

# HOTELS & RESTAURANTS INDIA fhrai magazine

Vol 22, Issue 12, December 2022 Pages 56 ₹50

A MONTHLY ON HOSPITALITY TRADE  
By DDP Publications



## Reshaping Hospitality

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Pre-budget  
Recommendations**

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*Dear FHRAI Members,*

**W**e are into the last month of the calendar year and the signs are really encouraging for the hospitality sector in terms of resurgence of business. It is that time of the year when people usually plan their annual vacations and holidays, resulting a boom in travel and tourism activities. It is heartening to see that people have been able to shed their COVID-related fears and inhibitions leading to tourism activities picking up in a big way within the country.

We are very happy to inform that recently the Government of India has taken two important decisions that can provide big impetus to inbound travel to India. The first one was removal of the mandatory filling of Air Suvidha Forms for inbound passengers to India and the second one was restoring e-visa facility for UK nationals travelling to India. Members may recall that FHRAI had sent separate representations to the Government of India with these requests recently and the hospitality industry is thankful to the Government for considering them.

December 2022 marks the beginning of a momentous opportunity for India to showcase its world-class standards and facilities to the world while celebrating the country's rich and varied heritage and diversity, as the country pushes the accelerator on hosting the G20 Presidency for a year. During this period, around 200 major meetings and events will be held in more than 50 different locations in the country, not only in the major cities but also at historical sites, which will give more prominence to India's tourism repertoire. Hosting these meetings will put a spotlight on several lesser-known tourism destinations and heritage sites in the country, bringing them to the forefront of the global tourism map. G20 Presidency also opens the door for enormous opportunities to showcase what the country has on offering for

the rest of the world. Needless to say, after two years of dismal performance, G20 Presidency has come as a golden opportunity for the tourism and hospitality sector in the country.

On the policy advocacy front, FHRAI attended a very important pre-Budget meeting chaired by the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman with the Trade and Service Sector representatives. FHRAI put forth to the Hon'ble Minister specific requests for transforming the tourism and hospitality sector with special emphasis on granting infrastructure status to the hospitality industry. The Federation also requested for continuation of the Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme (EPCGS) for another 10 years and extension on the repayment period under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to 10 years or based on the loan repayment period of the principal loan, along with other critical points.

FHRAI also attended pre-Budget meetings with the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Tourism during which the concerns and expectations of the hospitality sector were shared with the policymakers.

The next few months are very important for the hospitality sector in terms of business as the period is considered auspicious for marriage and related ceremonies. We are very optimistic that the hospitality sector would continue to do better in the coming months due to strong demand. This is by far one of the best business periods in the last three years and the hospitality sector is looking to reap maximum benefits out of it. We wish prosperity and opportunities in abundance to all the members in this period.

With best regards,

**Jaison Chacko**  
Secretary General, FHRAI



**Jaison Chacko**  
Secretary General  
FHRAI



**THE NEXT FEW MONTHS ARE VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN TERMS OF BUSINESS AS THE PERIOD IS CONSIDERED AUSPICIOUS FOR MARRIAGE AND RELATED CEREMONIES**





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**Cover Photo:**

Fazlani Natures Nest, Lonavala



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Wellness tourism is fast catching up with travellers as it provides them thoroughfare to unwind from the hustle and bustle of their daily routines and connect with nature



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### THE FEDERATION OF HOTEL & RESTAURANT ASSOCIATIONS OF INDIA

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FHRAI Magazine is printed, published and edited by Devika Jeet on behalf of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Association of India and published by DDP Publications Pvt. Ltd. 72, Todarmal Road, New Delhi - 110 001 and printed at Modest Print Pack Pvt. Ltd., Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi - 110020

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# FHRAI puts forward Pre-Budget Recommendations

In Pre-Budget Recommendations to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, FHRAI proposed granting of infrastructure status to the hospitality industry, uniform GST @12 per cent on all hotels, among others.



**F**HRAI has submitted Pre-Budget Recommendations to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman demanding various policy changes for the hospitality industry in the upcoming Union Budget 2023-2024.

The Pre-Budget Recommendations were divided into parts—policy recommendations and tax recommendations. These are summarized as follows:

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Increase the ECLGS loan term for the hospitality sector for the maximum period

The 6-year period of loan repayment is too less for the hospitality sector to reap the desired benefits of otherwise a well-intended scheme. Most of the beneficiaries of the scheme had already mortgaged their properties as surety for the Principal Loan and if the ECLGS loan is not in sync with the earlier loan, that would lead to default

of payments and high volume of NPAs in the sector. It is requested to enhance the repayment period of ECLGS to 10 years or as per the loan repayment period of the principal loan, whichever is longer.

### 2. Waiver of secondary condition with regard to average Foreign Exchange Earnings under EPCG scheme retrospectively from FY 2007-08 onwards

In this regard, the two requests are cited below:

a) Grant Relaxation in average export obligation by adjusting the preceding 3 years annual average performance for all years commencing from financial year 2008-2009.

b) Allow to offset any shortfall in the average EO in any year by using the excess export done above export obligation for fulfilment of an EPCG license.

### 3. Continuation of EPCG Scheme, service export benefits and grant export status to the hospitality industry

EPCG Scheme has helped the hospitality sector in India immensely to emerge as a strong player in the global tourism market, by procuring equipments as per international standards and quality. However, the capability of the domestic market to cater the specific requirements of the hospitality sector is in its nascent stage in comparison to the requirements of the hospitality sector, where the clientele is largely from the global market which is highly competitive. Therefore, it is imperative to continue the EPCG Scheme to enable the hospitality sector remain competitive in a global market scenario, for some more years.

**FHRAI SUGGESTS TO  
INTRODUCE ONE FLAT  
GST SLAB @12 PER  
CENT ALL TIMES TO ALL  
HOTELS IN THE COUNTRY**

Therefore, the following recommendations are suggested:

- a) In view of the volatile economic environment created due to COVID, the government is requested to continue the current benefits for the hospitality industry under the EPCG Scheme for another 10 years.
- b) Grant export status to hospitality sector to accelerate growth of the sector.

#### **4. Granting Infrastructure Status to the hospitality industry**

Currently, hotels built with an investment of ₹200 crores or more have been accorded infrastructure status. This threshold has to be brought down to ₹10 crores per hotel to give fillip to budget segment in hotel industry. This will enable hotels to avail term loans at lower rates of interest and also have a longer repayment period.

We therefore request to classify hospitality under the RBI Infrastructure lending norm criteria for access to long term funds to enhance quality accommodation supply and therefore stimulate higher global and domestic travel demand.

#### **5. Industry status and allied benefits to the hospitality industry**

Though industry status has been accorded to hotels by many state governments, the incentives and privileges associated with an industry are never conferred to the industry.

It is requested to grant industry status to hospitality industry pan India and set up a corpus fund to incentivize all states to align their policies and set off any losses that may occur due to its implementation.

The lower cost of operations spread over a higher payback period will reduce the cost of our supply which will boost demand and through a higher inflow of both foreign and domestic tourists will boost further confidence in capex spending in tourism and will thereby add to structural employment growth across our hinterlands.

#### **6. Placing tourism and hospitality on the Concurrent List of the Constitution**

We request to place tourism in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution for effective legislation to make tourism into a national agenda.

It will ensure better coordination between the Centre and state for fund allocation and implementation for projects and programs aimed for the holistic development of tourism sector in the country.

#### **7. Uniform GST@12% on all hotels**

GST rates for hospitality in India are one of

## **CURRENTLY, HOTELS BUILT WITH AN INVESTMENT OF ₹200 CRORES OR MORE HAVE BEEN ACCORDED INFRASTRUCTURE STATUS. THIS THRESHOLD HAS TO BE BROUGHT DOWN TO ₹10 CRORES PER HOTEL TO GIVE FILLIP TO BUDGET SEGMENT IN HOTEL INDUSTRY**

the highest in the world. This makes both domestic and inbound tourism in India very expensive. India is facing tough competition from neighbouring destinations especially due to the higher rate of GST in India and other factors which make the total tourism package expensive to India.

The system of GST shifting to different slabs in the same hotel on different dates—under/over 7500 room rate—creates compliance issues. It also spills over to F&B.

Therefore, we suggest to introduce one flat GST slab @12 per cent all times to all hotels in the country.

### **TAX RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **1. Relaxations in Section 115JB—minimum Alternate Tax**

We request to allow MAT waiver for 2 years from April 2023–March 2025 as this will help in reducing the tax burden and will provide marginal relief to the hospitality sector.

#### **2. Extend investment linked benefits under Section 35AD for brownfield hospitality projects also**

Hotels and resorts are highly capital-intensive business which require constant upgradation of civil works, furniture and furnishings and plant and machinery to maintain high quality standards for customers of the hotel and resort properties.

The ongoing works take a lot of capital and cash flows and in turn creates large scale employment. However, this capital work, while necessary to maintain standards and safety does not get monetized in terms of revenue benefits and thus hampers much needed cash flows and thus capex reinvestment and thus jobs creation.

Therefore, we request you to kindly extend investment linked benefits from Section 35AD to ongoing capex of hotels

and resorts, which will immensely benefit high quality brownfield capex and capacity expansion and thus accelerate investment and employments in the sector. At present this benefit under Section 35AD is applicable to new hotels of 2 stars and above category only.

#### **3. Request to modify the Leave Travel Allowance (LTA) rules**

The current rules allow to claim LTA only for travel fare or tickets within India. Expense incurred for accommodation/on hotel stays are not eligible for exemption.

To incentivize domestic tourism and as well as to support hotel sector's revival, government may consider to modify the rules to include deduction of other expenses such as hotel stay under LTA rules. We request you to allow the amount spent on hotel stay to be considered as LTA expense.

#### **4. Treat the payments made by foreigners in rupees in hotels as foreign exchange earned for the purpose of EPCG scheme**

Foreigners coming to India and staying and spending in hotels should be deemed as foreign exchange earned by hotels for the purpose of EPCG Scheme. It should be treated at par with merchandise exports of hotels and resorts to promote exports of hospitality services. To enable the investments into developing more global markets, it is requested to declare foreign exchange and deemed foreign exchange earnings from hotels and tourism as export earnings. Additionally, it is roughly estimated that each foreign tourist moves across Indian states, and stay at hotels and resorts and go through other experiences and spend their foreign currency or their converted foreign exchange. All such services of hotels and resorts which accept payment from such foreign tourists should be deemed as exports too.

#### **5. Allow set-off of business losses upto 12 years under Section 72**

With long gestations periods, the hotel industry suffers losses in the initial years of its operation. Hotel normally carry forward these business losses with an expectation to set off the same in the coming years.

COVID had severally impacted profitability of hotels in India and the industry would largely report business losses for the next few years.

In view of the monumental losses occurred to the hospitality industry, it is requested to allow to carry forward of business losses for up to 12 years instead of eight financial years, presently.

# IPO in the dock

FHRAI asks SEBI to stop OYO's IPO with immediate effect following CCI judgment holding OYO responsible for anti-competitive business practices.



**O**n the backdrop of the recent penalty imposed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) on OYO, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has submitted a representation to the Chairman of the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) requesting it to stop/bar the OYO's efforts towards floating an initial public offering (IPO) with immediate effect. The Association has informed and updated SEBI about the judgement passed by the CCI holding OYO responsible for anti-competitive business practices.

"The latest development of Hon'ble NCLAT ordering OYO to deposit 10 per cent of the total fine of ₹168 crores imposed by the CCI is yet another positive step in the interest of the hospitality sector in the country. As a result, OYO is now required to pay close to ₹17 crores as the initial monetary fine to ensure hearing of their appeal in the Hon'ble NCLAT. FHRAI will continue to pursue the matter further for the benefit of thousands of small and budget hotels in the country and to discipline the OTAs in the new digital

**FHRAI HAS STATED THAT OYO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SYSTEMIC DESTRUCTION OF THE BUDGET SEGMENT HOTEL BUSINESS AND ITS MARKET**

era so as to ensure fair market, healthy competition and a level playing field for all stakeholders," said, Jaison Chacko, Secretary General, FHRAI.

Last year, FHRAI had written to SEBI specifically requesting to suspend OYO's IPO process to protect the interests of thousands of hotels as well as the general public. The Association had brought to the attention of the market regulator about OYO's systemic destruction of the budget segment hotels, causing serious distress to the hospitality sector of the country. FHRAI has outlined the key findings of the CCI in its letter to the SEBI and has implored it to stop OYO's efforts towards floating an IPO.

