by steady domestic demand, reveals CRISIL Ratings analysis.

WORDS BY HT BUREAU

The Indian hotel industry is expected to experience a healthy revenue growth of 11–13 per cent in the next fiscal, following a strong 15–17 per cent growth in the current fiscal. The industry’s profitability will be sustained by strong earnings before interest, taxes, and depreciation (EBITDA) and limited capital expenditure. A CRISIL Ratings analysis of branded hotel companies with 70,000

rooms across categories indicates that domestic travel demand will sustain the industry’s performance, while foreign tourist arrivals are expected to remain around 10 per cent below pre-COVID levels.

Anand Kulkarni, Director, CRISIL Ratings, commented, “Average room rates (ARRs) are projected to grow by 5–7 per cent next fiscal, compared to 10–12 per cent this fiscal, while occupancy is expected to remain healthy at



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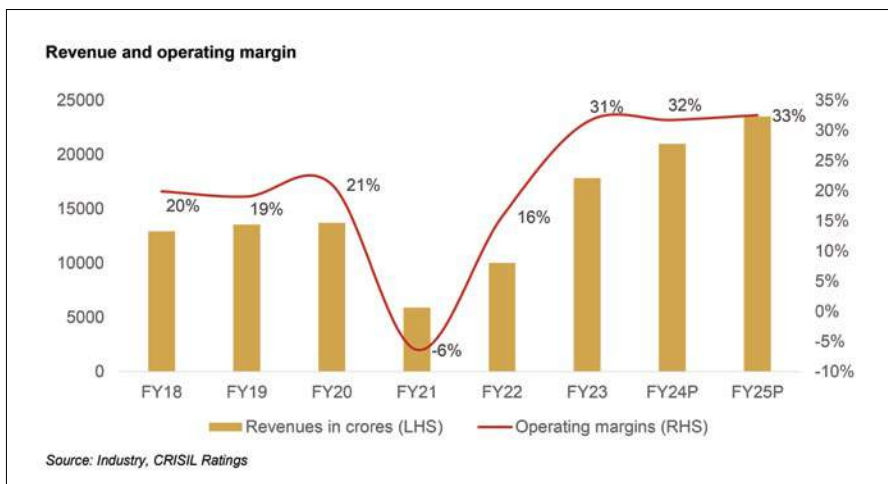
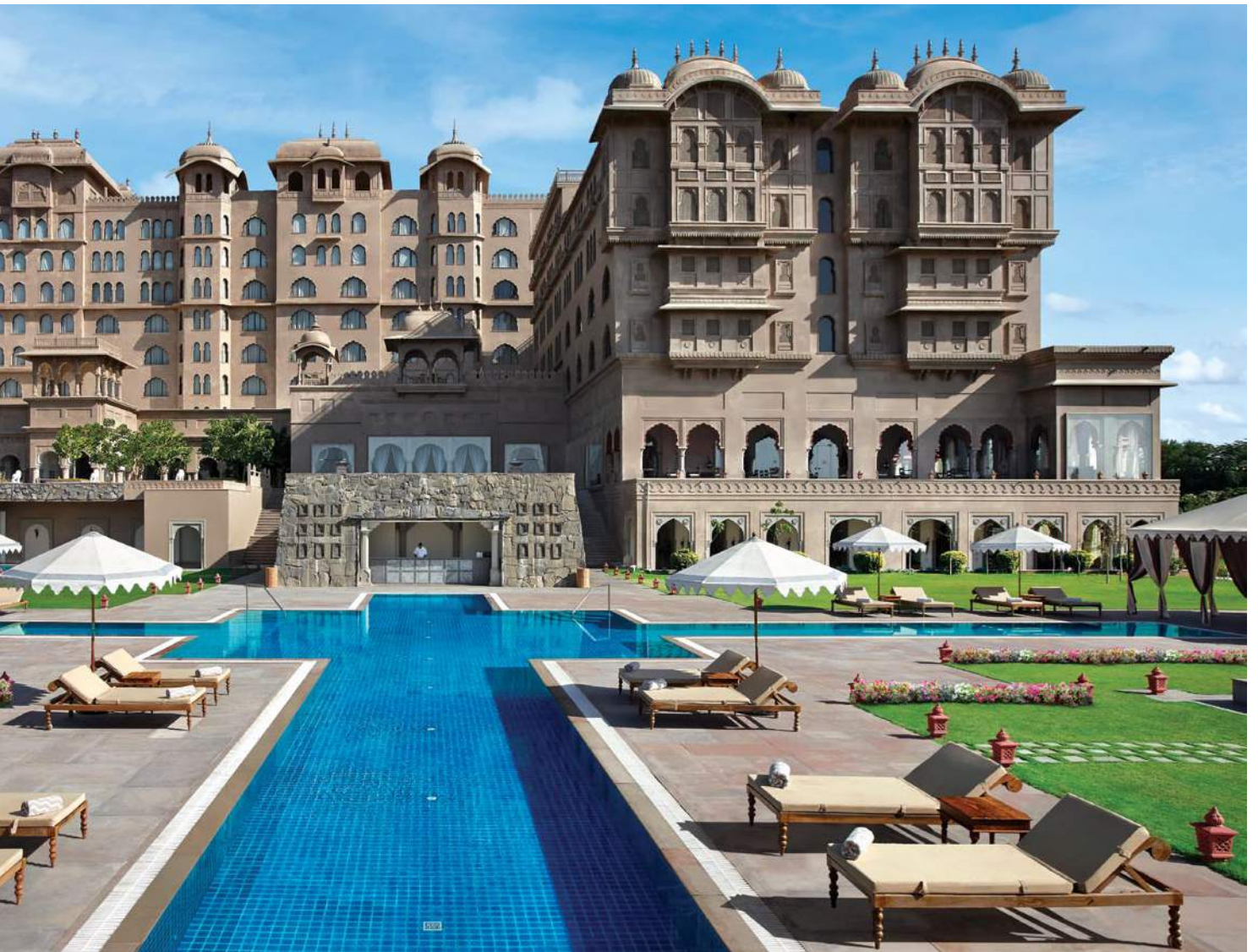
A CRISIL Ratings analysis of branded hotel companies indicates that domestic travel demand will sustain hotel industry’s performance.

current levels of 73-74 per cent.”

The foreign tourist arrivals in India, despite a growth this fiscal, are estimated to remain 10 per cent below pre-COVID level and pick-up in the same will provide fillip to the hotel demand next fiscal, according to the CRISIL Ratings analysis. It was further observed that “demand in the MICE segment is also expected to remain healthy as corporates

have resumed their activities post-COVID induced hiatus.”

Nitin Kansal, Director, CRISIL Ratings, said, “Greenfield capex is expected to remain subdued with the new room addition remaining at 4-5 per cent per fiscal over the next couple of years. While the demand rebound has boosted industry sentiments, the cost dynamics remain a constraining factor for



the new capex. High land costs, sizeable increase in construction costs, long gestation period coupled with cyclicality in the sector is resulting in cautious new capex in the sector. Therefore, brands may keep adding rooms through

management contracts, which will limit their upfront capital costs.”

The effect of conducive demand supply dynamics is also visible on the operating profitability of the industry. The ARR-driven revenue growth typically translates into better

profitability, given that operating costs do not increase proportionately. Plus, hotels had taken several cost efficiency measures, such as better manpower planning and optimisation in F&B expenses, in the past two fiscals. While costs are expected to inch up gradually, operating leverage will help maintain strong operating profitability, at 32-33 per cent over the current and the next fiscal — similar to last fiscal and 1,000 bps higher than the pre-COVID level.

In this milieu, credit profiles of the hotel companies will continue to improve. For instance, interest coverage is expected to rise to 4.3 times and 5.5 times this and next fiscal, which will be higher than 3.2 times last fiscal. The debt to EBITDA ratio is seen improving to 2.2 times this fiscal followed by below two times in the next from 2.9 times last fiscal.

HT

Elevating home aesthetics

SPIN's Summer/Spring Collection offers a diverse range of colours and product designs to revitalise living spaces. Some of their products include the Cora collection, which transforms everyday objects into modern aesthetics, and the Treyo Tray, which adds flair to serving or organizing tasks.



Craftmanship
at its best



Luxury meets innovation

Strot, a Delhi-based luxury furniture and lifestyle brand, has partnered with Italian design brand, Seletti to offer a unique collection of Italian design. The partnership aims to provide top-notch products and influence trends across the subcontinent, enhancing living spaces.

Fusion of artistry

White Studios has launched unique furniture collection, Zoi. The collection includes 16 artifacts—accent chairs, loungers, side tables, centre tables, floor lamps, serve ware and decorative pieces. Zoi is inspired by traditional crafts, historical art styles and contemporary shapes.





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WORDS BY AMITA PANDEY

A symbol of the ‘Modern Fair Culture’ in South Asia region, India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), under the Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry, is committed to showcase excellence achieved by the country in diverse fields. Its mission is to facilitate, encourage, and coordinate various activities and programmes to enhance India’s exhibition prowess.

“ITPO offers infra, marketing, and information facilities to both exporters and importers, aiding buyers in sourcing products from India and fostering trade and investment opportunities,” averred **Hema Maity**, GM, Functional Division, Fair Services, Domestic Fairs, ITPO.

ITPO also organises national level participation in overseas trade

fairs and exclusive India sourcing fairs showcasing the best of India globally. Participation in events is based in line with the government’s vision for India’s growth.