In 2019, FHRAI had filed a complaint against OYO and MMT-Go with the CCI. The CCI found the hotel

room aggregators to be in contravention of the law and recently announced a penalty of ₹168.88 crores on OYO and ₹223.48 crores on MMT-Go.

The aggregators were found to be indulging in predatory pricing, exorbitant and unfair commissions, misrepresentation of information and arbitrarily levied service fees. The Association expects the CCI order to serve as an eyeopener for investors as well as for the market regulator about OYO's unethical business practices and terms the order as one of the biggest wins for the hospitality industry against the dominance of the aggregators.

FHRAI has stated that OYO is responsible for the systemic destruction of the budget segment hotel business and its market as a means to achieve a notional billion-dollar valuation which is a serious cause of concern for the hospitality ecosystem of the country. Now that OYO has been found guilty of indulging in anti-competitive and unfair business practices thereby affecting the business of small hotels and suppressing competition, it is imperative that its IPO should not be allowed in the interest of the hospitality sector, consumers and potential investors.

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# Air Suvidha Form scrapped

After much persuasion, FHRAI finally managed to convince government authorities to put end to Air Suvidha Form, which had become nightmare for inbound travelers.

In a big relief to travelers flying from abroad to India, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has scrapped the mandatory filling of Air Suvidha Form. The order came into effect from November 22. It is to be noted that Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) had written to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Tourism demanding scrapping of the Form. Welcoming the decision, **Jaish Chacko**, Secretary General, FHRAI, said, "The removal of the mandatory filling of Air Suvidha forms for inbound international passengers is a welcome move from the government. Not only was filling out the online form tedious, but

## THE REMOVAL OF THE MANDATORY FILLING OF AIR SUVIDHA FORMS FOR INBOUND INTERNATIONAL PASSENGERS IS A WELCOME MOVE FROM THE GOVERNMENT

many travellers were completely unaware of the requirement until arriving at the airport check-in. Several passengers missed their flights to India. There was difficulty in uploading passports and vaccination

certificates on the online portal. The Indian tourism and hospitality industry was losing potential tourists. We had requested for the withdrawal of this mandatory requirement and we are glad that the Govt. of India considered our plea."

"With the travel and tourism sector slowly opening up throughout the world, it is imperative that India also make necessary relaxations in this regard and remove the Air Suvidha Form which is posing a hindrance in the growth of Indian tourism, post-COVID," FHRAI had said in the letter submitted to the aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and tourism minister G Kishan Reddy.

# FHRAI flags glitch in NIDHI portal

Association writes to MOT that its members are confronting continuous bottlenecks while trying to access the services being offered by NIDHI portal.

Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has flagged concerns in the NIDHI portal. The Association has written a letter and presented various points for the consideration by the Ministry of Tourism (MOT).

In the letter, FHRAI said, "As this process is in its nascent stage, our members are not fully aware about the changes in the portal and are facing continuous challenges while trying to access the services being offered through the portal."

Too much information is required on this portal such as:

- Pictures of rooms, bathroom, lobby, exterior, Hotel GM selfie among others.
- 3rd party aggregator booking links (MakeMyTrip, Goibibo, Yatra etc)
- Promotor/owner contact details, address
- Staff details (on rolls/contractual/ male/female)
- Social media handle links
- Amenities and facilities pictures (Bar, Laundry, parking, pool, gym among others)
- Large number of documents—scanned copies required
  - Bar License

## EACH TIME AN APPLICATION IS FILED, A NEW PASSWORD IS ASSIGNED AND NO APPLICATION NUMBER OR REFERENCE NUMBER IS PROVIDED

- Clearance Certificate from Municipal Health Officer/Sanitary Inspector (Health NOC)
- Building plans duly sanctioned
- FSSAI License
- Consent to Operate from the State Pollution Control Board
- NOC from Fire Department
- Certificate/license from Municipality/Corporation
- Plan for Rainwater Harvesting
- NOC from Ministry of Environment & Forests
- NOC from Police Department
- Trade license to operate
- Sewage Treatment Plant"

FHRAI underlined that the abovementioned information were required for the previous portal too, but that was for the government's own website. "The NIDHI portal is handled by outsourced agencies and very vital information and data of the hotels are now put on public portals makes them vulnerable," FHRAI said. The Association further mentioned "Each time an application is filed, a new password is assigned and no application number or reference number is provided. Thus, it becomes extremely difficult for the person who files multiple hotel applications to keep a track on the status of the applications."

### WEBINAR ORGANIZED

FHRAI in association with Quality Council of India (QCI) organized a webinar on 11th November, 2022 towards capacity building of members about the NIDHI+ portal. During the webinar, the members were given a detailed demonstration of NIDHI+ portal and were explained all the features and usages of the portal. It was an interactive webinar during which the QCI team resolved various queries and also welcomed suggestions from the participants.

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# e-Visa facility for UK relaunched

FHRAI's continuous efforts towards restoration of e-Visa facility for UK nationals bear fruit as facility has been restarted by government.

The e-Visa facility for UK nationals to India which was discontinued previously due to COVID has been reintroduced by the government. It is to be noted that Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) had submitted a representation to Dr. S Jaishankar, Union Minister of External Affairs and G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Tourism requesting the restoration of e-Visa facility for the UK, Canada, and other source markets.

Welcoming the decision, Jaison Chacko, Secretary General, said, "We thank the Government of India for restoring the e-Visa facility. Non-restoration of e-Visa facilities has been a major reason for the low traffic of tourists to India from the UK and Canada, among a few other countries whose nationals contribute to the maximum foreign tourist arrivals. Tourists prefer countries with tourism-friendly policies and procedures for their travel destinations. The

**WE THANK THE GOVERNMENT FOR RESTORING THE E-VISA FACILITY. NON-RESTORATION OF E-VISA FACILITIES HAS BEEN A MAJOR REASON FOR THE LOW TRAFFIC OF TOURISTS TO INDIA**

unavailability of the e-Visa facility has been critically impacting the survival efforts of the tourism sector in the post-COVID period and hence, FHRAI had recently submitted a representation to the Government requesting its restoration."

FHRAI had stated that prior to the suspension of e-Visas in March 2020 due to COVID, it was available to the nationals of 171 countries, who immensely benefitted from the facility. While the e-Visa facility has now been restored for nationals of 156 countries, the UK and Canada, among a few others continue to be left out whose nationals contribute to the maximum foreign tourist arrivals. International tourists make advance flight and hotel booking for a hassle-free experience but the unavailability of e-Visa creates hurdles in travel planning.



## HRANI meets Delhi Commissioner (Excise)

Delegation from HRANI reiterates its assertions advocated earlier such as adjustment of fees, increase in service timings, among others.



(L-R) Sanjay Chauhan, Manager, F&B Controls, Le Meridien Hotel; Vinod Gulati, Vice President, HRANI; Krishna Mohan Uppu, Commissioner, Excise, Entertainment & Luxury Tax, Govt of NCT of Delhi; Jitender Aggarwal, Deputy Commissioner, Excise; Ramesh Dang, Managing Director, Seven Seas Hotel, Rohini; Garish Oberoi, President, HRANI and Renu Thapliyal, Secretary General, HRANI

A delegation led by Garish Oberoi, President, HRANI along with Vinod Gulati, Vice President, HRANI, Renu Thapliyal, Secretary General, HRANI, Ramesh Dang, Managing Director, Seven Seas and Sanjay Chauhan, Manager, F&B Controls, Le Meridien Hotel met Krishna Mohan Uppu, Commissioner, Excise, Entertainment & Luxury Tax, Govt of NCT of Delhi in the wake of the excise policy under review by

**THE HON'BLE COMMISSIONER GAVE A POSITIVE HEARING TO THE DELEGATION REGARDING ISSUES**

the Delhi Government and short supply of few brands. The Deputy Commissioner, Jitender Aggarwal,

Deputy Commissioner, Excise was also present in the meeting.

HRANI has reiterated on the submissions represented earlier to the excise department such as adjustment of fees, increase in service timings and other issues related to hospitality industry.

The Hon'ble Commissioner gave a positive hearing to the delegation regarding issues and assured that adequate supply will be resumed soon.

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# SIHRA'S annual convention strikes chord



Three-day conference focused on current challenges and finding solutions for various issues, the hospitality industry is facing. Here are some glimpses from annual summit.



# Discontinue prohibiting of **service charge**

FHRAI seeks clarity from East Khasi Hills' Deputy Commissioner on the recent warning to hospitality establishments over service charge.

Following East Khasi Hills' Deputy Commissioner's (DC) warning of action against service charge violators, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) has written to the DC informing about the stay on implementation of the guidelines dated 4th July 2022 issued by Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA).

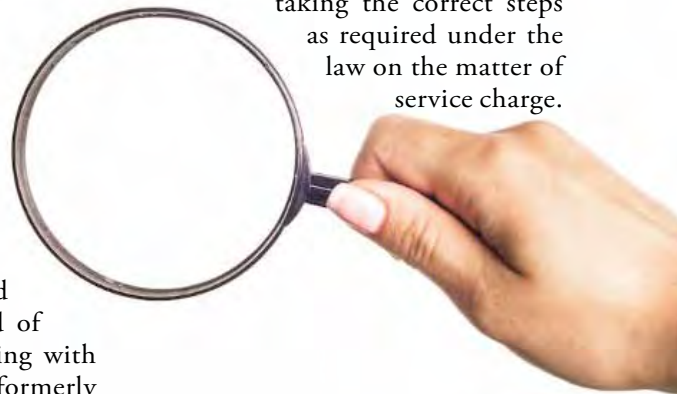
FHRAI had challenged the guidelines by filing a writ petition before the Hon'ble Delhi High Court (HC) which then vide order dated 20th July 2022 stayed the CCPA's order. All directions under the guidelines have been stayed subject to no service charge to be levied on takeaways, and all restaurants shall prominently display in the restaurant that service charge shall be levied.

## **FHRAI HAS WRITTEN TO THE DC FOR TAKING THE CORRECT STEPS AS REQUIRED UNDER THE LAW ON THE MATTER OF SERVICE CHARGE**

The Association has also informed the DC about the order dated 20th July 2022 being challenged by CCPA before the Division Bench of the Hon'ble HC of Delhi. However, the Bench vide order dated 18th August 2022 disposed of the appeal without interfering with the interim arrangement formerly

ordered on 20th July 2022. Thus, the directions of the guidelines dated 4th July 2022 remain stayed and cannot be implemented so long as restaurants comply with the agreed conditions.

FHRAI has written to the DC with the objective to place facts and the present status for taking the correct steps as required under the law on the matter of service charge.



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# Deposit 10% of total penalty: NCLAT

In a latest development, NCLAT orders OYO and MMT to deposit penalty of ₹17 crores within six weeks before hearing of their appeal.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has directed OYO to deposit 10 per cent of the total fine of ₹168 crores imposed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

A two-member bench comprising of **Justice Rakesh Kumar** and **Dr Ashok Kumar Mishra**, Technical Member said in the order, "The appeal is admitted subject to a deposit of 10 per cent of the penalty amount which must be deposited within a period of six weeks. Deposit should be in the form of FDR in favour of Registrar, NCLAT."

Welcoming the order by the appellate authority, **Jaison Chacko**, Secretary General, FHRAI, said, "The latest development of Hon'ble NCLAT ordering OYO to deposit 10 per cent of the total fine of ₹168 crores imposed by the CCI is yet another positive step in the interest of the hospitality sector in the

country. As a result, OYO is now required to pay close to ₹17 crores as the initial monetary fine to ensure hearing of their appeal in the NCLAT. FHRAI will continue to pursue the matter further for the benefit of thousands of small and budget hotels in the country

## Delhi HC refuses to stay NCLAT order

The Delhi High Court has dismissed the writ petition filed by MakeMyTrip challenging the NCLAT order to deposit 10 per cent penalty amount for entertaining the appeal against the CCI order imposing a penalty of ₹223.48 crores on MMT-Go and ₹168.88 crores on OYO.

MMT had petitioned the High Court to suspend the interim order of the 10 per cent deposit by NCLAT and further to seek a stay or relief as regards the sanctions imposed by the CCI.

and to discipline the OTAs in the new digital era so as to ensure a fair market, healthy competition and a level playing field for all stakeholders."

The appellate authority gave the order while hearing an appeal filed by Oravel Stays Ltd, owners of brand OYO seeking stay on CCI's judgement imposing a fine of ₹168 crores on the budget hotel aggregator for indulging in unfair business practices. Earlier, CCI had imposed a penalty of ₹223.48 crores on MMT-Go and ₹168.88 crores on OYO.

In a separate order dated Dec 6, 2012, Hon'ble NCLAT had directed MMT to deposit 10 per cent of the fine imposed on the entity as a pre-condition to entertain their appeal against the order of CCI which had held MMT-Go guilty of anti-competitive activities and imposed penalty of ₹223.5 crores along with a set of directions to change their behavioural practices.

## Regent Suites Gurugram honoured

Hotel Critics & Bloggers Association bestows best luxury hotel award 2022 to Regent Suites Gurugram based on guests' and hospitality bloggers' feedback.

Regent Suites Gurugram recently won best luxury hotel award 2022 by Hotel Critics & Bloggers Association (HCBA) and Worldwide best hotel.com. Sujan Ganguly, Area General Manager, Regent Suites Gurugram also won the Gurugram's Best General Manager Award 2022.

Commenting on the award, Ganguly, said, "92 per cent of their guests are seemingly happy with the kind of experience they get in the hotel. Hotels is famous amongst the 18-30 and 30-45 age group and maintaining more than 90 per cent of occupancy with decent ARR. Currently, the hotel focuses on the impressive experience with the improvement in the NPS (Net Promoter score)."

This decision was taken by HCBA after consideration of the following parameters:

- **Guest feedbacks:** HCBA collected many reviews from many guests who



**TEAM REVIEWED ONLINE PERFORMANCE AND REPUTATION OF THE HOTEL. DURING THE REVIEW, TEAM FOUND THAT REGENTA SUITES GURUGRAM IS LEADING THE CHART**

stayed in the hotel and also the reviews and first-hand information of many hospitality bloggers, who stayed at the

hotel incognito.

- **Online reputation:** Team reviewed online performance and reputation of the hotel. During the review, team found that Regenta Suites Gurugram is leading the chart (1 out of 1022 Hotels in Gurugram) and became one of the best preferred hotels in Gurgaon on Trip Advisor in a very short period of time. The online ranking of the hotel on OTA was very impressive.

- **Social media:** Regenta Suites Gurugram is the most active hotel page on social media as compared to other hotels. Within four months the hotel has organized so many influencer events to promote the hotel facilities.

- **Creating wow experience:** Ganguly along with all the HODs and staff are more concerned about the personal interaction with each and every guest to understand their needs and fulfil the needs on priority. So, all guests can carry a wow and memorable experience.

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# Industry status to hospitality: A critical demand



As part of introducing ease of doing business for hospitality sector, need for granting infrastructure status for industry also becomes significant.



FH Bureau

## EODB IN HOSPITALITY WILL REDUCE PROCESSES

An important factor impacting the industry is the absence of a uniform system for approvals and compliances, which is hampering growth of tourism and hospitality sector. From inception of a hospitality project to day-to-day running of the establishments, the sector is tangled in a myriad web of bureaucratic processes. States in India follow different licensing and compliance requirements, making the process cumbersome and energy-consuming. To this end, licences, and compliances, among other requirements should be brought down and bottlenecks removed. The industry needs a unified system of compliance by incorporating innumerable rules prevailing in various states to bring Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) to the sector in India.

There is a need for an overall banking reform. Hotels should be allowed to pay back their loans over a period of 20–25 years like developed countries. With a hotel's cash flow, it will be impossible to pay back the loan in 7–9 years, resulting in NPAs. Prepayment penalty should be waived, thus enabling hotels to shop around for best rates of interest. Banks should be mandated to pass



**Pradeep Shetty**

President,  
HRAWI

**“GST rates for hospitality in India are the highest in the world. Uniform GST @12 per cent should be applicable for all hotels in the country”**

the increase or decrease in repo rate by RBI with immediate effect.

As part of introducing EoDB for the sector, the need for granting infrastructure status for the industry becomes most critical. Currently, hotels built with an investment of ₹200 crores or more are eligible to avail the benefits under this facility. The infrastructure status allows hotels to avail term loans with longer repayment schedule of 15 or 25 years akin to road, railways, and ports, among others.

Tourism should be placed in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution for effective legislation to make tourism into a national agenda. GST rates for hospitality in India are the highest in the world. This makes both domestic and inbound tourism expensive. Uniform GST @12 per cent should be applicable for all hotels in the country. Among other things, water, drainage, and sanitation needs of hotels should fall under the local municipal compliances and requirements rather than leaving an entrepreneur to find a solution himself. For several years now, liquor license fees are charged based on the hotel's category.



## REGULATION OF TAX REGIME REQUIRED

Various hospitality industry associations have emphasised that it is critical that the industry is freed from all bottlenecks to fast-track employment, capital expenditure and foreign exchange earnings across the country. They have initiated dialogues on rationalisation of compliances for hospitality, tourism and travel industry and have been urging all states and other Central Government ministries to ensure ease of doing business.

The industry has repeatedly appealed to be classified in the Concurrent List to ensure a national shared common framework between Centre and states for tourism and all its verticals.

To prevent hospitality and tourism enterprises from filling up multiple paperwork for different permissions, certifications, and licenses across central and state governments, an e-central repository of such information may be created which can be converted through a 'standardised template' and thus save time and resources.

Since hospitality enterprises lead to valuable jobs creation, forex and



**Sudesh Poddar**

President,  
HRAEI

**“We urge some care to be taken to ensure that classified tourism, travel, and hospitality enterprises are not regressively taxed”**

GDP growth, it is thus important that all states grant industry classification to tourism, travel and hospitality to ensure rationalisation, standardisation, and harmonisation of all levies and cesses while making the industry bankable and organised.

Input tax credits for all inputs from states including levies, cesses and taxes on power, fuels, parking, monument tickets, stamp duties, liquor, property taxes, among others should be made available across the country for all hospitality GST slabs leading to further 'one country one GST' for the hospitality industry.

We urge some care to be taken to ensure that classified tourism, travel, and hospitality enterprises are not regressively taxed but are progressively incentivised for jobs and economic growth that they are creating in their own region.

Finally, a standard national template can be developed through a consensus approach based upon a role model state which has the most streamlined approvals for each of the verticals of tourism, travel, and hospitality.

# UNNECESSARY LICENCES SHOULD BE ABOLISHED

The two major concerns of the hospitality sector are prohibitive costs of starting a business and delays in obtaining licences and permits.

Regulatory requirements are incoherent, for even the most common licences across the sector vary across states, cities and even localities within cities. It is almost impossible to apply for multiple licences or permits simultaneously, which is a big constraint for the hospitality industry.

The sector has to deal with multiple regulators at the Centre, State, municipalities, and many hyper local authorities. This results in either overlapping requirements or contradictory requirements.

Suitable amendments must be brought to list tourism under the Concurrent List. This way there is a more definitive approach to policymaking on all aspects of tourism.

There must be some uniformity in terms licensing regime in at least each state, if not amongst all states. Every state must undertake a detailed audit of regulations necessary at the state and hyper local level, to facilitate uniformity, to identify and repeal unnecessary licences, and to do away with contradictory regulations.

The regulator regime must include timelines for licensing authorities to follow. Any request for licences must be responded to within the prescribed time period, and if not, it would be considered as approved automatically. Similarly, the regime must also identify licences that are definitely required to be renewed every year and those that can be for a three or five year period, and those that can be one time.

Even though on paper a single window clearance system exists for tourism, ground realities are different. The single window clearance has neither reduced the need for in person follow ups, nor reduced the time required to procure licence.

In fact, the single window clearance system must be revamped to ensure that the purpose of such a system is truly met. This would mean that the system should allow for all applications for multiple licences to be submitted online, for businesses to be able to track their applications online, and to ensure that approvals are granted in a timely manner.

Tourism is a broad industry and one that generates significant revenue and



**Garish Oberoi**

President,  
HRANI

**“Regulatory requirements are incoherent, for even the most common licences across the sector vary across states, cities and even localities within cities”**

employment across the value chain. While each sector contributes in terms of taxes and employment, the sector that particularly stands out is the hospitality sector including food and restaurants, especially those that cater to leisure and MICE tourism segments. India's global share in tourism may not be very high, but it is still one of our largest foreign exchange revenue earners. In fact, tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for India.

Though, some of our state governments have done commendable work and had approved the ease of doing business policy for the hospitality sector but the states which are lacking must reevaluate the current regulatory framework.

The need of the hour is for the government to include tourism in the Concurrent List distinctly, for enabling a more cohesive approach to policy making. States must look to rationalise licences across different municipalities and do away with unnecessary licences to ease the regulatory cost and process for business. A properly thought policy will also help do away with multiple overlapping and contradictory regulations.



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Over the past 25 years, AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology has transformed itself into a global institution. In association with leading hotels like Taj and Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne, the college perfectly trains students for an international work scenario. A Student-centric approach to education is the ethos that drives the college. College believes in creativity and passion and provides excellent experiential learning and a dynamic platform for the exchange of ideas.

The college has created its blueprints, giving it a unique position in the marketplace and the world. The college is committed to maintaining a flawless image and high standards of excellence and carrying them forward to new heights. AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology Constantly strives to excel in the field of hotel management education. As an affirmation of this, the continual endeavor of college is shown through the graph of achievements and episodes of success. By signing over 30 Plus MOU and partnering with top players in the hospitality industry, AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology always strives to push the boundaries.

AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology is NAAC Accredited 'A' grade, Autonomous College under Savitribai Phule Pune University. The college holds All India 13th rank among top Private



Hotel Management Institutes in India & rank 2nd in the West Zone by The Week Magazine 2022.



**Dr. Sonali Jadhav**  
Principal,  
AISSMS College of Hotel Management  
& Catering Technology

College hosts an array of student-centric activities such as ATITHYA – A reflection of Hospitality. AISSMS College of Hotel Management & Catering Technology believes that students learn and grow with practical exposure and clubbing with hospitality events helps in their holistic development. Atithya is a novel concept initiated by AISSMS College of Hotel Management &



Catering Technology to bring all hospitality professionals on a common national ground. During this three-day event the college hosts teams from eminent hospitality schools across India and even abroad. The participating teams compete with each other in several hospitality competitions to win the coveted ATITHYA CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY. The Industry also wholeheartedly supports the event and this is a perfect opportunity for students to not only interact with them but also get a chance to be recognized and appreciated by the Industry.

In addition to this college also conducts various skill development and CSR activities as Anna He Purn Bramha, and Skillet- An Entrepreneurship Development Activity, to give students a real sense of practical experience.

The alumni have vast global footprint and they actively give back in terms of employment opportunities for current students as well as mentoring them. Our Alumni presence is in more than 22 countries across the globe. The Training and Placement has a good track record and students are placed not only in India but in almost all the hot tourist destination like France, Dubai, Mauritius, Seychelles, USA to name a few.



# HOSPITALITY segment will see exponential growth

Experts reckon that two-year long distress suffered by hospitality sector during COVID has ended and sector is looking at better future prospects.



## HOSPITALITY SET TO RECLAIM OLD GLORY

The COVID outbreak caused the global economy to collapse almost immediately and presented an unprecedented challenge for all businesses. Over the past two years, disturbances brought on by COVID had a substantial impact where many tourist properties were vacant due to travel restrictions. The tourism and hospitality sector suffered the worst hit since it impacted both domestic and international travel. The inbound travel has yet not picked up to pre-COVID levels but the impact is not felt due to the surge in domestic travel through revenge tourism, staycations, daycations, workations and other short holiday breaks by the youth and working professionals.

Post-COVID, the hospitality sector is slowly but surely trying to get back on its feet. The industry is benefiting from the relaxations being given on the flights to and from India. The demand has also soared due to meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) and business travel. Weddings, domestic leisure, long weekend breaks, festivities and business travel has also started to increase and adding up to covering the losses borne by the industry in the past years.



**Vineet Taing**  
President  
Vatika Hotels Pvt. Ltd.

**“The millennials and GenZ have become the new breed of travellers and have started redefining the ways one travels”**

The millennials and GenZ have become the new breed of travellers and have started redefining the ways one travels, staycations and workations are the new buzzwords that have started cropping up ever since the relaxation in the travel restrictions and COVID effect was over. Many organisations have started restructuring their workplace policies to motivate and retain their employees. The terms such as Work from Home and Work from Anywhere have started coming into the picture. With the Hybrid working model being a permanent working solution, the wanderlust in the millennials and GenZ started picking up and the working professionals started looking for offbeat locations to stay and work. The young travellers were keen to explore unexplored locations with high-quality infrastructure and sanitization without putting a dent in their pockets and the industry started evolving as per the new demand picking up. Most of the resorts and hotels has started offering long stays at a nominal cost.