Future plans

The redevelopment into Bharat Mandapam was driven by the need to expand the existing infra and accommodate the increasing demands of the industry.

Legacy of AAHAR

AAHAR—the International Food & Hospitality Fair— has grown in recent years and has become the ultimate destination for global vendors and sourcing professionals.

AAHAR 2025

AAHAR 2025 will be held from March 4 to 8, and is likely to cover an area of 1,10,000 sq. mtrs. Over 1,600 firms from India and abroad are expected to take part.

HT



“ITPO participates in trade fairs abroad and exclusive domestic fairs showcasing the best of India”

An observant traveller

Keshav Suri's way of diving into a destination is to soak in all the experience and culture it has to offer.

WORDS BY LIPLA NEGI

Q: A book that influenced your career journey...

A: *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf is one of my favourite books and I feel it has influenced me a lot.

Q: Your favourite holiday destination?

A: My favourite holiday destinations are Goa and Paris. I need to travel a lot for work, so on vacation, I prefer leisure.

Q: Your last holiday was?

A: Paris, with my husband. We both love everything it offers—art, culture, fashion, food, and romance.

Q: One change that you would like to bring to your industry?

A: Make it more inclusive. At Lalit, we believe in developing destinations and have been working on the acceptability of pink tourism, to make travel to India more inclusive and safer for all.

Q: How do you maintain your energy and fitness levels?

A: My work with my team members is my workout. We are a family of over 3,000 team members, who are the source of my energy, enthusiasm and confidence.

Q: Your travel essentials...

A: My Krono Kare lip balm, sunscreen, but purse first.

Q: Describe yourself as a traveller?

A: Observant. I enjoy immersing myself in the experience and culture that a place has to offer.

Q: Your biggest leadership lesson?

A: I think COVID has

been the significant crisis worldwide, teaching us valuable lessons in teamwork and compassion. Three important qualities of a leader include flexibility, adaptability, and constant evolution.

Q: One advice that you would like to give to young hoteliers?

A: I can give three virtues for young hoteliers: patience, perseverance and practice.

HT



Keshav Suri
Executive Director,
The Lalit Suri
Hospitality Group
& Founder, Keshav
Suri Foundation

Movements



Palak Shah
VP, Sales, Cinnamon
Hotels & Resorts

Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts has appointed Palak Shah as the Vice President, Sales. Shah brings 24 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He will lead strategic sales initiatives, focusing on accelerating growth in key source markets. He will also oversee the global sales office initiatives.



Sagar Kulkarni
Director, F&B, Sheraton
Grand Pune Bund
Garden Hotel

Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel has appointed Sagar Kulkarni as the new Director, Food & Beverage. With a proven track record at various establishments, Kulkarni has demonstrated proficiency in overseeing food and beverage operations, forecasting, budgeting, and ownership handling.



Haramohan Bora
Director, F&B, Aloft
Bengaluru Outer
Ring Road

Aloft Bengaluru Outer Ring Road has appointed Haramohan Bora as Director, F&B. With over 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Bora has honed his leadership abilities at establishments such as Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Road and Shangri-La Bengaluru, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield.



Pankaj Gupta
Area GM, Crowne
Plaza New Delhi
Mayur Vihar

Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar has promoted Pankaj Gupta to the role of Area GM within IHG Hotels & Resorts-South West Asia. Gupta will oversee eight operating and two pre-opening hotels, including the GM role. With over two decades of experience, Gupta has exhibited leadership excellence.



Ankur Mehrotra
GM, Radisson Blu
Guwahati

Ankur Mehrotra has been appointed as new General Manager, Radisson Blu Guwahati. Mehrotra brings a wealth of leadership and expertise to the role. He previously served as Senior Manager, Operations, South Asia, Radisson Hotels Group, where he helped the hotel achieve Centre of Excellence targets.



Manoj Jangid
GM, Fairfield by
Marriott, Kolkata

Fairfield by Marriott, Kolkata has promoted Manoj Jangid to the position of GM, following his tenure as Hotel Manager. Jangid has been instrumental in establishing the hotel convention centre as Kolkata's premier banqueting facility for social and corporate events. Jangid brings a wealth of experience with a proven track record.



Shantanu Budhalakoti
Front Office Manager,
Bengaluru Marriott
Hotel Whitefield

Shantanu Budhalakoti has joined Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield as new Front Office Manager. With a career spanning 13 years, Shantanu started with Hyatt Regency, Delhi and joined the Marriott brand in 2016 with the Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield and has worked at various properties of the brand.



Babita Butola
Executive Housekeeper,
Grand Mercure Bengaluru
at Gopalan Mall

Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall has appointed Babita Butola as Executive Housekeeper. With over a decade of experience in the hospitality industry, Butola has previously served as Deputy Housekeeper at Vivanta Bengaluru, Whitefield. Her dedication to guest service has earned her many accolades.

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