Yet, the industry needs a major push to recover the losses and damages caused in the past two years of COVID.



## 2023 AUGURS WELL FOR HOSPITALITY SEGMENT

The hospitality industry has been doing reasonably well for the last few months. The occupancy levels and ARR's have been rising steadily. This has been possible due to the improved business sentiment across the country. The average Indian has been travelling more often, which translates into more revenue for the hospitality industry.

Moreover, most of the corporates have resumed working from the offices. The corporate travelling has also picked up and that is the reason city-centric hotels which were not doing good are also witnessing good numbers.

The recently concluded Diwali season has been very good with hotels across all categories doing good numbers. I can say this because our company, The Fern Hotels & Resorts caters to almost all the organized sectors of hospitality. On one hand, our premium end resorts are doing well. On the other hand, our smart, efficient hotel brand, Beacon Hotels has also done very well.

With the New Year and Christmas seasons approaching, the bookings



**Param Kannampilly**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
Concept Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.  
The Fern Hotels & Resorts

**“Overall, the entire business environment is looking good for the industry in general and hospitality industry in particular”**

have been very good in various leisure destinations. We are very optimistic that the New Year will begin on a positive note and augurs well for hospitality industry. Another favorable thing has been the increase in the overall MICE segment. Though it has not reached its full potential, still the scenario is looking very encouraging. The marriage segment is almost back to its old glory. More and more people are organizing their marriages in banquets. Those with deeper pockets are again exploring destination weddings. Once the other segments of MICE sector start pulling their weight, I am sure this will also add to the bottom lines. Overall, the entire business environment is looking good for the industry in general and hospitality industry in particular. The hospitality industry has already seen its worst days and the hoteliers have suffered badly during COVID. I hope and pray to God that the hotel industry is going to do very well in the year 2023. It will again prove that it is one of the most important growth engines of the Indian economy and will play a huge role in creating jobs.

# VALUABLE *and* EXUBERANT



Wellness tourism is fast catching up with travellers as it provides them thoroughfare to unwind from the hustle and bustle of their daily routines and connect with nature.



Ananya Kukreja

**A**n oasis from the labyrinth of life, a peaceful escape from the bustling traffic, a breath into serenity for the ones that live with intent to align with the mind, feed the soul, nourish the body, and revitalize the spirits for the ones that wish to be fully present wellness resorts and centres all around anticipantly recognise the choices of today's mindful traveller and enable them to connect with their whole selves. According to Global Wellness Institute, a leading market research institute, wellness tourism has grown at an average annual rate of

7.5 per cent in 2022. This projection is higher than the current projected 6.4 per cent rate for the annual growth of overall global tourism. India boasts extensive facilities and a wide range of healthcare wellness tourism options, including alternative and holistic treatments. With its long, rich tradition of Ayurveda, Yoga, and meditation, India is widely regarded as one of the genuine spiritual homes of the current wellness movement, with a powerful and distinct "wellness halo." Recently, Queen Camilla made a 10-days trip to India for a holistic therapy and wellness vacation—this

alone shows the respect and recognition India holds in this segment of travel and tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (GoI), realizing this potential of the medical and wellness industry formulated a national strategy and roadmap for medical and wellness tourism. The mission is to create a robust framework for synergy amongst the ministries of both GoI and state governments and private sector for promoting the industry. A new agency, National Medical and Wellness Tourism Board is soon to be created. The initiative of accreditation of wellness centre by



**Allen Machado**  
COO, Niraamaya  
Villas and Spas

“**THE AGE GROUP BETWEEN 25 TO 30 HAS SEEN AN INCREASE OF 35 PER CENT OVER THE PRE-COVID LEVEL AND THE AGE GROUP BETWEEN 35 TO 45 CONTINUES TO DRIVE THE HIGHEST FOOTFALLS**”

NABH and AYUSH has been greatly driven by the Ministry of Tourism in consultation with wellness tourism service providers, state governments, and other stakeholders. Most industry insiders expect the wellness industry to rebound from COVID and expand in 2023.

#### DISCERNING TRAVELLER

“I am long due for a relaxing trip”, “I really need a good massage”—very so often, these words are heard amongst colleagues and friends—more so in the recent times of hustle and long working hours.

Today, 73 per cent millennials believe that ‘Well’ is the new ‘Wealth’. Long phases of isolation, endless hours of work at desks and in front of screens, and struggle to achieve work-life balance had become all too familiar over the years of COVID and after. While the booming business provides various career

centric opportunities to individuals, it takes away from their personal wellbeing. “Travellers now are travelling to improve their quality of life, recharge their resilience to face the daily stresses of their work-life, and enhance their innate potential,” says **Dr Sanjay Khanzode**, Wellness Consultant, Fazlani Natures Nest.

While people of the age group above 50 used to earlier frequent holistic wellness resorts, post-COVID, a big shift is being seen in the age-demographic attraction towards wellness experiences. “The age group between 25 to 30 has seen an increase of 35 per cent over the pre-COVID level and the age group between 35 to 45 continues to drive the highest footfalls,” says **Allen Machado**, COO, Niraamaya Villas and Spas.

Predominantly, wellness resorts around the country saw a major share of inbound travel from Europe, UK, Russia, France, Germany, and USA, amongst others. International

travel, while it did have a sudden drop due to COVID and its accompanied restrictions, a big shift has been observed in domestic travellers who are now exploring unparalleled destinations within India. The wellness tourism segment continues recovery and steady growth with the evolving intents of their now guests.

Length of stay for wellness retreats range anywhere from 3 to 21 nights. Most resorts and wellness centres offer different and often personalised packages for the guests and their needs. Lately, there has been a shift from a short three-night stay to a minimum of five-night stays. Travellers are always encouraged to stay as long as possible and make the most of the experiences and alternatives this segment has to offer. Most resorts recommend a minimum stay of a week—this period is the least amount of time required to reset the body’s functions and see some meaningful results.

#### GRATIFYING EXPERIENCES

This trend of striving for a sustainably healthy life is definitely an indication that “establishing long-term wellness in a high-paced life is not only a challenge amongst aspirant travellers, but something that more and more travellers are seeking” says **Shruti Shibulal**, CEO and Director, Tamara Leisure Experiences. Most wellness resorts and centres are focused and



### How to select a wellness resort

Travellers, when picking a wellness resort should foremost study and decide the kind of wellness retreat they are looking for and work backwards from there. This includes narrowing down to the facilities that are important to them such as vegan cuisines, beach access, gym, among others.

Choosing the size of the resort is the second step, it very much matters. While some wellness retreat addicts say that small is the best, it does depend on the travellers' preference and budget at the end of the day. Large resorts will have more options, facilities, and retreats to cater to their different guests and smaller ones will have more intimate and serene spaces. For most travellers, mid-size resorts hold the perfect balance of luxury services and retained prices. List the pros and cons of the choices and narrow it down from there. For instance, smaller resort has a beautiful view, but only shared dorms or a large resort has vegan, but no place to be secluded, among others.

Next, one must choose the location and the time it takes to travel to said location—travellers can choose from several main options such as mountain, countryside, beach, city, or choose as per the state or country they wish to explore and narrow down from there. India has all demographic choices and one can easily witness all aforementioned locations and sceneries, sometimes in a very short parameter.

Last but not the least, Budget, nobody wants to put a price on their health, but let us be honest, not many have infinitely deep pockets. Travellers must align all the above points to the amount they are willing to spend on this trip and choose a package and place that best fulfils them.

### India's top wellness destinations

- Uttarakhand
- Karnataka
- Himachal Pradesh
- Kerala
- Rajasthan
- Madhya Pradesh
- Goa
- Uttar Pradesh



**Aniket Sarkar**  
General Manager,  
Ananda in the Himalayas

**“OUR EXPERIENCED TEAM OF PHYSICIANS AND WELLNESS EXPERTS MAKE OUR HOLISTIC HEALTH OFFERING RESULT ORIENTED WITH A FOCUS ON CREATING AWARENESS AND SUSTAINED SELF-PRACTICE FOR LONG-TERM WELLBEING”**

pride themselves on their USPs and expertise. Personalised ayurvedic therapy, herbal medication, aroma therapy, cure cuisine, Yoga, meditation sessions, sound therapy, fitness classes, Spa treatments, physiotherapy, emotional healing, Vedanta talks, local walks, community engagement, hikes, farming, and many more come under the umbrella of wellness services and retreats various resorts and centres offer. The traveller must understand their needs and choose a wellness resort accordingly. “For us, nature plays an important role. We receive guests cutting across ages—family groups, millennials, young married couples, and senior citizens. However, we have seen that since the onset of COVID, we are receiving more queries from 35-49 age bracket for wellness therapies,” says **Akash Garg**, Chairman and Managing Director, Timbertrail and Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort. Most resorts and centres are based around serene spaces, away from the bustle of the city life to allow the traveller to fully immerse themselves in nature and enjoy their memorable enriching experiences.

### SOARING UPWARDS

Wellness resorts have always seen a seasonal demand, however, after COVID, they have witnessed demand through the year—travellers make a visit whenever they can get a few days of leave from work. Maximum footfall is of course still seen when the air around gets chilly and work gets slow. “Highest occupancy months are from November through February,” says **Joseph Garcia**, COO, Malabar House. “People now wish to start their year on a peaceful note focusing on their wellbeing that reflects through the year,” acknowledges **Arun Ashok**, Regional Manager India and Middle East, Luxury Escapes. Quarter I and IV look good for wellness centric brands where most are surpassing their budgets in lieu of the rise of health-conscious individuals.



**Shruti Shibulal**  
CEO and Director,  
Tamara Leisure Experiences

“ESTABLISHING LONG-TERM WELLNESS IN A HIGH-PACED LIFE IS SOMETHING THAT MORE AND MORE TRAVELLERS ARE SEEKING”

Many resorts partner with international organizations, and brands of wellness and research to further promote and expand their reach. Brands continually enhance their wellbeing offerings to create an impactful

### Top wellness resorts in India

- Ananda in the Himalayas
- Soukya Holistic Health Centre
- Tamara Leisure Experiences
- Fazlani Natures Nest
- Moksha Himalaya Spa
- Malabar House
- Niraamaya Surya Samudra
- Luxury Escapes
- Atmantan
- Kairali Ayurvedic Group

holistic health program. The integration of various modalities helps customize each program suitably. “Our experienced team of Physicians and wellness experts make our holistic health offering result oriented with a focus on creating awareness and sustained self-practice for long-term wellbeing,” says **Aniket Sarkar**, General Manager, Ananda in the Himalayas.

After the success wellness resorts have seen across India, many brands are now planning their expansion within the country before eventually taking it international. “The way



**Akash Garg**  
CMD,  
Timbertrail & Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort

“SINCE THE ONSET OF COVID, WE ARE RECEIVING MORE QUERIES FROM 35-49 AGE BRACKET”

the government is also supporting wellness tourism, we are planning to open a new retreat in Goa, and are reopening all our centres across the world,” confirms **Abhilash K Ramesh**, Executive Director, Kairali Ayurvedic Group.



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# RESHAPING HOSPITALITY LANDSCAPE

With impressive recovery and substantial uptick in bookings, hospitality sector is poised for incremental growth, aver top industry leaders.



## WE PLAN TO ADD 42 HOTELS TO OUR INDIA PORTFOLIO

### 2022 IN RETROSPECT

Guests have evolved and are increasingly becoming more mindful than ever about travelling responsibly. They are paying more attention than ever before as to how a hotel looks after the world around it, with an increasing number deciding whether to book a stay based upon a property's carbon footprint, sustainable practices and how it supports the communities in which it operates. As one of the world's leading hotel companies, we have always embraced our responsibility and the opportunity to make a positive difference as we help shape the future of responsible travel.

### EXPANSION PLANS

Building on the commitment, IHG has launched a 10-year action plan called 'Journey to Tomorrow' that aims to make a positive difference to our people, communities and the planet. In addition to metros and other established tourism destinations,



**Sudeep Jain**  
MD,  
SWA, IHG Hotels & Resorts

Tier-II and III markets in India will gain significance as more travellers are exploring these cities. We are well placed to cater to demands arising from secondary markets and have a strong offering for this segment across with our leading brands. Staycations and weekend leisure travel demand will continue to rise as well. With hybrid working model, people will

experiment with their work settings, and we will continue to offer a seamless and comfortable 'workcation' experience with customized packages.

### MAIN FOCUS

We currently have 45 hotels in South-West Asia across five core brands, out of which 41 hotels are in India. IHG is well-positioned to capitalize on the market demand and we are meaningfully expanding our presence across key markets in the country, with new signings and openings. In the next 2-3 years, we plan to add another 52 hotels in South-West Asia, out of which 42 hotels will be added to our portfolio in India. While our mainstream portfolio will continue to drive growth in line with market demands, we also see potential of debuting our global brands such as Regent, Kimpton, Voco and the recently launched Vignette Collection, at the right time with the right partners, at the right location.

# REVPAR WILL SURPASS FAR AHEAD OF 2019

## 2022 IN RETROSPECT

We witnessed a 10-12 per cent year on year growth. We are facing serious challenges at the workforce front. We need to learn how to manage our people better. Flexibility on timings and hybrid systems are need of the hour when hotels want to retain their talent. We are planning to hire hundreds of apprentices. I see India on a boom—strong country under strong leadership, steady govt, stronger infra and an economy that can sustain itself—we are in a good spot.

## EXPANSION PLANS

We have another 45 active hotels in the pipeline and under construction. We are getting stronger in Tier II, III and IV cities.



**Ajay Bakaya**  
MD,  
Sarovar Hotels & Resorts

Smaller cities do not have strong infra hotel structure. Our portfolio is spread across the

country in a strategic manner—40 per cent in North India, 25 per cent in West India and South India and 10 per cent in East India. We are growing stronger on Tulip brand and working on consciously strengthening and developing these brands in India.

## MAIN FOCUS

Our main focus will definitely be on adding more rooms. I believe that RevPAR will surpass far ahead of 2019. I am extremely optimistic. Even if I look at my own company, we have a project going on in Chennai and you cannot resolve all the issues on video calls. For sure, COVID has taught us not to travel without a reason. But as business demands, one has to travel.

# WE AIM TO REACH 70 HOTELS BY 2025

## 2022 IN RETROSPECT

So far, this quarter, there has shown an impressive recovery and a substantial uptick in bookings, especially in metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai. Owing to the ease in regional travel restrictions and the resumption of international operations, we are optimistic for the upcoming months and expect relatively longer booking windows.

## EXPANSION PLANS

We have a pipeline of four openings this year across India, with the aim to reach 70 hotels by 2025. We are eyeing sustainable growth in the Indian market across the economy, premium and luxury



**Puneet Dhawan**  
SVP,  
Accor

brands and are committed to holistic development involving our guests,

owners and partners. Our mid-scale and economy brands, Novotel and ibis, have an extremely high brand recall in India with a strong focus on the meetings and conventions market, as well as the wedding market. We are also looking for the right partners as we expand our luxury brands such as Raffles, Fairmont and Sofitel, after the successful response we received for Raffles Udaipur last year.

## MAIN FOCUS

As of October 2022, Accor operates 56 properties across India and South Asia, with more than 10,000 keys, alongside 25 properties (5,000 keys) in the pipeline. Over the next 24 months, we are expecting to add six new properties to the network.

# WE CROSSED THE 50TH HOTEL MARK IN INDIA

## 2022 IN RETROSPECT

We are on a strong growth trajectory in Incredible India, as the market is full of potential opportunities. This year, we crossed the 50th hotel mark in India, and we plan to add 25 more in the next three years, focusing on building mid-scale brands in Tier I and II cities.

## EXPANSION PLANS

We are thrilled to expand our portfolio to make hotel travel possible for all by bringing more brands under the Wyndham umbrella into the market. We also continue to expand our corporate team in India to strengthen our support to our hotel partners and our overall growth strategy in the region. India



**Dimitris Manikis**  
President, EMEA,  
Wyndham Hotel & Resorts

is important to us not just because of the growth and adding new properties but also

because of the talent, passion and bright future we see in the young people within our industry.

## MAIN FOCUS

Specific trends that will continue to shape our industry next year and future include digital adoption and technology, sustainable hospitality, and the repositioning of the workforce. At Wyndham, we continue to invest in technology that best supports our hotel partners and enhances the overall guest experience. For instance, our new mobile app prioritises low-contact in-stay features to provide travellers with a reimagined user experience to inspire their upcoming travel plans.

# WE HAVE A SOLID PIPELINE OF 4 UNDER-CONSTRUCTION HOTELS

## 2022 IN RETROSPECT

The industry witnessed some of its best performing months this year with recent months surpassing the pre-COVID performance levels of 2019 which indicate that demand is not only back, but it is sustaining. This was largely driven due to easing of COVID restrictions, resumption of domestic travel and international flights, strong leisure travel demand and gradual return of corporate travel. Now, with the festive season approaching, the market remains optimistic and welcoming and demand across the board remains strong.



**JB Singh**  
President and CEO,  
InterGlobe Hotels

and an international hotel brand. Apart from the 26 operational hotels in various Tier I and II cities, we have a solid pipeline of four under construction hotels (600 plus keys) today including 2 Ibis (Thane and Mumbai), one Ibis Styles in Goa and an upscale hotel in Bangalore. We plan to open Ibis Thane in 2022-23, followed by Ibis Styles in Goa in early 2023-24.

## MAIN FOCUS

Our focus has always been towards providing holistic customer experience, for instance, our hotels offer India's longest-running breakfast, from 4 am until noon, keeping up with the needs of business travellers.

## EXPANSION PLANS

The portfolio represents one of the most

sizable financial commitments in the mid-market segment by an Indian business house

# WE AIM TO HAVE 55 HOTELS BY FY 2025-26

## 2022 IN RETROSPECT

We have seen a 72 per cent growth in volume and 26 per cent growth in ADR with 105 per cent increase in unit turnover this year as compared to last year. Travel is slated to remain on the top of people's lists of things to do within the domestic market. In the coming years, we foresee a solid shift towards innovations with regards to operations and services. Digitisation, virtual and augmented reality will proliferate the industry even further.

## EXPANSION PLANS

We have three planned openings coming soon, WelcomHeritage Azora in Fort Kochi, WelcomHeritage Ayatana in Ooty and WelcomHeritage Parv Vilas Resort &



**Abinash Manghani**  
CEO,  
WelcomHeritage Hotels

pipeline. We are also looking at expanding our presence in East India. We plan to have 55 hotels by FY 2025-26 with 2000 keys in all.

## MAIN FOCUS

Since its inception and through these 25 years, WelcomHeritage is committed to showcase India's spectacularly rich cultural and natural heritage with our guests' comfort on top priority. To this end, the brand continues to introduce services that facilitate both. While expanding our presence to include newer destinations in the hills, wilderness, cultural seats of the country as well as remote lands, we are consciously crafting destination experiences for authentic and fresh perspectives.

Spa, Kasauli Hills in Solan. Our properties in Indore and Dungarpur are in the

# SMALLER MARKETS WILL BE OUR FOCUS IN 2023

## 2022 IN RETROSPECT

This year has seen a strong revival of the hospitality market primarily driven by domestic tourism demand. Be it weekend travel, or longer breaks during the holiday season, the demand from domestic markets has been overwhelming. Going ahead, 2023 is going to be a landmark year for the hospitality market with demand surpassing even pre-COVID years. As a hospitality chain, we are expecting the occupancy level to be above 80 per cent. The wedding segment and other celebrations will be a huge demand generator for Indian hospitality players next year.



**Sarbendra Sarkar**  
Founder & MD,  
Cygnett Hotels & Resorts

Bikaner and going forward we are well placed to achieve our target of 100 hotels in the next five years. Besides 4 to 5 projects in the North East, we are looking to open new properties in markets such as South India, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to name a few.

## MAIN FOCUS

We have a target of adding more than 5,000 keys to our portfolio in the next five years, so, of course, rooms are a very important part of our future plans. It is our constant endeavour to maintain the high service standards that we already have in place in our existing hotels and replicate the same in our new additions.

## EXPANSION PLANS

We have recently added new hotels

in places such as Dehradun, Jaipur, Bhubaneswar, Tezpur, Vrindavan and

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# NUANCES of hotel design

Hospitality chains in India lately have turned their attention to concept of hotel design and its impact on the psyche of guests. Industry experts believe that it will continue to dominate hotels' agenda furthermore.



Charmaine Fernz

The idea of living in a hotel is all about luxury and relaxation. Nonetheless, there is a lot of brain and pain that goes into every intricate detail of the design. As Norman Foster once said, "As an architect, you design for the present, with an awareness of the past, for a future which is essentially unknown." This thought holds for every generation that has been in the hospitality industry.

The concept of design is so precious that it is the first step in the building blocks of a successful hospitality chain. **Kezya de Braganca**, Founder, MansionHaus and Director, Riviera Constructions explains it in a simple way saying a hotel design is a synthesis of elements. It blends philosophy, style and substance, to create a functional identity. "A successful hotel design concept should grow from a strong foundation, just like the building itself. Each of those covers an essential element of hospitality services, such as storytelling, target audience, space identity, spatial design, and services. Each component, although developed independently, closely interacts with the others to create a unique, consistent whole," adds de Braganca.



**Kezya de Braganca**

Founder,  
MansionHaus

“A successful hotel design concept should grow from a strong foundation, just like the building itself”

It has been very rightly quoted, "If you think good design is expensive, you should look at the cost of bad design." Thus saying, every hotel is unique but one bad decision can cost you for a lifetime. As **Nikhil Sharma**, Regional Director, EURASIA, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts explains that there has been a paradigm shift in the way hotels were designed in the past. The expectations, tastes and budgets of guests have a direct impact on the overall design of the top hotels. Apart from internal matters such as finance, architecture and business plans, hoteliers now show a keen interest in enhancing the stay experience for guests on their properties.

**Amandeep Sharma**, Head, Project & Technical Services, Leisure Hotels Group sheds light on the key elements when building a resort property. He says when looking to construct a resort property, the location, nature and the environment play a very important role in the overall hotel design. The area programme subject to the location of the property, room size and room and facilities mix is envisaged based on the market by the sales team and feasibility analysis. This is followed by the guest's comfort, brand identity (music, lobby

fragrance among others), arrival experience, and the overall look and feel of the property. Furthermore, considering the location, the material selection can be more local putting the spotlight on sustainability with locally available products and bringing in local design elements among many others.

The hotel design according to de Braganca also has other elements to be considered such as the story of a hotel that lies at the heart of any successful hotel. It embodies the purpose, and design philosophy and conveys why guests should choose to stay at your hotel, far beyond space planning and service delivery. Originality attracts people and nurtures a community of like-minded advocates of your brand organically. A compelling story lasts virtually forever, is rather inexpensive and triggers an emotional response that leads to a decrease in price sensitivity.

The next element is spacing wherein spatial planning is critical to the physical makeup of a hotel. It encompasses a cohesion of form and function, the customer journey and circulation plan, as well as its interior design. The hotel is divided into zones that are private, semi-private, public, occasional, and semi-occasional areas. These spaces must identify with and reinforce a hotel's core story. This is the first and most essential step to planning your hotel, as it greatly impacts the customer experience and your required team strength. Different spaces have different purposes and require sensible placing: a quiet library space will not do well if located next to a busy restaurant or hotel bar. Interior design should come last in the space design process.

The identity element in the framework encompasses all the sensorial aspects of a hotel concept. From colour palettes to choice of materials, corridor signage to your website layout and up to the hold music, every ingredient is an opportunity for a hotel to assert its unique identity. Since these are experienced by guests before, during and after their stay, the identity you express must be fully coherent with your story.

### MYRIAD INDIAN LANDSCAPE

Having listed varied elements that have to be considered in the design of a hotel, it is also essential to understand the country's advantages. India being so expansive and multicultural has so much more to offer hoteliers. Guests today are looking for an international experience in their own country, so hotel development companies are adhering to these norms? Nikhil Sharma explains that recent global trends and the democratisation of travel have led to changes in travellers' design expectations. The rapid growth of the Indian economy and



**Amandeep Sharma**  
Head, Project & Technical Services,  
Leisure Hotels Group

### “Indian traveller is certainly more demanding therefore hotels must cater to this ever-evolving demand”

increasing exposure to global construction technologies are synonyms for a shift towards a more homogenous global design style. Guest experiences in India must therefore reflect these new trends to meet changing travel anticipations.

India as a country has so much to offer. As de Braganca says with such a rich and diverse culture and heritage, celebrating a 'sense of place' has become synonymous with Indian hospitality. As the world's population becomes well-travelled, we constantly look for meaningful experiences and memories wherever we go. It is needless to say, that hospitality design has evolved organically on a trajectory that is sparked by the consumer's ever-evolving thirst and hunts for better experiences. Design and architecture being the core shell of this experience, we are witnessing the very best in international design giving way to local sway and paying homage to the history, culture and heritage of the destination.

She further adds, "From the bygone days of global brand standards to a hyperlocal design experience we witness today, we have come to learn that no hotel property stands alone, independent of its destination. More and more brands are increasingly conscious about delivering authenticity without compromising on cosmopolitan standards

and luxury. A successful hotel property must also be able to act as a springboard to the culture of its location."

Amandeep Sharma prefers going more local saying that there are several advantages and disadvantages to working in the Indian hotel space. He adds that from a design and construction point of view, India is preferable for cheaper labour/workforce, availability of materials and cost of construction. However, the flipside is that the exposure of local interior designers' design language needs to be improved, lack of the availability of good consultants/professionals and finally, all government policies are still not supporting tourism projects. The other factors are the multi-utilization of spaces i.e. the All Day Dining getting converted into informal meeting facilities during non-traffic hours. Having a multi-talented workforce is essential as some international brands are clubbing the reception with the bar so staff duties can be alternated.

### DISTINCT DESIGN ELEMENT COUNTS

As the building blocks are well placed, it is the design that matters. The question that arises here is whether it is more challenging to design Indian hotels. As Nikhil Sharma explains, the Indian hotel industry is predominantly driven by local inbound travel. In our view, the larger population of India emotionally connects to respective locations and cultures. This is usually reflected in hotel design and is included as part of a neighbourhood story. However, in international markets, where most hotel stays depend on outbound international business travellers, the hotel's design may not always require guests to connect with respective local cultures. It can be generic with a more functional and lean contemporary design.

Amandeep Sharma believes that the Indian traveller is certainly more demanding therefore hotels must cater to this ever-evolving demand. He says that in the international budget brand hotels there are no bellboys, no laundry pick-up service, no in-room dining among others, whereas in India we need to have these services. However, the scenario in India is changing. In many international properties, one can see the concept of unisex toilets increasing in public areas where there is a space constraint. This trend is yet to catch up in India.

de Braganca says the hotel industry has until recently largely pursued standardization so that their properties could look and feel the same irrespective of location. However, with the rise in travellers looking for authentic, unique, local experiences and willing to seek alternatives

## Important benchmarks for hotels

**Aesthetic appeal:** In an era where travellers love to capture every moment of their vacation (or workation) on social media, the appearance of a hotel holds immense significance. Hoteliers try to create aesthetically pleasing interiors to attract more guests through online and offline bookings. Special attention is given to garnering guests' attention by adding Instagram-worthy corners, lounge areas, quirky artwork, ambient lighting, green corners and more.

**Good location:** This is an important consideration while developing a hotel. The location is very important. The accessibility of the property to the city centre, busy market areas, airport and railway stations among others, make it a more desirable choice. An increasing number of guests prefer checking the location of a hotel before booking accommodation. Thus, it is an intelligent move to invest in a piece of land or property that offers an extra advantage because of its strategic location.

**Efficient plan:** A full-proof plan goes a long way in making a hotel an overnight success. The purpose it is catering to (business tourism, spiritual tourism, leisure tourism among others), its target clients, location, budget among others, should be kept in mind while charting the hotel design plan. In the end, the plan's efficiency goes a long way toward the hotel's popularity.

**Sound financing:** Hoteliers should have a clear financial picture in their minds right from the start. One can proceed with elaborate planning only when they have an exact number in mind. It is crucial to adhere to the available budget to avoid any kind of financial crunch in the future.

**Competent management:** A team of skilled and experienced managers can make the overall hotel design process seamless and hassle-free. The management team works like a support pillar during hotel design and offers their valuable services to enhance the outcome.

**Good workmanship:** From managers to technicians and labourers, every individual matters when it comes to the hotel design process. Each of them should be competent and experienced enough to offer their best at every stage of development.

to obtain them, the era of standardization seems to be ending.

Today, hotels are increasingly seeking to infuse local culture into the guest's journey to enhance the experience. Today, more and more hotels have become focal points for locals by embracing local retail and outsourcing services to local businesses. Hotels are also becoming cultural hubs where guests could experience various cultural workshops in arts, music, gastronomy and spa. This trend calls for adding local touches to the hotel design, as well as involving local designers and artists in the hotel operation, to create a unique ambience.

With India fast becoming the centre stage for the global market and tourism, it makes good business sense for the hospitality industry to adopt the Principles of Universal Design—the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

### SUSTAINABILITY: A WAY FORWARD

As Charlotte Moss says, "There are two things that make a room timeless: a sense of history and a piece of the future." With this thought in mind, the Indian hospitality industry is undergoing a significant shift, according to Nikhil Sharma. "One of the key trends responsible for such a change is contemporary hotel design being pushed forward by technological advancements and digital adoption. Increasing reliance on modern technology has significantly helped to bring down overall operation time and improve the level of safety for guests, especially after COVID. As a result, the digitalization of services has become an integral part of hotel design today," he adds.

Sharing her thoughts, de Braganca says sustainability is key to the future of hotels. She adds that architects predict, with optimism, that hospitality design is finally becoming more environmentally conscious. As this takes precedence more hotels today are embracing sustainability as part of their business model. From automating process flows to energy-saving devices and equipment, going paperless, and plastic-free, preserving water and reducing food waste—all of these are becoming the industry norm. Hotels are rethinking transportation, sourcing supplies and products, and leaning towards local craftsmen and artisans. More importantly, bringing in guests on their sustainability journey—communicating the why and inspiring by the how.

Hotel brands are shifting away from uniformity and homogenization and are making individual properties



**Nikhil Sharma**  
Regional Director,  
EURASIA, Wyndham Hotels and  
Resorts

“There has been a paradigm shift in the way hotels were designed in the past. The expectations, tastes and budgets of guests have a direct impact on the overall design of the top hotels”

more personalized. The experiential design transforms spaces into immersive environments and entices people. Today, hospitality design offers exciting opportunities to create holistic environments that are accessible to everyone. In recent times, work, life, and leisure have become interchangeable and it has led to multi-functional and flexible spaces. Hotels need to put wellness on their agenda and embed it into design and function through concepts like biophilia. Guests want a connection with nature even in an urban setting.

Guest rooms will no longer be just places to sleep and shower. Instead, they will multi-task in gyms, dining rooms and offices. Over the last two years, outdoor spaces from forests, gardens, and beach settings to an aquamarine poolside have all been focal points for hotels and this is still an area we are seeing many hotel brands investing in. Hotel designers do not see any future for buffet-style dining on the property. The end of buffet-style dining could shepherd in a new era for private dining options in guest rooms. EV charging stations may need to become a standard in design planning.

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# SUBTLE POWER

New architectural lighting range by Häfele consists of 8 series and covers various applications, installation techniques and design themes. The biggest advantage of this range is absolutely low Unified Glare Rating.



**H**äfele's Loox Range has been meeting the demands for lighting in furniture as well as the growing needs for networking and digitalization since the last 10 years. The solutions offered within this range maximise simplicity and flexibility as well as assure high reliability. The range presents itself as a unique combination of elegant design and state-of-the-art technology making it the perfect choice for any home furniture application, be it Task Lighting for Kitchen cabinets and plinths, Decorative Lighting for Living Room Showcases, Mood Lighting for Bedroom Applications or pure Functional Lighting in Wardrobes.

Identifying this distinct gap early on as an opportunity, Häfele initiated the research and engineering for a range of lights that enhances the design of architectural spaces as well as provides opportunities of achieving different illumination techniques and functionalities. As a brand, Häfele understands design and is known for its bend towards innovation. It also understands the importance of home ergonomics, lifestyle conveniences and ease of mobility within your surroundings. Our efforts towards this exercise led to the development of a versatile range of architectural lights and hence Häfele Architectural Lights was brought into existence.

With Häfele's new architectural lighting range you will find all your lighting needs taken care of. Whether it is lighting up a small

area, highlighting a wall texture, emphasizing on a work of art, illuminating the floor space at night or simply ensuring even distribution of light across the entire space—these lights have got you covered. The range, consisting of 8 series, covers various applications, installation techniques and design themes. Each series comes with a comprehensive offering of the different types of interior lights, be it downlights, spotlight or wall washers, which allows you to implement a consistent design theme (in terms of the lighting fixtures) across the space available, even with differentiated illumination techniques. The biggest advantage this range carries is the absolutely low Unified Glare Rating (UGR). The convenient plug-and-play assembly, impressive product specifications, flexibility in ordering components, luminaire finishes, and availability of glare reduction accessories provide an overall customized option tailored to your specific requirements. Engineered on the same philosophy of 'easiness' and 'flexibility' as the Loox furniture lighting system, Häfele can now be your holistic, lighting solutions provider, delivering premium ambient, task and accent lighting for your living spaces.

## OXFORD SERIES

The Oxford Series, designed on the concept of modularization, delivers flexibility and a variety of options for the customer to choose from. Be it a spotlight, downlight or wall washer,

the minimalist design theme of the series remains seamless and consistent across. The inherent deep baffle design and a low UGR help enhance the visual clarity and provide comfortable aesthetics in the living spaces.

## DELFT SERIES

Available in two colours, black and white, the Delft Series is best suitable for dining rooms, hotel rooms, bedrooms, living rooms, and display areas with its deep baffle design which equally distributes the light toward the center. With the help of a simple plug-and-play concept, the luminaires from the Delft Series have an entirely tool-free installation.

## IMPERIAL SERIES

The Imperial Architectural Lights by Häfele are the best choice for meeting the illumination needs of such spaces. These luminaires with a small design build and effortless aesthetics, come with an anti-glare feature that helps create a soft, soothing light effect for additional comfort.

## MCGILL SERIES

In corridors and along the stairways, floor washers are used to not only illuminate the surroundings but also to create soft lighting effects that subtly enhance the floor textures. These luminaires provide a glare-free illumination in areas with limited brightness and help avoid injuries or tripping especially in places where there are changes in the elevations.



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# HICSA WELCOMES MARRIOTT CEO AS SPEAKER

Anthony Capuano, CEO, Marriott International will be deliberating on range of matters regarding hospitality sector at 18th Edition of HICSA.



The 18th Edition of Hotel Investment Conference-South Asia (HICSA) in Bangalore from 11 to 13 April 2023 will feature Anthony Capuano, CEO, Marriott International as a speaker. This would be Capuano's first visit to India as the



**Anthony Capuano**  
CEO,  
Marriott International

Thadani, Founder Chairman, Hotelivate said, "We are absolutely thrilled to have Anthony Capuano speak at HICSA this coming April. Marriott International continues to be at the forefront of the hospitality scene in the region and are excited to announce the grand gala opening cocktails being hosted at one of their newest hotel resorts called JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa. The conference also moves to Bengaluru for the first time, which is the tech start-up capital of India and where many hospitality companies are adapting to the technology trends."

He further added that "Bengaluru also opens doors to a whole new set up of leading real estate players in the South."

HICSA since its inaugural edition in 2005, has been an unequalled gathering platform for the hospitality industry the world over. The conference is valued for its content-rich sessions and excellent networking opportunities attracting the hospitality industry's top brands, hotel owners, bankers, developers, and professional advisors from around the globe. The event will take place in Bengaluru over the course of two and a half days with the primary event at Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park on April 12 and 13.



global CEO of Marriott. The senior leadership of Marriott will also be hosting the opening night cocktails in the event at the new JW Marriott Bengaluru Prestige Golfshire Resort & Spa, one of Marriott's newest resorts in India.

Announcing the development, Rajeev Menon, President, Asia Pacific (excluding Greater China), Marriott International said, "We are delighted to partner with HICSA for their 18th annual event in 2023. HICSA is recognized as a key event for hotel investors, developers and partners in South Asia, and our presence is testament to Marriott International's continued commitment to growing our portfolio in the region, and our

**“This would be Capuano's first visit to India as the global CEO of Marriott. The senior leadership of Marriott will also be hosting the opening night cocktails at HICSA”**

confidence in the appeal of South Asia as a leading tourism destination in the future.”

Commenting on the 18th anniversary of HICSA, Manav

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# FESTIVE SEASON IMBUES NEW ENTHUSIASM

Hoteliers express delight and excitement at recent tourism boom and spike in bookings ahead of festive season after long hiatus due to COVID.



FH Bureau

## ROOM OCCUPANCY TO PICK UP SHARPLY

The upcoming festive season is an important period for hotels to showcase the best they have to offer with their festive activities. The festive season has had a major impact on the business in Q4, with around 20 per cent of the revenue generated from the one-week festive promotions i.e., the period from 23 December 2022–21 January 2023. Room occupancy rate is also picking up and the trends look promising. It will most definitely take the RevPar up.

### ROBUST MARKETING STRATEGIES

When it comes to attracting clients, a robust sales and marketing plan has been set in place



**Satish Kumar**  
General Manager,  
The St. Regis Goa Resort

for the season. These include extensive use of social media, paid advertisements, digital marketing, and strategic sales partnerships in order to amplify the resort and its festive offerings. Our loyalty program—Marriott Bonvoy—has helped reach out to our loyal customers globally, and our 32-year-old rich legacy helped us build guest loyalty among our patrons.

Pertaining to the Food and Beverage offerings, the resort is passionate about creating F&B experiences that encompass taste-making, modern indulgence, discerning expertise, and iconic celebrations. The resort offers four dining venues and two bars. For the festive season, we are serving an array of handcrafted cakes, festive goodies, signature hampers, and a display of Ginger Bread houses for our guests.

### ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS GALORE

Besides F&B offerings, we have planned entertainment for our guests such as fireworks and DJ night at our sheesha lounge. An aperitif selection, Christmas Brunch, and our beautiful champagne Sabrage ritual, and a sparkling flow of champagne are planned for Christmas. We are offering a Gatsby-themed party and gala dinner at The Great Lawn to commence at the beginning of New Year and a firework display by the beach at midnight.

“With a sense of revenge tourism extending into the international market, we are noticing inflow from the United Kingdom, Russia and Kazakhstan returning to our property”





**Abhishek Sadhoo**  
General Manager,  
Shangri-La Eros New Delhi

**“This year’s festive celebrations will see significant growth in the travel and hospitality sectors. The business is looking very promising for the hotel specifically for dining and accommodation”**

## WITNESSING INCREMENTAL GROWTH

This holiday season is sure to be more meaningful than ever, with families reuniting all over the world to commemorate all those missed milestones and to cherish being together like never before. This year’s festive celebrations will see significant growth in the travel and hospitality sectors. The business is looking very promising for the hotel specifically for dining and accommodation. At Shangri-La Eros New Delhi, the team has developed exciting and reimagined festive celebrations for the guests to celebrate the year-end festivities.

### STRONG SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Helping guests experience moments of joy has always been central to Shangri-La’s heartfelt hospitality. To make Christmas and New Year’s eve planning and gifting even more convenient this year, Shangri-La has the season covered with a one-stop Shangri-La Experiences website. Bookings and purchases can be made via the new site with ease, allowing guests to focus on what is most important: celebration and spending quality time with family and friends. A strong social media strategy, on-property activations of the festive offers, targeted listicles, emailers to the guest database, including corporates and local clientele, are some of the key strategies the hotel is focusing on.

At Shangri-La, the colleagues are encouraged at all levels and across all businesses to bring in new ideas and creativity to meet the guests’ needs, from adopting the latest technology to creating personalized Shangri-La moments, delivering re-imagined luxury dining and wellness experiences, and offering Shangri-La’s special kind of hospitality—‘Hospitality from the Heart’.

### SPECIAL PACKAGES ON OFFER

The Festive Collection at Shangri-La Eros New Delhi includes exciting hotel events, creative gift ideas, and unforgettable dining experiences to make the most wonderful time of the year even more magical. From New Year’s eve celebrations to festive gift

items, foodie treats, hampers, and experience vouchers, there is more than ever on offer this year. Guests can enjoy a festive afternoon tea at Mister Chai, and Grappa Bar will offer festive sips along with a signature Turkey preparation. The restaurants will offer a specially curated Christmas eve feast and a special brunch on December 25. Grappa Bar will offer a spectacular New Year’s eve celebration with a resident DJ, and guests can also try an Asian or Italian meal on December 31 at the hotel’s award-winning restaurants.





**Sonica Malhotra Kandhari**  
Joint Managing Director,  
MBD Group

**“The hotel teams have carefully curated events towards rendering the guests a perfect destination experience and also marking the New Year celebrations”**

## EXCITING EVENTS ON OFFER

The blissful festive season of December 2022-January 2023 is one of the most awaited in recent years after a forced hiatus due to COVID. While the guests are looking forward to the unique offerings presented by the city, we are likewise eager to welcome back our patrons. Guests today have become highly conscious and are sensitive while choosing the experiences they sort to, for spending quality time with their loved ones.

### PRIORITIZING CLIENT DEMANDS

In the recent times, MBD Group's marketing and sales strategy is heavily based upon stitching story-telling seamlessly into the fabric of consistent customer relationship management. The focus is on 'socially hearing' our clients to make the experience worthwhile, laden with memorable moments. An upward trajectory is already being seen by us in occupancy with guests resorting to get-togethers and larger gatherings to celebrate the merriment. On-ground exciting events like cake-mixing and Christmas tree-lighting have been successfully reintroduced this year. While early bird offers are made available with pre-bookings and curated staycation packages at Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida and Radisson Blu Hotel MBD Ludhiana, the fine-dining restaurants are offering special chef menus in both our hotels. Also, our guests will have

the opportunity to savour international cuisines at SXVIII and Café Delish with an array of traditional festive goodies. Our guests will also be serenaded by musical live performances during the season. The hotel teams have carefully curated events towards rendering the guests a perfect destination experience and also marking the New Year celebrations.

### REVPAR INCREASED

Radisson Blu MBD's RevPar Index, which measures a hotel's revenue per available room in comparison to other hotels, has increased 25 per cent from pre-COVID times, while its RGI (Revenue Generation Index) that measures a hotel's performance and occupancy rate against that of

its competitors is also much higher. Among MBD Group's award-winning restaurants boasting of both age-old as well as new-age cuisines, are 'Made In India', RED, SXVII, Café Delish and The Chocolate Box & Lounge. Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida, the group's flagship hotel, has been the first five star boutique luxury hotel in Noida, MBD Group's maiden venture and fully owned and managed by it. Since nineteen years, it is a trendsetter in fashion and style.



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**Gaurav Sinha**  
Hotel Manager,  
JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru

“Our room occupancy rates have swollen since the curbs were lifted and cross-country air travel began”

## BUMPER 2023 BECKONS

The year-end events are important for all hotels. Most hotels make investment in deciding on artists, food, and other critical areas. The impact of the festive season on Q4 business is huge and, in fact, there have been times when it has helped hotels close the gap and end the year on a profitable note. But seeing the kind of response we are getting on weekends this December; we foresee bookings to increase from the past two years.

### LEVERAGING MARKETING TOOLS

Our room occupancy rates have swollen since the curbs were lifted and cross-country air travel began. We have sold out for the past few months, and yes, we do feel it will help us climb the ladder in RevPAR. Demand-wise though, there have not been any major shifts. Our clients continue to be corporates and people from the leisure category. JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru is known for its central location, which translates into a high demand for social and corporate events such as weddings, conclaves and so on.

What we have done to get here in the past few months is being present in various platforms, using all marketing tools to our advantage. From a back office that links travel portals to meeting corporates for tie-ups, to using digital marketing to activate all social platforms, targeting various age groups, people with various interests using PR to create a brand recall nationally, we have worked together to drive business for the property.

### OFFERINGS APLENTY

For the mega parties lined up for the year-end, we have people on the ground to meet with corporates and share special rates for their company's New Year eve celebration as well as our regular customers to whom we reach out with attractive options for customizing events. For brands not on our list, we use social media platforms, outside the traditional marketing to showcase the property and the offerings for the season.

At JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru, we have planned various formats of revelries and dining for various target audience this festive season. We will commence the Christmas eve gala dinner on the 24 December 2022, a Christmas Brunch and Christmas gala dinner on the 25 December, all with a live band, a massive buffet offering Western, Indian, and Asian cuisines at JW Kitchen.

For the New Year celebration, we have the New Year eve bash at the JW Lawns with appetizers and premium spirit selection followed by a gala dinner at The Grand Ballroom. Simultaneously, we have also organized another revelry at the Spice Terrace and The Merak Brewhouse with appetizers and premium spirit selection. For those who want to enjoy a quiet meal without the hullabaloo, we have a 5 Course Mediterranean dinner at ALBA followed by a countdown on the JW Lawns with our DJ to add an element of fun and the New Year vibes.



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**Rajesh Radhakrishnan**  
GM,  
THE Park Chennai

**“In terms of marketing and sales strategies—digital and online platforms will be the focus this year in our effort to market our events to larger yet focused audiences”**

## BOOM TIME FOR REVELLERS

The Hotel and Restaurant industry is optimistic about a sparkling festive season ahead. As far as the demand goes, it appears that this year will be one of the best years for the industry. The industry is witnessing steady growth and improved demand across all verticals, be it Restaurants, Bars or Rooms, post-COVID.

### DEMAND IS ON HIGHER SIDE

With an ever-evolving demand curve, domestic travel has bounced back and has reached pre-COVID levels. The demand is already high, though international travel has not yet picked up. This is leading to an increase in demand for rooms with a positive impact on RevPAR. We expect the December business to be strong, especially in F&B verticals and overall growth is expected to be good in Q4 and substantially higher than pre-COVID period.

After COVID cases reduced there is a marked change in customer behaviour, wherein a shift towards people spending on various experiences is noticed. People are also spending more quality time with their families. This has augured well for the industry and hotels have an opportunity to review their existing offerings and leverage this need. There is also a shift in customer sentiment with an increased focus on quality and they are willing to pay a higher price for it.

### FOCUSING ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

In terms of marketing and sales strategies—digital and online platforms will be the focus this year in our effort to market our events to larger yet focused audiences. Digital Guest Management Systems, emailers and WhatsApp campaigns will be utilized to target different market segments. Direct sales and traditional marketing via corporate and social connects still hold strong for the final conversion of business.

For the year-end festive season, we are curating a whole lot of attractive packages and cutting-edge entertainment be it music, theme, or entertainment. THE Park has always been at the forefront of hosting the most renowned parties and artists. Being New Year's eve, we will be upping the ante to ensure guests get the best of all, for a memorable bash. We have multiple venues and entertainment options available, which would cater to customers looking for different music genres such as Bollywood, commercial, techno and electronic dance music. There is a 'Star Lit Party' planned at our rooftop alfresco space aqua. The nightlife spaces like The Leather Bar and Pasha will host some of the best DJs and artists. We also have an elaborate gala dinner offering cuisines across the world at our restaurant with entertainment even for children. Overall, December is packed with delightful offerings leading to New Year's eve.



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# RINGING revenue bells

After lull of two years, good old Christmas jingle and holiday rush are poised to return minus COVID restrictions.



For the past two years, COVID restrictions have been playing spoilsport for holiday goers, wanting to party away their Christmas and New Year break with friends and family. Thankfully, this winter, the holiday season looks optimistic and fun-filled for travellers as well as the travel sector. As images of overcrowded airports are making rounds, many hotels are already preparing for the busiest time of the travel season after a gap of two years and zero business. "Demand has already outpaced supply for the Christmas and New Year season, leading to completely sold-out dates, especially in our hotels in cities such as Bhuj, Jaipur, Udaipur, Amritsar, Goa, Varanasi, Dehradun, Rishikesh, and Corbett. In fact, the room occupancy has passed pre-COVID levels in this quarter of 2022," shares Rajan Kalra, Director, Sales, Suba Group of Hotels.

## ZERO COVID CURBS BOOST FESTIVE BIZ

Making Q4 a blockbuster for the hotel industry, zero COVID restrictions are showing an encouraging impact on travellers who have been forced to cancel their year-end vacation in the past two years. "In the wake of zero COVID restrictions, we are witnessing



**Rajan Kalra**  
Director, Sales,  
Suba Group of Hotels

“Demand has already outpaced supply for the Christmas and New Year season, leading to completely sold-out dates”

unprecedented demand from domestic tourists. Year-end vacations, wedding season, and renewed focus on MICE have led to higher than ever advance bookings for December-January period. Room rates too have seen a surge,” reveals Paritosh Ladhani, JMD, Sincere Developers that owns Taj Hotel & Convention Centre Agra.

Buoyant on the demand, hotels are witnessing waves of tourists driving room occupancy and revenue. “Occupancies and room rates driven by domestic leisure travellers are at an all-time high. Revenue per available room (RevPAR) is expected to grow as much as 50 per cent in this period compared to the same time in 2021. Not just room revenue but F&B revenue is higher as well. For hotels like us in Agra, the recently launched direct Mumbai-Agra flight has also had a positive impact on our overall revenues,” says Ladhani.

Besides the holiday rush, the wedding business is also adding sparkle to Q4 revenue growth. “This quarter will clock not only higher room revenue but also higher revenue from banquets, spa, and F&B. The mood of the consumer is buoyant, as we have a festive quarter sans any restrictions after two years. In fact, the hospitality sector is experiencing good business growth owing to a large number of



**Mehul Vaswani**

Director, Hospitality,  
Chokhi Dhani Group

**“Q4 will clock not only higher room revenue but also higher revenue from banquets, spa and F&B”**

resulted in the rise of backyard cities.” Experts believe that this change in mindset nudged travellers to rediscover their neighbourhoods and it will only grow. “Considering our population, the percentage of Indians having passports is still far less. So, our country will always have a large number of domestic travellers. Our brand, which is in the mid-market accommodation space, offers value for money and will always be the beneficiaries of domestic growth,” adds Kalra.

Industry stakeholders believe that high air ticket prices, mandatory health protocols in some countries and long wait for visas are also contributing towards tourist rush at the domestic destinations. “Travellers are spending on luxury domestic experiences rather than jetting out. This is also because travelling abroad still has its share of hassles. Bookings for January look encouraging,” reveals Vaswani.



**Paritosh Ladhani**

JMD,  
Sincere Developers

destination weddings,” agrees Mehul Vaswani, Director, Hospitality, Chokhi Dhani Group.

#### **DOMESTIC DEMAND REMAINS ROBUST**

Thriving on the pent-up demand, domestic travel has been helping the tourism industry recover faster than one had anticipated. Besides driving tourist numbers, domestic tourism has been inspiring travel trends as well. Agrees Kalra, “Leisure domestic travel drove the recovery throughout this financial year. Post-COVID, a boom in local and rural travel, eco-tourism, farm stays, and wellness vacation

**“Year-end vacations, wedding season and renewed focus on MICE have led to higher than ever advance bookings for December-January period”**



# AI set to transform food industry



Technological advancements and digitization in the food business are gaining much importance post-COVID and spurring restaurants and hotels to go contactless, reckons Rajendra Mittal, Partner, Mittal International.

## Food industry has suffered heavily during COVID. How is the industry rebuilding?

Small restaurants were forced to close. The restaurant's management appeared to require more money than could be saved. The restaurant industry tried to adopt innovative techniques such as fewer seats per table, contactless doors, guest self-parking, and usage of QR coded menus for contactless ordering and payment of bills through digital payment platforms.

## How do you see Artificial Intelligence influencing the food sector?

Restaurants are using a variety of strategies to take advantage of technology. These include technological advancements such as artificial intelligence that enhance the client experience. For restaurant franchise operators, the addition of digital tools and programmes does come at an additional expense. Artificial intelligence is more efficient than humans for order-taking. Order-taking led to less strain on the staff and more time to focus on higher-value tasks and interaction with the customer. This can help ensure order accuracy, as the customer enters their order into the system personally and reviews the order before finalizing it.

## How is technology reshaping the future of the food industry?

Customers give delivery workers instructions over the phone as to where the food should be placed. Order preparation is the first step towards contactless delivery. Orders must be processed without any physical interaction. The kitchen may have bags of food that a staff member can take and move to a staging location. To achieve a contactless



**Rajendra Mittal**  
Partner,  
Mittal International

**“Artificial intelligence is more efficient than humans for order-taking. Order-taking led to less strain on the staff and more time to focus on higher-value tasks and interaction with the customer”**

delivery, several of these operations need physical handoffs between staff that must be digitally managed. To avoid needless physical contact, every paper must be converted to digital format.



## Mittal International opens experience centre

Mittal International recently launched Experience Rajendra Centre, a 1,600 square foot facility, in Noida. The Centre's objective is to provide consumers with hands-on experience on the equipments. Mittal International has always wished for a single location where clients could go and can experience actual product demonstrations. Distributors and customers can now test the finished products and cuisines, as well as the equipments' operations and methods. The Centre also offers a selection of automatic and semi-automatic coffee machines in a separate area with a barista-like ambiance.

Mittal International, which was established in 1980 by Rajendra Prasad Mittal, is credited with bringing foreign kitchen equipments to the Indian hospitality sector. The company also launched the Scotsman ice cube maker to India and sold the first La Cimbali coffee machine to Oberoi Mumbai in 1989. The best brands from across the world are available from Mittal International, a pioneer in introducing cutting-edge cooking and refrigeration equipments to Indian commercial kitchens.

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## WALNUT FLOOR HURRICANE LARGE

Inspired by nature, this Walnut hurricane with amber glass top and wooden base behold the sophisticated mood lighting. It is just a perfectly, elegant hurricane that would fit in with modern or traditional decor. Crafted out of high quality glass top for maximum opulence that stunningly reflect and embellish the surrounding light.



## BOMBAY VELVET BY HOUSE OF KNOTS

Maintaining balance and harmony in an unorthodox blend of geometry is Bombay Velvet. Square, circle and rectangle come together with a flair of whimsy in refreshingly subtle greys juxtaposed with brilliant red and vibrant blues. A cotton fringe gives an extra dimension to this innovative rug. Perfect to be placed in a passage as an accent rug. This rug in convention-breaking design and silhouette is hand tufted by craftsmen using fine wool that are art for the floor.

## JEWELRY FOR INTERIORS' COLLECTION BY GRAFF

Designed with exquisite details, sculpted with precious materials, and engineered with precision, GRAFF's luxury bath fixtures have been described as "jewelry for interiors." Taking inspiration from classical artworks, iconic architecture and organic shapes, every shower system, faucet, and accessory embodies GRAFF's credo of design excellence. Casting captivating silhouettes and creating unparalleled experiences, GRAFF's collections infuse the personal wellness space with the art of bath.



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# MOVEMENTS



**SANJAY MISHRA**

**Vice President  
Empires Hotels**

★ From kitchen to F&B, banqueting to sales & marketing to entire operation of a hotel, Sanjay Mishra has the vast experience of 22 years in hospitality industry. He started his career at Holiday Inn, Surat as a Captain in 2000. In his new role as VP, Empires Hotels, Mishra will be focusing on acquiring more properties in near future and implement powerful marketing strategies on both online and offline front adapting latest technology adhering to the digital transformation strategies among others.



**ARINDAM BOSE**

**Director of Sales  
Crowne Plaza Today Gurugram**

★ A seasoned hotelier, Arindam Bose joins Crowne Plaza Today Gurugram as the Director of sales. He was previously associated with The Courtyard Marriott, Gurugram. Through his engagement with hotel brands such as The Leela Hotels, Palaces & Resorts, CWT, The Lalit, and Taj City Centre Gurugram, he brings a diverse experience with him. His areas of competence include brand positioning and visibility as well as growing business volumes with innovative strategies. He has a strong grasp of technology and analytical skills.



**SUMITA C MAJUMDAR**

**Head, HR & Learning & Development, Fortune Hotels**

★ In her new role as Head, Human Resource & Learning & Development, Sumita C Majumdar will be responsible for managing the extensive human resource portfolio of the upscale business and leisure hotel chain, bringing focus on talent management, compensation, employee benefits and wellbeing, training and development, compliances as well as workplace safety. Sumita's corporate experience spans over 30 years in Human Resource. She is skilled in conducting organisation health surveys/ employee satisfaction surveys, analysing the survey results for action plan implementation.



**TARUN ARORA**

**Chef De Cuisine of Events  
Andaz Delhi**

★ Tarun Arora holds a postgraduate degree in Bachelor of Science in Hospitality & Hotel Administration from IHM Gurdaspur. He began his career in the food and beverage industry in 2008, as an Executive Trainee and Demi Chef De Partie at Hotel Imperial, New Delhi. He has been appointed as Chef De Cuisine of Events, Andaz Delhi. With over 15 years of experience across the globe, Chef Tarun has showcased his skills and talent at numerous events and platforms, over the years.



**JITENDER GUPTA**

**Financial Controller  
Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport**

★ Jitender Gupta started his journey with Maruti Suzuki India Ltd and brings with him over 23 years of deep understanding and commands experience in cost and management accounting. He has done post-graduation in Commerce. His last assignment was with The Lalit, New Delhi. As the Financial Controller, Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport, he will be seeing hotel's all financial operations such as accounting, auditing, and budgeting. He is excited that the hotel will thrive towards an elevated revenue growth for a strong future.



**NAMIT VIJH**

**Cluster General Manager  
Radisson Hotels Group**

★ With a degree in hospitality management from IHM Chandigarh, Namit has an experience spanning more than 15 years with leading hotel brands such as The Oberoi Group, The Imperial, Hyatt Hotels and The Leela Palace Hotels Resorts. As Cluster General Manager, Radisson Hotels Group, Namit will be overseeing bigger portfolio comprising of Radisson Blu Jaipur, Radisson Jodhpur, Radisson Nathdwara, Radisson Udaipur, Radisson Agra and Country Inn & Suites by Radisson Kota in addition to Radisson Gurugram Udyog Vihar.

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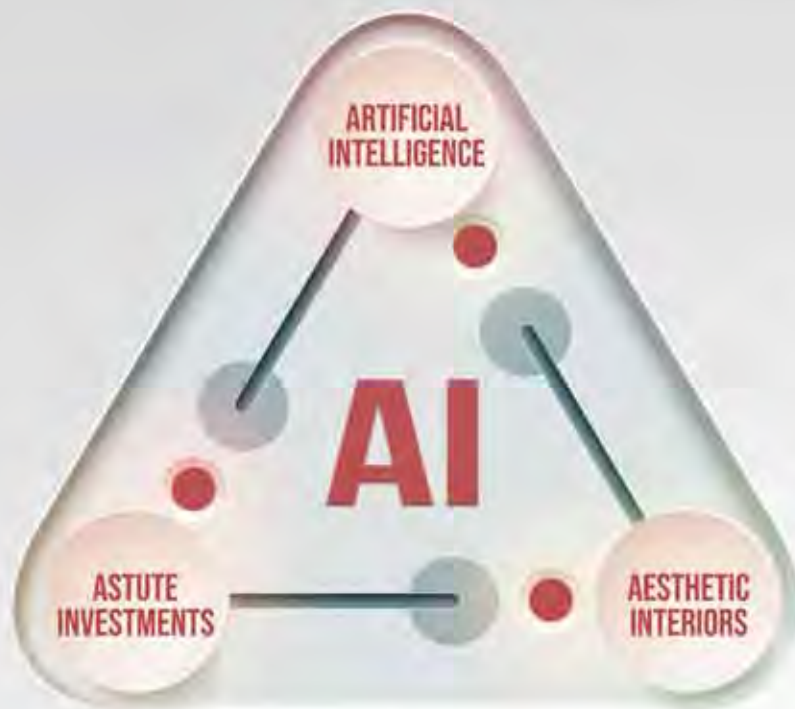


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Anthony Capuano, Chief Executive Officer, Marriott International  
Chris Nassetta, President and CEO, Hilton  
Dillip Rajakarier, Group CEO, Minor International  
Dimitris Manikis, President - EMEA, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts

Jitu Virwani, Chairman and MD, Embassy Group  
Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, Executive Director, Historic Resort Hotels  
Neil Jacobs, Chief Executive Officer, Six Senses Hotels Resorts & Spas  
Puneet Chhatwal, Chief Executive Officer, IHCL  
Zubin Saxena, Managing Director and VP Operations - SA, Radisson Hotel Group

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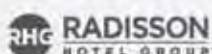
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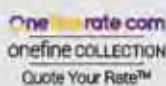
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